

ADOPTED

City of Keene
New Hampshire

BICYCLE PEDESTRIAN PATH COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, October 14, 2015 8:00 am 2nd Floor Conference Rm, City Hall

Members Present:

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

Staff Present:

William Shoefmann, Planning

Others Present:

Members Not Present:

James Duffy, Councilor
Linda Rubin, Vice Chair
Andrew McCarron

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Pregent called the meeting to order at 8:21 AM. Roll call was conducted.

2. Approval of Minutes – September 9, 2015

Mr. Little had written comments on the minutes: add “Mari Brunner, SWRPC” on page 1 under the listing of “Others.”

Mr. Hayes made a motion to approve the minutes of September 9, 2015 as amended, which was seconded by Mr. Redfern and passed by unanimous vote.

3. Project Updates – See Attached Table

a. Roundhouse T Phase II

Mr. Little stated that the table in the agenda says “out for bid” but it should say “under construction.” Mr. Schoefmann replied that he will update that. Mr. Little shared photos of the construction. Mr. Schoefmann stated that he thinks they are aiming to complete it in November.

b. Cheshire Rail Trail Phase II – Whitcomb’s Mill Road to Hurricane Road

Chair Pregent stated that this is complete and looks good. He and Mr. Redfern questioned whether this should be removed from the project updates list. Mr. Little stated that there was a question of signage at Whitcomb’s Mill Road. He asked if that has been addressed. Discussion ensued. Mr. Schoefmann stated that when Public Works Director Kurt Blomquist returns in two weeks, he will talk with him, and the two of them plus Parks & Recreation Director Andy

Bohannon will walk the area. He continued that they can take this off the project list but still talk about it.

c. Jonathan Daniels Trail Phase II

Chair Pregent stated that they talked about getting money in in the CIP to study this. Mr. Schoefmann replied that hopefully this will be an item in the Planning section of the CIP. He continued that they can put in the old project and account for some inflation in costs. The project is to study the possible routes. Discussion ensued about the area. Chair Pregent noted that the Conservation Commission does not want the trail in sensitive areas like the swamp. Mr. Brehme asked if these two projects will be separate. Mr. Schoefmann replied that the first one would probably not be a CIP project; they probably need a grant to do re-surfacing and drainage on the existing trail that goes from Ashuelot River Park to Appel Way. Discussion ensued about plans and ideas for drainage. Mr. Redfern noted that this is on the City's radar but the BPPAC can reinforce the need to address the drainage problem in the trail section by the apartments. Chair Pregent stated that overall the trail is in good shape, although there are a few places that could use some attention. Mr. Brehme agreed. Discussion continued. Chair Pregent suggested signs cautioning bikers and pedestrians to be aware of each other.

d. Park Avenue Loop

Mr. Schoefmann stated tomorrow he and Mr. Bohannon will be attending the scoping meeting in Concord (rescheduled from last week). He continued that the draft Request for Qualifications (RFQ) was sent to the State. He will respond to Mr. Little's written comments via email to the group. Mr. Little asked if it is a fixed price or a cost plus contract. He continued that if it is fixed price, he recommends deleting the word "etc." from two places on page 2. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he will take that under consideration.

Mr. Schoefmann continued that they are on schedule. He hopes to have the bid live this Friday. Chair Pregent asked when construction would be. Mr. Schoefmann replied that it has to be constructed between the fall of 2016 and the fall of 2017, per the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT)'s schedule.

e. South Bridge

Mr. Little stated that the table in the agenda packet says "working" and it should say "out for bid." He continued that the website shows nine bidders currently registered. He distributed copies of a South Bridge image, with a to-scale comparison of the final North Bridge design and the South Bridge design they are looking for bids on. He continued that he understands that is still subject to change but it will look pretty close. The bid opening is scheduled for October 22.

f. Bike Racks

Mr. Schoefmann stated that there are not many updates. Chair Pregent stated that soon bike racks will be stored for the winter. Mr. Schoefmann replied yes and they are looking at having more sheltered bike parking.

g. Complete Streets

Chair Pregent stated that the demonstration projects were completed in Keene and Swanzey and were successful.

