

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ASHUELOT RIVER PARK ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, July 14, 2026

8:15 AM

**Room 22,
Recreation Center**

Members Present:

Paul Bocko, Chair
Suzy Krautmann, Vice Chair
Kelly Cook
Dian Mathews
Richard Roth, Alternate

Staff Present:

Carrah Fisk-Hennessey, Parks & Recreation
Director

Members Not Present:

Arthur Winsor
Leslie Casey
Thomas Haynes, Alternate

1. Welcome and Call to Order

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

2. Approval of June 9, 2026 Meeting Minutes

Chair Bocko asked if there were any edits or corrections to the meeting minutes. Ms. Mathews stated that she has a question for Mr. Winsor regarding something he said in the June meeting about the Magnolia tree.

Ms. Krautmann made a motion to approve the June 9, 2026 meeting minutes. Ms. Cook seconded the motion, which passed with a vote of 5 to 0. Mr. Roth abstained due to having not been present at the June meeting.

3. Friends of Ashuelot River Park Arboretum Report

Ms. Mathews reported the following on behalf of the Friends:

- They have been working every Friday. This past Friday had nine people, from various groups, including the Monadnock Garden Club, Delta Gamma, the Friends, and Master Gardeners, which was great.
- They have been working in the area of the Mascoma Bank parking lot, taking out the massive ornamental grass.
- They created a new cobblestone form.

- The plant-of-the-month on the Friends' Facebook page is Coneflower.
- June events at the park were amazing, although Pollinator Palooza was not as crowded as last year.

Discussion ensued about Pollinator Palooza's attendance. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey asked if the Friends think the decreased attendance was due to it being on a Saturday, because the idea of moving it to a Saturday was to hopefully increase attendance. Ms. Mathews replied that everyone they asked was happy it was on a Saturday. Others agreed. Ms. Krautmann stated that maybe there were not as many activities for children as there were in years past. Ms. Mathews replied that she wonders if they should consider performances by Little Red Wagon for next year – it is a phenomenal acting troupe affiliated with UNH. She gave more information about them.

Ms. Mathews continued the Friends Report:

- They attended Farmer's Market and will do that again on August 15.
- They participated in the Monadnock 250 parade, which was "a hoot."

Ms. Mathews asked Ms. Fisk-Hennessey if there was any feedback about the pop-up that was at the park. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey replied that it was a really hot day, and about 30 families came, which was good. She continued that they did rock painting, the nature scavenger hunt, bubbles, and temporary tattoos of butterflies and beetles with their real scientific names.

Ms. Mathews stated that the last thing she wants to say on behalf of the Friends is that the watering system that KPRD purchased and installed, for the Friends to use to water the gardens, is "beyond fabulous" and they are very grateful. Mr. Roth asked for more information about it. Ms. Mathews replied that they now have a 300-gallon water bladder right next to the shed, which has a switch to turn on the pump electrically, and it has a faucet right there. It works, it is wonderful, and the hose is easy to use. The Friends no longer have to cart around the jugs of water, and they thank the KPRD for this.

4. Finance Report

a. Bartlett Invoices Paid

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that all the Bartlett Tree bills came in and were paid. She continued that she listed them and noted exactly what they were for. The ARPAB now has an updated balance of \$54 in the Bartlett Tree line. It is great when Bartlett quotes them a specific amount, and they come out and do the work, and then the amount is near exact.

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that the work Bartlett did included the soil treatment for the seven maples, the canopy stabilization for the Silver Maple, and the soil treatment for the Magnolia. She continued that the bark treatment for the phytophthora canker on the English Oak was something that Bartlett suggested; the first treatment was free. They suggested doing a second treatment, which will be \$145, so the ARPAB might go over budget a little bit, but it will be important to see if the treatments improve the tree's health, as many are concerned.

Ms. Mathews replied that the Friends were talking about it. She continued that their tent at Pollinator Palooza was right next to that tree, and it is in very bad shape. Others agreed.

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey continued that the other Bartlett bill was for the root invigoration for the Japanese Tree Lilac.

