

City of Keene
New Hampshire

BICYCLE PEDESTRIAN PATH ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, September 11, 2019 8:15 AM City Hall, 2nd Floor Conference Room

Members Present:

Dillon Benik, Chair
Brad Dufresne
Christopher Brehme
Charles Redfern
Todd Horner
David Souther, Alternate

Staff Present:

Will Schoefmann, City GIS Technician
Andy Bohannon, Director of Parks and Recreation
Rhett Lamb, Community Development Director

Members Not Present:

Drew Bryenton, Vice Chair

1) Roll Call

Chair Benik called the meeting to order at 8:16 am and roll call was conducted.

2) August 14, 2019 Minutes

Mr. Redfern moved to accept the August 14, 2019 minutes, Mr. Dufresne seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

3) Council Referral (FOP) Request to Purchase City Property: 160 Emerald Street

Mr. Schoefmann said the State and City were exploring who owned the property near the Rail Trail. Mr. Schoefmann stated that the minutes from 2011 mentioned that the Shallado property had come up as well. He said after careful analysis they now they have documentation that the City owns the property. Mr. Schoefmann said that Mr. Tousley has made a current request to purchase the property. He said there is a 2015 aerial photo that shows the property unpaved and another in 2019 which shows its present day state.

Mr. Tousley stated that there has been investment interest for development in that area for a while. He said most of the interests are aimed at increasing parking capacity and since then he was able to extend the Gilbo Avenue connection of the bike path and that strip of the bike path took 8-9 feet away from Emerald street parking. He said the focus has been so much on Main Street instead of Emerald Street and took away 20 parking spaces which has exacerbated the problem. Mr. Tousley said there are seven retail businesses in his building and parking is a problem. Numerous offices, hair dressers, all affordable, local businesses. He stated that this is a very important piece of the local economy and it will benefit him as a landowner as well as the local businesses. Mr. Tousley stated that Mr. Redfern has emphasized the importance of having a trailhead; however, he does not think there is any reason to have a trailhead in Keene.

Mr. Redfern stated that the retail businesses are not the ones experiencing a need for more parking and the tenant users are the ones in need of parking. He asked Mr. Tousley when he took ownership of the facility and Mr. Toby replied in 2007. Mr. Redfern noted that the prior owner used the area in question for parking and Mr. Tousley has had the benefit of not paying the State for the use of those lots. He further stated that Mr. Tousley invested in placing putting asphalt down for around \$100K. Mr. Lamb stated that the City did not do any research on ownership of the property until a couple of months ago. Mr. Benik asked if Mr. Tousley is requesting to buy from this southerly border. Mr. Tousley said they have already lost 15 spaces and the parking lot is primarily for employees of those businesses. Mr. Redfern stated that the City code's charge items include that they make reports and recommendations to City Council and City Staff about the management and infrastructure of bike trails and paths. He stated that he envisions the possibility of a trailhead, or a pocket park in that location, therefore, there are a number of reasons for the City maintaining control of that area. He noted that, however, there may be a way to accommodate Mr. Tousley's desire to acquire additional parking spots. Mr. Redfern proposed that the City lease the parking spaces to Mr. Tousley, taking into consideration the improvements Mr. Tousley has made in the parking capacity. He stated that he believes this decision would generate better returns for the City than an outright sale and allow the City to retain control of City infrastructure (bicycle and paths).

Chair Benik stated that BPPAC are advocates for the bike paths and pedestrians and there may be something to Mr. Redfern's plan, however, he does not see an upside to the City selling Mr. Tousley the proposed land. Mr. Lamb noted that the City could make the point that the space is an important decision point for going east or west, and as a stopping point that can be developed into a park or a food truck location along Emerald Street. He said while the City is sympathetic to Mr. Tousley's parking situation, he recommends that that the City retain the property for a period of time before deciding if they want to develop it for some future use. Mr. Bohannon noted to keep in mind that this is the intersection between the Cheshire Rail Trail and Ashuelot Rail Trail and there are potential improvements for that space between the City of Keene and Swanzey. Mr. Dufresne asked if there could be a financial gain from a sale with a provision towards maintaining it as green space. Mr. Redfern stated that the City does not like to sell property and keep revenue for specific purposes as they keep it in a general revenue pot. Mr. Bohannon added that when they sold the land to Eversource behind Wheelock Park they put the money back into Wheelock Park. Mr. Schoefmann stated that in the project update table that is updated monthly, BPPAC has prioritized the Emerald Star concept which would translate into a single spot for information as in a hub of trail information.

Mr. Brehme asked what will happen to the property if they do not sell it to Mr. Tousley. Mr. Lamb replied that there is no specific CIP project but there have been some early concepts. He said a lease-back seems appropriate but that would be up to City Council. Mr. Redfern stated that the recommendation is not to sell the property and let City Council weigh in and understand Mr. Tousley's side of the problem and they can come up with some remedy. It is between balancing control of the property and accommodating Mr. Tousley's situation. He said the only upside would be to accommodate businesses, but they are still not sure about how the Arts Corridor will affect the needs of cyclists.

Chair Benik moved that they recommend to City Council to not sell the property to Mr. Tousley, Mr. Redfern seconded and the motion passed 5-1 with Mr. Dufresne voting against the recommendation.