Mr. Schoefmann reported that the Complete Streets policy has been drafted by a team of Southwest Regional Planning Commission (SWRPC) staff and City staff and needs to be officially accepted by the City Council. He continued that it was at its first reading at the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure (MSFI) Committee meeting and he believes the committee is still discussing it.

h. Mayor's Challenge

Mr. Schoefmann stated that after it was brought to his and the Mayor's attention by Ms. Rubin, they are working on it. With the BPPAC's input given, he will write a recommendation on where the mayor can focus the City's efforts and initiatives. They will work diligently on one or two focus areas until March 2016. The idea is that people can end the initiatives in March 2016 but it can be continually used as a planning tool. He did a presentation to the NH Bicycle and Pedestrian conference held by the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) in Concord two weeks ago, on what the Mayor's Challenge is all about. A person from NHDOT helped him with the presentation.

i. Signage

Mr. Schoefmann reported that trail etiquette signage has been installed on the trailhead and trailhead maps have been produced and need installation. He continued that he does not know if they will get up this fall. They made two to be put up on Whitcomb's Mill Road and Eastern Avenue. Mr. Redfern asked if the maps were produced by the Planning Department's printer and whether they will be laminated. Discussion ensued and Mr. Schoefmann replied that they might have to be reproduced yearly.

Mr. Redfern asked if the signage recognizes the contributions from Pathways for Keene and Monadnock Conservancy. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he will have to check with Mr. Bohannon. Mr. Redfern replied that he will email him.

Mari Brunner arrived. Chair Pregent asked for her input on Bike Racks or Complete Streets. Ms. Brunner replied that 85 bike racks were placed in Keene and Swanzey, mostly Keene, with 170 bike parking spaces. She continued that on September 25, people came from all over to attend the regional workshop on Complete Streets. She created a summary document about the (now completed) Complete Streets demonstration event. Chair Pregent asked about the presentation to City Council committee on the adoption of the Complete Streets policy. Ms. Brunner replied that the MSFI Committee has been working on reviewing the policy and will be sending it to the City Council.

Mr. Little reported that at last month's meeting, they talked about the BPPAC sending NHDOT a letter about South Bridge. Mr. Schoefmann replied that it is drafted but Planning Director Rhett Lamb needs to look over it and then Chair Pregent needs to sign it. Mr. Little stated that the letter requests that NHDOT put lighting on South Bridge or at least a conduit so lighting could be added later.

4. BPPAC Master Plan

a. Review Documentation

Chair Pregent stated that they need a refresher on where they are before they move forward. Mr. Schoefmann stated that they have a final document they have been touching on for about a year and a half. He continued that he will try and post up a workspace so people can access it whenever they need to. They had draft BPPAC goals and objectives and strategies. He asked if they want to go over those now or in their own time. He thinks now it is time to look at a projects list. He can get busy writing, but they need some priority projects, looking at bike paths, in-street bike facilities, and the pedestrian networks. He asked if anyone has some really key areas to look at. Completion of the main rail trail corridors in town is obviously a priority. They have a good strategy for funding and accomplishing those. Harder ones to think about are the connections they have been talking about.

a. Moving Forward – Discussion and Action Items

Mr. Redfern stated that an example is the extension of Victoria Street. He continued that he thinks a safe crossing over that area should be a priority. It should be a platform to take people over the trucks instead of having people compete with the trucks at grade level. Access points are important and they should identify where those access points could be more formalized. Also, having rail beds completed city limit to city limit is a priority.

Chair Pregent asked if specific projects should be in the Master Plan. Mr. Schoefmann replied yes, they were in the previous one. He continued that the 2010 Comprehensive Master Plan (CMP) has a list that this committee submitted, of bike-friendly streets and an overall projects list. He will look at that and return to the BPPAC with a list of which projects they have done, and which are left over, so they can talk about prioritizing those. Today they can talk about the low-hanging fruit – projects that would be obvious. Then when they have better attendance at the next BPPAC meeting they can talk in depth about connections and other projects.

