

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ASHUELOT RIVER PARK ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, November 10, 2020

8:00 AM

Remote Meeting via Zoom

Members Present:

Arthur Winsor, Chair
Judy Sadoski
Paul Bocko
Councilor Steve Hooper
Suzy Krautmann
Thomas Haynes, Alternate

Staff Present:

Andy Bohannon, Director of Parks,
Recreation & Facilities

Members Not Present:

George Foskett
Dave Whaley

1) Welcome & Roll Call

Chair Winsor called the meeting to order at 8:00 AM.

2) Acceptance of October 13, 2020 Minutes

Ms. Sadoski moved to accept the October 13, 2020 meeting minutes, Mr. Bocko seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

3) Finance Update

Mr. Bohannon presented an update of the finance report. He stated that the final landscape clean-up is still outstanding, however, total expenditures for the season amounts to \$18,729.20. He asked if there were any questions. Hearing none, Chair Winsor moved onto the next item agenda.

4) Conway Master Plan

Mr. Bohannon said he hoped that members had an opportunity to review the materials and information that he sent out. He said he sent out a spreadsheet and the minutes that were put together related to Master Plan (MP). He said he provided some information and asked for member's thoughts. Chair Winsor stated that they had spoken about a phased approach to

accomplish the MP and asked Mr. Bohannon and Ms. Matthews to review next steps for the first phase. Mr. Bohannon replied that they can use the spreadsheet to go over the plan together.

Mr. Bohannon stated that they took the four components or key areas from the MP: *Rachel Marshall Outdoor Lab, North Arboretum, Main Arboretum and Southwest Arboretum*. He explained the layout of the spreadsheet including target dates which he noted is important for goal-setting. He stated that adding estimated costs will allow them to build the case for the budget coming up in the next few months and by doing that they can develop a solid budget to present to the trustees of trust funds and show them the project plan, priorities, estimated costs and provide them with a solid foundation. He stated that is his purpose and is hoping members will agree to this proposed plan.

Mr. Bohannon stated that he shared some items from the discussion with Ms. Matthews and he can type feedback directly into the spreadsheet in real time. Ms. Krautmann asked Mr. Bohannon if each component is prioritized in order and Mr. Bohannon replied that he prioritized what was highlighted in the MP section presenting the four areas and the bullets they discussed within each of those areas. He said these were the higher prioritizations within each of those areas based upon the MP and they can expand on those priorities today as well. He stated that he is seeking member input, so the process is not completely driven by the City.

Ms. Sadoski stated that she can discuss the areas she highlighted as priorities. She said they have spoken a lot about the gazebo, and she sees that as a high priority and rated it as number one. She said she also prioritizes the two entryways at Mascoma Bank and Starbucks, as well as increasing seating options in both the Rachel Marshall Outdoor Lab and the Arboretum. She said in the long-term, the expansion of the parking lot may need to be put on hold until that comes to fruition. Chair Winsor added that they need to work on the entryway from the parking lot which goes hand in hand with removing the gazebo, and he still believes that they need to keep the Starbucks entrance. He noted that if they do put more seating across the bridge it should be permanent granite seating to avoid maintenance and vandalism. Ms. Sadoski also highlighted the need for attention to safety issues in the Rachel Marshall Outdoor Lab, especially with increasing access and seating. Councilor Hooper agreed with focusing on the Mascoma Bank entrance and development of a Welcome map as top priorities, as well as increasing seating and redesigning the gazebo. He says the gazebo is always dominated by the same group of people and there is a need to increase access to the rest of the community and not just cater to certain groups of people. Councilor Hooper stated that continuing to improve the Outdoor Lab area is also important to enhance outdoor education. Mr. Bocko stated that he agrees with focusing on the Mascoma Bank and Starbucks entrances and suggested that if they work on each component they can change and improve the area inside. He prioritized the Mascoma Bank entrance and the gazebo and then improving and clarifying the Starbucks entrance. Ms. Krautmann agreed with prioritizing the Mascoma Bank and gazebo entrance and then secondarily the Starbucks entrance. Chair Winsor asked Mr. Bohannon if when they remove the gazebo, a new structure go in shortly after that. Mr. Bohannon replied that everyone seems to be on the same page and said that if they prioritize the gazebo as discussed with the students from Conway, they can spread out the seating

and not lose what was there but instead repurpose and rebrand it. He stated that he agrees that the Mascoma Bank entrance provides the most opportunity for the biggest bang for their buck. Ms. Krautmann stated that they had mentioned a Welcome area at the Mascoma Bank entrance, and she agrees with that idea. Chair Winsor said that now that they have the QR codes, and the bat houses, better informational signage at the entrance is a great idea.

Mr. Bocko said that regarding the signage at the Mascoma Bank the entrance, he would like to see a space for interpretation from local students which he can help facilitate. He said they achieved this at the Rachel Marshall project years ago, where students designed and built a storage shed with display space on the outside that students used. He said that educationally that is a good direction to go in as more intentional education for student groups. Councilor Hooper asked if they are putting a lot of effort into that entrance, will the gazebo be part of that change because of the presence of people always in the gazebo. He asked if that phase will include beautification and removal of the gazebo. Chair Winsor agreed with Councilor Hooper that if they welcome people and it is not welcoming that is not going to work. Ms. Sadoski added that there is a way to echo or incorporate the front gate in the new entrance at Mascoma Bank that would be effective as well.

