

City of Keene
New Hampshire

BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN PATH ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, December 9, 2020

8:15 AM

Remote Meeting via Zoom

Members Present:

Drew Bryenton, Vice Chair
Brad Dufresne
Michael Davern
Todd Horner
Rowland Russell
Councilor Jan Manwaring
Dr. Chris Brehme, Alternate
Charles Redfern, Alternate

Staff Present:

Will Schoefmann, GIS Technician
Andy Bohannon, Director of Parks and
Recreation, City of Keene

Members Not Present:

Dillon Benik, Chair

Vice Chair Bryenton called meeting to order at 8:19 AM.

1) Roll Call

Vice Chair Bryenton read the Zoom meeting platform guidelines aloud and roll call was conducted.

2) November 18, 2020 Minutes

Mr. Dufresne moved to accept the November 18, 2020 minutes, Mr. Russell seconded, and the motion was passed by unanimous vote.

3) Reprioritizing Projects

Vice Chair Bryenton stated that they are discussing the reprioritization of projects as high, medium or low. Mr. Schoefmann stated that they have discussed combining some projects and/or working strategies into other projects, so the spreadsheet demonstrates that they have created different categories to be incorporate into the plan.

P-23 – Mr. Schoefmann stated that the rezoning portion of the project has culminated so they would focus more on the TAP projects which still has some ongoing components, such as resurfacing and the streetscape, as well as formalization of the connection to the Cheshire Rail Trail. Mr. Schoefmann stated that the TAP funding was delayed but now it is in engineering

hands and as soon as they get the green light from the State and Feds the project will proceed. Vice Chair Bryenton suggested they move the project to low priority as it is already in motion. Mr. Russell asked if Victoria Street has any impact on this project and Mr. Schoefmann replied that he will check into his notes on that project. He said it is budgeted for FY 2022 and asked Mr. Bohannon for additional insight on Victoria Street. Mr. Bohannon did not immediately reply. Mr. Schoefmann said that Victoria Street will be started from scratch instead of conceptually connecting it to Marlboro Street. Mr. Redfern stated that Mr. Lussier told him this project is in the supplemental notes of the CIP and that they were not immediately going to take action on it, however, Mr. Redfern's interest in P-23 is to make sure that they create a platform crossing instead of an at-grade crossing for the safety of Cheshire Rail Trail users and he has been tracking that. Mr. Schoefmann stated that they had set the priority of this project as high. Councilor Manwaring added that it also depends on access to the Kingsbury property and that is far into the future. Mr. Russell proposed that they track the project in case any of the elements change in the near future. Vice Chair Bryenton suggested they set the project as medium priority with an asterisk.

Mr. Horner asked if the design of the Marlboro Street project has been finalized and if so, can the design plans be shared with BPPAC members. He said that he is interested in learning how engineering plans to create a Bartholomew-Court connection to the Cheshire Rail trail. Mr. Schoefmann said there are designs available for that and he can get them for Mr. Horner. Councilor Manwaring said they had voted on that in the past. Mr. Schoefmann said it is between the HCS building and the City garage if he remembers correctly. Mr. Horner stated that if the design has already been finalized the committee may not have any further input. Mr. Schoefmann suggested keeping it at a medium priority level due to funding delays, however, it is good to keep on the radar in case BPPAC has further support they can lend to it when those circumstances change.

Beaver Brook-Greenway project – Mr. Schoefmann stated that this is a conceptual project that the City had rolled out in conjunction with a push for east side redevelopment, including the focus on Marlboro Street. He said Mr. Bohannon can speak more to this. Mr. Bohannon stated that the project was a conceptual project starting at the Kingsbury property, going over to Route 101 to Baker Street. He said that there will be some walking components around the field but not in connection with anything further down the trail. Mr. Schoefmann said the concept was to have an informal trail down the brook side of the trail. Mr. Bohannon stated that it is private property, so they are not prioritizing the concept. Mr. Schoefmann agreed that it is a high-level project. Mr. Russell proposed ranking the project as low priority due to the fact that the connectivity issues are tied to private land ownership. Members agreed.

Russell Park improvements – Mr. Bohannon stated that this project is high priority as it is already in motion. He said the committee will be reviewing the concept designs tomorrow night, and on Friday they will be developing the survey where people can help choose the elements of the park. They will provide nine options and collect survey responses and then move forward based on that feedback. He stated that the connection the Cheshire Rail Trail is also noted on the project. Mr. Russell asked if there is a direct way to get to the park from the Rail Trail and Mr. Bohannon stated that there is not due to private land ownership. He said the private owner will not budge on that issue at all, however, Mr. Bohannon said he is holding out hope that they can

achieve that one day. Mr. Schoefmann stated that it is not far from the Rail Trail. Mr. Russell proposed that wayfinding will become important in that case. Mr. Redfern asked Mr. Bohannon if Friday's session is a public input session. Mr. Bohannon replied that Thursday the committee will meet with a consultant and then they will push that information out to the public via City social media platforms and the website. He said he will be talking to Mr. Chris Mitchell and local radio shows. Mr. Redfern asked when that will happen, and Mr. Bohannon replied that he will be working on the outreach on Friday. Mr. Dufresne asked how quick the turnaround will be with the consultant team. Mr. Bohannon replied that the work is already done, and the consultant team is coming in on Friday with two designs and ready to launch the website. He said he is pleased with the direction that have taken for tomorrow night's meeting. He said the next phase will include public engagement on park design and various elements that the community would like to see included.

