

City of Keene
New Hampshire

BICYCLE, PEDESTRIAN PATH ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, September 13, 2017 8:00 AM City Hall, Second Floor Conference Room

Members Present:

Chris Brehme, Vice Chair
Thom Little, Member
Charles Redfern, Member
Sam Hawkes, Alternate
Dylan Benik, Alternate
Drew Bryenton, Guest

Staff Present:

Will Schoefmann, Staff

Members Not Present:

Linda Rubin, Chair
Ed Guyot
Don Hayes, Member

1) Roll Call

Vice Chair Brehme recognized Mr. Benik and Mr. Hawkes as alternates for the meeting and called meeting to order at 8:03 am. Roll call was conducted.

2) Accept August 9, 2017 Minutes

Mr. Little motioned to accept minutes with revisions, Mr. Redfern seconded and it was passed by unanimous vote.

Revisions are as follows:

Page 1, Approve August 9, 2017 Minutes, paragraph 1, change:
“Mr. Redfern seconded (?)” to “Mr. Redfern seconded”

Page 4, paragraph 2

Page 5, paragraph 3

Page 6, paragraph 1

Page 7, New Business, paragraph 2, change:

“Pathways of Keene” to “Pathways for Keene.”

Page 6, paragraph 3, change:

“Southwest Regional Planning” to “Southwest Region Planning Commission.”

Page 7, paragraph 2, change:
“his apartments” to “he parks”

Page 7, paragraph 2, change:
“cars come through at a great speed” to “bicycles come through at a great speed.”

Mr. Little suggested shifting conversations to one conversation as it can get confusing for minute-taker. He suggested referring to organizations by their acronyms to avoid confusion, for example, PFK for Pathways for Keene. Mr. Schoefmann suggested instead to say the entire word.

3) Project Updates (Note: BPPAC Master Plan Documents available to committee members on google drive)

Mr. Schoefmann stated that highlighted items on Agenda are the ones that have had movement and he would touch upon those items.

He stated that the TAP project-Cheshire Rail Trail-Park Avenue Loop alternatives have been approved by City Council on June 1, 2017. He said the historical resource review was conducted and a change order for additional engineering study costs was processed and is due at the end of September for submittal. Mr. Redfern asked if it was prolonged because of the additional requirements and asked if it was on budget and Mr. Schoefmann replied yes. Mr. Brehme asked Mr. Schoefmann about the loop intended to come back at the “dog leg” next to Kohl’s. Mr. Schoefmann replied that there will be a widened tip down that will allow cyclists to get off of the roadway under the bypass and more easily onto that segment of trail, and there will be “sharrows” (shared lane markings) underneath the bypass that are transitioned from the bike lane on Park Avenue. He said that the intersection lacks space to accommodate bicyclists. Mr. Brehme asked if there is any discussion about bringing striping down to Pitcher Street by Target. Mr. Schoefmann said it was in the alternatives but the budget did not allow for it. He said that they had to refine the scope to meet the essential needs of project before making any specific neighborhood connections.

Mr. Schoefmann stated that the Master Plan has fallen behind due to his responsibility of administering the TAP grant and the Southwest Region Planning Commission and MAST mini-grant, so he has set some updated deadlines for certain portions of the project detailed in the back of the packet. He added that if anyone on the committee wanted to seek out grant money the City could hire a consultant to work on the Master Plan. He stated that he has some portions to finalize, including Mr. Little’s information, as well as adding trail maps and other graphics. Mr. Schoefmann said he will begin the sustainability portion of the Master Plan in October. Mr. Brehme asked if they could expect updates for the background at October’s meeting and the sustainability piece at November’s meeting and Mr. Schoefmann agreed.

Mr. Schoefmann stated that he had a meeting with a new sign tech and would be going today to install the “noncompliant signage” at 3 preselected locations along Maple

Avenue and at Washington Street coming off Routes 9 and 10, right after the right of way for where the state ends. He said the signs would be in place by the end of day. He also pointed to a letter of inquiry from Monadnock Cycling Club (MCC) which he attached to the end of the packet. Mr. Hayes asked if Mr. Schoefmann thought that the letter of inquiry helped moved things along more quickly. Mr. Schoefmann replied that the letter was addressed to the Mayor and Manager with an urgent tone.

