

City of Keene
New Hampshire

Bicycle, Pedestrian Path Advisory Committee
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, May 10, 2017

8:00 AM

**City Hall, Second Floor
Conference Room**

Members Present:

Linda Rubin, Chair
Christopher Brehme, Vice Chair
Thom Little
Charles Redfern
Don Hayes
Dillon Benik, Alternate
Sam Hawkes, Alternate

Staff Present:

William Schoefman, Planning

Members Not Present:

Ed Guyot
Emily Coey

1) Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Rubin called the meeting to order at 8:10 am.

2) Accept April 12, 2017 Minutes

Chair Rubin made a motion to approve the April 12, 2017 minutes, Mr. Little seconded and the motion was passed unanimously.

Chair Rubin requested that the Improvement Fund document be put into the Old Business item on agenda. Mr. Schoefman suggested that West Street be placed in Project Updates. Everyone was in agreement with changes made to the agenda.

Chair Rubin requested that minutes be available a week before each committee meeting. Mr. Schoefman stated that he would try to get minutes out earlier for the next meeting. Mr. Little inquired about the Trail Lighting Report produced by a Geography student which was discussed during last month's meeting. Mr. Schoefman recommended Google Drive as the best way to share the report with committee.

3) Project Updates

Cheshire Rail Trail-Park Ave. Loop

Mr. Schoefman identified the Cheshire Rail Trail-Park Ave. Loop as top priority project. He stated that a second public meeting had been scheduled for Wednesday, May 24 at 6 pm with the Municipal Services Facilities and Infrastructure Committee. Mr. Schoefman stated that the project consultant will present the preferred alternatives for the project with public feedback included.

Chair Rubin inquired if the committee had seen the alternatives on the project. Mr. Schoefman replied they had not but that he would share an abbreviated version of the presentation from the consultant next Wednesday. Chair Rubin replied that the MSFI committee meeting would present an opportunity for the committee either to support or oppose the proposed alternatives and asked Mr. Schoefman if there was significant public opposition. Mr. Schoefman stated that he had an open public comment period for approximately 3 and a half weeks and that he had received little to no opposition, but did receive suggestions for alternatives. He also stated that he had participated in a number of interviews with members of the public as well as addressed emails and posts totaling between 39-42 responses to the survey in Keene, which he considered a pretty sufficient indication of interest. Mr. Schoefman also added that as soon as he makes revisions on the alternatives proposed based on public feedback that he will post it to Google Drive. Chair Rubin encouraged committee attendance at the MSFI meeting presentation as well as utilizing public comment opportunities.

South Bridge

Mr. Schoefman stated that South Bridge was opened by New Hampshire Department of Transportation. He referred the committee to attachments in the packet for a number of activities associated with Bike to Work and stated that there will be a Community Ride on Wednesday, May 17, which will start at the Eastern Ave. trailhead, stop off at Railroad Square and end at the South Bridge. Mr. Schoefman stated that Pathways of Keene will be helping with sponsorship for that event. He then stated that Friday May 19, the Mayor will do a brief ribbon cutting ceremony at 2:30 pm at the South Bridge. Mr. Schoefman handed committee members the Back to Work Week. He pointed out that the event will be smaller than the North Bridge festival. Chair Rubin asked if there would be a press release and Mr. Schoefman replied yes. He also stated that there would be a free bike raffle announced at the ceremony and encouraged committee members to learn more about the event.

Mr. Little stated the solution was finally in place for “the most dangerous pedestrian cruising in Keene. He observed that bollards had been installed on both sides into the concrete, as well as locks for authorized vehicles to gain access. He also added that there are access roads on both sides and a safe cleanup is still underway. Mr. Little suggested that NH DOT be thanked for the superb job that they did on making significant improvements on an issue that has been ongoing for over 20 years. He mentioned that the improvements included access roads and a lip on both sides of the concrete deck that diverts rainfall down the bridge to the drains instead of over the sides. Chair Rubin reaffirmed the success of this effort and recommended that committee members attend the ribbon cutting and acknowledge the success of the project’s vision.

