

City of Keene
New Hampshire

BICYCLE PEDESTRIAN PATH COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, September 9, 2015 8:00 am 2nd Floor Conference Rm, City Hall

Members Present:

Greg Pregent, Chair
Don Hayes
Thom Little
Charles (Chuck) Redfern
Andrew McCarron
Christopher Brehme

Staff Present:

William Schoefmann, Planning
Andrew Bohannon, Parks & Rec (arrived
at 8:10 AM)

Others Present:

Mari Brunner, SWRPC

Members Not Present:

James Duffy, Councilor
Linda Rubin, Vice Chair

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Pregent called the meeting to order at 8:02 AM. Roll call was conducted.

2. Approval of Minutes – August 12, 2015

Mr. Little noted a correction to the minutes: on page three, in the title, change “Cheshire Rail Trail” to “Cheshire Rail Trail Park Avenue Loop.”

Mr. Little made a motion to approve the minutes of August 12, 2015 as amended, which was seconded by Mr. Redfern and passed by unanimous vote.

3. Project Updates – See Attached Table

Mr. Schoefmann distributed copies of an updated table.

a) Roundhouse T Phase 2

Mr. Schoefmann reported that construction is underway. Chair Pregent stated that he went to look at it and it looks okay to him. Mr. Schoefmann replied that there will be a culvert instead of a bridge. Mr. Little stated that part of the culvert is out there now. He continued that the table says “out to bid” and that needs to be changed. Mr. McCarron asked when it will be complete. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he thinks by the end of the construction season.

b) Cheshire Rail Trail Phase 2

Mr. Schoefmann reported that this has been completed.

c) Jonathan Daniels

Mr. Schoefmann reported that he is waiting on Mr. Bohannon to get a quote from Ralston Construction.

d) Jonathan Daniels Phase II

Mr. Schoefmann reported that there is no change. He continued that they have approached the Conservation Commission regarding areas of Tenants Swamp and they would want careful consideration of where the trail would go.

Mr. Little stated that last month they talked about putting the money back in the CIP for the Jonathan Daniels Trail Phase II. He continued that one action item was to have the BPPAC discuss putting in a request to include that in the CIP, which is beginning to be put together.

Chair Pregent replied that he is not entirely sure of the process. He asked Mr. Schoefmann. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he had a budgeted amount from the last time, about two years ago, and that would be a reasonable amount plus calculations for inflation. He continued that if the BPPAC wants to request it he will put it back in. It will be a discussion between Planning, Parks & Recreation, and Public Works to see which section of the CIP it would go in.

Mr. Little stated that he thought they could not go forward until the study of the potential routes was complete. Chair Pregent replied that it is a good idea to use the same number but adjusted for inflation, then think about getting a discussion going with those three departments to get it back in the CIP. Mr. Redfern stated that \$20,000 is a lot of money. He continued that he would like to meet with the Conservation Commission and find out exactly what their concerns are before they spend the \$20,000. He wants a vote to determine whether it would be practical to spend \$20,000 on something that in his opinion will be an insurmountable project. He would vote in opposition.

Mr. Bohannon arrived at 8:10 AM.

Mr. Schoefmann replied that an Environmental Assessment or something to that affect would be included in the study. The Conservation Commission's concerns would be noted in the study going forward. The three possibilities they were talking about were a route up Park Ave, up Route 12 heading outbound towards Maple Ave, or the woods trail that is along the banks of the Ashuelot River heading north. Mr. Redfern asked if that would include estimated costs for whatever is being determined, so everyone is clear. Mr. Schoefmann replied yes.

Mr. Little stated that this is about the fourth time the expense of the project has come up. He continued that his memory is that there were four options being considered. One was on the back side of the hospital then cutting through some private property and he recalls that the property owner did not want a trail going through the property. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he does not remember the City looking at a fourth option.

Mr. Bohannon stated that as Parks & Recreation Director, he would not be in favor of running a trail up the side of the river for many safety reasons. He continued that there are many homeless

people who live on the western side of the river and he gets many reports of people feeling unsafe in that area. Also, it would be difficult to do maintenance in that area; it is hard to get to.