Mr. Schoefmann stated that he would also be working with New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT) regarding the 3 newer compliance style signs he had acquired for free from Newport, New Hampshire. He said he has 13 spots that were initially envisioned in the MCC donation of the older signs, all in the right of way along Routes 9, 10, 12 and 101, and 3 of those spots should be fulfilled prior to year-end, however, that would be dependent upon NHDOT's approval of encroachment agreement.

Mr. Redfern updated committee on Lighting Project. He stated that Pathways for Keene has received all of the RFP responses and they have selected the lowest bidder (\$49,000) to place lights from Island Street to pitcher Avenue. He said that they have pre-selected the lowest bidder but first want to verify the strength of the composite material the vendor uses for the fixtures and the poles. Mr. Redfern said Mr. Bohannon (Director, Parks, Recreation and Cemeteries) will also come to evaluate the fixture and the pole. He stated in about two weeks they will have a vote on the bidder. He said they have \$50,000 in budget so they are all set with funding.

Mr. Redfern stated that the vendor they selected is the most technologically advanced option and also costs the least. He said the battery is inside the head fixture of the LED and the solar array is bigger than many of the others and it sits on top of the head. He said they had a bidder that was a bit lower in cost but the product was ornamental with four lantern heads, about 8-10 feet in height and not very durable. Mr. Little asked if the connection of the light to the post is standardized to facilitate replacement with a future upgrade with minimal expense to the City. Mr. Redfern said the entire unit including the poles is relatively inexpensive (\$1200) because the composite material they use is cheaper than steel. He said the foundation is anchored underground and there are no wires involved. Mr. Little added that the real expense might be the upgrades in the future. Mr. Schoefmann stated that street lights have about a 30 year lifespan. Mr. Little replied that the report from an earlier meeting suggested that the technology is evolving fast and Mr. Redfern replied that it would be like a "dog chasing its tail" to keep up with the technology. Mr. Little stated that it was important to standardize the interface to ensure they are easily replaceable. Mr. Schoefmann suggested that Mr. Redfern bring these questions up with the vendor for clarification.

Mr. Schoefmann said the Planning staff met with a geography seminar group from Keene State College (KSC) to review goals and to kick off a project they will be conducting in cooperation with the City. He said they are looking at downtown wayfinding to be incorporated as part of the downtown Revitalization project and students will be looking at the paths specifically and transition zones and there will be more to come on that as information arises. Mr. Brehme said the Professor leading the project has given him the

opportunity to speak about the project with BPPAC because of his research experiences with wayfinding. He said utilizing Keene State students as subjects for understanding how newcomers navigate the City is an important source of information. He said he will ensure that the students' work is as applicable to Mr. Schoefmann's work as possible. Mr. Schoefmann said he hopes students will be working on locations, like the Monadnock marketplace and other civic destinations, and identifying destinations along the trail and overall citing their overall interests to focus the wayfinding project. Mr. Brehme asked if the white signs around town are part of the revitalization project. Mr. Schoefmann said he is not sure but he thinks that the City Manager asked Department of Public Works to come up with an idea and to test it. Mr. Brehme asked if students should contact Mr. Lundquist about white signs and Mr. Schoefmann replied yes. He said there are many different levels of wayfinding that can be approached but to stick to this level. He said he will make sure the committee is updated. He also said he forwarded a survey from another student regarding Ashuelot River Park and Goose Pond which provides good material and helpful resources. He asked Mr. Brehme to please send out a link to committee for previous projects from Geography website to give them an understanding of what students are doing and so that they may respond to student surveys. Mr. Brehme said there are interactive webmaps on student surveys that could be a great resource for BPPAC.

