

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ASHUELOT RIVER PARK ADVISORY BOARD AGENDA

Tuesday, June 2, 2020 at 4:00 PM
Online

Members:

Arthur Winsor, Chair
George Foskett
Judy Sadoski
Dave Whaley
Paul Bocko
Counselor Steve Hooper
Suzy Krautmann
Thomas Haynes, Alternate

Staff:

Andy Bohannon, PRF Director

Guests:

Samantha Peikes – Conway School
Amanda Smith – Conway School
Katherine Holder – Conway School

Agenda:

1. Welcome and Call to Order
2. Acceptance of Minutes – May 5, 2020
3. Finance Update
4. Conway School Stakeholder Engagement Session #2
5. Adjourn – Next Meeting Tuesday, June 14 @ 8:00am

Due to the COVID-2019 State of Emergency, the Ashuelot River Park Advisory Board Committee will be holding its meeting remotely using the web-based program, Zoom. Board members will be participating in this meeting remotely. Members of the public will be able to access this public meeting through a variety of options. To view the webinar visit the following link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87401408499>. To listen via telephone, call 603-766-5646 and enter the meeting code 9811441. When the meeting is open for public comment, callers will be asked if interested in commenting or asking questions. If you encounter any issues accessing this meeting, please call 603-757-1835 during the meeting.

1 City of Keene
2 New Hampshire

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5 ASHUELOT RIVER PARK ADVISORY BOARD
6 MEETING MINUTES
7

8 **Tuesday, May 5, 2020**

4:00 PM

Remote Meeting Via Zoom

Members Present:

Arthur Winsor, Chair
Councilor Steve Hooper, Vice Chair
George Foskett
Dave Whaley
Suzanne Krautmann
Paul Bocko

Staff Present:

Andy Bohannon, Director of Parks,
Recreation & Facilities

Members Not Present:

Judy Sadoski
Thomas Haynes, Alternate

9
10 Mr. Bohannon read the authority to hold a remote meeting: Emergency Order #12, issued by the
11 Governor of the State of New Hampshire pursuant to Executive Order #2020-04.

12
13 **1) Welcome & Call to Order**

14
15 Chair Winsor called the meeting to order at 4:07 PM. Mr. Bohannon called roll and all members
16 reported that they were phoning alone from their home addresses. Mr. Bohannon said this meeting
17 was an opportunity to engage with the Conway School students assigned to this project in the park.
18 The students—Samantha Peikes, Amanda Smith, & Katherine Holder—were also attending via
19 Zoom, alone from their home addresses.

20
21 **2) Conway School Stakeholder Engagement Session #1**

22
23 The Conway School of Sustainable Landscape Design students led a presentation before a question
24 and answer engagement session. Ms. Peikes began by thanking all for attending. She said that she,
25 Ms. Smith, and Ms. Holder are tasked with assessing the ecological resilience of Ashuelot River
26 Park (ARP).

27 Ms. Peikes first discussed what makes a public space resilient and how that resilience can benefit
28 the community. Ms. Peikes defined resilience loosely as how well a place or system can overcome a
29 disturbance and persist in the future. She said that resilient parks could benefit communities by
30 providing cooling effects, clean water and air, and access to outdoor spaces, which improves mental
31 and physical health.

32 Ms. Peikes continued by using a map of the park to demonstrate the area of interest for this project,
33 which is focused on the Arboretum at Ashuelot River Park and the former Rachel Marshall (RM)
34 Learning Lab across the bridge.

35 Ms. Peikes explained that the Conway School students are enrolled in a 10-month master's program
36 in ecological design, though which they work on real projects with real clients to grapple with
37 complex design and planning problems. For example, past Conway School students have worked in
38 Keene on the Ashuelot Greenspace Master Plan to redesign the unused parking lot, as well as the
39 Carpenter Street Field (now the Patricia T. Russell Park), which has led to a \$1.5 million project
40 beginning fall 2020.

