



ASHUELLOT RIVER PARK ADVISORY BOARD MEETING AGENDA

Tuesday, February 10, 2026 at 8:15 AM

Room 22 Recreation Center

Members:

Paul Bocko, Chair
Suzy Krautmann, Vice-Chair
Leslie Casey
Dian Mathews
Kelly Cook
Arthur "Bud" Winsor
Thomas Haynes (Alternate)

Staff:

Carrah Fisk Hennessey, Parks & Recreation Director
Bryan Ruoff, City Engineer

Agenda:

1. Welcome and Call to Order
2. Approval of January 13, 2026 Meeting Minutes
3. Ashuelot River Dam – Bryan Ruoff, City Engineer
4. Friends of Ashuelot River Park Arboretum Report
5. Finance Report
 - a. Calendar Year 2026 Budget (Trustees in March)
6. Project Tracking
 - a. Permanent Sign
 - b. Bird Ecology
7. Recent/Upcoming Events
 - a. Pollinator Palooza – day change – Saturday 6/27/26 11am-2pm
8. New/Other Business
9. Adjourn – Next Meeting scheduled for Tuesday, March 10, 2026



CY 2025 Budget Review

Total Budget \$14,500 (Trust Funded)

Expenditures \$7727.01

Phil's Tree \$2850 – Siberian Elm Excavation

Bartlett Tree \$1507.28 – Arboretum Pruning

Bartlett Tree \$1243.38 – Arboretum Root Invigoration

Bartlett Tree \$1172.33 – Arboretum Soil Removal and Mulch Application

Balance \$6772.99

Budget Lines: Landscaping (\$4000)

Replanting Program (\$500)

Bartlett Tree (\$9000)

Invasive Treatment (\$1000)

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ASHUELOT RIVER PARK ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, January 13, 2026

8:15 AM

**Room 22,
Recreation Center**

Members Present:

Kelly Cook
Leslie Casey
Dian Mathews
Paul Bocko, Chair
Suzy Krautmann
Thomas Haynes, Alternate

Staff Present:

Frank "Pepper" Anderson, Parks & Recreation
Brett Ouellette, Parks & Recreation

Members Not Present:

Arthur "Bud" Winsor

1) Welcome and Call to Order – Board Member Updates

Chair Bocko called the meeting to order at 8:15 AM. Roll call was conducted. The ARPAB welcomed guests, Raynee Carlson from the Friends, Councilor Haas, Rob Hamm, and Kate ?? from the East Keene Neighborhood group.

2) Approval of December 9, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Ms. Mathews noted corrections to the meeting minutes:

Line 125 – When plants are put in the soil for the winter, it is called “heeling in,” not “healing.”

Line 126 – It should be “heeled it in”

Ms. Krautmann made a motion to approve the December 9, 2025 meeting minutes as corrected. Ms. Casey seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

3) Friends of Ashuelot River Park Arboretum Report

Ms. Mathews stated that the Friends are in winter mode, doing paperwork and things they need to get accomplished. She continued that they will meet in February and are talking about working out something with Antioch to use their space next to Mascoma Bank for the Friends meetings. The East Keene group invited the Friends to a meeting, and she was impressed that 23 people showed up in a snowstorm. She was announced as the speaker, which she had not been

34 expecting. It was very interesting. The group has so many people who have different things
35 they are working on, such as collecting cans for the Community Kitchen, and each park had its
36 own thing that was being worked on. It might be something they all can work out. Ms. Mathews
37 continued that for example, Ms. Casey and Ms. Cook brought their Master Plans and passed
38 them around. These people want to plant; that is what gardeners do. That made her think about
39 how it would be great to have a city guide, using the Master Plan, taking the list of plants and
40 applying that to every park, so people are not planting things willy nilly. It might be a good start.
41

42 Ms. Casey stated that it seems to her that the Pat Russell Park folks thought Public Works staff
43 told them that they could only plant approved street trees, and it was not clear that they
44 understood that a park is a different thing.
45

