

**City of Keene
New Hampshire**

ASHUELOT RIVER PARK ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, January 12, 2021

8:00 AM

Remote Meeting via Zoom

Members Present:

Arthur Winsor, Chair
Judy Sadoski, Vice Chair
Dave Whaley
Paul Bocko
Suzy Krautmann
Thomas Haynes, Alternate

Staff Present:

Andy Bohannon, Parks, Recreation &
Facilities Director

Members Not Present:

Mr. Bohannon read a prepared statement explaining how the Emergency Order #12, pursuant to Executive Order #2020-04 issued by the Governor of New Hampshire, waives certain provisions of RSA 91-A (which regulates the operation of public body meetings) during the declared COVID-19 State of Emergency.

1) Welcome and Call to Order

Chair Winsor called the meeting to order at 8:06 AM. Roll call was conducted and guests were welcomed, including Dian Mathews who will soon be Chair of the Friends of Ashuelot River Park Arboretum, Louise Zerba, Jamie Doherty and Ruzzell Zullo, who is in the process of applying to be an alternate board member.

2) Acceptance of December 8, 2020 Minutes

Suzy Krautmann made a motion to approve the minutes of December 8, 2020. Paul Bocko seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

3) Election of 2021 Chair

Judy Sadoski nominated Arthur Winsor to remain as Chair. Paul Bocko seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. Mr. Winsor accepted the position of Chair. Suzy Krautmann nominated Judy Sadoski for Vice Chair. Paul Bocko seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. Judy Sadoski accepted the position of Vice Chair.

4) Finance Update

a. 2020

Mr. Bohannon reported \$22,000 had been budgeted for the year of 2020. They ended up expending a bit less than that at \$19,979 because Conway School charged \$10,000, rather than the \$12,500 that was expected. Mr. Bohannon stated the decreased charge may have been due to COVID-19.

b. 2021

Mr. Bohannon put forward the 2021 budget outline so the advisory board could get an idea of what they would be working with, and noted that it wouldn't be adopted for another month or so. He reported reaching out to the landscape contractor, who indicated their budget would need to increase slightly over the \$5,000 it was set at in 2020. Mr. Bohannon will work on obtaining quotes for that and continue to build the budget.

c. Trust Funds

Mr. Bohannon stated there used to be two Trusts from which the advisory board received funds. The Maintenance Trust was smaller and was expended with the maintenance project of the irrigation system. He clarified that they are now working solely on the Ashuelot River Park Trust, which is much larger than the Maintenance Trust. He made note of the two sections in the Trust Funds Chart, the first demonstrating the average income earned and the second section showing trustee budget approvals in the past. Mr. Bohannon stated the trust has done well over the last five years and they are able to expend the interest, which is up to \$22,407, if needed for certain projects.

Mr. Bohannon reported The Rachel Marshall Trust is now also available for use in Ashuelot River Park. This trust was used in the early 2000's for the Rachel Marshall Outdoor Learning Lab. The program eventually ended but the trust remained and was set up to be used on improvements around the East side of town, but not for the Downtown Tree Fund. He stated the Ashuelot River Park Advisory Board used some of the trust for projects at Robin Hood Park, but left around \$20,000 for the future Russell Park project. Since that time, two other funding sources of \$4,000 and \$1 million become available for the Russel Park project, which prompted Mr. Bohannon to speak with the City Manager about using the Rachel Marshall Trust for Ashuelot River Park. The City Manager agreed and the ARPAB now has a great opportunity to use \$27,000 from the Rachel Marshall Trust.

Chair Winsor asked for questions or comments on the budget. Judy Sadoski inquired about progress on the parking lot development project. Mr. Bohannon replied he reached out to Ken Stewart in early December and gathered from their conversation that the project is still on hold and likely will be for quite some time.