41 Next, Ms. Holder explained goals for the Conway School project at ARP. The students are
42 assessing the park through the lens of climate resilience to address three main goals: 1) revitalize a
43 community treasure, 2) reinvigorate community involvement in the park, and 3) enhance the
44 ecological function and services of the park. To achieve those goals, Ms. Holder listed the project
45 tasks:

- 46 ▪ Ensure ongoing maintenance and inventory of garden bed plots to ensure a sustainable and
47 climate resilient landscape
- 48 ▪ Increase accessibility to all places and facilities within the park
- 49 ▪ Provide ideas for increasing educational opportunities within the park
- 50 ▪ Explore methods for erosion control along river banks
- 51 ▪ Develop a management plan for invasive species
- 52 ▪ Incorporate more opportunities for seating
- 53 ▪ Assess how resilient the Arboretum and RM Outdoor Learning Lab are to climate change
- 54 ▪ Assess what the park will look like in the future with climate change

55 Ms. Smith continued explaining why it is important to assess the park's ecological resilience. She
56 noted that the City of Keene acknowledges that climate change is and will affect the City, which is
57 clear in a quote she read from Keene's 2010 Comprehensive Master Plan: "Keene is already feeling
58 the impact of a changing climate. From more frequent and worse flooding, to changes in annual
59 snowfall, to the infestation of non-native plant and animal species, to the increase in high-heat-
60 index days and poor air-quality days, the community has come to recognize that these changes are
61 affecting the community's built, natural, and social environments."

62 Ms. Smith displayed a photo of rescue workers seeking stranded people via boat on Water Street
63 during a 2005 flood. Such floods and other extreme weather events and natural disasters have
64 tripled since the 1970s. In addition to weather changes, climate change poses risks to human health
65 through vector-borne diseases, heat related illnesses, poor air quality, and impacts to mental health.
66 The park faces potential climate change impacts such as flood damage or obstruction of uses, loss of
67 native species, risk of vector-borne illnesses, and increased conflict or risks near the dam related to
68 heat waves such as injuries. Ms. Smith said that public parks provide numerous ecological services
69 that contribute to a resilient community, such as flood control, mitigation of the heat island effect,
70 and contributing to clean air. Still, these municipal parks are vulnerable to the aforementioned
71 climate impacts and so are the services that parks provide to communities.

72 Ms. Holder began a discussion with the Board and used various questions as prompts. First, she
73 shared ground rules for the conversation: speak freely, there are no stupid questions, own your ideas
74 with "I" not "we," follow the moderator's guidance, and have fun!

75 Question 1: What aspects of the park (generally) work well or do not work well? Have you faced
76 any issues with accessing/using the park? Do the educational components work/how can they be
77 improved?

78 Mr. Foskett was eager to hear the students' thoughts on how to incorporate memorials in the park.
79 He said that many people have donated funds but there are no clear ideas yet for the best use of
80 those funds for memorials in the arboretum. To date, Mr. Foskett said there have been some
81 memorials in the form of benches with name plaques and the cobblestone dedications, which have
82 been the biggest revenue source to date for the arboretum. These cobblestones, benches, and other
83 donations are managed by the Friends of the Arboretum at Ashuelot River Park. He asked what
84 form the students think that memorials should take, what locations are best, and how donations
85 should be used for memorials. He said that was his main concern at this meeting. Ms. Smith said
86 they had not yet investigated memorial details, as those recommendations would evolve as the
87 project unfolds.

88 Mr. Foskett said there are many trails running through the park and he wanted to see the arboretum
89 become a destination for trail users from the surrounding area. Additionally, he said that the park is
90 30 years-old and needs refurbishing. It began with 6" diameter trees that are now 2' in diameter. It
91 began as a sun garden and is now a shade garden, which needs replanting. Ms. Smith said that those
92 concerns would be included in their analysis. She said this meeting was an opportunity to seek input
93 to generate a broad picture of the park's needs. More design solutions would be proposed at the next
94 engagement session.