Mr. Horner proposed setting this project as high priority. Members agreed. Vice Chair Bryenton added that BPPAC also seek alternative access for cyclists to access the Park more readily. Mr. Horner asked if the Beaver Mill condo property would be an avenue towards access and Mr. Bohannon replied that he has spoken with them and they have not shown much interest. He said they submitted a grant for improvements and development of the Park, but for the next round he will apply for acquisition to increase connectivity. He agreed with keeping the project as high priority.

P-26-Gilbo Avenue-Colony Mill – Mr. Schoefmann stated that the concept for this project is to explore the possibility of bike lanes on Gilbo Avenue and is pending gaining formal access to the Colony Mill parking lot. He said it is not on the priority list but is a conceptual project. Mr. Russell stated that this is connected to improving connectivity to the pocket park on Emerald and it does not appear to belong on the priority list at all. Mr. Redfern said that the Colony Mill transition from commercial to residential might open up the developer's interest in supporting alternative modes of transportation for the their residents. He suggested that they keep it on the radar but rank it as low. Mr. Brehme said he would like to see the north side of Gilbo Avenue separated as it can be dangerous. Mr. Russell suggested bundling this project into the pocket park and connectivity projects. Vice Chair Bryenton asked if the Center of Keene is lumped into this and Mr. Schoefmann replied that the Colony Mill and City of Keene are owned by the same developer/property owner. He said it is up to them to point their residents to the City's facilities. Vice Chair Bryenton suggested ranking the project as low as movement on it does not seem likely in the near future. Members agreed.

P-27-West Street – Mr. Schoefmann stated that this is big project aimed at improving the completeness of West Street and has been a focus for bike counts for BPPAC. He said he is not sure what a ten-year Department of Transportation (DOT) plan would like for West Street and asked Mr. Horner is he has any input. Mr. Horner said he believes that the City has submitted this as a ten-year proposed City project and one point of potential input is the Transportation Advisory committee (TAC) at Southwest Regional Planning Commission (SWRPC). He said that they review ten-year plan project proposals and prioritize proposals and then submit them to DOT based on how they think the regional funding should be allocated. Mr. Horner said he can get more information about the timing as he recalls seeing a preliminary section drawing of what the ride-of-way could look like after the project is completed and BPPAC would be interested in

seeing the drawings and the concept. Mr. Schoefmann asked if that drawing came from the City and Mr. Horner replied that he should ask City Engineering for more information. Mr. Redfern asked Mr. Horner if BPPAC ranked West Street as high, would that help with TAC's ranking or not. Mr. Horner replied that it might factor onto their thinking if the information was relayed over to TAC. Mr. Schoefmann said that every little bit helps and noted that BPPAC's interest in the facilities could factor into the design. He said they could have a conversation about what BPPAC envisions as a safer, more complete West Street. Mr. Horner said that West Street is not yet in the ten-year plan but has been proposed. Vice Chair Bryenton said they should keep this project as high priority and they can add this into new business for next month's agenda. Mr. Russell said he would like to include the Ashuelot Park crossing on West Street into that discussion as part of the connectivity problems. Mr. Horner agreed and said he crosses that street every day and cars routinely fly through the light changes. Mr. Bohannon said there have been fatalities at that crossing so they can make a case for improvement to that crossing. Mr. Schoefmann stated that he will add this item to the agenda for next month.

P-28-West Street bypass – Mr. Schoefmann said that because West Street is so dangerous, they discussed finding a way around it. Mr. Brehme said that if you cross the bridge over the Ashuelot River Park and head northwest, you cross over the Melanson property and end up over by Hannaford's much more safely. He said it is a long-term solution. Mr. Russell said that Antioch University New England (AUNE) had been involved in that project for a while and if they were ever to get the pedestrian bridge over West Street, it makes Mr. Brehme's idea more accessible. Vice Chair Bryenton said that the Emerald Start concept might help this crossing more feasible. Mr. Russell said this is long-term, idealistic thinking and is a building block for increasing access to the Ashuelot River beyond access at Ashuelot Park. Mr. Brehme suggested they rank this project as low priority as it does not have the proper backing yet for movement in the near future. Members agreed.