Ms. Matthews said it would be effective for the Board to go through each of the four areas and pick one or two things they could to work on. She said they need to be practical, for example, with the Outdoor Lab, they could walk through and identify where they want certain things planned like seating, or rocks. She said redesigning Starbucks parking lot should happen. She asked if the parking lot is owned by Starbuck's and Mr. Bohannon replied yes. She stated that of they remove the gazebo and implement a pergola. They should talk about the trees that need to be removed because before the Main Arboretum is constructed that needs to happen. She said that they also need to talk about the water faucet as they may place it under the place where the sprinkler and they can't plant anything until they have that done. She said they should look at the list and star items that are most important as some items can be done cheaply and jumpstart things; for example, the education area, the presence of invasive plants at the north Arboretum, and they should start there.

Mr. Bohannon stated that Rotaract is aiming to do a large project in the spring and they can move their way towards that. Instead of going south for the spring, they will stay local and Ashuelot River Park is a target of theirs, and perhaps they can aim to build a pergola. Chair Winsor stated that the existing sign by Starbucks should stay and they should develop a new sign by Mascoma Bank; however, that original sign is historical for the development of the park so they should aim to develop something new for the Mascoma Bank entrance. Mr. Bohannon said that the gate that is currently established at the corner of the Starbucks entrance is not necessarily ADA accessible; however, he will go take a look at that and they may not necessarily be able to get handicap access in the Starbucks parking lot but they may be able to have one in the alternate entrance. Mr. Bocko said he was thinking differently about starting in one area and working through that and that would be the Mascoma Bank entrance; he said Ms. Matthews stated that

they can do both but to move in other ways as they need to work on the entrance area adjacent to the gazebo and the smaller things to get ready for other areas. He said he likes the challenge.

Ms. Krautmann noted that in regard to the path the goes across the bridge, if there was something definitive to show the end of that path would be ideal. Mr. Bohannon agreed and said that Melansons has changed ownership and stated that it is not a public entrance, as they had people searching employee cars, so if they could design it in a way so as to not highlight it and emphasize other areas. Chair Winsor noted that years ago there was discussion about accessing the park from that side, however, that idea is no longer in the pipeline. He asked Mr. Bohannon if he has acquired enough member feedback to get started with. Mr. Bohannon replied that yes, he will aim get some estimates and a quote related to removing the gazebo. He added that they should take some more at the next meeting and get some definitive action about priorities that he has heard from the Board.

5) Bat House Update

Councilor Hooper has been working with Mr. Bohannon on improving the access for bat houses and said they are in the process of changing the post locations. He said they are using the map to develop plans to remove the post locations and moving them into the correct locations.

Councilor Hooper stated that a couple of weeks ago, an educational program was co-chaired by Ms. Delanus and Mr. Bocko in the Ashuelot Rover Park and Horatio Colony Preserve. He said he will defer to Mr. Bocko about the bat house program. Mr. Bocko added that on October 17 and 18 they had evening programs on a Saturday at Ashuelot River Park distanced on the lawn; two small groups of ten or fewer individuals went out looking for bat habitats. He said on Sunday evening, they had about 15 people participate at Horatio Colony Nature Preserve in very different habitats and the consensus was that with access to water and better space, the Ashuelot River Park was a more ideal location. He said it was a good program, with a diverse group of people from Antioch University New England and other people from town.

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

Ms. Matthews stated that they did not do a lot this year due to COVID-19, however, they did work bulbs and worked with Workforce Opportunity, which is an organization of young adults with disabilities looking for livelihood opportunities. She said they started with two individuals and taught them how to plant; they acquired ten lilacs from the State lilac commission and put four in Rotaract beds and the six went into other beds.

Mr. Bohannon stated that they have also applied for a couple of different grants to provide plants for the future. He said if they receive a grant, they might be able to throw some seed money in as a match as well.

7) Park Discussion

Chair Winsor asked members if they have any other concerns. He said right now they are trying to button things up for the fall with the contractor but beyond that they are aiming to plan for next year. Councilor Hooper stated that he would like to see the opportunity for bathrooms at the park in the near future. He said it should be a part of the discussion as far as the use of the facilities, as everyone needs that as an option if they are utilizing the park. Chair Winsor stated that bathrooms should be noted, and they should compare it with what other parks do as far as how to accomplish that. Ms. Krautmann asked about the solar lighting in terms of bathrooms as well. Mr. Bohannon said he will get pricing options as there are some options out there, for example, solar benches that allow phone charging. He said he does not know how expensive they are, but it might be something they can look at for various needs.

8) Adjourn- Next meeting Tuesday, December 8, 2020 at 8 AM.

There being no further business, Chair Winsor adjourned the meeting at 9:00 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Ayshah Kassamali-Fox, Minute Taker

Edits submitted by,
Andy Bohannon, Director of Parks, Recreation & Facilities

Additional edits by,
Katrnya Kibler, City Clerk's Office