Chair Pregent replied that he assumes a feasibility study would go along with the environmental study to take concerns like that into account. He asked if Mr. Redfern has a point. Are they asking for too much money? Or is it an acceptable amount for a small environmental study? Mr. Schoefmann replied that for the feasibility study, it depends on who they go with. They would send out an RFP and then negotiate for what to include in it.

Chair Pregent replied that they want to make sure they have enough money to do the study but not spend too much. He asked if staff can come up with a different amount. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he is not comfortable giving a figure today. Mr. Redfern replied that some consideration must have gone into the \$20,000 figure. He continued that he will change his vote to recommend that they do the feasibility study with cost estimates, a route, and an environmental assessment. Mr. Schoefmann stated that the BPPAC can recommend constraints on the study. Mr. Redfern replied that they should give minimums. Chair Pregent spoke in favor of getting this into the CIP to get the ball rolling. He asked if they need to vote on anything today. Mr. Schoefmann replied no, but he will note that they want to look at environmental assessment, route options, and cost estimate.

Mr. Little stated that to summarize, whatever it is should define what the product is, which will come out of the study. What are they getting from the \$20,000+? What they are doing is just listing some of the items that would be in the report. Chair Pregent replied that he would like to see the money in the CIP and get this going again.

e) Cheshire Rail Trail Park Avenue Loop

Mr. Schoefmann reported that the project agreement was signed and returned to the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT) and NHDOT sent their signed copy back. They are officially in agreement. The project will take about three years. There will be a scoping meeting this month. Everything is on track. Mr. Little asked if there is a drop dead date for when the City could not ask for any adjustments. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he might find out at the scoping meeting.

Mr. Brehme asked if there is some overlap between this project and the Jonathan Daniels trail Phase II out to the middle school. Mr. Schoefmann replied yes, the route takes you from Cheshire Rail Trail heading north, after North Bridge, up to Maple Ave, and then there are sidewalks to the middle school. Mr. Bohannon replied that it is one of the three options.

f) South Bridge

Chair Pregent stated that he did not go to the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure (MSFI) Committee meeting. Mr. Bohannon stated that NHDOT made their presentation regarding use of the bridge and stated that it would be completely state-funded. He continued that there were concerns about snowmobiles and other vehicles going over it for purposes of Keene State College (KSC). That is still to be resolved. City staff will be meeting with NHDOT next week. They are planning on going to bid this fall. Mr. Redfern stated that a real estate broker from Swanzey spoke in opposition.

Mr. Little stated that the BPPAC had a question about whether the project was all inside of the state right-of-way and it was stated at the meeting that yes, it is. He continued that there are no issues with abutters. NHDOT also indicated that they had submitted a wetlands permit request. That was the only thing that seemed to be a potential issue. Also brought up at the meeting: are there any plans to put lighting on the structure, based on its location? That was a lesson learned on North Bridge after construction – no one had considered lighting at all. NHDOT said they had no current plans for lighting but could consider it in the future and lay the groundwork for that. It would seem logical to have it lighted. There was a discussion of the underpass and the problems with it, as reported by police.

Chair Pregent asked if they can do anything. Mr. Schoefmann suggested they write a letter. Mr. Redfern replied that he would ask for lighting as the ultimate goal, but the conduit would be the minimum. Mr. Little and Chair Pregent agreed.

Mr. Redfern made a motion for the Bicycle Pedestrian Path Advisory Committee to write a letter to the New Hampshire Department of Transportation requesting a conduit or lighting for South Bridge. Mr. Hayes seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

Mr. Little stated that there was previously a lengthy discussion about snowmobiles on the structure. He continued that he thought the City Council said that they would be allowed. He is confused about why it came back up at the meeting – he thought it was a done deal and that was the purpose of having a concrete surface. Mr. Bohannon replied that snowmobiles are not allowed on the City footprint. He continued that there are ways of directing snowmobiles away from the city once they cross bridge. He is having conversations with the snowmobile club about the route. They are considering trying to get them over the bridge in order to move away from the city. As soon as you cross that bridge, you are within the city footprint. Discussion continued. Mr. Bohannon stated that staff knows all of the issues on the table, such as snowmobiles and lighting, and now they need to meet with NHDOT to work out the answers.