95 Chair Winsor said that many trees in the arboretum are overgrown or doing poorly and he hopes the
96 students will consider what needs to change to remedy overcrowding. He added that the park is used
97 poorly sometimes to a detriment, which this Board needs advice to manage in a tasteful way to not
98 drive away good use of the park and protect the park as best possible.

99 Regarding memorials, Ms. Krautmann stated that she sent photos to Mr. Bohannon via email from
100 the Sandhills Community College Horticultural Gardens in NC, where they have abundant
101 stationary garden features, like statutes, that could provide examples of memorial possibilities.

102 Regarding Chair Winsor's comments about poor use of the park, Councilor Hooper noted that he
103 and other City Councilors have wondered about reintroducing a public toilet to the park and he
104 wondered if the students could assess that possibility. Mr. Bohannon said that the idea would be
105 considered. He recalled that there was once a composting toilet now closed several years due to a
106 drug overdose therein. As the park rebuilds with a goal to bring more people back, he thinks it is a
107 good time for this group to revisit the possibility within this project.

108 Mr. Bocko said that the resilience focus is perfect because there are growing challenges managing
109 certain features of the park, which has been wonderfully accessible for 30 years. He was happy to
110 see the former RM site on the list of priorities, as he was the director of that program in the past,
111 and he hopes to see that area stay for educational opportunities. Regarding education, Mr. Bocko
112 referenced a behind-the-scenes minimal-impact Quest in the park, which is like a treasure hunt. He
113 manages the Quest and thinks that following this project there is an opportunity to revise the Quest
114 to focus on resilience, which could be a way to highlight the project's work and promote exploring
115 the area without constructing more signage. A school group could develop the Quest, as most past
116 Keene Quests were developed. He hopes there will be more chances to brainstorm educational
117 opportunities specifically. He said there was once significant activity in the RM portion of the park,

118 that the project has a strong legacy, and that he hopes the area will come into focus again. He
119 imagined opportunities for Keene State College (KSC) and Antioch University students to
120 participate in developing and using the space.

121 Regarding education, Mr. Whaley wondered if the students could identify a mechanism to assess
122 whether the bat houses are being noticed/appreciated so the Board can understand whether their
123 signage, etc. need improvement. Mr. Bohannon said the houses have been installed for some time.
124 He needs to communicate with Ingrid Evans to determine whether they were installed properly; he
125 received an email to the contrary from a member of the public saying the houses should be facing
126 south and are too near to trails/humans, both of which would deter bats from using the houses. Mr.
127 Bohannon and Councilor Hooper will follow-up.

128 Councilor Hooper said that the four bat houses would increase educational opportunities in the park,
129 which was an incentive for the Board supporting the project. He agreed that the RM area does not
130 need to return to full fruition, but he does want emphasis on the area, which is now full of many
131 native plant and bird species that enhance sightings for nature lovers.

132 Chair Winsor recognized Libby McCann, who was calling alone from Westmoreland. Ms. McCann
133 is a professor of environmental studies and education at Antioch. She was on the 2010 Keene
134 Comprehensive Master Plan Advisory Committee and said it was good to see the resource used. She
135 is excited about the park and the great work this group is doing. She commented on the wonderful
136 potentials in the RM area for wildlife and education. While the site is accessible, she wants to talk
137 to organizations in the community to ensure accessibility for all. She said this was an exciting
138 opportunity to connect and learn about the project. Ms. McCann said the same 2010 Master Plan
139 also informed creation of the local Community Garden Connections program, which offers financial
140 and other support. For example, the program supported the garden beds behind ARP at Harpers
141 Acres as well as local rain garden installations.

142 Mr. Foskett questioned whether the students would investigate invasive species growing in the park
143 like Japanese knotweed. Mr. Bohannon and Ms. Holder replied in the affirmative, stating that the
144 students want to do more research before providing any suggestions.