46 Chair Bocko stated that it sounds like they made some good connections. Ms. Mathews replied
47 that it was good to educate people. She continued that people need to know what is invasive and
48 what is not, and what would be good to grow. It would be great if all the groups could get
49 together on something. Councilor Haas replied yes, to have more citizen education from the
50 City, and citizen input to the City, about all the parks. He continued that the Friends of Ashuelot
51 River Park Arboretum is probably the largest, most powerful, and most organized of all the parks
52 groups. He and others from the East Keene Neighborhood group are trying to jump onto the
53 Friends' coattails. Ms. Mathews replied that using the Master Plan would be a great idea.
54

55 Mr. Hamm stated that he has a concern. He continued that the Conservation Commission has a
56 lot of recommendations for how to deal with riparian ways. Pat Russell Park and the Ashuelot
57 River Park have the Ashuelot River running right by them. He has not seen evidence that Parks
58 & Recreation and the city engineers pay attention to what the Conservation Commission has to
59 say about appropriate plantings throughout the city. He would like to see evidence of that.
60

61 Chair Bocko stated that the Board has a history of, in collaboration with the Friends, having
62 Antioch students work on projects. He continued that he has been listening to this conversation
63 and thinking that it sounds like a great idea, to have a guide of plantings, tying together things
64 like the Conservation Commission recommendations, a binding up of different groups. Higher
65 education now has challenges on many levels, including having fewer students. If different
66 groups pool resources, it could be a work study position. The ARPAB has done that before, with
67 a student working on something through an Antioch office, to benefit the park. The displays at
68 the park were created by a graduate student, for example.
69

70 Councilor Hamm asked if they are moving in that direction anytime soon. Chair Bocko replied
71 no, not right now. He continued that they always need to think of the Friends' and the ARPAB's
72 missions, but he thinks it could be a collaboration with different groups. Councilor Haas replied
73 that the East Keene group/Friends of Pat Russell Park is not averse to fundraising for such.
74 Chair Bocko replied that he can talk with him more about how it has worked and what they could
75 do. He continued that right now, it is not something the ARPAB has been talking about, as they
76 have to follow through with more recent projects, like bird ecology.
77

78 A) **Parks Staff Irrigation Discussion**
79

January 13, 2026

80 Chair Bocko welcomed Brett Ouellette and Frank "Pepper" Anderson, Parks & Recreation staff.
81 He asked if they are up to speed about the irrigation problem. Mr. Anderson asked for more
82 information.

83
84 Ms. Mathews stated that there is a spigot in the front. She continued that the Friends would like
85 another spigot further back in the park. She continued that they are finding that it takes too much
86 time to undo all the hoses and connections, to get all the way into the back of the park to water
87 the projects they have done. They have a wagon full of water jugs, which they need to fill up
88 many, many times. They coordinated with various people so that plants were continually
89 watered over the summer. It is a lot of work.

90
91 Ms. Casey stated that it is not enough water. She continued that she did some calculations. If
92 they want an inch a week of water per week in a garden that is a tenth of an acre, that would be
93 2,700 gallons of water. With the wagon, it took her two hours to do 50 gallons for the pollinator
94 beds. There are over two acres of planted beds. They need a different solution.

95
96 Ms. Mathews stated that they were thinking, in the bed where the Elm was taken out, maybe a
97 spigot could be placed and hidden there. Mr. Ouellette asked for more information about where
98 exactly that is. Ms. Mathews showed him on the map. Discussion ensued about the spot.

99
100 Ms. Mathews stated that something else she just thought of is that no one is talking about the
101 piece of property for the Monadnock Conservancy. Mr. Anderson replied that his understanding
102 is that Andy Bohannon, Deputy City Manager, will be heading that. He continued that it will be
103 a natural playground, but he does not have all the information. It sounds like they want a
104 restroom there, so he and Mr. Ouellette were talking about how they do not know the grand plan
105 yet, but they might be able to run water from there. Mr. Ouellette asked if a water spigot by the
106 compost area would be adequate for the Friends. Ms. Mathews replied she thinks so. Mr.
107 Ouellette replied that potentially it could come from the Conservancy's area while it is already
108 being dug. Then Parks & Recreation would not have to worry about the irrigation lines that are
109 already in the ground. He does not know where all the wires are for the lights.

