

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ASHUELOT RIVER PARK ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, October 14, 2025

8:15 AM

**Room 22,
Recreation Center**

Members Present:

Paul Bocko, Chair
Suzy Krautmann, Vice Chair
Leslie Casey
Kelly Cook
Arthur Winsor, Alternate
Thomas Haynes, Alternate

Staff Present:

Carrah Fisk-Hennessey, Director of Parks,
Recreation

Members Not Present:

Dian Mathews

1) Welcome and Call to Order

Chair Bocko called the meeting to order at 8:15AM. Roll call was conducted.

2) Approval of September 9, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Raynee Carlson noted a correction to line 69, which states that “A large silver maple tree by the dam is dead, and dangerous.” It is not the entire tree that is an issue, just a portion of it. Others agreed.

Ms. Krautmann made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of September 9, 2025, as amended. Ms. Cook seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

3) Friends of Ashuelot River Park Arboretum Report

Ms. Casey stated that Ms. Mathews could not be here today and asked her to give the Friends report. She reported the following:

- The Friends have plenty of lovely compost, thanks to the City and the UNH grant. They started distributing the City compost around the beds and will keep doing that.
- Watering remains challenging and time-consuming. Per her calculations, it is not even physically possible to give the beds the full, recommended amount of water by hand.

Ms. Carlson agreed and stated that the drought will probably just be a way of life. She continued, “If the garden dies, we (the Friends) cannot be 100% responsible for it.” They really need a spigot closer to their gardening shed, so they can use a hose or a sprinkler instead of spending hours standing at the beds with containers of water.

Discussion ensued about the watering. Mr. Winsor spoke about the possibility of installing a snap valve. The Friends clarified that they are stating their need but letting others figure out the exact solution. Chair Bocko asked how much the Friends think the drought is exacerbating the problem. The Friends replied that they watered three times a week, and for the past few years, they have been mostly weeding/in “beautification mode,” not planting. They have many new plants to plant in the spring.

Chair Bocko stated that if there will be more and more drought, long term, they will need to think about the resiliency of the park and what will be there. The Friends replied that that is exactly why they are putting in native plants, which have deep roots. Discussion continued about how resiliency is a critical piece for the Friends and the park as a whole.

Ms. Krautmann asked about the dam. Chair Bocko asked her to hold onto that thought. He asked Ms. Fisk-Hennessey about irrigation, which he knows she looked into before, and there are limitations. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey replied yes, the new system hits the areas that the City needs it to hit until they build new gardens. She asked about installing a spigot in that area, was told it would be very difficult. She can ask about a snap valve. Discussion continued.

Ms. Casey asked if herbicide has been applied to the knotweed along the dam. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey replied yes.

Friends members continued the Friends report:

- Tia Zehnbaauer has put together a great Facebook page for the Friends and is doing a great job managing it and adding to it. They hope to attract donors.
- They want to get the list of the cobblestones on there, so people can find their cobblestone.
- They are creating a new, one-page brochure for the cobblestones so people can order them, now that they have space for more.
- They plan to join the NH Center for Non-profits to make use of their resources.
- So that snowplow drivers do not pile snow in the garden as they have before, the Friends have a plan for temporary fencing and possibly signs, if it is okay with the City.

Mr. Winsor asked if they mean the garden area where the handicapped parking signs are. The Friends replied yes. Mr. Winsor spoke about how it is against the law to put snow obscuring the handicapped parking signs, so anyone who does it can be reported and fined, and it thus not necessary for the Friends to do extra fencing or signs. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey clarified that last winter, City staff made contact with the private business that hires the snow removal contractors, so this should be taken care of.

4) Finance Report

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that the Finance Report has a “TBA” because she was waiting to get the invoices from Bartlett Tree, and those came in early this morning. She continued that those are for \$3,865. She gave information about the root invigoration, pruning, and diagnosis work Bartlett has been doing and plans to do. Chair Bocko asked if she thinks Bartlett’s work is on target. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey replied yes.

Brief discussion ensued about signs of rat activity and what has been done so far to try to address that.

5) Project Tracking

Mr. Winsor asked if there is anyone to work on the signs, now that Nicole Cullinane is gone. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey replied that a KSC intern, majoring in Communications, is helping them. She continued that the intern used the information and photos from the ARPAB and created a very rough draft. She is working on it. Brief discussion ensued, and Chair Bocko asked if the ARPAB would be able to take a closer look at it next month. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey replied yes.

Ms. Carlson asked if they are waiting until the spring to relocate the sign. Mr. Winsor replied that they are waiting until they have a sign design to give to the sign-maker, before they can think about moving it.