Mr. Little said that the flashing lights on the pedestrian walkway on Roxbury Street become invisible when the sun is lower in the sky and he thinks it is probably the same issue in the morning hours. He suggested changing the color of the lights from white to green could resolve this problem. Mr. Little said he was unsure who to report the problem but he is concerned about the potential for accidents. Mr. Schoefmann said he would take note of it but to contact Mr. Blomquist or Mr. Lussier, City Engineer, with that problem. Mr. Brehme said those lights are a step up from what they were before and the sun's position will change seasonally and that may minimize the problem, as could the new MoCo Arts building when it is completed.

4) Complete Streets

West Street- Mr. Schoefmann said he could lead the discussion about the Complete Streets design guidelines although they had previously discussed having an engineer come in. He said West Street is broken into two segments when looking at guidelines. He said the section coming off of Central Square up to Gilbo Avenue by the People's United Bank, just before it opens into four lanes is referred to as a Slow Street. He said Slow Streets call for a combination of traffic calming, flashing beacons and sharrows, and are the limitations of the bike facilities that are envisioned for a Slow Street. He said downtown is another example, the roundabout at Winchester and Marlboro is supposed to be a Slow Street with slower speed limits, bump outs, etc. Mr. Schoefmann said the segment heading out past Dunkin Donuts (Gilbo Avenue) and further out is considered a Gateway Street, which is characterized by more traffic volume because vehicles use it to access city core, more robust bike facilities, protected bike lanes, higher visibility, flashing beacons and bump outs for pedestrians as well, and often times incorporating some on-street parking. Mr. Schoefmann said these are two characteristics that they have

set forth in the Complete Street design guidelines to have West Street look like in those segments. He encouraged members to look at guidelines. He said in the first segment, Central Square to Gilbo Avenue, there is not a lot of space in the right of way for accommodation of a bike lane, but when the right of way opens up and there is greater traffic volumes there may be more possibilities of opening up a bike lane or protected bike lane. He said one of the things the City had tried to avoid in the past are mid-block crossings for pedestrians, for example, where there is not a four-way intersection because it is considered poor engineering practice. He said the condition of the sidewalks past School Street is dismal, there is no standardization of the sidewalks and often times a utility pole is stuck in the middle of the sidewalk. Mr. Schoefmann said that is an overview of the existing conditions as compared with what the Complete Streets guidelines recommend. He said Southwest Region Planning Commission helped develop the sidewalks and maybe they designated them as transition zones or a combination of facilities in that section. Mr. Redfern asked if they have considered removing the poles in the middle of the sidewalks. Mr. Brehme said he thinks they recently placed new poles making the sidewalks even narrower. Mr. Schoefmann said an important thing to consider are the timelines and expense of these types of projects, for example, it would be good to consider interim solutions that can be implemented for West Street without redoing the entire street due to limited funding. He encouraged committee to envision what improvements could be made within a 5 year span vs. a 10 year span, what transitional or phasing of a Complete Street would look like and mapping them up to an incremental timeline of implementation.

Mr. Brehme asked if the lane configuration on West Street would be changed into single lane traffic each way with a middle turn lane, or is West Street locked into two lanes each way. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he is unsure. Mr. Redfern asked if BPPAC can make suggestions, for example, for burying utility lines, Mr. Schoefmann replied that he is soliciting recommendations from BPPAC and suggested identifying grant funding for West Street as there are opportunities for complete streets and corridors. Mr. Brehme stated that infrastructure funding is ideal and Mr. Schoefmann said that the City jumps on those opportunities but then priorities can shift into different directions.