Master Plan

Mr. Schoefman stated that the Master Plan is moving along well. He attached a draft of the Master Plan at the end of packet for the committee's review with a number of changes made based on committee feedback from the April meeting. He stated that the background begins on the second page and that the areas in brackets indicate where he will insert information.

Mr. Little offered feedback on 3 items. His first suggestion was a correction to the wording in the Background section of Master Plan. He recommended changing Bicycle Pedestrian Path Advisory Committee to Bicycle Pedestrian Path Advisory Committee. Secondly, Mr. Little recommended that all trails be referred to as ADA compliant with the exception of the Jonathan Daniels Trail (non-ADA compliant) and one short section of the Cheshire Rail Trail by Hurricane Road. Mr. Little stressed the importance of using the term "Multi-Use Trail" when referencing ADA-compliance in the Master Plan. He also offered his own language for the North Bridge section which described it as having been constructed using a Federal highway appropriation grant with massive contributions from Pathways for Keene and taxpayer funds and as designed to pay homage to Keene's railroad heritage, to never require painting and to be safe for a 6 year old child, as well as being ADA compliant. Mr. Little also questioned the utility of the maps showing project identification. He stated that the maps are confusing and could be improved.

Mr. Hawkes asked Mr. Schoefman why project updates were not included in the Master Plan. Mr. Schoefman indicated that he will soon include list of projects in the outline. Mr. Hawkes passed Mr. Schoefman an editorial comment for his review. Mr. Schoefman stated again that he is open to committee feedback via phone or email at any time.

Chair Rubin suggested putting priority projects as a sampling of work they have done somewhere in the methodology. Mr. Schoefman responded that he will put priority projects into a transition section between A and B and a Planning Efforts section and that he just began working on that section earlier this month so it is in early stages of development. Mr. Little stated that he likes the Master Plan overall and that it "feels right." Mr. Schoefmann emphasized that initially the committee described a 15-25 page plan that and that he is attempting to create a concise document with simple language per the committee's original recommendations. He also stated that he is open to feedback on how to create a more succinct document and in collaborating with committee members on the Master Plan. Mr. Little suggested paying special attention to the summaries.

Wayfinding

Mr. Schoefman stated that the topic of Wayfinding falls under the Master Plan Priority Project. . He stated that a Keene State Geography seminar will be using Wayfinding as a topic this upcoming year. Mr. Brehme explained that he is co-supervising the seminar with another faculty member who will be teaching the course to a group of 3 students, one of whom is an adult student who completed the Lighting project and who Mr.

Brehme believes to be very capable. He stated that he anticipates a positive outcome from this student's work.

Mr. Redfern stated that PFK will be giving the City Council a check for \$31,000 for the Lighting Project this upcoming cycle, plus an additional \$15,000 for this year's fundraiser, totaling about \$46,000. He said they may have more money as they are still fundraising. Mr. Schoefman added that PFK has a preferred couple of sections that will be put in a report for the committee which is tied into the report that the student created. Mr. Redfern stated that his survey feedback suggests there is a lot of enthusiasm for solar lights on the trail.

Mr. Schoefman told committee that there is some new Wayfinding Signage off of the Rail Trail at Railroad Square and on the other side of street. He stated that the Department of Public Works and the City Manager are testing new approaches and he encouraged committee members to visit the locations and provide him feedback for the City Manager.

Chair Rubin asked Mr. Schoefman about the newer kiosk with sponsor plaques located behind Panera Bread at the beginning of the trail. Mr. Redfern stated that he would like to see maps included with the plaques and told Mr. Schoefman that he will be "pressing for maps." Mr. Schoefman stated that the maps are the focus of the Parks and Recreation Director because he facilitated the project with PFK. Chair Rubin asked how a plaque can be sponsored. Mr. Redfern said kiosks were a joint effort between 5 participants as part of a Spirit of Place. He stated that Benson Wood provided wood at a steep discount, Melanson Roofing created the kiosk roofs free of charge, the Monadnock Conservancy and PFK provided financial funding and people performed the trail clean ups. All 5 groups are recognized in the kiosks for their trail efforts. He stated that there are 3 kiosks in total and the other two are located at Eastern Ave and Whitcomb's Mill. Mr. Redfern emphasized that if kiosks are not functional they will get vandalized.