Chair Bocko asked if the canopy stabilization was cabling. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey replied yes. Chair Bocko asked how many they did. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey replied that she is not sure of the exact number of cables; discussion ensued about how it is approximately three.

Mr. Roth stated that he read in the minutes that the ARPAB went half the year without having spent any of its budget, but now they have. He continued that since this group is funded by a trust, he asked if the funds are “use it or lose it,” or if the money comes in every year no matter what the ARPAB ends up doing. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey replied that the ARPAB proposes a budget every year, and the money will show up every year. Chair Bocko added that the ARPAB is advised on how much they can put in a budget based on what it brings in. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey replied yes, the budget is derived from the interest on the trust.

Mr. Roth stated that his other question is whether these lines, such as the second treatment Ms. Fisk-Hennessey mentioned, are in pen or pencil. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey replied in pencil, as the total budget number is the total budget number, and the line items are how the ARPAB has predicted and organized their spending.

5. Project Tracking

A) Permanent Sign

Chair Bocko stated that this agenda item is about the nice wooden, arched sign. He continued that this is about working up the permanent elements of that. The ARPAB has information from a graphic designer who works for the Monadnock Conservancy.

Mr. Roth asked if the position of the sign would be reoriented. Chair Bocko replied yes, because the ARPAB wants to use both sides. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that to give additional context, there is a temporary sign up, on canvas. It has been there about a year. The KPRD does not have a graphic designer on staff, so per Mr. Winsor’s idea, the ARPAB decided to reach out to the Monadnock Conservancy’s graphic designer, Martin Royle, because the Monadnock Conservancy is sharing the space with the Ashuelot River Park. They now have a lot of high-level concept ideas. She received an email from Mr. Royle last night and she has an example timeline to share with the ARPAB.

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey read the email from Mr. Royle:

“Here’s a draft of the timeline idea for the board’s review. A few notes and comments for you and the board:

One, let me know what you and the board think of this timeline. The pictures are placeholders. We will replace with high resolution stock images or scans.”

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that Mr. Royle is looking for the different photographs that they have, but the actual photographs, not a photo of the photo, so he can scan them in and they can be high resolution without any pixelation.

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey continued:

“Two, this is obviously not all the signage, but having this timeline approved will allow me to see how much space we have to work with for the rest of the front of the sign. For next steps, once I have approval and notes on the timeline, I’ll be working on the rest of the front of the sign. I might need a few months to get this back to you. We are busy at the Conservancy and I have some travel coming up. For the back, at some point, I will need the QR codes along with any images you all feel must be included. But let’s hammer out the front first, then move on.”

Ms. Mathews stated that the ARPAB and Friends, through a lot of discussion, had decided not to include Native American history on the sign. She asked if they told Mr. Royle that. Others replied that they do not think so, but they like what the sign includes about Native Americans. Ms. Mathews asked if anyone recalls why the ARPAB and Friends made that decision. Chair Bocko replied that he thinks what they came to is that while they mention and honor the Abenaki in the history – which will probably be changed, because he thinks Mr. Royle thought it was a lot – their intent is to communicate the history of the *park*. It is important to honor the Abenaki in the narrative. Briefly, they talked about a land acknowledgement but did not follow up with that. The timeline has a lot in it. They might have to make some choices.

Chair Bocko and Ms. Mathews continued discussing the content of the timeline. Chair Bocko stated that again, he thinks it is important to somehow acknowledge that the park is on indigenous lands, but with limited space, they are telling the history of the park and especially the arboretum, which started with something in 1960 but mainly in the late 1990s. Ms. Mathews replied that she does not think they need to go earlier than 1960. Chair Bocko replied that maybe Mr. Royle expanded it a little bit. Ms. Cook stated that they want to go back to concentrating on the park itself. Ms. Mathews stated that there was a lot happening in the 1990s to establish the park, and a lot of people who remember that.

Chair Bocko stated that he will take this opportunity to say that the ARPAB needs to do more with indigenous folks. He continued that he has learned over time, collaborating with folks, that when you write something down, it should not come from a white male perspective.