Mr. Bryenton asked how the rail trail interacts with bike infrastructure on West Street in terms of preferred options of bike lanes on West Street or creating a series of exit and entry points to the rail trail to access West Street. Mr. Brehme said he thinks more could be done along the rail trail with signage indicating which businesses are along this market place and across West Street as well. He said he often sees people running across West Street coming from Hannaford's with groceries and trying to not get killed. Mr. Schoefmann suggested getting rid of sidewalks altogether and creating a mixed use walkway, however, people will try to use the sidewalk. He said along Rail Trail serves a degree of commuting function but it probably more used recreationally so in terms of a transportation corridor it is important to have contiguous facilities throughout. He said people coming out of the West Keene neighborhoods will still ride along West Street regardless. Mr. Brehme stated that the Center of Keene is a good example and Mr. Schoefmann agreed that people will still use the easiest way to get from point A to B regardless of how they try to affect behavior. He recommended a side path because there

are large sidewalks coming from the underpass. Mr. Brehme stated that he thinks it is an imminent domain issue and does not know how practical these things are. Mr. Schoefmann said they built improved concrete sidewalks that are about 6 foot in some sections and then go to about 8 foot as part of the new section, so on West Street do you gun for sidewalks of that caliber or do you piecemeal or stripe bike lanes now. Mr. Little stated that there are two subjects that are intertwined- one is recreational use and the trail system supports that, then the other subject is commuting. He does not think the shared sidewalk services the community needs at all as the sidewalk access maximizes interruptions. He said for recreational use it is great, sidewalks that are 8 foot wide eating up bicycle space in favor of recreational bicycle space. He said West Street itself needs to be wider but it would be at the expense of the sidewalk and perhaps they should have bicycle lanes and then pedestrian walking access that is narrower. Mr. Schoefmann said he was suggesting the mixed use pathway like those by the YMCA but he sees Mr. Little's point about commuter access. Mr. Little suggested developing a long-term plan for widening West Street to include priority bike lanes for commuter bicycle use and then secondarily ensuring walking pedestrian access on both side. Mr. Brehme agreed that there are two separate issues, recreation and commuting, and he is concerned primarily with safety especially in terms of the pedestrians on West Street throughout the seasons. He suggested separating the sidewalk from the car lane, and then secondarily focusing on the cyclists because as of now they can use the bike lanes. Mr. Schoefmann said the intent is to gather ideas and he can contact the City Engineer if the committee is interested or alternatively, Mr. Schoefmann can speak with the Engineer about what is possible. Mr. Schoefmann said he is coordinating new striping facilities in line with resurfacing projects so depending on how soon you want implement these things is one way of approaching this.

5) Old Business

- Public Outreach and Events-Mr. Redfern announced that there will be a roundtable event called "What Happened after the Trains left Keene" at Sunday at 1 pm at Historical Society of Cheshire County on Main Street, focused on what led to the abandonment of the rail beds from that point until today. He said the event will include the Cub Scouts conceptualizing idea of bike paths, Pathways for Keene's creation, as well as an Antioch study, and currently BPPAC is missing from that group. He encouraged BPPAC members to represent the committee. Mr. Schoefmann suggested Mr. Redfern email members the details.

Request for letter/resolution re: ATVs- Mr. Redfern stated that the request letters for banning ATVs from bike paths have turned into resolutions. He said that the Conservation Commission has proposed a resolution. Mr. Schoefmann said the way it was stated at City Council was that the resolution was to be sent to congressional representatives instead of letters, which is on the Municipal Services and Infrastructure (MSI) committee agenda and encouraged members top attend if they were interested September 13 at 6 pm at Council Chambers. Mr. Little said he supports the entire community taking a position with a resolution which he believes will have a stronger impact. Mr. Schoefmann clarified that the request states that the City of Keene will not

allow ATVs on improved rail trails in the city and it was put forward by Councilor George Hansel and heard at full Council and referred to MSI committee.

6) **New Business**

Mr. Hawkes asked for a Bicycle Mayor update and Mr. Schoefmann said Tiffany has had two meetings with the Mayor already identifying her goals: Education and Outreach.

Mr. Brehme asked for clarification on length of meeting, 9:00 or 9:30 am and Mr. Schoefmann said they should clarify that at the next meeting.

7) **Adjournment-Next meeting date –October 11, 2017**

Mr. Brehme adjourned meeting at 9:10 am.

Respectfully submitted by,

Ayshah Kassamali-Fox, Minute Taker

Additional Edits by,

Will Schoefmann, Planning Staff