145 Chair Winsor noted that soon QR code signs would be installed on trees in the park with species
146 information and he wants to see related educational opportunities, with resilient signage and
147 information on wildlife and native species. He thinks the original educational intent of the RM area
148 should continue.

149 Question 2: How do you define resilience? How can the arboretum support a more resilient
150 community? How can the arboretum be more resilient in the future?

151 Ms. Krautmann said that updated plantings would help the park be more resilient. Mr. Bohannon
152 agreed and suggested featuring in the arboretum more native NH plants so visitors see examples of
153 what plants they can acquire locally would look like in their yards. In that way, the arboretum can
154 be an example to the community of how to adapt to the climate.

155 Ms. McCann defined resilience as the ability to bounce back from disturbance but in a state
156 different from the original. She said that resilience could be at different scales: personal,
157 community, ecological. She wondered how the arboretum could contribute to resilience at all three
158 scales through community engagement, plantings, and volunteerism. She envisioned opportunities

159 for multiple stakeholders to participate. She was excited about the prospects and would be happy to
160 be of service where applicable in the future.

161 Mr. Foskett said that replanting occurred along West Street in recent years, but the Board has
162 waited to replant near Starbucks and the Mascoma Bank parking lot. He said that the Board was
163 waiting until this project to hear the students' recommendations before further replanting
164 throughout the arboretum. The students agreed that they would assess the existing conditions in
165 garden beds, including soils, drainage, and more, before recommending the best native plants for
166 those conditions. Mr. Foskett asked if the students would investigate any grant opportunities to fund
167 some of their recommended improvements, like replanting. The students said that they could inquire
168 and said they more likely imagined grant opportunities related to education or streambed work, for
169 example, more so than for replanting.

170 Chair Winsor thought that low-impact plants – meaning those with minimal need for fertility,
171 irrigation, and human inputs – would make the park more resilient. He said that the arboretum
172 depends currently a lot on irrigation and a little on fertilizer. He knew that the Conway School is
173 mindful of low-input plants and so he looked forward to hearing their recommendations.

174 Mr. Bocko thought about building climate resilience into the future of the park. He recalled that
175 when the park was established 30 years-ago, it was designed for the future as well, which got the
176 park to this point today. He said the park is now in a different place to reevaluate resilience for a
177 new future not just a few years from now, but much further, especially as climate impacts are
178 changing quickly. He is biased to how the arboretum can support community resilience. He thinks
179 there are opportunities to use renewal of the space as a teaching tool with minimal signage after the
180 project, especially if the redesign is advertised successfully to the community as crucial in a
181 changing climate.

182 Councilor Hooper agreed with Mr. Bocko that there would be opportunities later to advertise the
183 great results of this project through photography in local media. Although the results of this project
184 and redesigning the park are premature at this point, he wants the community to know this Board is
185 trying to improve the City.

186 Chair Winsor said the park needs a web presence, which would also make the park more resilient in
187 the future. For example, in the current situation where people are confined at home, they could take
188 a virtual tour and learn about the park.

189 Ms. Krautmann said that with the aesthetics of seasonal blooming, path widths and the amount of
190 grass space in the arboretum would need to be likely reconsidered.

191 Mr. Bocko said that with advertising, this is a great opportunity for community resilience. Though
192 he does not live in Keene, he said this could be a next piece of momentum in addressing climate
193 change. He said that Keene is doing great work already in all departments and is recognized as a
194 regional leader in many ways and he thinks this project can help that momentum versus being a
195 daunting first task for the City as a climate leader. Mr. Bohannon agreed and said there have been
196 similar discussions for Russell Park. Mr. Bohannon thinks funding will be an important focus for
197 this Board after the project, whether through trust funds or applying for grants. As a member of City
198 Council, Councilor Hooper said he was excited to have the Conway School working on this project.
199 He is excited to see the results and wished the students luck.

