

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ASHUELOT RIVER PARK ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, September 15, 2026

8:15 AM

**Room 22,
Recreation Center**

Members Present:

Suzy Krautmann, Vice Chair
Kelly Cook
Leslie Casey
Dian Mathews
Thomas Haynes, Alternate (voting)

Staff Present:

Carrah Fisk-Hennessey, Parks & Recreation
Director

Members Not Present:

Richard Roth, Alternate
Paul Bocko, Chair
Arthur Winsor

1. Welcome and Call to Order

Vice Chair Krautmann called the meeting to order at 8:17 AM.

2. Approval of July 14, 2026 Meeting Minutes

Mr. Haynes noted a correction to the July meeting minutes: he was not present, but the minutes list him as so.

Ms. Cook noted another correction, in the ARPAB budget overview: “yellow tail dogwood” should be “yellow twig dogwood.”

Vice Chair Krautmann made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of July 14, 2026, as amended. Ms. Cook seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

3. Friends of the Ashuelot River Park Arboretum Report

Ms. Mathews stated that it has been a very active month. She reported the following on behalf of the Friends:

- A Master Gardener who was in class with her and Ms. Casey volunteered her husband David Kamm to organize the data for the approximately 2,400 cobblestones, coordinating the list of names with the map. It is in alphabetical order, and people can search for the location of their cobblestone. It works well

- The Friends redid and tightened up their procedure for cobblestone purchases, and one more rendition is coming. When all this is ready, it can be on a QR code on the kiosk at the park
- Twelve Master Gardeners are now associated with the park
- Five Friends will take the upcoming Natural Resources Stewards class
- The Friends had a Farmer's Market booth twice in August, in conjunction with the Master Gardeners. It was great for outreach and community relations. Next summer, they will do a booth at the Farmer's Market once a month
- The Friends had a personal tour of Distant Hill Farm with Mike Nerrie, who is a great resource, and they bought more plants
- They did a lot this season on the West St. bed, which is where the cobblestones are. Next year, they will work on filling in more of the holes with shade plants
- In the Dawn Redwood garden, they put in some Black-Eyed Susans to keep weeds out, but they will replace those with low, more fitting plants
- Jennifer Campbell and Tia Zehnbaauer of the Friends are both members of the Monadnock Garden Club, which has been coming to the park. The Old Homestead Garden Club comes once a month, and she (Ms. Mathews) is encouraging them to come more. Members of a sorority came at least three times over the summer. It is becoming a great coalition for the park
- Now that five Friends will be taking the Stewardship course on Fridays, they will meet at the park on Sundays instead of Fridays
- Art in the Park was great, and they received a lot of compliments on how the park looks. The Friends give kudos to the Parks Department crew who did great work cleaning up the park so it looked wonderful for the event.
- Master Gardeners are supposed to help and advise in public areas. Maybe the Friends should do more to help the Parks Department staff. Highway Department staff have said members of the public call and ask them to identify plants on the side of the road, which they are unable to do, and they were thinking it would be nice if there were a way to figure that out
- One member of the group had an idea and ran with it, to raffle off a cobblestone. It generated a lot of interest and raised \$130 for the Friends

Discussion ensued about how the Friends also took in a lot of donations, not connected to the raffle.

Ms. Casey stated that she noticed that every tree in the Mascoma Bank is dead, except for one birch. She continued that as a gateway to the park, it shows a lack of care. Discussion ensued. Tammy Adams stated that to satisfy Planning Board requirements, Mascoma Bank has to replace those trees to maintain a certain percentage of greenery on the property.

Ms. Casey stated that in the spring, the Friends had talked about flagging some of the bush honeysuckle and other invasive plants and having Parks Department staff help remove them. Ms. Mathews suggested they put that on next year's agenda. Others replied that late fall might be a good time. Ms. Mathews replied that Parks staff will have to change out the water pump. She continued that depending on where that is, the digging might not affect any of the Friends' plants, but if it does, Ms. Fisk-Hennessey can have a staff member call her. Then the Friends will

come. Maybe on a Sunday, the Friends can mark the invasive plants. Discussion continued. Ms. Mathews asked if invasive plant removal is something Parks staff could fit in. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey replied potentially, but it would help to know how many invasive plants they are talking about.