Suzy Krautmann referred back to the Rachel Marshall Trust wanting to clarify if those funds could only be used for educational purposes, as in the Rachel Marshall area of land. Mr. Bohannon stated the funds can be used for any park purpose on the East side, Ashuelot River Park qualifies under that area, and it does not have to be for educational purposes. An example of what the funds cannot be used for would be paying a professor,

because that's already being done. Mr. Bohannon stated these funds allow the advisory board the potential to come up with some unique projects and really think out of the box. Additionally, the money won't go away if they need to hold onto it for whatever reason.

Chair Winsor agreed the flexibility will be useful and wondered if they could start as early as this winter with tree take downs to implement the first phase of the masterplan? He asked if they could have someone advise them to be able to do some preliminary work that they otherwise couldn't do with a large number of people in the park. Mr. Bohannon thanked Chair Winsor for the great conversation starter and stated he reached out to Bartlett Tree to obtain a quote for the annual maintenance of tree trimming and fertilization, and a second quote for them to work on the bed area that is mature. Mr. Bohannon stated he will reach back out to his contact there now that the holiday season is over. He also reported speaking with Chuck Sweeney, Superintendent of Maintenance Parks and Cemeteries, about the gazebo and whether or not it could be removed prior to April. He will report back on these matters.

5) Park Discussion – Master Plan Implementation
a. April Work Outing

Mr. Bohannon stated he has been in contact with Rotary Clubs Rotaract program, which is the high school group, and they are looking to come into the park for 3 days, 6 hours each day, during April vacation. He talked with Chuck Sweeney, Superintendent of Maintenance, and discussed what would be needed to make those park days happen. It will be similar to the Keene State College day in size and effort, but will differ in that it will be 3 days and 6 hours each day. This will do a lot of good for the park but the advisory board will need to be prepared and make sure they have dedicated resources ready. Mr. Bohannon stated he will need to have a conversation with Dian Mathews related to Friends of Ashuelot River Park Arboretum, and noted that she has already been able to obtain grants for some plantings. He has also been working with Bensonwood to obtain a quote on building a pergola. They shared a price with him recently which he needs to share with Louise Zerba. He noted they are donating their design effort and the advisory board would pay for the materials as well as the building of the pergola. Additionally, Bensonwood expressed interest in involving some kids with the project. Mr. Bohannon stated Louise Zerba will need to be involved with this as well.

Mr. Bohannon went on to state they are planning on putting in 4 benches underneath the pergola. The Pergola would be 12' by 24' with 6 pillars and span across where the gazebo is now. The benches will be placed between each of the pillars and their design will be consistent with what you see in the rest of the park. He stated the other opportunity would be to change the bench to recycled material, but that would be inconsistent with the rest of the park benches. Someone did donate a bench already and it will go before the finance committee this week. Mr. Bohannon stated this project is a big undertaking and they are working on plans to make all of this happen, which will include plantings, removal of invasive species, replacing stone dust, creating rain gardens, etc.

Bensonwood wants to leave an impact so they don't want to do anything that's typical maintenance of the park.

Chair Winsor asked if the dates would match up with April vacation for the high school. Mr. Bohannon replied yes.

Suzy Krautmann asked about the benches and if something solar or plug-ins could be an option. Mr. Bohannon replied that he has reached out to the company who would provide the solar benches and will update everyone once he hears back about pricing. Suzy Krautmann asked if the solar benches could be placed under the pergola and Mr. Bohannon replied that would be up for discussion at a later time.

Paul Bocko asked if he could have more details with regards to Bensonwood wanting some kids involved. Mr. Bohannon stated they would like to involve some of the kids that are part of the program into the engineering side/design phase to offer some educational opportunity. He needs to talk with Rotary Clubs to see if that is possible. Chair Winsor responded that it is a good idea, the students would get a lot out of that and could even tour the facility.