Chair Pregent agreed with Mr. Redfern about the priority of the Victoria Street project. Discussion ensued about the details of it. Mr. Schoefmann stated that he knows this is a priority for enhancing the Marlboro Street area, but he does not know the ins and outs. He continued that he will talk with Mr. Blomquist to get more information and see whether this is a CIP project. Mr. Redern stated that the BPPAC must strongly say it cannot be at grade level – that would be a major safety issue and he would have grave concerns.

Mr. Little stated that it is important that the areas left to be worked on be identified in a spreadsheet, and to have these areas named so everyone is using the same names. He continued that that would help the process, but he thinks what would just slow the process down is talking now about individual projects and their priority relative to others, unless the projects are critical.

Mr. Schoefmann replied that this is the advocacy group for the bike and pedestrian paths, and it is important for them to do the legwork and find priorities. He continued that it is more than just staff creating a spreadsheet – they need to attach the human piece. When the BPPAC has thought critically about the list and identified priorities, it gives it considerable weight to the City Council.

Chair Pregent asked if they first find money and then identify projects, or identify projects and then find funding. Mr. Schoefmann replied that they identify projects – finding funding is staff's

job. He continued that next month he will give them the list of the previous Master Plan's projects so they can see which have been completed and which still need to be done, but today they can bat around any ideas they have for what they see as major priorities.

Mr. Redfern stated that in 1995 they set up a priority list but did not follow it precisely, because sometimes circumstances arise that cause priorities to shift around. He continued that they should attach a caveat preceding or following the list, saying that priorities may shift depending on funding or other circumstances. Mr. Little suggested having a plan that describes the environment and an appendix that defines the priorities, so they do not do all of this work on a Master Plan that soon becomes outdated. They should have a Master Plan that is not always out of date, so people can use it as a reference document. Mr. Schoefmann replied that it is okay for the Master Plan to become out of date, because it means they are making progress with projects. He continued that the Master Plan spans several years, so the whole thing will not quickly become outdated. Mr. Redfern spoke of the importance of the BPPAC prioritizing projects, because it is their responsibility, not just staff's, and not Pathways for Keene (PFK)'s.

Mr. Brehme asked if there is data that needs to be collected to inform this process, or if Mr. Schoefmann has enough data. Mr. Schoefmann replied that like he said, he will provide the BPPAC with a list of projects that have not been updated, and a map showing which ones have been completed and which still remain and where connections need to be. He continued that today he is giving the group the opportunity to talk about projects they see as priorities.

Mr. Brehme stated that he suggests a crossing over Route 101 for the trail that heads towards Troy. Mr. Redfern replied that is the Cheshire Rail Trail south. Mr. Schoefmann stated that he thinks he means a connection to the Stone Arch Bridge, including the section from Eastern Ave to Route 101. Chair Pregent replied that that is a tough one for many reasons but he agrees that it would be fairly important. Discussion ensued about this project idea.

Mr. Redfern stated that when they make the list of projects, they should describe where they envision it going from and to, name the trail, determine what type of surface they want, and state who owns each segment. Mr. Schoefmann replied that most of the segments they have improved are ones for which they have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the State, meaning that the State owns it but maintenance is the City's responsibility.

Mr. Little stated that NHDOT indicated that a dirt path will come up to both sides of South Bridge when it is built. He continued that a project could be to connect where the asphalt ends at Keene State College (KSC) over to South Bridge. He assumes the path on the other side of the bridge will remain dirt or gravel because of who the property owner is. Another project would be a second bridge over Route 101 and the connection from there to the Cheshire Trail South. He thinks that would be lowest priority on the list, but if they are on the list, they never know where money might come from. Discussion ensued about this area.

Chair Pregent suggested a project – a way to go from the end of Eastern Avenue to the bridge going across Route 101. He continued that the trail is in tough shape and has been abandoned for years. Mr. Little asked what the problem is with the trail. Mr. Schoefmann replied

significant encroachment by home owners, with sheds, yard waste, etc. Chair Pregent added that drainage is poor. Discussion continued about this area.

