

City of Keene
New Hampshire

BICYCLE PEDESTRIAN PATH COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, March 11, 2015

8:30 am

2nd Floor Conference Rm, City Hall

Members Present:

Greg Pregent, Chair
Linda Rubin, Vice Chair
James Duffy, Councilor
Thom Little
Christopher Brehme
Charles (Chuck) Redfern
Andrew McCarron

Members Not Present:

Staff Present:

Will Shoefmann, Planning
Andy Bohannon, Parks and Recreation

Others Present:

Mari Brunner, Southwest Regional
Planning Commission
Tara Germond, Southwest Regional
Planning Commission

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Pregent called the meeting to order at 8:30 AM. Roll call was conducted. Tara Germond and Mari Brunner from the Southwest Regional Planning Commission (SWRPC) introduced themselves.

2. Approval of Minutes – February 11, 2015

Mr. Little made a motion to approve the minutes of February 11, 2015. Ms. Rubin seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

3. Presentation from Southwest Regional Planning Commission (SWRPC)

Tara Germond distributed copies of a handout. She stated that she and Mari Brunner are here to talk about the PICH grant (Partnerships to Improve Community Health) from the CDC, which funds a collaborative effort between Cheshire Medical Center, Healthy Monadnock, and the SWRPC. She continued that the SWRPC is working on the active transportation component. The focus is a three-year initiative to address factors to improve healthy lifestyles, smoke-free environments, active transportation, etc. Ms. Rubin added that Cheshire County was the smallest entity and most rural nationwide to get this grant. Ms. Germond continued that one focus is to improve access to physical activity for 58,000 people in Cheshire County. One of the first objectives is Complete Streets in Keene and another community that has a small downtown area, like Jaffrey, Marlborough, Hinsdale, Swanzey, or Troy. They will do demonstration activities, which is the most exciting part of the grant. For a day or weekend they can demonstrate what a Complete Street would look like, including what you can do on a sidewalk to make it more

livable or pedestrian-friendly. People will be able to actually experience it, not just see it on plans. The second objective is to increase the Rack It Up program work they did last fall, funding and installing bicycle racks at specific locations in Keene. They have about 50 new racks for Keene and the other community they will work with. They hope to do more branding and outreach for that. The third objective is to increase the Safe Routes to School work. In year one they are working with all of the Keene elementary schools and the Marlborough elementary school, and are talking with the principals.

Ms. Germond continued that they see the BPPAC as a vital partner in being an advocate for these three focus areas and other activities supporting active transportation. They are working with the Monadnock Region Transportation Management Association (MRTMA), and they are a sounding board, but the BPPAC is an important partner. Ms. Brunner added that Rack it Up this year will be different – they will be funding the entire bike rack instead of 50/50 cost sharing. Mr. Redfern asked about bike lockers or storage units. Ms. Germond replied that in year one they only have funding for the racks, but for year two, they have talked about a few ideas for other amenities like wayfinding signs and bike maintenance stations. She will add bike lockers to the list of ideas. Mr. Bohannon stated that he knows they have talked about possible locations for bike maintenance, so they should feel free to reach out to him about that. He continued that at the last BPPAC meeting they talked about trail etiquette signs. This is all good stuff that they are doing. Ms. Germond suggested they have a follow up meeting to talk with him.

Ms. Rubin asked if they have a specific request of the BPPAC. Ms. Germond replied that they want the BPPAC's support as they move forward. She continued that next Thursday they will update the City Council on the grant and the Complete Streets policy for Keene. Their primary ask of the BPPAC is, they would like to come to the BPPAC meetings regularly with updates. Chair Pregent asked that this be a standing item on the agenda. Mr. Schoefmann agreed.

Ms. Rubin asked if BPPAC members should attend the City Council meeting, or if they can give an abridged version of the presentation to the BPPAC. Ms. Germond replied that she, Ms. Brunner, Ms. Rubin, Planning Director Rhett Lamb, and Public Works Director Kürt Blomquist will give a presentation on the progress that has been made since the resolution passed expressing commitment to creating a Complete Streets policy. She continued that they have been working with Planning and Public Works staff to create a policy, and standards for Public Works to look through when doing roadway work. They are also working on a visual guidance document that would show the public what Complete Streets look like. At the City Council meeting, they will describe that work and what they intend to do between now and September. They will have a draft policy for the City Council to review by July.

