

**CITY OF KEENE
BICYCLE, PEDESTRIAN PATH ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
NOVEMBER 14, 2018**

Wednesday, November 14, 2018 8:15am City Hall, Second Floor Conference Room

Members Present:

Linda Rubin, Chair
Dylan Benik, Vice Chair
Thom Little, Member
Charles Redfern, Member
Chris Brehme, Member
Drew Bryenton, Member
David Souther, Alternate

Staff present:

Will Schoefmann, GIS Technician
Andrew Bohannon, Parks and Recreation

Members Not Present:

Ed Guyot, Member

1) Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Rubin called meeting to order at 8:18 am and roll call was conducted.

2) October 10, 2018 Minutes

Mr. Little moved to accept the October 10, 2018 minutes with amendments, Vice Chair Benik seconded and motion was passed unanimously.

Revisions are as follows:

Page 3, paragraph 4, change... *“the cue before BPPAC”* to *“the queue before BPPAC”*

Page 3, paragraph 4, change... *“ones in the cue”* to *“ones in the queue”*

Page 7, paragraph 2, change... *“they used stainless steel and concrete”* to *“they used a foundation of stainless steel reinforcement bars and concrete”*

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

Mr. Schoefmann stated that he added Cheshire Rail Trail Phase 4 (Transportation-Heritage Trail concept) to the list. He said the City Engineer will be working on that project which will involve a number of phases including Eastern Avenue to 101, the bridge to span 101, improvements to the Old Stone Arch Bridge and a potential crossing at Swanzey Factory Road and further out to Swanzey. He said there is not a lot of

information thus far about it. Mr. Schoefmann said he will try to schedule the City Engineer to come and speak with committee at next month's meeting.

-Bike Racks- Mr. Schoefmann stated that bike racks were not put out this year in places where they are traditionally available. Mr. Little asked if he knew the reason why. Mr. Schoefmann said it was probably an oversight as there are plenty of bike racks available in the Public Works garage.

-MAST Complete Streets Grant Award- Mr. Schoefmann announced that Keene was not selected for the Complete Streets grant this year. He said the grant was awarded to Hinsdale, Winchester and Jaffrey instead. Mr. Schoefmann stated there was a MAST subcommittee that met to go through the applications and rank them based on their scoring criteria. Their recommendation was then approved by the MAST Steering committee for subsequent approval by Southwest Regional Planning Commission's Board (SWRPC)—the fiscal agent for the funds—which were distributed out of the NH Charitable Foundation.

Mr. Schoefmann stated that from last year's grant award, the lining has been redone by the DPW's Road Striping budget and the project signage physical installation has wrapped up. He said City staff will be providing metrics to SWRPC, bike counts in the project area, final PSA and some accident research from the police department and the State.

-TAP Grant for this year- Mr. Schoefmann stated that the City submitted for Marlborough Street that tied into other infrastructure improvements. He said the project was ranked 4th by the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) out of 6-8 applications in the region. He said in the past New Hampshire has disregarded the TAC ranks, however, they are competing with Swanzey for rail trail improvements which was ranked 1 or 2 by TAC. Mr. Schoefmann said they should have a final determination on selection around late December early January and the funding should be approved by Council around March or April.

-Bike Mayor- Mr. Schoefmann announced that the Ms. Mannion, the Bike Mayor, has been hired on through the Safe Routes to School grant which is essentially the tail end of what the State has for funding in that realm. He said it jumps off of the infrastructure improvements along Peco Avenue area across from the Keene Middle School and old Jonathan Daniels School. The project is envisioned as a Bike to School Week event at the Keene Middle School as Jonathan Daniels was an elementary school at the time the infrastructure was built and has since been turned into a preschool. The money for the project was still available so the State agreed that they could implement the project at the Keene Middle School instead. He said there were a number of applicants and Ms. Mannion was selected to spearhead the project sometime in May.

Mr. Redfern asked if there was an update for the Cheshire Rail Trail-Park Avenue Loop (Phase 3). Mr. Schoefmann replied that there is no update and he assumes that the

project is in holding until construction season, however, that is a question for the City Engineer.

4) **“Emerald Star” Concept**

Mr. Schoefmann stated that the concept would probably require significant funding and it can be put on more time. Mr. Redfern suggested putting it under Old Business instead.