Mr. Roth stated that he is a communications person; it is his career, teaching-wise. He continued that he is still trying to clarify a few things. He asked where this sign will be located in the park. Ms. Mathews replied that it will go on the kiosk, and these are several ideas. She continued that there will be a history and a map, and more. The sign will be right by the Jonathan Daniels Trail.

Mr. Roth stated that he always tries to think, who is the audience? What are you trying to tell them? This is a lot of information for people to take in, when they just want to get going in the park. He continued that the more words, the less likely it is that it will be communicated with, as people are focused on things like wildlife they see. Ms. Mathews replied yes that this is wordy,

which the group has talked about. Mr. Roth replied that it is wordy and very busy, which is a problem. He continued that as a sign people will be walking past, if the ARPAB wants them to stop and look at it, it needs to be much more efficient. Also, the teeny print in the top left-hand corner, to him, is more important than “the settlers came to the region.” It says, “*The Abenaki called it the land between.*” His question is, between what? That is very interesting, and he did not know that is what the word “Ashuelot” means, and he has lived here almost 30 years. There is an opportunity to teach in an efficient way. He thinks the words in the teeny print are most important, and the rest is secondary. Ms. Krautmann agreed.

Mr. Roth stated that the same thing happens again when it talks about the 1800s. He continued that what is in the teeny print is most interesting. He gave more examples. Chair Bocko replied that he thinks Mr. Roth is hitting on something here. He continued that at least three of these timeline items are ones the ARPAB did not produce, which is okay, as it is good to see the layout. Ms. Mathews replied that they want the items that they (the Friends and ARPAB) picked, and some of the pictures, too. Chair Bocko replied that they need to make choices on what to let go, too. Ms. Mathews stated that she thinks they need to have a meeting with Mr. Royle.

Chair Bocko stated that he needs to know from Mr. Royle what the size of the timeline is, and where it will go. He continued that the group had pictured the timeline on the bottom of one of the front panels. And they have to make choices, because they have other things, too. If this is on the bottom all the way across, that takes some space. Mr. Roth added that the text should be large enough so that grandparents can read it without having to bend down to see the bottom of the sign.

Mr. Roth stated that another comment he has is he wonders why the timeline stops at the 1990s. He continued that it makes it sound like nothing has happened in the park for the past 40 years. Ms. Mathews replied that the committee worked on this timeline for a long time, and they whittled it down. Ms. Cook stated that she thinks what the committee did was more the history of the park, whereas Mr. Royle is doing the history of the Ashuelot River. Mr. Roth stated that maybe there could be a separate thing that goes into some of what has happened since the park was formed. Chair Bocko replied that the committee had talked about the Abenaki and what they were going to do, and at one point, they even had items on the timeline of events that happened elsewhere, thinking that they must include them. But this is the history of the park. Ms. Mathews replied that also, someone wrote a very detailed history that includes up to the 1990s.

Ms. Krautmann stated that she thinks the land is important, and she likes the small writing. She thinks that is a good work up to the park. Ms. Mathews replied that the committee did not do that part, so it kind of changes it. Ms. Cook replied that the park land was donated, but what was it before it was donated? Why was that land so important to the City that they wanted to preserve it and turn it into a park? That kind of information would be interesting especially to people who did not grow up here and do not know. It is nice that all these things were built and all these trees were added, but to her, what is also important is what was there before. Chair Bocko replied that he would argue that the history will complement the timeline, which is shorter and more about the actual, physical park.

Ms. Mathews stated that not everyone has seen the history part of it. She continued that the group that worked on this had different committees, and Chair Bockó's committee did a very good write-up on the history. They are only talking about the timeline today. The history is not part of the timeline. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that she thinks the vision of the front of the board is the history and the timeline. Chair Bockó added that it will have to be shorter; Mr. Royle made that clear.

Ms. Krautmann stated that she wants to talk about the green color that was chosen. Chair Bockó replied that this is just a sample that Mr. Royle did. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that regarding colors, the City has new accessibility standards that they adhere to. Mr. Roth replied that the fonts are important to accessibility. He continued that what is shown in this sample does not have enough contrast. Others agreed.