Councilor Duffy stated that they have been working on this since 2010, he thinks. He asked if there are questions or concerns with City staff that this committee should be aware of and assist with. Ms. Germond replied that it has been great so far with regularly scheduled meetings and they have made a lot of progress in a short amount of time. She continued that Public Works and Planning have been very supportive, and Mr. Schoefmann helped with the mapping effort.

Mr. Bohannon stated that he assumes they have specific areas targeted for Complete Streets, such as Park Ave and Marlborough Street, but there is an opportunity for the education piece

with the Cool Wheels event with the Kiwanis, he thinks the first week in May. He continued that he can work with them on that, providing literature that shows what a Complete Street looks like. Ms. Germond replied yes, as they think of these events, please let the SWRPC know, or if there are other groups to present to, they would be happy to come do that.

Mr. McCarron asked if Complete Streets is year-round policy or just in nice weather. Ms. Germond replied that it would be a year-round policy and include measures of how well they are implementing their commitment to Complete Streets. Mr. McCarron asked where the numbers 0 to 58,000 came from. Ms. Rubin replied that the grant application required showing that by the end of year three you are increasing healthy eating, active living, etc., for at least 75% of the population. For this region, that is 58,000 people. Brief discussion ensued.

Mr. Redfern asked if there is Earth Day this year. Ms. Brunner replied yes, she is trying to contact the Antioch person in charge of that, but has not reached her yet. Mr. Redfern stated that he suggests they have paper copies of their presentation for City Council because half of the time the projector does not work. Mr. Schoefmann replied that IMS replaced it in the last two weeks.

Chair Pregent suggested Ms. Brunner and Ms. Germond hang out after the meeting so he can talk with them about getting on his radio show soon. He thanked them for coming today.

4. Education and Outreach

Mr. Bohannon reported that he does not have an update related to the map project. He continued that the Cool Wheels event will be at the Recreation Center the first Saturday in May, hosted by the Kiwanis Club. Each year it seems to grow in attendance; they have done a great job with it. Chair Pregent replied that the BPPAC should have a presence in some way. Maybe they could give a presentation. Bike Week is the following week. Maybe they could come up with something to educate folks about Bike Week, at the Cool Wheels event. Discussion continued. Chair Pregent stated that they will talk about it at the April meeting and come up with a plan. Mr. Schoefmann replied that they had thought of having the Mayor make a proclamation for Bike Week.

Councilor Duffy stated that for a number of years the Mayor did a proclamation for Earth Day and he does not see why not for Bike Week. There could be a resolution making it Earth Week, maybe not do-able this year, but something to think about for the future. The BPPAC and the Cities for Climate Protection Committee could plan this together and energize what used to be a great thing. One year there was a contest for Keene students to make posters against climate change. It took a lot of planning and coordination and has fallen by the wayside, but he thinks they should try it again. There are many other ideas. It was a more organized, energized process back then.

Chair Pregent replied that that would be great for next year, but there is not enough time this year, so he suggests they focus their efforts on Bike Week since it is a couple months away. He asked how they go about approaching the Mayor. Mr. Bohannon replied that he can help with that.

Mr. Redfern made a motion for the BPPAC to encourage City staff to write the Mayor a letter asking him to proclaim May 4 to 8 “Bike Week.” Councilor Duffy seconded the motion.

Ms. Rubin stated that Mr. Redfern sent a link about the Mayor’s Challenge, a national program. Ms. Germond replied that the US Department of Transportation (USDOT) is promoting it, and it is a nationwide challenge to mayors and elected officials to commit to their recently adopted policy, supporting Complete Streets, and thinking of all users when constructing roadways. She continued that it was launched in February and is on a rolling basis. To participate, a community needs to form a team designated by the Mayor and register online. Mr. Redfern replied that he sent this information a couple weeks ago to the Mayor, the City Manager, Mr. Schoefmann, and Ms. Rubin. Ms. Rubin replied that it seems like a good thing to do, and it would not be extra work for a team of people; there is a plan they are already working on. She continued that there are advantages to the City signing on. Chair Pregent asked if they should request that this be part of the proclamation. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he wants to talk with the Mayor about this. Chair Pregent replied that it could be a separate issue.

