

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ASHUELOT RIVER PARK ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, July 12, 2016

8:00 AM

Recreation Center Room 12

Members Present:

Arthur Winsor, Chair
Jenna Spear-O'Mara
George Foskett
Charles Redfern
Councilor Steve Hooper

Staff Present:

Andrew Bohannon, Parks, Recreation &
Facilities Director

Others Present:

Ken Stewart
Ryan Owens, The Monadnock Conservancy

Members Not Present:

Susan Thielen
Judy Sadoski

1) Welcome & Call to Order

Chair Winsor called the meeting to order at 8:02 AM and noted two guests present—Ken Stewart, and Ryan Owens of The Monadnock Conservancy.

2) Approval of March 10, 2016 Minutes

Chair Winsor noted two necessary changes to the minutes of March 10, 2016. Where Ms. Thielen was quoted throughout the minutes, it should be Ms. Spear-O'Mara quoted; Ms. Thielen was not present at the meeting. Additionally, the date on the minutes should be listed as "March 10" not "May 10."

Ms. Spear-O'Mara made a motion to approve the minutes of March 10, 2016 as amended. The motion was seconded by Councilor Hooper and carried unanimously.

Councilor Winsor noted the need to address agenda item number five at the beginning of the meeting to accommodate Mr. Stewart's schedule. Mr. Foskett made a motion to change the order of agenda items, which was seconded by Ms. Spear-O'Mara and carried unanimously.

3) Ashuelot Green Space Update

Chair Winsor welcomed Mr. Stewart and Mr. Owens to provide an update on the Ashuelot Green Space.

Mr. Stewart indicated he has been working with Gallagher Hannan for several months to refine the design concept. They have consulted closely with Mr. Bohannon about appropriate activities for the space as well as the layout. Mr. Stewart stated the goal is for the space to accommodate various activities, connect surrounding spaces, flow in an aesthetically pleasing way, and not be burdensome to neighbors. He added that additional consideration needs to be given to public safety issues and access to water.

Mr. Stewart continued that the design incorporates open grass play areas for children's natural play and exploration. There will be shaded areas for community activities, possibly including pavilions. There will also be community access to the river with a boat put-in area and close parking.

Mr. Stewart indicated there was past discussion with the City Agricultural Commission to have the Farmers Market of Keene located in the green space. However, it was thought to be too far from Downtown. Mr. Stewart is confident the community will use the pavilion space. The green space will also have accommodations for different generations such as park benches. Mr. Stewart said that the green space will accommodate activity to complement the more passive enjoyment of the arboretum.

Mr. Stewart continued explaining that the site is in the floodplain and in an area that was filled, leveled, and paved. Therefore, part of the goal of the green space is to demonstrate ecological restoration such as the proposed pollinator meadow. He indicated this will require work as the layer under the asphalt does not accommodate planting. This is the case throughout most of the site so the approach will depend on the use. The exception is at the corner of Ashuelot Court and Ashuelot Street which is outside the floodplain and will be built up. It is a nice entry area and provides a view of West Hill. The design additionally includes plans for filtration/drainage/swales to eliminate polluted runoff into the river. Mr. Stewart continued indicating the goal, related to the Monadnock Conservancy's involvement, is for people to have access to and education of restoration.

Mr. Stewart stated most of the design process is done—the concept is well-settled, addresses use and ecology, coordinates with Parks and Recreation, and represents reasonable maintenance. The upcoming priority is to develop a plan to have this privately funded so as to not burden tax payers. There was discussion of partnering with a non-profit so that donations are tax deductible. It was through this idea that the relationship with the Monadnock Conservancy and Mr. Owens began in alignment with their goal of reinvigorating peoples relationships with their landscapes. The space is visible, connected to pathways, and in a large city which provided an opportunity for Conservancy partnership. Through this partnership, a fundraising consultant will look at the feasibility of fundraising and building an endowment.

The next step is to move from the conceptual design into real design detail to determine cost. Bringing the design to where it is currently and partnering with the Conservancy has been key. Mr. Stewart indicated that Ms. Hannan and Mr. Bohannon reached out to other communities with similar parks to learn from their experiences. Mr. Stewart also

noted other successful partnerships of the Conservancy in Keene including the rehabilitation of the Cheshire Rail Trail.

Mr. Redfern asked if the neighbor's opinions have been surveyed. Mr. Stewart replied yes and their responses have been largely positive, particularly as the lot is considered unsettling at night. Ms. Spear-O'Mara agreed that the night activity on the lot is displeasing to the neighbors and people look forward to having it developed and used healthily. Councilor Hooper added that it will likely enhance surrounding property values. Mr. Owens agreed and said the surrounding property owners view it as an enhancement.

