

City of Keene
New Hampshire

BICYCLE/PEDESTRIAN PATH ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, March 9, 2016

8:00 AM

2nd floor Conference Room

Members Present:

Linda Rubin, Chair
Christopher Brehme, Vice Chair
Charles (Chuck) Redfern
Thom Little

Members Not Present:

Don Hayes
Emily Coey, Alternate

Staff Present:

William Schoefmann, Planning
Andrew Bohannon, Parks & Recreation
(arrived at 8:23 AM)
Kürt Blomquist, Public Works (arrived at 8:21 AM)
Tara Kessler, Planning (until 8:57 AM)
Don Lussier, Public Works (arrived at 8:30 AM)

Chair Rubin called the meeting to order at 8:11AM and declared the meeting an “emergency,” per RSA 91-A:3, because the committee needs to conduct its business of prioritizing the projects. This means that Mr. Redfern, in attendance via cell phone on speaker phone, counts as part of the quorum.

1) Roll Call

Roll Call was conducted.

2) Accept Minutes of February 10, 2016

Mr. Little made a motion to approve the minutes of February 10, 2016, with the following amendments, which was seconded by Mr. Brehme:

Page 2, d), change “for travel study” to “for trail study.”

Page 8, paragraph 5, change “the City seems to only make infrastructure ADA-compliant when a funding source requires it” to “the City requires ADA-compliance when a funding source requires it.”

The motion passed by a unanimous, roll call vote.

3) Project Updates

a) Roundhouse T Safety Report

Mr. Schoefmann stated that he and City Engineer Don Lussier looked at the list of the safety concerns that Mr. Little brought up. He continued that Mr. Lussier is compiling a report that will be available to this committee and will be sent to Eversource.

Mr. Little stated that there was only one that was, in his opinion, necessary to address right away. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he and Mr. Lussier found others. Mr. Little asked if the concern is being addressed. Mr. Schoefmann replied yes.

b) Cheshire Rail Trail Phase II

Mr. Schoefmann reported that there is no status change. He continued that he will keep the BPPAC informed about drainage issues.

c) Jonathan Daniels Trail

Mr. Schoefmann reported that there is no status change.

d) Jonathan Daniels Trail Phase II

Mr. Schoefmann reported that there is no change. This is in the Planning CIP for FY17.

e) Cheshire Rail Trail Park Ave Loop

Mr. Schoefmann reported that the City received three responses to their Request for Quotes (RFQ), from Clough Harbor, DuBois & King, and Holden Engineering. Staff is reviewing these responses and they will have interviews scheduled the week of March 25.

f) South Bridge

Mr. Schoefmann reported that there is no change. He asked Mr. Little if he had anything to add.

Mr. Little stated that the scheduled finish date for South Bridge was going to say "October 28, 2016" instead of "N/A," on the "Project Status" document from February. He continued that he tried contracting the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT) twice and got no response, and thus has no information. He suggests having a legend at the bottom of the "Project Status" document that clarifies that "budget even" means "within budget." Mr. Schoefmann replied that he will figure something out.

Mr. Redfern reported that Pathways for Keene (PFK) met the other night and decided to try to use their annual fundraising race to come up with money for putting in some kind of lighting on South Bridge. He was not at the meeting but he got that report. Mr. Schoefmann replied that is great and he can let him know how the City can facilitate the conversation with the State regarding that.

Mr. Little stated that this was discussed in the last meeting and the object was to have it lit. He continued that the question was whether it had to be physically attached to the structure. Mr. Schoefmann replied that NHDOT will have a lot of comment about what they think is appropriate lighting, and he does not want to speculate what they might say. Mr. Little replied that there is also the question of lighting from the structure over to the athletic field and from the structure in the opposite direction. Chair Rubin replied that there will be a lot of steps. Mr. Schoefmann replied that the conversation will be between PFK, Keene State College (KSC), the City, and the State, at some point. Mr. Little replied that conceivably it might have no impact on South Bridge at all. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he does not think so. He continued that he thinks lighting might occur after

construction is completed. Mr. Little stated the project is time critical. The money evaporates on October 28, 2016. Any engineering changes would slow it down.

g) Bike Racks

Mr. Schoefmann stated that he assumes the Highway Division will be setting bike racks out fairly soon, probably late April. He continued that he will get a better idea from William Byrne, Highway Superintendent. He will get Mari Brunner to give an update on the Rack it Up program.