Amenities – Mr. Schoefmann stated that this project includes kiosks, trailhead facilities, potable water and tune up stations, public art, etc. He said they are always trying to improve those facilities where they can, recognizing the funding constraints on the City staff side. Mr. Russell said that he is still on the board of Friends of Public Art and they have discussed modern sculpture using industrial heritage materials. He said he likes the idea of adding more of the industrial corridor motif along the Ashuelot and the Cheshire Rail trails signage. Vice Chair Bryenton stated that they might need to be more specific, for example, requesting a bathroom or water station. Mr. Russell suggested discussing a wish list at a future meeting. Mr. Redfern stated that visitors love amenities on trails. Mr. Bohannon said that they wanted to put water fountains around the various trails, however, for winterization reasons the cost was prohibitive. However, trail users could consider raising money for placing water stations in certain locations keeping in mind the cost. He stated that the fountains were water bottle fillers. Mr. Russell said that the alternative is that interpretative signage should include where public restrooms and water stations are located instead of actually building those facilities. Vice Chair Bryenton proposed keeping this project as a high priority. Mr. Horner added that he likes the idea of digging into the wish list in a future meeting.

Trail lighting – Mr. Schoefmann said that there has been work done on trail lighting by Pathways for Keene (PFK). Mr. Bohannon said that the City has requested that no more lights be

added for installation and maintenance purposes. However, PFK wants to focus on the Phase 4 projects and raising as much money as possible for the bridges. The lights are useful, but it is a big effort to get them installed and they found them to not be of the highest quality. Mr. Russell encouraged being specific to lighting needs at the trailheads and kiosks and to pay attention to safety issues along the industrial corridor. Mr. Redfern stated that he agrees with the focusing money and efforts on the historical transportation trail and that will be the main focus for PFK. He said they already have quite a few lights up already and they want to take a wait and see approach to gauge the lifespan of the lights and future developments in technology. Mr. Horner stated that the products used for trail lighting might be imperfect, however, he thinks the lighting really improves the night time usability of the Cheshire Rail Trail on the east side of Keene. He said it might be helpful to distinguish between lighting along a segment of trail and lighting at an intersection in regard to safety. Mr. Russell said that female students at AUNE strongly appreciate the increased lighting on the trail for safety purposes.

Vice Chair Bryenton proposed a medium priority ranking for the trail lighting project. Members agreed. Mr. Schoefmann said there are still elements of lighting that the committee can prioritize. Vice Chair Bryenton asked Mr. Bohannon if data is being collected on the efficacy of the lights. Mr. Bohannon replied that earlier in the spring, the lights were on in the day and the technicians came and fixed that. He said they do not have a lot of issues with them, but they are just not high performance and it is more a matter of making sure the program is conducted cost effectively. He noted that one of the hurdles the City has is that they make additions but do not simultaneously add to the maintenance budget of add-ons. Mr. Russell stated that he likes the idea of collecting input in survey form and they can discuss the opportunity for public engagement for responses to current and future features

4) Old Business

A. Wayfinding/MAST Grant

Mr. Schoefmann stated that City staff is working on the finalization of the 2017 project metric report and that will be reported out by the end of the year as was requested by MAST for eligibility for the 2020 grant. That will include the pilot wayfinding and some complete streets improvements along Gilbo Avenue and School Street, lighting for the crossing at the Roundhouse T and the Emerald Street pocket park and some improvements at the West Street intersection at the Ashuelot River park. Mr. Bohannon stated that Mr. Schoefmann, Mr. Redfern and himself have been in conversation about wayfinding; Swanzey has also been doing some work on wayfinding and they have been collaborating on designs. Mr. Schoefmann stated that he will provide the design drafts at the next BPPAC meeting. Mr. Bohannon added that they are in a good place and ahead of schedule. He said the next phase is to pinpoint locations and identify segments which will be done with the MAST grant. Mr. Bohannon stated that the wayfinding signs further out will allow the data to accrue with the MAST grant so that they receive better identification and interest points to work their way to the inner core. Mr. Schoefmann stated that along with the draft signs from the Mondanock Region Rail Trail Collaborative (MRRTC), he will include Mr. Horner's Walk your City information to next month's meeting agenda for committee feedback.

B. Emerald Street/Ashuelot Rail Trail Trailhead

Mr. Bohannon stated that he will get more information about the historical work for the kiosk at the pocket park. Mr. Redfern expressed his concern that the kiosk is vulnerable to tagging if they do not move fast on that front. Mr. Russell added that he will ask the Historic Society Board and Mr. Poanessa about the status of that project. Mr. Russell updated the committee that the bike repair station is still in limbo due to the flooding event that happened on campus and many of the materials are in containers in the parking lot. Once they are able to locate that, perhaps they can move forward on installation. He also stated that they approach the landowner at Center of Keene to allow one or two parking spots for trail rider access at the waystation. Mr. Brehme also suggested that they take a parking spot away and putting in staircases.

5) Other Project Updates

Mr. Schoefmann stated that he investigated the DPW garage and found six Racket UP racks available, as well as some pre-fabbed three rack corrals. He stated he will update the committee on rack availability at the next meeting.

6) New Business

- Marlboro Street design
- West Street project concept.
- Amenities
- Survey to launch to the community regarding amenities.
- Recreational tourism project for UNH
- Ranking of priority projects

7) More Time

8) Adjournment

Next meeting date – January 13, 2021.

Vice Chair Bryenton adjourned the meeting at 9:35 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Ayshah Kassamali-Fox, Minute Taker

Additional Edits by,
Will Schoefmann, Community Development Staff