110
111 Mr. Ouellette continued that the other thing is, they cannot just tap into the City's irrigation and
112 put a spigot in, due to the way the system works. When a zone comes on, a main valve comes
113 on, which is in the box where the spigot is in the front. That main valve charges the main line.
114 For whatever zone is scheduled to come on, there is another zone valve that comes on. Thus,
115 there are two valves that come on to water, say, the front of the park. When you go to the next
116 zone, the main valve stays on, while the valve for the previous zone shuts off the next one turns
117 on. When the system is off and nothing is running, the main line is not charged at all. You
118 cannot just tap into the main line and put in a spigot because you will not have water unless the
119 main valve is on. With the computer program, you cannot just turn the main valve on without
120 having another zone on. You would have to run a single line off before that master valve, so that
121 the line would stay charged all the time for a spigot, because if you do the single line *after* the
122 main valve, you would not get water unless the main valve was turned on.

123
124 Ms. Mathews stated that she has always wondered how much of the beds get watered with the
125 current direction of the sprinkler heads. Mr. Ouellette replied none. He continued that when you

126 are coming in the park from West St, that whole left side, those sprinkler heads there and on the
127 West St. side over by Starbucks, and the same ones over by the compost and in that back area,
128 are not like typical sprinkler heads. They are single little lines that go in a circle, almost like an
129 umbrella. The stream comes out, then when it comes back around it shuts off. It does 180
130 degrees, not a full 360 degrees.

131
132 Ms. Mathews asked if he knows how much of the beds were watered with the original system.
133 Mr. Anderson replied zero. Ms. Mathews replied that the Friends have dug up lines in the beds,
134 but she does not know exactly where. Mr. Ouellette replied that when he started with the City,
135 that system was being taken out, so he is not certain, but he knows that when they put the new
136 irrigation system in, the original design was just to get the grass, not the beds. Ms. Mathews
137 asked if he means nothing in the arboretum was considered. Mr. Ouellette replied that
138 everything in the main area, like those few trees there, get the water. He continued that he could
139 set some of the lines in the main area to go the full 360 degrees, but the problem is that the zone
140 would then need to be on twice as long.

141
142 Ms. Mathews asked if they could put an asterisk there and keep it in mind, and ask Bartlett Trees
143 about it. She continued that some of the trees are aging out now, and if they continue to have
144 drought, it might shorten the trees' lifespans. A lot of money is involved in those trees. She
145 asked if there would be a way to turn a sprinkler head for just a couple of waterings if there was
146 a bad drought. Mr. Ouellette replied that he would have to go out and manually turn it on and
147 adjust it. He continued that it could only be done with the lines that are to the right of the main
148 path and behind where the old gazebo was. On the map, the areas shown with solid blue squares
149 could have sprinkler lines adjusted to 360 degrees. The other ones, on the left side, with a square
150 box that is half blue, are not made to be shooting a big stream of water and could not be adjusted
151 in that way. Ms. Mathews replied that hopefully, if it comes to it, the trees that need it will be on
152 the right side.

153
154 Chair Bocko stated that the expansion of the park, that whole parking lot area, is still a couple of
155 years away. He continued that that is a "medium-term" change that might lead to expanded
156 water access. He asked if there are any short-term solutions.

157
158 Mr. Anderson replied that the short-term solution he sees would be the possibility of a 250-
159 gallon square tote, set up on a couple of concrete blocks, toward the compost bin area. He
160 continued that they were talking about maybe having one by the shed area. He asked if that
161 would be close enough for the Friends. Ms. Casey replied that they have had problems with
162 filling from a tank, when the pressure is so low. It takes about 10 minutes to fill a container. Mr.
163 Anderson replied that they could install a pump in the shed and connect a hose to it. He
164 continued that it would not be the pressure of a garden hose, but at least they could have enough
165 pressure to fill a jug in a timely fashion. Mr. Ouellette added that it would be something like a
166 12-volt RV pump. You hook up the battery and hit a switch, and it pumps it out of the tank, and
167 with a 25- or 50-foot hose, you could probably fill a five-gallon bucket in a couple minutes.