Mr. Blomquist arrived at 8:21 AM.

h) Complete Streets

Mr. Schoefmann stated that they will have a brief presentation today about Complete Streets by Ms. Kessler and Mr. Blomquist.

i) Master Plan

Mr. Schoefmann noted that they are working on this. They will be doing the built environment priorities in today's meeting.

j) Mayor's Challenge

Mr. Schoefmann reported that he is working with the Mayor on a soon-to-be-released PSA regarding the importance of accommodating bicyclists and pedestrians traveling in the transportation network. Chair Rubin asked if the BPPAC can get the summary packet. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he will post it to the website and send a link.

Mr. Bohannon arrived at 8:23 AM.

k) Signage

Mr. Schoefmann reported that there is no change. Internally they are looking at a wayfinding strategy. He continued that he is in contact with NHDOT regarding the State's right-of-way sites and the installation of the signs about the 3-foot passing law. Those should be up fairly soon.

l) Lighting

Mr. Schoefmann stated that this is an ongoing discussion for the BPPAC to have input in. Today they got an update from Mr. Redfern.

4) Complete Streets Presentation

Ms. Kessler distributed copies of the Design Guidelines. She stated that she emailed copies of the Complete Streets documents. She continued that this is a product of a partnership between Healthy Monadnock 2020, the Southwest Regional Planning Commission (SWRPC), and the City. These design guidelines are the companion document adopted along with the Complete Streets policy. It is an internal document to be used by City staff as they design and build in the public right-of-way to make sure Complete Streets elements are considered.

Ms. Kessler continued that page 3 has a description of Complete Streets and their benefits. Page 4 outlines the six different street types for the city, developed by the Planning and Public Works Departments and the SWRPC. There are different considerations for the different street types. This is meant to emphasize that Complete Streets are not one and the same; they look different in different places. Page 5 has a map showing the different street types.

Ms. Kessler continued that Slow Streets are downtown. Page 6 defines them: areas where traffic is slowed down so all users can safely move within that area. They do not necessarily recommend protected bike lanes on slow streets because they are trying to slow traffic down, including bike traffic, so that potential conflicts are minimized as much as possible and everyone is cautious. There is a list of slow streets. Some roadways might change along the course from a slow street to a different type. Page 8 shows what a slow street might look like.

Ms. Kessler continued that Page 9 outlines the different considerations for both the roadway and roadside zones. It is organized as a check list. The City might not be able to incorporate all of these elements into one roadway, but this guidance prompts staff, City Council, and the community at large, as they are working on projects, to see if they considered the elements.

Mr. Lussier arrived at 8:30 AM.

Ms. Kessler continued that for example, larger sidewalks on a slow street would accommodate more pedestrian facilities like outdoor dining, pedestrian crossing spaces, or bike racks. A green buffer is recommended; furniture and lighting are considerations. There are roadway zone suggestions for the width of the travel lanes, medians or refuge islands, parking, etc. These are considerations to walk through.

Mr. Blomquist stated that they will see this format in each of the other street types, in a checklist format so that, for instance, when Public Works designs construction projects and reviews them with the City Council it provides a mechanism that the City Council can walk through to see if they have talked about and considered the elements. The roadways vary from 20 to 100 feet. They also have different values. Trees are very important. Sometimes putting in certain elements would require taking a tree down and that would have to be a discussion. This allows the discussions and makes sure they are thinking about these elements before doing a project, instead of after it is finished.

Ms. Kessler stated that they looked at other cities' models of guidelines, as well as national documents from the Complete Streets Coalition, the DOT, and others. Mr. Blomquist added that this design guidance assists staff not just with large construction projects, but with road repairs or rehabilitations, overlays, re-striping, and other everyday work. Also, as developers come in they receive this guidance and are asked to consider these elements. This guidance is for anytime that work will happen within the right-of-way. He gave more examples.