200 Mr. Bocko thought this was a great start to the project. He asked the students the most important
201 thing they need from this Board to support their next steps. The students felt prepared with the
202 information and local knowledge acquired at this meeting and said they would reach out to the
203 Board as further questions arise throughout their analysis. The students would continue meeting
204 weekly on Tuesdays at 10:00 AM with Mr. Bohannon through the duration of the project as well.
205 Mr. Bohannon would inquire with the Clerk's office how Board members could participate in some
206 of those weekly meetings. This meeting was a visioning opportunity for the students to understand
207 how the park is used and maintained, what assets exist, and what needs improving. This is the first
208 step.

209 Question 3: How do you use the arboretum? Is it used for educational purposes? (The students
210 displayed a map with letters and asked the Board members to identify what areas they utilize most.)

211 Mr. Bocko said one of his students studied the maple trees around I/J.

212 Mr. Foskett said he cares for the area to the right of the entrance where the sprinkler box is located
213 for the new irrigation system, where he is usually weeding when he is at the park. Otherwise, he
214 sees people sitting and enjoying the park for 30-60 minutes or sometimes longer if having a picnic,
215 etc. He thinks the arboretum is used a lot more as a pass-through.

216 When in the park, Ms. Krautmann walks past D-C-E-F or cycles from G-B-A to West Street. Chair
217 Winsor's favorite location is K, overlooking the dam, where he can hang out and enjoy coffee. Mr.
218 Bocko said the Quest goes through the whole arboretum and minimally in the RM area; it is a
219 vehicle to move people through the park. Councilor Hooper uses the arboretum and RM area
220 equally for wildlife and occasional wedding photography. Mr. Foskett added that the arboretum is
221 used a lot for photography during prom season. Chair Winsor added that he wants passive
222 recreation in the arboretum like photography or picnicking to be respected without discouraging the
223 active recreation associated with the bike path or kayak access, for example. The Chairman thinks
224 the students should consider how to redesign the space so it is clear where active and passive
225 recreations are most encouraged. The students would revisit the map with the Board, likely through
226 an online survey to gather more information.

227 The students have created an account for the park at: [https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/ashuelot-](https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/ashuelot-river-park)
228 [river-park](https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/ashuelot-river-park). Here, wildlife sightings and other information can be reported. Board members can visit
229 the website to see what is already included, much like the QR code process.

230 Board members can contact the students with questions/concerns via email: keene2020@csid.edu

231 Board members should anticipate an online survey via email by May 15, a formal presentation on
232 May 29, a second community meeting the first week of June, and final product delivery to the client
233 on July 15.

234 **3) Adjourn – Next Meeting Tuesday, June 2 @ 4:00 PM**

235
236 There being no further business, Chair Winsor adjourned the meeting at 5:15 PM.

237
238 Respectfully submitted by,
239 Katie Kibler, Minute Taker

Ashuelot River Park Advisory Board
Proposed Budget 2020

updated 5.26.20

	Budget	Actual To Date	Difference
CONWAY SCHOOL	\$ 12,500.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 7,500.00
Landscape Contract	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 1,250.00	\$ 3,750.00
Clean Up - Spring	\$ 1,250.00		
Mulch	\$ 2,500.00		
Clean Up - Fall	\$ 1,250.00		
Bartlett Tree - Pruning	\$ 3,500.00	\$ 185.00	\$ 3,315.00
Miscellaneous (not contract)	<u>\$ 1,000.00</u>	<u>\$ 650.00</u>	<u>\$ 350.00</u>
Total*	\$ 22,000.00	\$ 7,085.00	<u>\$ 14,915.00</u>

*Conway School to utilize Memorial Trust Fund & ARP Trust

Memorial Trust Fund	\$ 5,813.63
ARP Trust	\$ 6,686.37

Hamblett Electric - lights LED arch	4/24/2020	27555***	\$ 650.00
Conway - down payment			\$ 5,000.00
AGM landscaping	4/14/2020	15728	\$ 1,250.00
Bartlett Tree - nutrients	5/5/2020	38953452-0	\$ 185.00

***Actual bill \$1752.32 - each light \$650, labor, supplies