Mr. Roth asked if it is correct that there will be some longer history written on the board, too. Others replied yes. Mr. Roth asked if the timeline will be below. Others replied yes. Mr. Roth asked if the timeline will talk about before the European settlers came, the industrial growth, and the start of the 20th century, and if all of that will be text. Chair Bockó replied maybe not all of those pieces, but it talks about indigenous people, too. Mr. Roth asked if it is correct that this is all on the front of a sign that is also the entry sign. Ms. Mathews replied that the idea is that people who really like history can read the history, and people who really like putting things in context will be interested in the timeline, and people who do not want to read will have pictures to look at. Ms. Krautmann stated that there will be pictures beside the history. Ms. Mathews replied yes, historical photos.

Mr. Roth stated that he means no offense, but he would not do any of that. He continued that they have all of the pieces, but he would not put them together in that way. He is imagining people who walk into the park with their grandchildren or on a blind date. He recommends having a QR code that leads to the history written in that longer form, for people who are interested, or maybe putting it in a trifold brochure, so people who want it can take it. If it is a sign that welcomes people to the park, he would just have the sign be welcoming, with very little print, because most people are moving past the sign.

Chair Bockó stated that they are glad to have Mr. Royle's help, and they are taking small steps. He continued that others can correct him if he is wrong, but he thinks their vision for the front was not all text – there were maps. They gave Mr. Royle their overall vision, and he thinks what they need to see from him is something more in modular form. They need to see the whole thing. Discussion continued, and Mr. Roth spoke about how the field of graphic design has changed over the years, and how important it is for graphic designers to adapt to the general public's decreasing attention spans, which means greatly reducing text and instead having links to websites with the text. Ms. Krautmann stated that what the ARPAB gave Mr. Royle to work with was very wordy and busy, and he slimmed it down to make it more appealing. Chair Bockó and others spoke about wanting an actual mock-up from Mr. Royle. Discussion continued about the timeline's content and format, and Ms. Krautmann stated that she likes the pictures that Mr. Royle chose. Ms. Mathews stated that she thinks that when Mr. Royle chose the photos of the little boy fishing in the river and the dam, he was trying to tell them something. Ms. Cook replied that it is wonderful that all these people donated to the park, but that might not be most

interesting to people looking at the sign. Chair Bocko stated that the group has had many rounds of conversations like this, saying that they need to slim the timeline down, and they will have a longer version elsewhere. Ms. Mathews replied that maybe Mr. Royle will tell them to pick four photos and that is all, and that would be more realistic.

Mr. Roth stated that he would personally break it off and put the 1960s item as the last thing, saying the land was donated and it became a park. Chair Bocko and Ms. Mathews replied that it is more complex – it did not become a park until the 1990s. Mr. Roth replied that the land donated in 1960 would be the end of Part 1, and then somewhere else, pick up in the 1990s and what happened then. He continued that people are going through the park, not necessarily for an education where they have to study. People who are fascinated and want to know more will have a QR code to follow.

Chair Bocko stated that Mr. Royle put six things here; he does not know if Mr. Royle thought it was the whole panel. He continued that for the sign, minimalist is good. If the ARPAB and Friends chose something however, he does not think they would choose the six things that Mr. Royle did. He thinks they need to see what Mr. Royle was thinking of for the whole front.

Ms. Mathews asked if people remember the layout of the sign that Mr. Winsor had been talking about on the bike trail. Chair Bocko replied that Mr. Winsor has been referring to a wayfinding sign at the beginning of the bike path on Emerald St. Discussion continued about pictures versus words, and Mr. Roth spoke about how he sees many people walking, biking, and pushing strollers past that sign, but no one stops to read it. Ms. Mathews replied that she did. Discussion continued about how most people do not know the pronunciation or meaning of “Ashuelot,” and the meaning “the land between” is interesting and might inspire people to ask, “Between what?” Mr. Roth stated that there could be a QR code leading to more information. Ms. Krautmann stated that there is a path the Keene Middle School has where they found ancient artifacts.