The motion passed by unanimous vote.

Discussion continued about the BPPAC encouraging City staff to talk with the Mayor about the Mayor’s Challenge. Mr. Schoefmann stated that he will talk with the Mayor.

Chair Pregent reported that on March 28, people from the SWRPC will be on his radio show.

5. Project Updates

a. Roundhouse T Phase II

Mr. Schoefmann reported that property rights have been secured with Eversource Energy (formerly Public Service of New Hampshire). He continued that final review should be underway by the NH Department of Transportation (NHDOT) and Federal Highway. He is getting final plans for the committee to look at.

b. Cheshire Rail Trail Phase II

Mr. Bohannon reported that as soon as snow and mud season is gone, which is hard to predict, this project will happen – it will be completed this spring. Mr. Redfern reported that the Keene Snowmobile group is appreciating the improvements, particularly the ramp. He continued that the hope is that they help financially somehow and be involved in continued improvements in the trails.

c. Jonathan Daniels Trail

Mr. Schoefmann reported that Planning and Public Works staff members are still discussing options. Mr. Redfern stated that they were going to contact the Conservation Commission to coordinate with them to make sure they were not adverse to this project. He asked if that came about. Mr. Schoefmann replied that his understanding was that there were plans to coordinate with the Conservation Commission once a route was chosen and once an analysis of the area has been done. Chair Pregent suggested they check with Mr. Lamb to see if he has spoken with the Conservation Commission. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he will check with Karen Purinton, the staff liaison for that group.

d. Cheshire Rail Trail – Park Ave Loop

Mr. Schoefmann reported that they have had meetings and are now doing research. Mr. Bohannon added, in relation to the Ami Brown Road and its class 6 status and the landowners around it. He continued that they have to set up some time to go to the State to get clarification. Everything is moving along according to its timeline with a goal of completion next year. They are completing deed research now. Brief discussion ensued.

e. South Bridge

Chair Pregent asked if this is still on track for 2035. Mr. Schoefmann replied yes, unless something wild happens.

f. Bike Racks

Mr. Schoefmann reported that they are waiting to spring to put the bike racks out, and they welcome suggestions for locations. Chair Pregent asked if there is a map. Mr. Schoefmann replied yes, it shows locations of parking downtown. Chair Pregent replied that knowing where bike racks are might help the BPPAC figure out where others should go. He asked for the list or map. Mr. Schoefmann added that SWRPC has a map, too. Ms. Germond replied that the SWRPC had interns do an inventory last summer. They just updated it with the Rack it Up program sites. Ms. Brunner stated that that they will share it with the BPPAC.

g. Planning Projects

Mr. Bohannon reported that at the east side community forum there was lots of discussion around Complete Streets, trail connections, walkability, etc. He continued that this committee should stay abreast of that conversation. The question is how to connect this vital section of Keene to the other parts. Chair Pregent agreed. He continued that he was there and heard a lot of discussion on utilizing the trail on Marlboro Street. They need to make sure they are aware of what is going on and what people want. He was encouraged. People view the trail system as a benefit to work around with development.

Councilor Duffy stated that it was mentioned at the forum that staff is compiling the input into a report or summary. He asked when. Mr. Schoefmann replied that they are using Mind Mixer and there is a discussion summary of some of the major points. He will send the BPPAC a link to Mind Mixer. Mr. Bohannon added that they should check with Mr. Lamb about when the report is coming out. He will let Councilor Duffy know.

Mr. Redfern asked if there will be a formal report. Mr. Bohannon replied yes, and they will work with the Conway School to look at the Carpenter Street field and access points, which is a part of this that it very exciting from a parks and recreation standpoint. They will have public forums about this.