Mr. Bohannon addressed safety concerns and the opiate problem in the area. He indicated that moving forward, it will be essential to include the police department in the parks design. The opiate problem is widespread and will require focus on creating a safe environment. Mr. Bohannon indicated the lighting in the arboretum at the front of the park helps. The problem is in the late, overnight hours. Toward mitigation, the design includes long visual aspects, lighting, and strategic benches with wide views. The composting toilets will also likely have to be locked at night. No matter what, the police will need to be involved throughout the process.

Mr. Redfern asked if the lighting at the park will be solar. Mr. Stewart indicated those plans are not finalized and the issue of lighting will be discussed with the police.

Mr. Foskett indicated the arboretum is approaching 30 years old and gaining volunteer support is more difficult today. He stated priority needs to be given to maintaining enthusiasm and community involvement once the project is complete to ensure that a financial burden is not on the tax payers. He said they need to consider issues like drugs during the day as well to ensure it does not become an attractive nuisance.

Chair Winsor asked Mr. Bohannon how bad elements are deterred during the day at other parks. Mr. Bohannon replied that the parks are a part of the police patrols and are patrolled more often during the busy summer months. There are also diligent neighbors, volunteers, and City Staff. Additionally, community activity deters bad elements. Ms. Spear-O'Mara agreed indicating that neighbors will be important in this area and that she does not think the bad elements will be as prominent.

Chair Winsor asked if there is corporate sponsorship interest. Mr. Owens replied they have not talked to any businesses yet but that some have been approached through the feasibility studies. He said it is a good point but there is not much opportunity for businesses yet in this investigative stage. Mr. Redfern suggested a partnership with Healthy Monadnock 2020, less for financial support but for children's activities. Mr. Stewart indicated he will get back in touch with them. Mr. Bohannon added that one of the most attractive things about this project is that it is something that has never been done in Keene. It creates a different philosophy of creative play and gets kids back into nature. Mr. Stewart and Mr. Owens indicated the Conservancy is working on a similar successful project where kids get to explore and be active at a local farm. Mr. Owens

added this green space is consistent with serving those in the community who, because of time/transportation/money, are unable to access such programs and activities otherwise.

Ms. Spear-O'Mara asked about the project timeline going forward. Mr. Owens indicated the timeline is strategically undefined right now. They want to see the results of the feasibility study first to know what the best approach will be. Mr. Redfern asked if there will be electricity at the proposed pavilions. Mr. Bohannon replied that they have not reached that level of detail in the plan. There was discussion of the need to lock any electrical outlets on site if they are implemented. Mr. Stewart indicated that Ms. Hannan is on vacation and he will contact her soon to move forward with design detailing.

The Board thanked Mr. Stewart for his work and persistence on this project and indicated their enthusiasm at Mr. Owens' participation. Mr. Stewart and Mr. Owens departed the meeting at 8:48 AM.

4) Finance Report

Mr. Bohannon directed the Board to the back of the packet which lists the current budget at \$5,139.42. He indicated they have been invoiced for the first part of the lawn care service and for the Bartlett tree. There is one \$250 bill not recorded on the budget for fertilizer. That bill will be ready next month.

5) Report from Friends of the Arboretum at Ashuelot River Park

Mr. Foskett indicated he was not at the last Friends meeting so he had little to report. He stated his content at reestablishing contact with Homestead Garden Club as they have been instrumental to the arboretum since it began. Mr. Bohannon added that the Friends have gained new energy and volunteer groups from Honda of Keene and the Lions Club have been doing great work. He said the more groups they have contributing like that, the better.

6) Park Discussion

a. Bartlett Tree

Mr. Bohannon indicated the work was completed in June and he is waiting for the bill. He said it looks great and the work was well done. Councilor Hooper added that it is great the work was done unnoticeably. Chair Winsor added that it is also good for the health of the tree.

b. KSC LINKS Service Day—July 15 (rain date July 22)

Mr. Bohannon indicated they are expecting 50 people for the event. The event begins at 9:30 AM and is weather dependent; a rain date has been scheduled if necessary. There will be adequate supervision for the large number of participants. Chair Winsor and Mr. Foskett both indicated they will attend. Chair Winsor asked if any of the maintenance staff will be present. Mr. Bohannon indicated they will be delivering supplies and some

ARPAB Meeting Minutes
July 12, 2016

will likely remain to help. Mr. Foskett asked where the cobbles had been delivered. Mr. Bohannon indicated if they are not in the shed to check behind the shed.

7) **New Business**

8) **Next Meeting Date August 9, 2016**

Ms. Spear-O'Mara indicated she will be on vacation and will not attend the next meeting.

9) **Adjournment**

Hearing no further business, Chair Winsor adjourned the meeting at 8:56 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Katie Kibler, Minute Taker

Edited by,
Andy Bohannon