Chair Bocko stated that to wrap this up, he thinks they have made good progress on this. He continued that they all agree to slim the timeline down to small nuggets of information that excite people, but they need to meet with Mr. Royle, and they need to see the whole. Mr. Royle is going to look at the longer text, which he is sure Mr. Royle will say is too long, but he needs to look at it. He thinks that if it needs to be slimmed down, the ARPAB should be the ones to do it. He and the group know it well. For example, he himself knows some of the sentiment of the group and that there are some things and people they just cannot totally cut out. Ms. Mathews agreed and stated that there are people in town who did the work. Chair Bocko stated that he thinks there was also going to be a trail map and a garden map of some sort. They need to see the whole.

Mr. Roth stated that regarding communications, the number one task is always to figure out what the purpose of the communication is. He continued that to do that, you have to know who your audience is and what they can stand, given the environment they are going to be communicated in. It is a matter of figuring out what the essential messages are that they want people coming to the park to take away. It might not be who donated a plant in 1997, say. They donated it because they loved the park back then, and maybe their name is lost to history. Maybe that is not necessarily important for the people coming to the park today, or maybe it is. To him, it starts

with the Abenaki people, who named the space we are now standing in. Yes, then there were the wool mills, and the destruction of the shad, but he does not know if the planting of a tree in 1990 would make the cut. Ms. Mathews replied that regarding the shad, there will be a dam issue coming. She continued that it has been looming over them for ages. If they put in a fish ladder, it will bring the shad back.

Chair Bocko stated that this has been a great discussion. He continued that the ARPAB is grateful for Mr. Roth's contributions. Ms. Mathews agreed. Chair Bocko told Ms. Fisk-Hennessey that he would be ready to meet with Mr. Royle.

B) Bird Ecology

Chair Bocko stated that as a reminder, the student intern is coming back in the fall. Ms. Mathews suggested Chair Bocko invite the student to a meeting.

6. Recent/Upcoming Events

- a. Pollinator Palooza – Saturday 06/27/26 11:00 AM–2:00 PM**
- b. ARP Pop-up - Tuesday 06/30/26 1:00–3:00 PM**

Chair Bocko noted that they talked about Pollinator Palooza and the ARP Pop-up in a previous agenda item.

c. Art in the Park – Saturday 09/05/26 and Sunday 09/06/26

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that Art in the Park will be on Saturday, September 5, and Sunday, September 6.

7. New/Other Business

Ms. Krautmann stated that she just finished a trip to Tanglewood and The Mount, and she got some ideas for the park. She continued that during rehearsals at Tanglewood, they have yoga in the park. That might be a fun thing to sponsor. She added that both locations adopt trees.

Ms. Mathews stated that she was going to bring up the dogwood tree again, which is to the left as you go into the park. She continued that branches are frequently falling. This tree will age out, and this will probably keep happening with different trees. Some trees only live 25 years. That might be a really good idea for buying new trees.

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that she is working on an “adopt a spot” program which revitalizes the Spirit of Place initiative Keene had in place for a long time, so that people can be tied to a specific area of a specific park and really help with the maintenance and beautification. The Parks team has five full-time people, so volunteer assistance is always appreciated.

KPRD/the City also has a Branch Out for Parks tree donation program where people can donate money and earmark a specific location for native trees to be planted. People are not going to donate a specific tree, because the instances of failure are so high that they would just be

replacing the same tree over and over, which is not sustainable environmentally or financially. Another point with individual trees donated in honor of someone who has passed away, every time the tree dies, people reexperience that grief. Branch Out for Parks is already established. People can donate whatever they would like to donate, as long as they earmark which location they would like to see their donation help. Right now, about \$300 has been donated to Pat Russell Park. People want to plant trees in the spot where the Findings building was taken down.

8. Adjourn – Next meeting scheduled for Tuesday, September 15, 2026

The meeting ended for the minute taker at 9:11 AM due to technology issues.

The single agenda item confirmed after the technology failed was the August break in the ARPAB meeting schedule. The next ARPAB meeting will be Tuesday September 15, 2026 at 8:15 AM as the traditional second Tuesday in September (09/08/26) is voting day at the Recreation Center.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

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