Chair Rubin stated that she does not see bus stops as considered elements. Ms. Kessler replied that one of the 6 street types is an overlay, transit. It is kind of like having a base zone and a transit overlay on top of that.

Ms. Kessler continued with the document and explained Gateway Streets, the primary travel corridors from downtown to the city borders and beyond. She continued that Bicycle Streets are ones on which they know, from various data sources, that there is a lot of bike traffic. The focus should be on ensuring that bikes can move safely with traffic. Mr. Blomquist added that *every* street is/can be a street for bicyclists, but these are streets that typically connect to something like the trail system or parks, where you will see a higher volume of bike traffic. They are trying to make sure they are accommodating and providing safe corridors for that activity.

Ms. Kessler continued that the majority of Keene's roadways are Neighborhood Streets, in medium- to high-density residential areas. She gave examples. They all look a little different but the common link is they are primarily residential and do not have a lot of through traffic. She explained the considerations for these streets. Mr. Blomquist spoke of the interesting variety among these streets and the diversity of neighborhoods.

Ms. continued stated that Rural Streets are roadways that are in many areas of Keene, further from downtown, where houses are far apart and far back from the road. Considerations are as simple as ensuring paved shoulders and clear zones for snow storage, and maintaining vegetation to improve visibility.

Ms. Kessler explained the Transit Overlay – the map shows where transit is today in addition to areas that could be well suited for it in the future. Considerations for transit corridors include amenities such as lighting, signage, bike racks, covered shelters, spaces for bus to veer off to load/unload, parking nearby, safe crossings nearby, etc.

Ms. Kessler concluded that there are so many Complete Streets resources out there, and the City wanted a document tailor-made to Keene instead of a national set of guidelines. Healthy Monadnock 2020 funded this through a CDC grant. This can be a dynamic document as the community changes over time or best practices change.

Mr. Blomquist stated that “Complete Streets” does not seem like the right term and he prefers “Inclusive Streets.” He continued that that is more accurate because they are trying to ensure that all users and activities are being included – pedestrians, bicyclists, transit, people of all ages and abilities, and so on and so forth.

Chair Rubin stated that this is a great piece of work and she is grateful to everyone who played a part in it. They should all be very proud to have this in the community. She continued that yes, this guidance can change as the community changes, e.g. as the population ages and/or as more active transportation options are built and usage increases. She continued that as Safe Routes to School and other active transportation elements really get going, more and more people will be out there. She recommends a regular, intentional process of reviewing the guidance, as a community. Do they have

plans for studying how the roads are being used? They should be intentional in engaging others in measuring the uses so they remain aware of changes.

Mr. Brehme praised everyone's work on the design guidelines. He asked how close they are to the "picture perfect" situation for all of these streets, and if anyone is keeping an eye on that. Mr. Blomquist replied that they will always strive for utopia and that is part of the process. He continued that folks want certain changes downtown, but they have not yet had a conversation with the businesses and the community regarding an overall vision of what they want downtown to look like. They have done a great job on the Slow Street concept. They are now at a tipping point where there is interest in downtown activities that the downtown was not designed for originally, when it was more commercial. When Court and Washington Streets were re-done, some people were happy while others were unhappy, when elements were either put in or taken out, on both sides. The process has been working underneath. The Design Guidance documents that process. They will probably never get to everything that is pictured here because there are tradeoffs – such as having room for trees, or dedicated parking, but not both. Compromises are needed. This documents what the utopian vision would be if they started now with a clean slate.

Mr. Brehme replied that he does not expect a gold standard, but wonders if there is a way of saying, for example, "This is at 50%." Ms. Kessler replied that this is a community partnership. She continued that it is important to know what the baseline is and know how well they are doing in achieving Complete Streets goals. While inventorying the roads they were out in the field increasing their understanding of the streets, and that kind of information would be helpful – e.g. where sidewalks are missing on neighborhood streets. Mr. Schoefmann stated that they are looking at Marlboro St. right now due to a number of planning efforts. They are taking advantage of opportunities as they arise.