Mr. Redfern stated that he is in favor of connecting the trails as much as possible. He continued that Pathways for Keene (PFK) has not and will not take a position on snowmobilers. Snowmobilers have been advocating for years for South Bridge to be multi-use. The surface needs to be able to handle whatever is on the surface, and he is indifferent to snowmobiles if they do not hurt the surface. Mr. Bohannon replied that NHDOT works closely with the Trails Bureau, which recognizes that snowmobiles bring millions of dollars into the state. They will not want to prohibit snowmobile use. It will be as friendly to all users as possible. That will be part of the conversation for sure. Mr. Brehme asked if snowmobilers asked for use of North Bridge. Mr. Bohannon replied yes, they did, but the bridge is within the city footprint. Mr. Little asked for clarification about where snowmobiles are allowed. Mr. Schoefmann explained that they use the State right-of-way to go some places in Keene. Chair Pregent stated that he thinks snowmobilers will have a hard time arguing to use South Bridge.

Mr. Little stated that the preliminary designs showed ramps coming up from the highway past the bridge, out to the trail, and he does not recall seeing that at the presentation. He asked if that is still planned. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he does not know and will have to find out at the

meeting with NHDOT. Mr. Little asked if the City has materials from the MSFI Committee meeting about South Bridge. Mr. Schoefmann replied yes, whatever was at the meeting, the City has.

g) Bike Racks

Mari Brunner reported that the second round of bike racks came in. She continued that the program is almost completely over. They still have a few extra racks. Monadnock Family Services is interested and she will meet with them tomorrow. There are 170 bike spaces and most of them went to Keene. Chair Pregent praised the program. Mr. Redfern acknowledged Ms. Brunner's efforts spearheading this project and commended her work.

Chair Pregent asked for better bike racks by the City Hall. Mr. Schoefmann suggested he write to his representative. Discussion ensued about the bike racks. Mr. Bohannon replied that he can talk with the Public Works Department.

h) Complete Streets

Ms. Brunner reported that they have been working with Healthy Monadnock, the City, the Town of Swanzey, and other community partners on doing Complete Streets policies and demonstration events. She continued that August 29 was Swanzey's demonstration and it went very smoothly. It was heartening to see – the bike racks filled up, and children were playing in the mini-park. People did not seem to realize that it was a temporary change. There were a lot of questions about what the sharrow was. The Keene demonstration is on September 19. They have had four public meetings for the Keene event and there is another meeting tonight for people who wish to volunteer, at 6:00 PM at the Hannah Grimes Center.

Ms. Brunner continued that there is a regional Complete Streets workshop Friday, September 25, at Heberton Hall from 8:30 AM to 1:00 PM. It is mostly for municipal officials but members of the public are welcome. She distributed copies of a flyer about it. Chair Pregent added that Ms. Brunner will be on his radio show on Saturday to talk about that, and JB Mack will join the following week.

i) Signage

Chair Pregent stated that they talked about making the signs bigger to include maps. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he has maps in the works for the trail system. Mr. Bohannon asked if these would be on the kiosks. Chair Pregent replied yes, that was the issue. Mr. Redfern stated that they could double up on the kiosks if necessary to have more room – for the map, logos from Monadnock Conservancy and PFK, etc. Sometimes just the etiquette and rules take up a lot of space. Mr. Schoefmann and Mr. Bohannon replied that they can take a look at it.

Mr. Hayes asked if anything is happening with signage for Whitcomb's Mill Road. Chair Pregent replied that they have talked about a caution sign. Mr. Bohannon replied that there are two signs prior to the intersection that warn people of the trail crossing. He continued that the brush was cut back and may need to be cut back again. They need to be careful because it is not all City property. He and Mr. Schoefmann agreed that it is a tough spot. Discussion continued about it. Mr. Schoefmann replied that they will look and see what they can do.

Mr. Bohannon reported that when they received the designation of Bike Friendly City there was signage and they ordered some other materials, too. He distributed copies of pamphlets that can be used for educational purposes and the “Smart Cycling Quick Guide.”

4. Mayor’s Challenge Exercise

Mr. Schoefmann stated that he thinks they are on section 5 – “Create Networks.”