Mr. Little asked if there was an approximation of the cost for the concept and Mr. Schoefmann replied that there is not as it was just a conceptual way to promote the trail system. Mr. Schoefmann stated that the parking lot was owned by a private group and the concept was an interpretive center/visitor information distribution center. Mr. Benik asked if the location is the lot on Ashuelot Court and Mr. Schoefmann replied yes. Mr. Brehme said the concept was a children’s playground about 5-6 years ago, however, the concept never progressed as it lacked fundraising effort. Mr. Redfern added that when the hydro dam project was withdrawn, greenspace went down in priority. Mr. Schoefmann agreed that the original plan was to remove the dam and enjoy the remediated green space. Mr. Souther said there is still an initiative to remove the dam and a forum was created. Mr. Schoefmann said the concept is great and it is certainly something to keep on the radar, however, it requires funding. He said it could be included in the priorities discussion and they can also ask Mr. Bohannon about a CIP timeline. He said even if it is 5-20 years out, if the City thinks it would be a good amenity as a central point for trails it could be an asset but they better get it on the books soon. Mr. Little said if there is no approximation of cost the project is 20 years out.

Mr. Schoefmann stated that from BPPAC’s perspective, they could pitch the concept as a Visitor Center for the trails. Mr. Souther agreed that is why they need Mr. Bohannon’s input as he knows the plans for the Ashuelot River Park. Mr. Redfern added that there is an addendum process that cues up projects and informs City Council as to what might be coming down the pike. He said if there is no dollar attached to a project, it makes money less of a discussion point and adding projects as an addendum can raise awareness and begin advancing the concept of an idea. Mr. Schoefmann suggested BPPAC provide a project summary update to Council to alert them of the progress on current projects as well as future ones. Mr. Redfern also suggested placing a memo or putting projects in the appendage. Mr. Schoefmann asked members if they would like to talk about a project summary update to Council and priority discussion for next meeting. Chair Rubin agreed with that idea.

Referencing the “Emerald Star” concept, Mr. Bohannon explained that a gentleman came into the Parks and Recreation department, presented a letter and asked if the letter could be shared with BPPAC and the Ashuelot River Park Advisory board. Mr. Bohannon said it looks like a great plan as there is currently an initiative to connect every park to a ten-minute walk and the City of Keene is not participating as they are at capacity. Mr. Bohannon said he and Mr. Schoefmann are working on a new web platform for the trail system very similar to what they did for the parks. He said they aim to get more information out about the trails and parks, perhaps not at the “Emerald Star” concept

level, but with this new platform they will be able to promote parks and trails a little more efficiently than they have done in the past.

Mr. Brehme stated that the “Emerald Star” proposal really depends on the availability of the empty parking lot property. He asked what the status of the parcel is with the owners and what their intentions are with that property. Mr. Bohannon replied that coordination has been with the Mr. Ken Stewart, the Putnam family and two other partners. He said the concept was hanging on the coattails of the Ashuelot dam hydro project and when that did not go through the plan was stalled. Mr. Souther asked Mr. Bohannon what he would like to see happen with that property. Mr. Bohannon replied that he liked the plan as it included pavilions, a natural playground for kids with interesting play structures and a dirt pathway down the edge of Ashuelot Court that could serve as a turnaround spot, kayak launch and access to the trail. He said he would like to see the plan go forward, although it is a struggle for those advocating for alternatively using the property as a dog park or skate park. Mr. Bohannon said it would be a valuable asset to Keene in the form of greenspace, and providing trailhead and kayak access and much needed parking space for the park. Mr. Souther asked if they could see the diagram the owners created originally. Mr. Bohannon said they are welcome to look at it, however, it was purely conceptual and the property is privately owned so it can change at any time. He said he will provide the map to Mr. Schoefmann to share with BPPAC. Mr. Souther stated that if Mr. Bohannon likes the idea and he is holding a public forum on the dam, they can push the idea of the park at that time. Mr. Bohannon replied that it is private property, the three owners are very hard to get to and they made it very clear that they are currently in holding.

Mr. Little suggested alternatively applying the “Emerald Star” concept to the Stone Arch Bridge area as it is a Keene landmark. Mr. Bohannon replied that the City is currently working on establishing a downtown restroom and welcome center located along the bike path as a central location for information distribution. He said investment priority would be focused on that location instead. He announced there is a forum tonight at the Hive and tomorrow at the old Phat Stuff location to discuss the Downtown Footprint and point of information. Mr. Souther stated two information centers a mile apart might be too much in his opinion. Mr. Bohannon replied that he has proposed an Open Space and Trails improvement plan as the City has built over 2 million of infrastructure improvements and allocated very little money to maintain them. He said if successful, the plan will put 25K per year aside as seed money for recreational grants. Some priorities with that money are wayfinding, signage and kiosk information components because that is the only way that work will get done. Mr. Bohannon said he is hoping the improvement plan will go through. He encouraged members to view Mr. Schoefmann’s Parks page which has been widely publicized as they are aiming to mimic that concept on the Trails page by promoting and combining resources to streamline it.

Mr. Brehme shared that the “Emerald Star” concept is nice because it includes parking and there is a high need for extra parking. He agrees with having something like this concept on the trails that could promote tourism.