Chair Bocko stated that the bird ecology stuff is out there. He continued that he is having a hard time moving on it on his own. He hopes a student can help. He will try again.

6) Recent/Upcoming Events

A) Sculpture Art Installation

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that the sculpture has arrived. She shared information about the installation that happened, and the ribbon cutting that will be on October 25. Rick MacMillan and Friends of Public Art are handling press. Discussion ensued.

Chair Bocko stated that another upcoming event is a tree walk for the Senior Center, on October 30. He spoke about an Antioch staff member who is also a Senior Center board member, who they have been working with to organize this. Mr. Winsor gave more information about the event, at which he will be speaking about the trees. All ARPAB members are invited, and the walk is open to all regardless of age.

Chair Bocko stated that a very knowledgeable Antioch student is ready and willing to host a bird walk, which does not have to be through the Senior Center. They should get that

scheduled. Discussion ensued about when to schedule it. Friends members will contact Ms. Mathews to see what she thinks.

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that a geologic walk will be October 25 at Goose Pond, open to all.

7) **New/Other Business**

A) **Bartlett Tree Updates**

Mr. Winsor stated that he is excited to report that Frank Grano of Bartlett Tree has generously donated a beautiful Dawn Redwood, a large one, for the Ashuelot River Park. He shared the story of how this came about and thanked Parks & Recreation staff for doing a great job taking care of the tree temporarily in their shop. Discussion ensued about the logistics and financing of the installation at the Park, with Mr. Winsor stating that it cannot be planted until the elm is removed. They should plant it this fall. He asked if the ARPAB is okay with moving some of the landscaping money around to help make this happen. Chair Bocko asked about the Friends budget. Discussion ensued about finances.

Chair Bocko stated that it sounds like the Friends are willing to do some swapping around for this development. Friends members replied yes, although they are kind of being put on the spot and would normally hold a Friends meeting to discuss this and vote. Mr. Winsor agreed and replied that this tree donation was a total surprise. Ms. Casey asked if there is time for the Friends to hold their November meeting before deciding. Mr. Winsor replied probably not, as the tree should be planted soon. Discussion continued and Chair Bocko stated that it seems like everyone is generally in agreement about wanting to make this tree planting happen, although there is no firm cost and there are details to figure out. He continued that he does not think they need to make a motion today, but they can say, the ARPAB gives its permission to move forward with the process. Mr. Winsor can get a price, and everyone will continue communicating openly, without having a meeting.

Mr. Winsor stated that on a different topic, Paul Henkel, who does the planting at Covenant Living, has developed tree labels by using the 3D printer at the library. He has some to show the ARPAB today. He gave more information about the labels' materials and potential for QR codes and a logo, if they are interested in creating these for Ashuelot River Park. Discussion ensued with praise for Mr. Henkel and the labels.

Mr. Winsor stated that his other item of new business is he wants to talk about the cork tree. He continued that the tree nursery is supposed to only sell male cork trees that are not invasive, but apparently the Park's cork tree is female. Discussion ensued about the cork tree. Mr. Winsor stated that he would hate to cut down the tree because it was a victim of misidentification. The tree is beautiful. His plea is for the cork tree to be saved, but the elm has to come down.

Discussion ensued about the removal of the elm tree and potentially a nearby white pine. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that the City will get a quote and then communicate with the Friends and the ARPAB through this group.

Chair Bocko asked if there was any other new business. Ms. Casey stated that she unfortunately did not make it to the Source to Sea cleanup. Mr. Haynes replied that he went, but to Goose Pond. Ms. Carlson stated that she had asked someone participating in Source to Sea if they could focus on the Jonathan Daniels Trail, because they heard reports about trash there. She continued that last week, she herself walked the trail and it was very clean and nice.

Ms. Casey stated that the Friends were asked to have a table at the Conservation District annual meeting. She continued that it was kind of short notice, but it would be a good way to increase their visibility, so it is something to think about.

8) Adjourn – Next Meeting Scheduled for Tuesday, November 11, 2025 at 8:15 AM*

Chair Bocko noted that the next regularly scheduled meeting falls on Veteran's Day and thus needs to be changed. Discussion ensued about whether to reschedule or skip the November meeting. Chair Bocko proposed they skip the November meeting.

Ms. Krautmann made a motion to meet next on December 9, 2025, and not in November. Ms. Casey seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

There being no further business, Chair Bocko adjourned the meeting at 9:20 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Carrah Fisk-Hennessey, Parks & Recreation Director