Mr. Bohannon apologized that he was not able to connect with Louise Zerba prior to this meeting with the details on his conversation with Bensonwood. Louise Zerba mentioned they are open and have some money they'd like to expend. They want to do as much as they can to construct the pergola and give the students an opportunity to make a difference while building comradery amongst one another. Since they had to forgo their international mission trip due to Covid-19, Louise Zerba stated a social activity in the evening is something they'd like to see happen and make it as much like an international trip as they can, but with a local project. They are open to ideas. Mr. Bohannon added that among all of these projects they need to remember to maintain Covid-19 protocols.

b. Education Signage

Mr. Bohannon stated that within the master plan they talked about educational signage throughout the park. He talked with Paul Bocko about having Antioch students work on the signage over a course of time, similar to the Jonathan Daniels signage that's in the park, but with education related to climate resiliency and pollinators. Paul Bocko replied that he's interested but needs to consider the timing of it all. This project wouldn't be happening this year, it would take place in spring of 2022.

Paul Bocko stated the project is definitely in line with learning opportunities at Antioch and the Environmental Studies program. He pondered if it could be part of a class or possibly a paid internship for the students, if there's some funding available. He stated there will definitely be students wanting to get involved and will bring the idea to his Education Department and the Chairperson of the Environmental Studies Department. Chair Winsor commented the bat house is an example of an educational opportunity the advisory board took advantage of in the past, and it would be great news if this could happen again. Paul Bocko stated they have a Center for Climate Preparedness and

Community Resilience at Antioch, which does a lot with policy and could be another connection to this project.

Chair Winsor asked if there have been any discussions with Peter Poanessa about possible designs for the entryway signage, since the plan is for it to be changed. Mr. Bohannon replied that there hadn't been, but they have had a conversation about having a kiosk as an informational entrance. Peter Poanessa at Keene Signworx has done some kiosk work around town for them in the past, such as the kiosk at the Keene Bike Park. There are ideas and information about kiosks but no particular design with costs yet. Chair Winsor mentioned the sign at the Mascoma area and Mr. Bohannon agreed, stating they could incorporate the two together to make a grand entrance.

c. Invasive Species

Mr. Bohannon stated this item is in the master plan and is on the radar of the Conservation Commission, who are trying to work with the community on education of invasive species and be more proactive in general. In late May or June they will work with the Conservation Commission to host another public gathering and education session about invasive species, and do their best to clear out the invasive species that are currently present.

d. Pollinator Gardens

Dian Matthews stated she is not officially the Chair of the Friends yet so they haven't had a meeting; however, pollinator gardens is on their agenda and by next month she should have ideas for everyone.

e. Grants

Dian Mathews stated the National Garden Club awarded her garden club, Old Homestead, a \$5,000 grant from Plant America, which is the maximum they give and will be used for plantings.

6) Report from Friends of Ashuelot River Park Arboretum

Chair Winsor stated the report from Friends of ARP Arboretum can't take place until next month when Dian Mathews is official Chair.

7) New or Other Business

a. 2021 Calendar

Chair Winsor asked if anyone had any other new business, there were no comments. He stated the meetings will remain the same, held on the second Tuesday of each month at 8:00 AM.

Mr. Bohannon and Chair Winsor asked for any comments from public. Ruzzell Zullo stated it was a pleasure to sit in on such a well-run meeting and thanked everyone for having him.

Jamie Doherty stated she is new to the Keene area. She was previously involved in forest restoration activities out in Illinois and is looking for opportunities to continue this work. Mr. Bohannon suggested she should feel free to submit an application to become an alternate committee member, and can do so on the city website. Mr. Bohannon stated the Goose Pond plan may be something she'd be able to help with. Paul Bocko stated he is also happy to connect her with representatives from the Antioch Environmental Studies department for more opportunities.

8) Adjourn – Next Meeting Tuesday, February 9, 2021 at 8:00 AM

Char Windsor stated the next meeting is February 9 and 8:00 AM and thanked everyone for attending today. He adjourned the meeting at 8:52 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Nicole Cullinane, Minute Taker

Respectfully edited by,
Andy Bohannon, Staff Liaison

Additional edits by,
Katie Kibler, Clerk's Office