Chair Rubin asked how organizations or individuals can become involved in supporting the trail system. Mr. Redfern suggested that organizations could support kiosks in other locations for Phase 3. He suggested that for the solar lighting club, organizations like the Lion's Club can purchase a light and in return receive a plaque on the light for sponsorship. Chair Rubin said that she liked the idea of purchasing a plaque and having it up somewhere. Mr. Schoefman suggested that Mr. Redfern, and the Parks and Recreation Director coordinate together on creating a website to create awareness about solar lights and the Spirit of Place and in general for supporting trail system. Chair Rubin agreed and further emphasized leveraging public interest and plaque donations for making improvements for the trail system.

Mr. Schoefman briefly left the table and in his absence Chair Rubin mentioned that she sent an email to committee to inform them that Southwest Regional Planning is doing a more advanced Complete Streets workshop in Troy, NH. She encouraged members of the committee to attend along with other people from the City. However, there is a conflict with the Mayor's ribbon cutting ceremony and the community discussion for next steps

for Complete Streets. She suggested having Ms. Mari Brunner attend the next committee meeting to discuss what was presented at workshop and discuss next steps for Complete Streets. She suggested to the committee that they add Ms. Brunner's discussion to next month's agenda to begin the process of moving Complete Streets forward. When Mr. Schoefman returned to room he agreed and stated that he will be at workshop in the morning.

West Street-Complete Street

Mr. Schoefman suggested looking at the type of street that is designated as a complete street in Complete Street Guidelines. He suggested a discussion with City Engineer or Mr. Lindquist and recommended adding their attendance to the agenda for next month. Mr. Schoefman shared that West Street is positioned well to accommodate bicyclists but next steps are to discuss with engineers what the feasibility is of making it a complete street. He suggested looking at gateway streets in Complete Streets Guidelines to get ideas on what West Street would look like as a complete street. Chair Rubin agreed that committee should review definition of Complete Streets. Mr. Schoefman added that sidewalks are cramped on West Street and cross blocks are a question for engineers.

Chair Rubin asked if there would be time to accommodate Ms. Brunner for June meeting if they rearranged agenda items. Mr. Schoefman agreed that agenda items would probably need to be changed and he suggested that if members are in agreement, that he could work on Master Plan outside of meeting and share updates with committee through email or Google to accommodate speakers. The Committee agreed to rearrange agenda items for next June to accommodate Ms. Brunner and City Engineers. Committee members agreed to this revision to June meeting.

4) Old Business- Public Outreach, Workshops and Events

Mr. Schoefman distributed flyers with list of events for the Bike to Work Week. He stated there should be events listings on social media as well. Mr. Redfern stated that there have been very few raffle ticket sales for the bicycle giveaway (which includes a \$550 bike from Norm's and youth bikes from Walmart). He encouraged committee members to purchase tickets at the ceremony. Mr. Schoefman stated that they are attempting to incentivize participation through social media and that committee members should help spread the word. Mr. Schoefman said he would email committee members a PDF about the raffle.

Mr. Schoefmann reminded committee members of Southwest Regional Planning Commission Workshop on Friday, May 17. He said it is an all-day event with breakfast and lunch served. He encouraged committee participation. He said that the Monadnock Alliance for Sustainable Transportation (MAST) subcommittees are working throughout the month and recommended visiting their website for meeting dates.