“Do we have a master plan that outlines biking and walking networks? Do we have programs to incorporate bike-ped infrastructure into routine maintenance? Where could we use some help going forward?”

Chair Pregent stated that the answer to the first question is, they are working on it. Mr. Schoefmann replied yes, they have one, and they are updating it.

Mr. Bohannon stated that regarding the second question, in the summer they hire two people to do trail work along the rail trail corridor, and the youth trails crew does tree trimming and brush cutting on other trails, mowing, and other work. Chair Pregent asked if there is a plan for maintaining the new trails. Mr. Bohannon replied not necessarily, but they are monitoring them and already did some repairs to erosion on the Phase II project. Chair Pregent asked what the lifespan of trails is before they need serious repairs. Mr. Bohannon replied about 15 or 20 years. Mr. Redfern praised the City’s mowing program, which keeps the trails in place by preventing grass from encroaching on the trail, and noted that staff also fills in the chipmunk holes.

Mr. Schoefmann stated that the Engineering Division has a schedule for roadway and sidewalk reconstruction, but for sidewalk inspection they have a tool and try to keep tabs on the conditions of the sidewalks. He continued that an example of retrofitting is that in the past few years, they have created more ramps from sidewalks to streets, especially downtown. Chair Pregent added that they did a good job with that on Washington Street, too.

Chair Pregent asked what rating people would give for section 5. Mr. Little replied “done well.” Chair Pregent replied that he thinks “needs minor action.” Mr. Schoefmann, Mr. Bohannon, Mr. Hayes, and Mr. McCarron agreed. Chair Pregent stated that he says “needs minor action” because the City has a master plan in place (which is being updated), programs to incorporate infrastructure in routine maintenance, sidewalk inspections and maintenance criteria, routine maintenance projects that they use as opportunities to do retrofits for safety, and so on and so forth. Mr. Little asked, aren’t these activities already in place, and they are just continuing activities? That is why he chose “done well.” It seems to be under control, and they are somehow confusing the fact (by saying “needs minor action”) that these practices and programs just need to be updated and continued, but they already exist.

Mr. Schoefmann replied that he thinks there is opportunity to improve, be a little more transparent, and include more methods for assessing the condition of infrastructure. Chair Pregent replied that the fact that they are updating the master plan indicates “needs minor action.” Mr. Bohannon and Chair Pregent gave examples of two locations with pavement that needs repairing, for which there are no current plans. Chair Pregent stated that that might be something to put into the sidewalk inspection, to see when it gets to a point where it will impede

traffic. Mr. Bohannon replied that also, there is a concern with pooling in the winter on the bridge between Island and Pearl Streets, and there is question of how to do that. There is room for improvement, although he appreciates Mr. Little's vote of "done well." Chair Pregent agreed – "done well" means being over confident and "needs minor action" is prudent.

Ms. Brunner asked if they are only looking at biking routes or if they are also considering walking routes and sidewalks. Mr. Schoefmann replied that sidewalks are included. Mr. McCarron stated that in the winter there is always the question of which trails should have snow removal and which should not. He continued that there is not really a plan for that. Mr. Bohannon replied that that is a great point – they need to think about winter, too, not just summer. Mr. Redfern agreed with Mr. McCarron's comments. He continued that he asked Mr. Blomquist if there were plans to plow the new trail by the new dorms. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he thinks that might be up to KSC. Mr. Redfern stated that it is not KSC property across Winchester Street. Mr. Bohannon replied that he will address it when staff has their winter meetings soon.

Chair Pregent moved on to category 6 – "Improve Laws."

"What laws/codes/ordinances are in place that help or hinder safety goals? Where could we use some help going forward?"

Chair Pregent stated that the main law is no riding bicycles or skateboarding on sidewalks in downtown Keene. He continued that he hopes the signs that say this, painted right on the sidewalks, help. Mr. Little replied that he saw a skateboarder go right across a sign and does not think signs are the solution. He continued that it would be better to have a Police Officer there and fine skateboarders who do this. Mr. Schoefmann replied that the Police Officers are writing tickets for this. Chair Pregent replied that most people know you are not supposed to, but many people do not care and ride right over the signs. Mr. Redfern asked if the Parking Enforcement Officers enforce that particular rule. Mr. Schoefmann replied that Parking Enforcement has nothing to do with ticketing bicyclists on the sidewalk, but he will find out.