6. Maintenance

Mr. Bohannon reported that they just opened the Appel Way Trail the other day. He continued that there are a lot of races in the community. There was one on the Cheshire Rail Trail's Industrial Heritage section in February. There are more people who want to use the trails year round for race purposes. If they did not clear Appel Way trail they probably would be in trouble

for the Cheshire Hospital race that happens in early April. They tried to open the trail sooner this time so they did not get phone calls about ice.

Mr. McCarron asked if Appel is cleared all the way to Wheelock or just the highway bridge. Mr. Bohannon replied that it might be just to the bridge; he will find out and get back to Mr. McCarron.

7. Old Business

Mr. Schoefmann reported that he sent out a Doodle poll about scheduling the master plan meeting. Mr. Redfern replied that he can only meet next week, or maybe he can attend the meeting by phone.

8. New Business

Ms. Brunner asked if she can be on the agenda next meeting to talk more about the Rack it Up program, for about 10 minutes, focusing on the branding and ways that the BPPAC could help out. Chair Pregent replied yes. Mr. Schoefmann replied that she can speak during the “Bike Racks” section of the agenda.

Ms. Rubin asked how projects get onto the Project Updates list. She asked if Complete Streets and the Marlboro St. project should be on the list, and if there are others. Discussion ensued. Mr. Schoefmann stated that typically the ones on the Project Updates list are construction projects, and others are discussed under Planning Projects. Ms. Rubin asked if they can somehow incorporate Complete Streets into the agenda. Chair Pregent replied that they will be sure to address those issues under Planning Projects.

Councilor Duffy reported that the update today is that City staff recommends putting money in the current CIP (adopted in a few weeks) to start funding the design plans for construction for redoing Marlboro St., per Councilor Richard’s recommendation. He continued that if the City Council approves that it will begin in FY17. It would be under Project Updates in the BPPAC’s agenda. The system in place now for the agenda works – it creates a workable and functional boundary between what is actually happening and what they want to see happening.

Mr. Little asked if the next phase of the Washington St. project is underway. Mr. Schoefmann and Mr. Bohannon replied probably in early April as soon as the frost heaves have gone away. They will start as soon as they can. Ms. Rubin asked if that goes on the Project Updates list. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he will get them a list of what will be included in that project, so if there is something they want to discuss, they can. Mr. Little stated that a property owner on Washington St. said there were requirements for planting. Mr. Schoefmann replied that there are some bioswales and rain garden features. He continued that he will get specifics from the Public Works Department. Chair Pregent asked if it is correct that the project is settled and there is not much for the BPPAC to discuss or give input on. Mr. Schoefmann replied yes.

Mr. Redfern reported that he was contacted by a person whose family has been active in the Stone Arch Bridge project, asking if there are plans to have an extension of the multi-use trail down to the bridge and how that could start to be put on the radar. The bridge is an asset to the community and they want to see the community enjoy it. Such a trail extension might be a

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master plan issue. Brief discussion ensued about the location. Mr. Little talked about how he sees the need for a third bridge as inescapable. Chair Pregent asked him to bring it up during the master plan discussion.

Mr. Redfern reported that the snowmobile club suggests putting small street signs at the small stop signs at each crossing or intersection with a road, for the benefit of snowmobilers from out of town who do not know where they are when they get to a road. He continued that he thinks this would benefit other people, too. Mr. Bohannon suggested the snowmobilers donate such signs through Building a Spirit of Place. Mr. Redfern replied that he will ask them. He asked if the BPPAC is opposed to them doing this. Mr. Bohannon stated that they have to be careful of sign pollution. He continued that he could talk with Mr. Blomquist. It is good to let people know where they are, especially as they move towards the city limit. Councilor Duffy spoke in opposition to the idea, stating that websites, maps, and due diligence should be enough. Ms. Rubin stated that she thinks it is a great idea but wonders what best practice is around trail signs. Mr. Schoefmann replied that the master plan could include a recommendation for a comprehensive wayfinding program.

Chair Pregent reported that last month his report to the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee went well. He continued that the MSFI Committee is happy with the job the BPPAC is doing.

9. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:32 AM.

Respectfully submitted by
Britta Reida, Minute-taker

additional edits by,
Will Schoefmann, Planning Staff