Mr. Redfern stated that he agrees with Mr. Little's idea about paving the dirt path from South Bridge to connect with KSC's asphalt path, but he suggests avoiding prioritizing these right now. He suggests they list all projects they can think of and then debate priorities. Chair Pregent agreed.

Mr. Schoefmann summarized the projects he has heard suggested so far and asked for other ideas. Mr. Little suggested creating a bike route on Emerald Street that fits better with bicyclists' natural tendency to want to go straight down to Main Street instead of making several sharp turns. He continued that there is no sidewalk on either side and they need something there to support bicyclists' and pedestrians' access to Main Street. Mr. Schoefmann replied that it is great that they are thinking about such "in-street facilities" instead of just trails. Mr. Little stated that the Roundhouse T Phase I section is too narrow and needs to be widened.

Mr. Brehme stated that the new Ashuelot Green Space (next to Ashuelot River Park) will be developed at some point and that would be an opportunity for a nice trailhead there. He continued that they can think about how to incorporate that with improvements to the Jonathan Daniels Trail. Discussion ensued about the Ashuelot Green Space plans and how they are changing/have changed. Mr. Brehme reported that Astrid Warden has left Keene, and he and another person have been asked to step in, working with Ken Stewart.

Mr. Little asked, if the improvements are done on Emerald Street, what happens when bicyclists get to Main Street? Mr. Schoefmann replied that he has been mulling this over for a while, where to have bike lanes where to have sharrows. He continued that Mr. Blomquist has a project coming up to look at what can be done with Main Street. He will try and dovetail some improvements on that project. Maybe the BPAPC would be interested in studying where they could put bike lanes on Main Street and where sharrows would be appropriate. Discussion ensued about Main Street. Chair Pregent stated that they can keep talking about this, and it would be helpful to see what other communities have done with similar situations/streets.

Mr. Redfern brought up the topic of the greenway along the Beaver Brook corridor, as part of the Marlboro Street rezoning initiative. Chair Pregent replied that on the map it seems to be Beaver Street to Baker Street, and yes, they do need to talk about it. Mr. Schoefmann replied that the initial conversation was something like Carpenter Street to Marlboro Street, carving out a greenway if the Kingsbury property were to be redeveloped. Discussion ensued about how this relates to other projects. Mr. Little wondered about crossing Emerald Street and going from that point to Cheshire Trail South. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he will email an image showing where the greenway space was envisioned. Mr. Little replied that that could alleviate some bicycle traffic on Main Street.

5. Old Business

Mr. Schoefmann stated that he will have Chair Pregent sign the BPPAC's letter to NHDOT.

6. New Business

Chair Pregent noted that there is graffiti on North Bridge.

Mr. Little asked for the agenda item that lists the next month's meeting date to also list the time. Mr. Schoefmann replied yes, they can do that. He continued that however, the November meeting needs to be rescheduled because it is currently scheduled on a holiday.

Mr. Little asked for clarification about where bicyclists are allowed on the sidewalks. Mr. Schoefmann replied that it is against the law to ride a bicycle on any sidewalk in New Hampshire unless a sidewalk is specifically designated as allowing bicycles. He continued that however, the City has informally chosen to only enforce this law in the downtown area. Ms. Brunner asked if the City makes an exception for children. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he would have to check. He continued that even if the City does, he doubts the State does. Mr. Little stated that the last time he asked about bikes on sidewalks, it was Mr. Blomquist, he thinks, who told him the signs meant that bikes are not allowed on Main Street. Mr. Schoefmann replied yes, because that is where the City chooses to informally enforce the law, but per State law, bicycles are not allowed on any sidewalks.

7. Adjournment - Next Meeting is November 11, 2015

As noted in a previous agenda item, the November meeting date will be changed.

Chair Pregent adjourned the meeting at 9:33 AM.

Respectfully submitted by
Britta Reida, Minute-taker