Ms. Casey stated that in a small bed near where the anchor to the bridge is, just on the other side of that walkway, the shrubs are old and tired. They do not look good at any time. She thinks they should consider clearing that bed out and starting over. Other Friends' members agreed and discussion ensued. In response to a question, Friends' members clarified that the area they are talking about is on the near side right in front of the bridge; they do not worry about the other side.

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey replied that the other side is the Rachel Marshall Outdoor Learning Laboratory, and if anyone has not been there recently, they should check it out. She continued that staff have done a great job of making sure that area is cleaned up and accessible, and she encourages people to use that area. Others agreed that it looks nice.

4. Finance Report

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that she listed everything the ARPAB has paid for so far with the landscaping. The two reimbursement requests were from Ms. Campbell and Ms. Mathews for the plant purchases they are reimbursed. You can see that the "Bartlett Tree – Arboretum Health" line has been untouched from June. The English Oak is looking very sad. The City's intent was to have Jim Tatem, their Bartlett Tree representative, come look again. Ms. Mathews replied that Mr. Winsor came to look, and he does not think the problem is the virus. He is not sure what the problem is. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey replied that she and Mr. Winsor have both been in touch with Mr. Tatem, so they will see.

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey continued that invasive treatment will be happening soon. Andy Powers of Vegetation Control Services, in the middle of this week, will be out through the entire city with his company and additional herbicide applicators. They are very thorough and very thoughtful, making sure to only target the invasive species. Nothing will be killed by happenstance. Mr. Powers and his team are great at what they do. Per a question about the locations, Ms. Fisk-Hennessey clarified that it is a citywide contract that Parks and Rec worked with the Highway Department on to make sure they could attack all the Japanese Knotweed. They will look at the bittersweet at Goose Pond. Ms. Adams spoke about the growing bittersweet infestation at the end of Eastern Ave. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey replied that she will check and see if that area is on the existing long list.

Ms. Cook stated that she wonders how far onto personal property the herbicide applicators will go. She explained the location of a huge knotweed patch she sees. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey replied that her understanding is that they treat invasive plants within the right-of-way and in park spaces and other City-owned public spaces.

5. Project Tracking

a. Permanent Sign – Update from Martin Royle

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that the email from Martin Royle is in the agenda packet, with an example mock-up for the ARPAB to consider. She continued that the first bullet point from Mr. Royle's email is, *"If we stick to the seven entries on the timeline, each entry should be between 35 and 45 words."* Mr. Royle took a stab at editing the text, which is in the email. He said that the photos in the example mock-up are low resolution and are not meant to be final. He was giving a sense of the types of photos they could include for each entry. His next bullet point is, *"You can see how much space the timeline will take up, it's a lot! We could make the boxes smaller, use two pictures instead of four."* She is not sure that is where the committee would like to go.

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey continued that for the next steps, Mr. Royle would like to have the sign committee and the ARPAB provide edited text for the timeline, sticking to that word limit. He would like them to get the actual photos that are in "The Land Between" publication so they can make high resolution scans. Her question to the group is whether those photos are available at the Historical Society of Cheshire County (HSCC). Ms. Mathews replied that she thinks so. She continued that she has been going through boxes, and she has some of them. Discussion ensued. Vice Chair Krautmann noted that all the photos need to be categorized. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that if she could get her hands on the originals of some of these photos, they could make high resolution scans so the photos would not be pixelated on the sign. Photocopies would be very pixelated and blurry.

Discussion ensued about the mock-up. Vice Chair Krautmann stated that she thinks it has too many pictures. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey asked if the group wants to give this back to the sign committee to talk about. Ms. Mathews agreed. She continued that she does not think people would read so many words on a sign. Discussion continued about the layout. In response to a question, Ms. Fisk-Hennessey replied that Mr. Royle did not state anything about what the upper boxes would be for. Also, this will be a two-sided sign, and they do not have a mock-up of the back. Ms. Mathews stated that the sign committee met, but she could not go. She asked if anything came out of that meeting. Vice Chair Krautmann replied that the sign committee had not met since the last ARPAB meeting. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey replied that in July, the ARPAB was talking about the permanent sign and hoping to get a mock-up, and that is when she reached out to Mr. Royle and asked him to provide an example they could look at.