5) BPPAC Master Plan

Ms. Kessler left at 8:57 AM.

Chair Rubin stated that she did not see trail lighting on the projects list. Discussion ensued and Mr. Schoefmann stated that he will add it.

Mr. Little noted that the values should be "low, medium, and high," instead of "low, moderate, and high" on the Project Priorities Assessment Tool. Mr. Schoefmann noted that on the matrix there are a number of changes. Instead of the previous two scales he forwent trying to come up with a scale because low, moderate/medium, and high were consistent ways of ranking either axis. The committee can give feedback on that. He also felt that having a consistent system for both would remove confusion. Last time, the BPPAC had a lot of questions about how he came up with the organizational support rankings. On the matrix it is under the X axis. He defined "Organizational support" (the X axis) as "Budget + Policy (CIP/Operational Budget + City Code/State Law) + Program Opportunities." The Y axis, "Importance Level," is defined as "Community Objectives (Safety + Sustainability + Accessibility + Availability + Connectivity)." Those all tie back to the Master Plan, and they are values the BPPAC highlighted at their last meeting.

He continued that he put “medium” in the spreadsheet but “moderate” on the matrix tool and he will change that to “medium” as Mr. Little suggested.

Mr. Little stated that this new way that Mr. Schoefmann is presenting it is much clearer than the previous way. Chair Rubin stated that she prefers “moderate” to “medium” and asked for thoughts. Mr. Little replied that an advantage of “medium” is that no one would ever try to merge what they are doing now with last month’s confusion. Mr. Brehme agreed. Chair Rubin agreed to have Mr. Schoefmann change it to “medium.”

Mr. Schoefmann stated that he does not want to put the BPPAC under pressure to rank these. He suggests he send every committee member the spreadsheet to rank on their own and that they turn it in by a deadline. Then he will compile and average the scores and report out at the next meeting, and they can project where these things will fall within the matrix. Mr. Little replied that for today’s meeting, he went through and ranked the items that he had an opinion on and left blank the ones he needed to hear more information about. He showed what his paper looks like. He continued that regarding prioritizing the blank ones, he is not confident enough to do that in a vacuum.

Chair Rubin replied that they can do each it on their own as an exercise but the value will be in the conversation with everyone at the next meeting. They are each at different levels of understanding of what the projects are.

Mr. Little suggested a “no opinion” category. Mr. Schoefmann replied that hopefully that will not be necessary as they have discussion. Mr. Redfern replied that if they each do this exercise on their own they can be flexible and change their rankings as a group during discussion. He continued that he agrees with Mr. Schoefmann’s first brush at this. He suggested Mr. Schoefmann be prepared to give a little preamble to each project, might help the group discuss why they ranked the way they did.

Mr. Redfern stated that he hopes the group can reach finality in a meeting or two. Mr. Brehme agreed. Mr. Schoefmann stated that he has a few more updates to do to this packet. He asked if he should send the updated one to the BPPAC so they each can work on filling it out and come prepared next time to discuss it. Chair Rubin replied yes.

Mr. Bohannon stated that to Mr. Little’s point, he thinks it might help if trail system projects had their own assessment tool, for ease of looking at the information, so there is not too much information on each tool. Mr. Schoefmann replied that when they do the exercise here he will project the matrix and draw dots on it. He continued that when they report out, the way Mr. Bohannon is suggesting is the best way to do it, so there are not so many dots they cannot conceptualize what is happening.

Mr. Little asked what BE 9 – Access Points ID & Analysis is, and whether there is a description of that project somewhere. Mr. Schoefmann replied no, there currently is not, but he could create one. He continued that most projects are pretty self-explanatory, but some connection and access projects he could give more description for. He could try and relate them back to the goals the BPPAC decided upon, on the “shades of blue”

spreadsheet. Mr. Little asked him to make sure everyone has a copy so they are all working off of the same thing.