168
169 Friends members replied that they have concerns about vandalism and/or people trying to drink
170 the water. Mr. Ouellette replied that it could be elevated and have plywood up the sides to deter
171 people from trying to tamper with it, or they could box it underneath. Friends members asked

January 13, 2026

172 where the water in the tank would come from. Mr. Anderson replied that they could try and
173 capture some rainwater, but mostly, Parks staff would fill it up with the hose. Mr. Ouellette
174 replied that Parks staff are there for trash runs on Mondays and Fridays and could maybe
175 check/fill it then, with a garden hose connected to the spigot out front, or maybe a Friends'
176 member or volunteer could be tasked with it once a week or so. Friends replied yes, they think
177 they could do that. Ms. Mathews and others stated that it sounds like a workable idea. Mr.
178 Ouellette stated that he does not know how much water the Friends would use in a week, and
179 how frequently the tank would need to be filled.

180
181 Chair Bocko and the ARPAB thanked Mr. Anderson and Mr. Ouellette. Chair Bocko stated that
182 he and Ms. Mathews can follow up with Ms. Fisk-Hennessey after the meeting. He continued
183 that there is plenty of time, considering there is no watering happening in the gardens right now.
184

185 **4) Finance**

186 **A) Calendar Year Budget (Trustees)**

187
188 Chair Bocko stated that he and Ms. Fisk-Hennessey talked last week about the ARPAB
189 discussing the budget today, but he thinks the pressure on that was lessened and they will do it
190 another time, since Ms. Fisk-Hennessey is not here today. Looking at the finance report, the
191 ARPAB has not spent all of what was proposed, so they will have funds to carry forward.
192 However, he does not know if they will have all of these carryover funds plus the yearly
193 allotment; he thinks the total needs to be within a certain window.

194
195 Ms. Casey stated that the City mulch plus the City herbicide treatment really takes a chunk away.
196 Ms. Mathews asked about the leaves this past year. Mr. Anderson replied that staff took the
197 leaves out of the beds, then they sent them through the Parks Department's machine that breaks
198 them up into small pieces, and then staff blew them back into the beds. Ms. Mathews replied
199 that she is so happy to hear that. She asked Mr. Anderson to thank the people who did that.
200 Other Friends agreed. Mr. Anderson stated that they also started collecting leaves from the
201 cemeteries, bringing them back to their shop, and putting them in a pile for themselves so this
202 compost is not contaminated in the future. The ARPAB and Friends thanked him.
203

204 Chair Bocko asked if anyone else had anything to say about the budget. He continued that they
205 had talked last time about people jotting down ideas about the budget. They have a little more
206 time. Ms. Krautmann asked if Ms. Fisk-Hennessey goes before the Trustees in March. Chair
207 Bocko replied that he cannot remember. Ms. Mathews stated that Bartlett had a big year last
208 year. She continued that her question is whether it will be that amount of work every year, or
209 whether it will be like that again. She continued that she is not sure if Mr. Winsor has talked
210 with the new Bartlett person. Chair Bocko replied that is something to follow up on. He
211 continued that something to keep in mind is that the ARPAB whittled down Bartlett's original
212 proposal, too. Ms. Carlson replied that she was going to say, the difference between what has
213 actually been paid out versus what was proposed is significant. Chair Bocko replied that he and
214 Ms. Fisk-Hennessey have been talking about is that it might be that Bartlett was thinking about
215 the work in terms of the seasons, whereas the ARPAB needs to budget based on the calendar
216 year. That is something to keep in mind.
217

218 Ms. Carlson asked about the invasives treatment. She continued that the Friends have been
219 paying their share of the cost for spraying the invasives. Chair Bocko replied that he thinks the
220 Public Works budget paid for it this time. Mr. Anderson replied that the area was sprayed at the
221 same time Public Works had all of their spraying done. He had asked for it to be sprayed
222 because of all the knotweed. Chair Bocko replied that they will follow up on this, especially as
223 they renew the budget.