Discussion continued about the layout, including the possibility of having the river go behind the pictures, and thoughts on the colors. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey explained that the black and green are part of the City branding guide—there is a specific short list of colors she can share with the sign committee. She continued that she gave Mr. Royle the entire portfolio of the branding colors. Vice Chair Krautmann stated that ARPAB alternate member Richard Roth had some great points. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey replied that this is his field and it would be wonderful to include him.

Mr. Haynes stated that he believes the HSCC has scanned all of their photographic collections, so if a photo is at the HSCC, it already has a high resolution. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey asked if he

knows how the photos have been catalogued. Mr. Haynes replied it is on a type of museum software. He continued that if people know where the photos are, they might have already been scanned. They could be put on a thumb drive.

Vice Chair Krautmann stated that the “History” text is currently wordy. She continued that Chair Bocko was going to work on that. Ms. Mathews stated that they had talked about having some of the history on the front, the highlights.

Riley, Keene State College (KSC) student, stated that regarding someone’s comment about how the sign has too many words, she likes signs where you can read little facts like that. She does not think 35 to 45 words is too much. She would read it. She has been to a few parks where the whole board is filled with history.

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that it sounds like this needs to go back to the sign committee.

Vice Chair Krautmann stated that she wonders if the QR codes should go at the top of the sign. Others replied that they do not like having QR codes at the top. Ms. Adams stated that she is trying to use QR codes more often, because they often lead to great information. She continued that younger people are used to using QR codes and they should not be omitted from the sign. Maybe a small QR code could be at the bottom. Discussion continued. Ms. Mathews noted that they will need several QR codes, including one for the cobblestone information. Vice Chair Krautmann added that they could have a QR code leading to the list of people to thank. Mr. Haynes stated that they should keep in mind that some people do not have smart phones and do not use QR codes. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that a QR code can lead to the Parks and Recreation Department’s website about the Ashuelot River Park. Others agreed.

Riley from KSC stated that they could have just one QR code which leads to a website with different options for what people want to read. Others agreed and thanked her for that idea.

Ms. Casey stated that under “Stewardship now and into the future,” she wonders if they should mention that the arboretum part has expanded. Ms. Mathews added that there is also the addition of the Monadnock Conservancy.

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey asked if Vice Chair Krautmann could get the sign committee together before the next ARPAB meeting. Vice Chair Krautmann agreed. The group clarified that sign committee members are Vice Chair Krautmann, Ms. Mathews, Chair Bocko, Ms. Fisk-Hennessey, Mr. Winsor, and Mr. Roth.

b. Bird Ecology

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that they will push this agenda item to next month.

6. Recent/Upcoming Events

a. Art in the Park – Saturday, September 5, 2026, and Sunday, September 6, 2026

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that Ms. Mathews already gave a wonderful update about Art in the Park and the Friends' tent. She continued that the City also had a tent with the contracted playground landscape architects, Lu-La, which stands for "ludic landscapes." They gathered a lot of community feedback - topics such as which park elements people love, what brings people to the park, and what people remember playing with outside when they were children. Lu-La had an opportunity for children at the event to build a natural playground with natural materials on cardboard. It was just magical. She will send the ARPAB photos. Lu-La will come to the November and December ARPAB meetings. In November, they will share the information they gathered, and in December, they will hopefully have some concepts to share. The ARPAB's December meeting will be the public forum and they can invite people to come. Lu-La has been tasked with developing a natural playground in the expanded part of Ashuelot River Park. The City has two acres separate from the Monadnock Conservancy's one acre.

Ms. Cook asked what the timeline is for building the natural playground. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey replied that the City does not have the match funding secured yet, so the conversations about what would actually be constructed would not start until FY 28, which starts July 1, 2027. Ms. Adams asked what the potential funding source is for the match. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey replied that they hope to receive the Land Water Conservation Fund, which is a 50/50 match, and then they would move forward from there.

7. New/Other Business

8. Adjourn – Next Meeting Scheduled for October 13, 2026

There being no further business, Vice Chair Krautmann adjourned the meeting at 9:06 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Carrah Fisk-Hennessey, KPRD Director