Mr. Horner stated that it is in the best interest of the City to retain the opportunity to evaluate the future use of that partial before making a final decision. Chair Benik agreed that this discussion might be different in a year or a few months.

4) Old Business

- Downtown Bike Racks & Winter Parking

Mr. Schoefmann stated that he will be delivering a presentation to an outdoor recreation class at Keene State College (KSC) who will be helping the City with bike parking, bike and pedestrian counts and West Street bike counts for next week (9/14-9/21). He said he sent out a Doodle Poll for the West Street counts last week and he can resend it if members did not have a chance to sign up for counts. He said hopefully KSC students will help with the morning slots. Mr. Schoefmann said there are about 18 students working on the project so that will greatly increase their overall counting power. Mr. Redfern asked what dates are being proposed. Mr. Schoefmann said the Saturday times are strictly between noon and 2 pm. He said they will tackle three locations on the West Street corridor and they will possibly take a stroll downtown to count bikes on bike racks. Mr. Souther asked if they can differentiate between Green Bikes and other bikes to gauge how many of the bikes are KSC student bikes. Mr. Schoefmann said he has not come up with a bike rack count data sheet yet but he will create a simple one as well as gauge what the capacity is on each rack. He said he will have the capacities listed on the count sheet for members to see.

Mr. Schoefmann stated that they can also identify one or two locations to promote as covered winter parking. He said the awning by the Yolo shop is a potential location, as well as the spot across from the Monadnock Co-Op. He said the latter is moveable so it would make it easier for Department of Public Works to perform winter maintenance. Mr. Schoefmann encouraged further ideas for covered parking. He said BPPAC can also make a request that Mr. Schoefmann convey pertinent winter bike parking information to Mr. Lundquist.

- Dedication of Path System Section (Thom Little)

Mr. Schoefmann stated that request was fast cycled and by BPPAC's next meeting it should be approved by City Council. Mr. Redfern stated that he is the liaison between Pathways For Keene (PFK) and BPPAC and he informed PFK that the trail would be called "Little Way." He said that PFK is requesting that they add Mr. Little's first name (Thom) in the title of the trail as well. Mr. Schoefmann replied that the idea was to create a small dedication plaque to Mr. Little. He proposed that PFK provide funding for the plaque. Mr. Bohannon added that the idea was to highlight Mr. Little's many contributions to the trail system. He said the name of the trail would be "Little Way" and the plaque would have a serve as a memorial to Mr. Little's contributions. Mr. Schoefmann added that they made need some small financial assistance to purchase the plaque. Mr. Bohannon replied that that he will look into quotes. Mr. Horner asked what the argument is against having it be called "Thom Little Way" and Mr. Schoefmann said there is already a precedent with another trail dedicated to someone called Appel Way. Members agreed to let Council decide at the October 3 City Council meeting.

- Public Outreach and Events Subcommittee

Mr. Redfern stated that he found a document written by the Rail Trail Conservancy on marketing and outreach. He said he will make a copy and discuss it with the committee in October. Members agreed.

- Arts and Culture Corridor

Mr. Schoefmann said BPPAC has expressed interest in learning more about the Arts and Culture Corridor project in the past, and he forwarded an email to members regarding a public input

session with the consultants on the project. He said there are various slots that people can RSVP to and attend the informational sessions. Mr. Redfern noted that it is very important that BPPAC members show up to promote and advocate for the importance of the multi-use trails. Chair Benik stated that there are four different time slots and a pop-up tent and he encouraged members to attend. Mr. Bohannon said they are going to have a public forum for further discussion.

5) Project Updates

(Note: BPPAC Master Plan Documents available on google drive)

Mr. Schoefmann stated most of the striping has been completed downtown including the sharoes and bike boxes. Mr. Souther noted that the City did all the pedestrian striping after the college kids came into town and maybe next year they should consider doing that before people arrive. Mr. Schoefmann agreed and said they had a new contractor this year which impacted the scheduling.

Cheshire Rail Trail-Park Avenue Loop

Mr. Schoefmann stated that the anticipated date of construction for the Cheshire Rail Trail-Park Avenue loop is next year. He said the right-of-way discussions are wrapping up and easement and trail resolutions have been passed by Council. He said they are removing the class 6 trail and making it a class 2 trail which is higher level of trail. Mr. Bohannon said there were negotiations with CNS and the condo association which have been wrapped up. Mr. Schoefmann said the final design plans and the bid for a construction company will follow and he will let BPPAC know as soon as he learns more.

West Street Complete Street Project Counting

Mr. Schoefmann said Main Street facilities have been completed and he will aim to have KSC students conduct counts in downtown and he will also be conducting counts in downtown for reporting out for Complete Streets grant.

Mr. Bohannon stated that before Council tomorrow night the New England Mountain Bike Association will donate infrastructure for a pump track in Wheelock Park. They will be raising about \$25K in funds and anticipate completion of the pump track next spring.

Members agreed that it would be great to have a trailhead as the trail is in really good condition all the way out to Walpole. They agreed to discuss this idea further.

6) New Business (Items to be included for next meeting)

-Discuss a trailhead co-located next to the Food Network trail system.

7) Adjournment

Chair Benik adjourned the meeting at 9:18 am.

Next meeting date – October 9, 2019

Minutes respectfully submitted by,
Ayshah Kassamali-Fox, City of Keene Minute-Taker
Additional Edits submitted by,
Will Schoefmann, Community Development Staff