5) New Business

Guest, Mr. Daloz introduced himself as member of the Agricultural Commission. He proposed that the committee consider the idea of planting food plants like fruit trees and bushes along bike trails. He invited collaboration with committee members on these ideas. Mr. Daloz cited Northampton, Massachusetts as a case example and admitted that there are many questions on feasibility and engineering; however, he wanted to pitch the idea to the committee and gauge interest as a means of increasing food production in Keene and increasing the aesthetic pleasure of the trail system. Mr. Redfern asked if Mr. Daloz knew of any groups which would be willing to assist with the effort. Mr. Daloz replied not yet, however, he stated it would be an interesting area to explore along with the Agriculture Commission. He stated that there are many civic organizations that have various interests which might be interested in sponsoring trees in a similar way to the Solar Lighting project. Mr. Schoefman suggested that they can explore the idea in the Master Plan as long as he can obtain documentation on logistics of the process.

Mr. Little stated that there are two major “flavors” of trails and feasibility for the idea depends on who owns the trails. He stated that some of these ideas have already been implemented on some of these trails. However, the State is very reticent about planting trees because of increased maintenance costs. He stated that others have called for more foliage outside the loop (as opposed to the City-owned inner loop) but that those trails remain barren because they are state owned property. Mr. Daloz suggested crafting and sending a letter to pitch the idea. Chair Rubin suggested contacting Monadnock Conservancy as their mission has shifted to include public participation in natural areas and they may support the idea of enhancing trails as a way to get people into nature. She shared her experiences picking blueberries in the summer from the bushes alongside the Ashuelot Park trails and how she was greatly saddened when the bushes were removed from the trails. She stated her support for Mr. Daloz’ idea and Mr. Schoefman added again that he would like to find examples of where it has worked.

Chair Rubin thanked Mr. Schoefman for his Project Updates and said it was good to see that money is being spent in the way it was intended for trail projects. She asked if he is sure that money was used for trail projects and he said they will have to “bird dog” it in the upcoming years. Chair Rubin asked that now that they have prioritized how they would approach things moving forward. Mr. Schoefman said that major projects like the Complete Street redesign initiative for West Street would likely be a CIP project because it would cost a lot of money even for the planning stages. He stated he did know an exact price tag for the project and that the committee could explore prices at the June meeting.

Mr. Schoefman stated that in the past they have utilized Federal and State grant opportunities like TAP grant funding. Chair Rubin asked what they should do about Jonathan Daniels on priority list. Mr. Schoefman suggested they remove it from list as it has not been a top priority for the past 6-7 months. Chair Rubin asked the committee what they thought and Mr. Schoefman stated that if they remove it from the list it might lose priority altogether. Chair Rubin stated that the biggest economic development impact would be West Street so there are trade-offs yet she was unsure on the steps on how

funds were allocated. She recommended further discussion on how to approach re-prioritizing and how money was being allocated. Mr. Schoefman asked Chair Rubin if she wanted to make a specific motion to the City Council. Chair Rubin reiterated that she wanted to know where money is being allocated. Mr. Schoefman clarified that priority was implied on how they prioritized the 7 projects yet it is difficult to determine allocation of funds to future projects because of how the different departments interact with the CIP. Chair Rubin asked Mr. Schoefman what steps were necessary in moving priorities along in terms of funding. He recommended working with specific departments to include projects important to the Committee. He indicated he would ask that representation from DPW be requested for the June meeting to discuss the West Street project and to discuss the best steps to support initiatives of the Committee short of submitting a proposal to City Council.

Mr. Little asked to clarify who is responsible for the South Bridge structure and if there were an accident who would assume legal responsibility. Mr. Schoefman replied that he believes the South Bridge is still a State project and that the City is responsible for minor maintenance. Mr. Little asked if it would be a continuing relationship between the two organizations and Mr. Schoefman replied that the meeting constituted a final inspection. He also said he would try to find out more about the legal responsibility of the structure for Mr. Little but that was his best understanding of the meeting.

6) Adjournment

Chair Rubin adjourned the meeting at 9:15 am

Respectfully submitted by,
Ayshah Kassamali-Fox, Minute Taker