Mr. McCarron stated that the heart of the problem is that people need to bike up and down Main Street and it is not safe for them. Ms. Brunner asked if the law applies to children. She would never want to see a child riding their bike down Main Street – she agrees with Mr. McCarron. A child trying to get through the downtown would have to walk their bike on the sidewalk in order to be safe, so what is the point of riding the bike? Mr. Little stated that he sees people riding their bikes through the crosswalks on Main Street. Mr. Schoefmann stated that he agrees that they need significant action in this area. Chair Pregent stated that he agrees that bikes should not be on the sidewalks in the downtown area, although he would be okay with them being on sidewalks in other parts of the city. It would be good to talk about how to make Main Street a Complete Street and that would be a further discussion down the road. At least on this point, they need significant action.

Ms. Brunner stated that the plan for Main Street becoming a Complete Street does not include a bike lane. She continued that she thinks the MSFI Committee is looking at the Complete Streets draft policy right now. She thinks the plan is for Main Street to be a "slow street," where traffic

should be going slow enough for bicyclists to feel safe. Mr. Schoefmann replied that on part of Main Street there is room for a bike lane. Ms. Brunner stated that if the BPPAC has recommendations for Main Street she suggests they bring those to the MSFI Committee. Chair Pregent replied that he assumes there would not be major reconstruction of Main Street any time soon, since it already has been reconfigured rather recently. Mr. Schoefmann stated that from Emerald Street to Central Square is the difficult part. Mr. Bohannon stated that on tonight's MSFI Committee agenda, Mr. Blomquist will be leading a discussion on Complete Streets, if any BPPAC members are able to make it.

Chair Pregent asked what people thought about the next bullet –

“We have developed or engaged a multi-disciplinary coalition or task force to review and identify gaps, loopholes, or deficiencies in local ordinances, codes, and practices.”

He asked if they need a subcommittee for this. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he and Ms. Chalice came up with a list of programs and organizations that address this, such as the Complete Streets policy, the Safe Routes To School program, the master plan update, the CDC grant that Southwest Regional Planning Commission is implementing, Level of Stress mapping (ranking of streets based on bicycle stress levels), and so on and so forth. Chair Pregent replied that they might not need a subcommittee if other groups are talking about this. Mr. Schoefmann replied no, they do not need a subcommittee, but it would help to be aware of other groups' work and figure out how to concentrate all of the efforts together.

Chair Pregent stated that the next bullet goes along with the previous one –

“We have developed and implemented a plan to address identified gaps, loopholes, or deficiencies in local ordinances, codes, and practices designed to address pedestrian, bicyclist, and assistive mobility device user safety.”

He continued that they have some things going with this. They need laws or code or ordinances to improve bicycling conditions in downtown. There are some groups talking about it but they need everyone talking together, to better coordinate. He thinks this should be “needs significant action.” Mr. Hayes replied that he thinks it “needs action.” Mr. Little replied that he thinks it “needs minor action.” After brief discussion, the committee agreed to go with “needs action.”

Chair Pregent moved on to section 7 - “Educate and Enforce.”

“How are we doing on enforcement of safety laws? What campaigns or educational events do we have? What partnerships could enhance education? Where could we use some new ideas?”

Mr. Schoefmann stated that regarding the bulleted discussion points, they have data available for what times, locations, and behaviors contribute to bike accidents, but they need to conduct an analysis of that data. In regards to the next bullet, the City has not developed and integrated an enforcement plan to address those high-risk times, locations, and behaviors. Mr. Bohannon agreed. Mr. Schoefmann continued that this means they also have not trained law enforcement officers on this plan because the plan does not exist. As he mentioned earlier, he sees officers giving people tickets for riding their bikes on the sidewalk, but that is not part of an overall plan

or strategy. The City Council might have brought the issue of biking on sidewalks to the KPD's attention.