5) **Old Business**

-Bike Count Summary 2018 - Mr. Schoefmann stated that he is currently entering bike count data and hopefully he will have a summary of the counts the committee did for 2018 by next month. He said he received a large spreadsheet from the State and he was hoping to get a summary, averages and base documentation for the West Street project area.

-Project Priorities- Mr. Bohannon entered the meeting. Chair Rubin stated that they were going to try and agree on 5 priority areas and share them with Pathways for Keene (PFK). She said Mr. Schoefmann reached out to PFK about adding them onto the agenda but they had a very packed annual meeting agenda. They offered a joint meeting with BPPAC in January to see if they could align their priority areas. Chair Rubin suggested that before they have the meeting, the committee might want to talk intelligently about their priority areas or specific priority projects. She said they already have the top five projects identified, so they can share the “bucketed” areas of work in the Master Plan. Mr. Schoefmann referenced the priority areas as broken up into categories and said it is probably worth the majority of a meeting to strategize about the topics. He said he could project the list for the next meeting and they could aim to look at the categories they broke down and make sure they are still relevant and applicable through identifying the top five priority areas again.

Mr. Schoefmann suggested outlining what BPPAC’s impact has been recently, for example, Keene State College’s Wayfinding Geography study, Department of Public Works and Downtown project, the Complete Streets assessment with KSC Geography students and looking at West Street as a Complete Street. He suggested accounting for things that have happened. He said the priority list was something the committee wanted to be fluid year in and out, so that they could adjust focal points for BPPAC. Chair Rubin agreed and said that they can look at the top five priorities again and perhaps from there they can expand to a top ten list. Mr. Little agreed with identifying top ten priorities and then whittling it down to more focused priorities inside that group. Chair Rubin added that they probably already have the top ten ranked. Mr. Little stated that the Cheshire Rail Trail-Park Ave loop project is one of their top ten projects, however, perhaps they need a way to project timelines a year out or more that are already funded.

Mr. Bohannon suggested breaking the list down and reorganizing it into three status categories: Planning, Working, Completed and shifting the grid around so the Working category is on top. He said Phase 3 projects are out of their control and they should ideally be working on something else at that time. Mr. Schoefmann added that some of the Master Plan projects should be changed to Working, for example, the Complete Streets assessment being worked on with help of Keene State College students. Mr. Schoefmann also added the caveat that although the top ten priority list is ideal for the committee, the top five categories enables him as a staff person to focus his resources most efficiently as he has a limited bandwidth to prepare agendas, review minutes, support collaborators, etc.

Mr. Redfern stated that the committee has already come up with a priority list for the City and for BPPAC under the organizational column so they can work off of that list as they add rankings. Mr. Schoefmann said he does not want members to get frustrated if they expect movement on ten projects as opposed to five. Chair Rubin agreed that the West Street is a great example as it was made a priority as a long-term goal and Mr. Schoefmann put a lot of effort into organizing members to do bicycle and pedestrian counts. She said she recognizes that level of focus may not have been possible if he had ten projects to focus on instead of five. Mr. Schoefmann suggested identifying the top ten and then cutting back the list from there. Mr. Little agreed and said they could alternatively identify six projects instead of ten. Mr. Schoefmann said they will know if a project has no movement that they may need to do some extra promotion and networking. Mr. Benik agreed and said the West Street bike counts started with that idea as that project was listed as low organizational support and high committee support.

-Bike Racks- Mr. Schoefmann stated that it would be a good idea for him to draft a memo/letter to DPW/Highway requesting a plan for bike rack locations, distribution dates and dates when racks will be brought back in. He said if BPPAC would like to work with him on that they could have something for the committee next month and they can deliver it to Mr. Blomquist (Public Works Director) and Mr. Billy Byrne (Highway Foreman).

-Public Outreach and Events- Mr. Schoefmann shared that the Downtown Forum for the Land Use Code update will be happening tonight at the Hive at 5:30 pm. He sent an email out and there is also a website called Building Better Together. He said there are also a bunch of different running forums tomorrow.

6) **New Business - Items to be included for next meeting**

Chair Rubin said members should review the priority list for next meeting (which is different than the project update list). Mr. Schoefmann said he will make sure members have access to the correct document on the Google Drive and asked members to let him know if they would like a pdf hard copy. Chair Rubin said the draft letter about the bike racks should also be done at the next meeting so in order to avoid overscheduling the agenda, she asked Mr. Schoefmann to ask Mr. Lucier to update BPPAC in January.

7) **Adjournment-** Chair Rubin adjourned the meeting at 9:28 am.

Next meeting date –December 12, 2018

Respectfully submitted by,
Ayshah Kassamali-Fox

Additional Edits by,
Will Schoefmann, City Staff