Chair Rubin stated that new, or even not-so-new, BPPAC members might not know what all the projects are. She continued that it would be helpful to have another column with a one sentence description of each. Mr. Little agreed. He suggested it be a separate document instead of an additional column, and offered to help. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he will go through the BPPAC's goals and tie these projects back to that, and look at descriptions for trial projects.

Mr. Brehme asked why they are being asked to rank Main St. as a whole. Mr. Schoefmann replied that that is a header, with projects that relate to Main St. Mr. Brehme asked if it needs to be broken into categories like this. Mr. Schoefmann replied that that is what the BPPAC came up with for priorities. Mr. Blomquist added that how it appears to him is that they rank the major categories (e.g. compare the streets to each other) so they know where they will start their work, then there are subcategories within, to spend the resources on. For example, if Main St. is "high" and Marlborough St. is "medium," they start on Main St. Then there are subcategories within Main St. to tackle.

Mr. Brehme asked, if West Street is "low" overall but one of its subcategories is "high," how does that work, compared to a "low" subcategory in a "high" street? Mr. Blomquist replied that that is a tough question. He continued that he would say that if Main St. was "high" as a whole, all Main St. subcategories would be addressed first.

Mr. Schoefmann stated that he would stress that he has already looked at this from the organizational perspective. He continued that the BPPAC should think about how they feel about the projects, pretending that the organizational stuff is not an issue and these projects could happen tomorrow. They could say all projects are high priority, but the BPPAC is being asked to determine where these projects fit in based on the community objectives that the BPPAC set forth: safety, sustainability, availability, accessibility, and connectivity. They can start with trail projects and work their way through the list.

Chair Rubin asked if he can give the BPPAC a copy of this in two weeks, including the descriptions. She continued that each BPPAC member will prioritize the projects on his/her own, and then they will go through it together at their next meeting or two.

Mr. Schoefmann asked if he missed anything, other than trail lighting, which he now added. Discussion ensued about trail lighting issues. Chair Rubin suggested adding the category "lighting" to each of the projects as a consideration. Mr. Blomquist replied that if she means adding it to the top list that is hard. When they are looking at designing a trail, what amenities are priorities? As you design, you decide which amenities to add or not. Do you throw all that into the project definition or decide lighting is the priority? If you have a resource limit, how do you decide which amenities to do?

Mr. Little stated that he agrees that there needs to be a lighting standard for the city. He continued that a controversial topic is: they could add another column for ADA

compliance. The city did have an overall approach to lighting - there wasn't any. That was the stated approach on the trails. Chair Rubin stated that there is time to step back and look at it as an overall project. Mr. Blomquist replied that staff has ranked projects and now it is the BPPAC's turn. There is the "amenities" section and they could determine the priority amenities, within the ranked projects. Mr. Little replied that they seem to be saying there would be a project called "lighting" and it will probably have a fairly high importance. Chair Rubin replied that is right - there is an overall lighting plan, and lighting on individual projects to consider.

6) Old Business

7) New Business

Mr. Schoefmann reported that the BPPAC's report to the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure (MSFI) Committee got delayed. He continued that a new date will be set, pending the City Clerk's Office's plan. Mr. Bohannon added that this year's focus is on Comprehensive Master Plan (CMP) alignment. He continued that the City Council is looking for the Chairs to report on how their committees' activities relate to the CMP.

Mr. Little stated that the minutes for the last meeting were nine pages long. He asked if they need that level of detail, or if they can be shortened. Mr. Schoefmann replied that the Minute-taker follows the standard practice, and the minutes are long because the meetings are 90 minutes and the conversations are very detailed. Discussion ensued and other staff and committee members agreed that the length of the minutes is fine as is.

Mr. Little proposed having the meetings start at 8:15 AM since people are not arriving at 8:00. Discussion ensued. Chair Rubin suggested they keep the start time at 8:00 AM and keep striving to be on time.

8) Adjournment

Hearing no further business, Chair Rubin adjourned the meeting at 9:31 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

Additional Edits by,
Will Schoefmann, City Staff