Mr. Little replied that similarly, staff brought the issue of jaywalking on Main Street to the KPD's attention, and now, he does not see as much jaywalking. He continued that if an officer approaches a person about jaywalking, and word gets out in the community and discourages others from jaywalking, that has a positive impact. Mr. Schoefmann replied yes, but that is not a formal plan. Mr. Little replied right, that is what is missing.

Chair Pregent asked about how to train law enforcement. Mr. Schoefmann replied that there is probably information for handouts that they could review. He continued that this is not really his purview but they could approach Chief Costa and give him information to distribute, with bullet points regarding laws about bikes and sidewalks. Chair Pregent replied that this is probably low in the KPD's priorities. Mr. Schoefmann replied that once college is back in session, there will be more officers on foot downtown. Chair Pregent replied that bikes on sidewalks and jaywalking happens all the time, not just when college is in session.

Mr. McCarron stated that they are talking about officers disciplining pedestrians and bicyclists for not following the rules, but they need to consider motorists, too. He continued that many cars come way too close to bikes. He has spoken to the police about this, and their stance is that they do not enforce this because it is impossible. Mr. Bohannon replied that that is a good point. He continued that he had a conversation last spring with the director of the TV station at the high school. They are always looking for projects. He would be happy to ask him to get the students to create a PSA about bicycle safety. Maybe they could get the police involved. Chair Pregent replied that that is a great idea. Mr. Little replied that it would have a positive impact and get more people talking about these issues.

Ms. Brunner stated that some communities have new technology to address the law that vehicles must give bicyclists three or more feet of space when passing. She continued that there are officers undercover on bikes with radar. When cars pass them, if it is closer than three feet they can pull the driver over. It is interesting to learn about. It is more of an educational tool. They also record it so they can show the driver what it feels like to have a car driving so close. Chair Pregent replied that that is a great idea. If someone took the ticket to court there would be a record of their infraction. It could maybe go along with the BPPAC talking with Chief Costa.

Mr. Schoefmann stated that the next two bullets are about educating the public. He continued that they are scratching the surface with that with the trail signs. Chair Pregent replied that Mr. Bohannon's idea for the PSA is good. He continued that they could air PSAs on the radio, too, about bike safety. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he is sure the League of American Bicyclists has a lot of materials the City could use.

Mr. Schoefmann stated that regarding "engaging private and public partners to create public acceptance and awareness of safety and enforcement efforts," they do not do this very much. He continued that that is what Chair Pregent was just talking about. Chair Pregent agreed. He continued that they have a lot of educating and enforcement work to do. They are doing a lot of

Bicycle Pedestrian Path Advisory Committee meeting minutes,
September 9, 2015

things well but it is on-going. Mr. Schoefmann stated that this is probably the most difficult item to tackle effectively.

Chair Pregent stated that his recommendation is “needs significant action.” Others agreed.

Chair Pregent stated that the Mayor’s Challenge Exercise is complete.

5. Old Business

Mr. Schoefmann stated that they can work on the Master Plan at the next meeting.

Chair Pregent stated that he went for the first time to check the connection between the Ashuelot Trail and the new student housing and he thinks it stinks. He continued that it is very narrow, and goes right to the corner edge of apartments, and there is curbing and cars in the way. They probably cannot do anything about it. He thinks the developers did the minimum they can possibly get away with. Mr. Schoefmann stated that he would have to look at the site plan to see if they are in compliance. Chair Pregent spoke of how it could have been better – such as wider, and better marked.

6. New Business

Mr. McCarron stated that they did paving on Arch Street and it is really poor by Stonewall Farms. He asked if there are further plans for that. Mr. Bohannon replied that is in the works to be paved. He continued that it is a mess, but he understands that it is supposed to be paved by the end of the fall.

Mr. Redfern stated that September 30, in Concord from 8:30 to 3:30, NHDOT is sponsoring a Bicycle Pedestrian Path seminar on all things bike, pedestrian, and Complete Streets related. Anyone who is interested should sign up soon. It is free and includes lunch. Ms. Brunner replied that she and Mr. Mack are going, too. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he will be speaking at it.

7. Adjournment - Next Meeting is October 14, 2015

The meeting adjourned at 9:27 AM.

Respectfully submitted by
Britta Reida, Minute-taker