224

225 **5) Project Tracking**

226

227 **A) Permanent Sign Development**

228

229 Chair Bocko stated that he had a note from Ms. Fisk-Hennessey about sign development. He
230 continued that the project has legs. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey's note was thinking about outsourcing
231 creating the sign, which he thinks they had always planned on doing, with Peter Poanessa. He
232 thinks Ms. Fisk-Hennessey is still catching up with where the ARPAB was at with this project,
233 because the ARPAB has languished with this project for a while. Discussion ensued about
234 whether the idea is to outsource the design as well as the actual creation of the sign, with
235 ARPAB members noting that Mr. Poanessa requires a finished design and does not participate in
236 the design process. Chair Bocko stated that as they do budget development, they need to think
237 about whether they need a third party to do this sign design. Discussion ensued about finding out
238 who in the community could do this. Chair Bocko replied that he is sure they could find
239 someone. He continued that it is a matter of how much it would cost. He could talk with Ms.
240 Fisk-Hennessey about sourcing someone. Even though it sounds like in house, the capacity is
241 not there for getting the design to Peter-Poanessa-quality, they still need a basic mock-up to give
242 to someone who would do the design.

243

244 Ms. Mathews replied that she had written "send layouts to Ms. Fisk-Hennessey" and she was
245 talking about it with Ms. Carlson and she just now realized what that note to herself means. She
246 will get those sign layout ideas to Ms. Fisk-Hennessey. Chair Bocko replied that Ms. Fisk-
247 Hennessey had not known about those. Ms. Mathews replied that maybe they should have a
248 committee meeting, find a layout that might work, then find a graphic designer.

249

250 Ms. Carlson asked if Parks staff would be moving the sign, and when. Mr. Anderson replied that
251 it is not on their schedule anytime soon. He continued that after spring would probably be the
252 earliest time they could do it. First things first, they need to get the irrigation up and get the ball
253 fields up. So it would be after June 10, approximately. Chair Bocko replied that the way the
254 front and back of that sign turn out might determine how the ARPAB wants it to be placed. Ms.
255 Mathews stated that they want to move it about four feet forward, so people can see both sides of
256 it. Discussion continued.

257

258 **6) Recent/Upcoming Events**

259

260 Chair Bocko noted they have flyers for the "The Nature of Oaks" event, tonight at 6:00 PM.
261 Councilor Hamm replied that there will also be one in February and one in March. He continued
262 that they are partnering with the Caterpillar Lab. Everyone is invited.

264 **7) New/Other Business**

265
266 Ms. Casey stated that she sent Ms. Fisk-Hennessey and Mr. Winsor an email about the snow
267 piling up in the handicapped parking spots at the park. Discussion ensued. Chair Bocko stated
268 that they can keep an eye on this as the winter continues. Ms. Casey stated that they cannot put
269 in valuable plants unless they can be sure they will not get covered in snow and salt.

270
271 Ms. Mathews asked if anyone has heard anything about the dam. She continued that the charette
272 she attended by the RI School of Design was five years ago. She was curious about whether
273 anything has occurred. There were five proposed designs. The fish ladders were beautiful but
274 expensive. Most people said they liked the dam the way it was, but whether that was doable was
275 in question. Mr. Haynes stated that he is not sure, but he thinks that not much will happen unless
276 the State puts pressure on the City. He continued that he believes there is money for dam
277 removal, but not necessarily money for an alternative. His sense is there is not a lot of pressure
278 being put on anyone, but he does not know anything for sure. Mr. Anderson replied that he has
279 not heard anything new lately. Discussion continued about the ideas for the dam/river.

280
281 Chair Bocko asked if there was any other new or other business.

282
283 Councilor Haas stated that he and others from East Keene will be continuing their discussions
284 about a broader view of managing the parks and horticulture, at the next Conservation
285 Commission meeting. He continued that the discussion will be along the same themes, about
286 getting a united group going, and information sharing.

287 **8) Adjourn – Next Meeting Scheduled for Tuesday, February 10, 2026**

288
289 There being no further business, Chair Bocko adjourned the meeting at 9:07 AM.

290
291
292 Respectfully submitted by,
293 Britta Reida, Minute Taker

294
295 Reviewed and edited by,
296 Carrah Fisk-Hennessey, Parks & Recreation Director