

**City of Keene
New Hampshire**

BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN PATH ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, July 14, 2021

8:15 AM

**2nd floor Conference Room/
via Zoom Webinar**

Members Present:

Dillon Benik, Chair
Councilor Jan Manwaring
Todd Horner
Rowland Russell
Charles Redfern, Alternate

Staff Present:

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

Members Not Present:

Drew Bryenton, Vice Chair
Dr. Chris Brehme, Alternate
Brad Dufresne
Michael Davern

Chair Benik called the meeting to order at 8:15 AM.

1) Roll Call

Roll call was conducted. Mr. Redfern will serve as a voting member at today's meeting.

2) June 9, 2021 Minutes

Chair Benik moved to accept the June 9, 2021 meeting minutes with revisions, Mr. Redfern seconded, and the motion was passed by unanimous vote.

Revision as follows: change: "Alex Lacey" to "Alex Lacy."

3) Naming of North Bridge – MSFI/Council Referral

Chair Benik stated that the minutes from MSFI's last meeting are in the agenda packet. Mr. Bohannon and Councilor Manwaring were in that meeting's attendance. Councilor Manwaring informed the committee that when a bridge is named it goes to MSFI and that typically causes some disagreement in the community about what the name should be. She said there is the option of the Dale Pregent Bridge but many community members want the bridge to remain the North Bridge. She said her advice is to honor Dale Pregent with the 101 bridge because citizens believe that the North Bridge is colloquially recognized already. Mr. Bohannon stated that a subcommittee did a public process and returned with the consensus to keep the name as North Bridge. He said that naming the idea of naming the other bridges after the former mayor may be a good option, however, the will for the Council and group may be to keep the name as North Bridge. He said they received 63 nominations and reviewed the names and selected North Bridge. There was a lot of sentiment from the various veterans as well. Dr. Russell asked for the name of the bridge by Keene State College is. Members replied it is named South Bridge. Dr. Russell stated that names are challenging and perhaps one option is to have stretches of the trail

have names to honor certain people. He said the Krauss Bridge possesses political and strategic challenges as well, however, they may have control over naming sections of trail. Mr. Redfern stated that he spoke to Mayor Pregent and he wants to express how important that it is for him, he put a letter to the editor, and seemed easy going. Mr. Redfern stated that he spoke to Mr. Lussier and he indicated that his concern is changing the name may impact eligibility for historical grants; Mr. Redfern stated that keeping the North Bridge name the same is good for now, as well as the Bailey Bridge.

Chair Benik stated that he does not love the idea of changing the name of a bridge, however, he likes the idea of naming stretches, for example, the Pearl Street to West Street segment could have a sign dedicated to a person. Chair Benik asked if Council is looking for a motion from ECC for renaming North Bridge. Mr. Russel stated that the Ashuelot Bridge currently does not have a name so that may be an option as well.

Chair Benik moved to recommend to Council that the name North Bridge remain the same and to explore dedicating a segment of trail from Island Street to Pitcher Street to the former Mayor, Mr. Redfern seconded, and the motion was passed unanimously.

4) Old Business

a) Wayfinding: UNH Downtown Trails, Needs and Design Surveys MRRTC, MAST Grant

Mr. Bohannon stated that the UNH Downtown point person reached out to him and he will be following up with her in the next week or two to report back to the committee. He said that Mr. Schoefmann identified some individuals around time to be part of a steering committee and come into the next meeting at the end of August to start the process. Mr. Schoefmann stated that they will integrate some of the work around the amenities survey and get ahead of the game. Chair Benik asked how many people will be on the steering committee. Mr. Bohannon replied that there will be around 6-8 people on the steering committee and ECC will be critical in that process; he said they want to bring some individuals from downtown businesses as well to go into the community and interview their business peers. Mr. Bohannon stated that there will also be a larger group from KSC, along with Dr. Brehme and his students, who will be working with the public during intercept surveys. He stated that some individuals in the area contacted the State about wayfinding signs and the State asked for them to stop and want to come up with their plan for State owned trails, However, the City has their right of way from Eastern Ave west to the North Bridge, so the City can put signage onto that stretch and then from Emerald Street to David Street. He said there is already a kiosk there so they can place information there, however, that may change with newer guidelines as they are aiming to make the signage uniform. Mr. Redfern stated that they have been trying to acquire signage for the trails and finally there are some local group initiatives and there is momentum and now the State is putting a stop on it; the problem is the funding and cost of the signage moving forward.

Dr. Russell stated that they are closing six programs at KSC including the Geography department, which is something that needs to be traced in terms of the GIS lab, however, if they do not keep their GIS lab, they can look to AUNE for using their GIS lab or Environmental Studies department. Mr. Redfern stated he had a conversation with Mr. Caswell about money coming into the State for the American Recovery Act program, for example, Mr. Blomquist has been able to get money from different DES programs, and the Parks received \$22M and some of the money should trickle down to the municipalities but that is not the case. He said there are two projects: Mt. Washington and Canon Mountain have septic systems that need to be replaced for

\$8M each; and he pushed for more money, but they told him he will have to push for the trail side of funding opportunities. Mr. Blomquist stated that there is a highway bill going through where they will fund multi-use trail systems, however, with all the money being spent there is resistance in passing the current bill. Therefore, it would be good to push the delegation to have a new highway bill in October because otherwise there will be no additional funding. He said the focus will be on alternate transportation and climate resiliency.

Mr. Schoefmann informed the committee that the Walk Your City Plan should be a like to like match and part of a pilot program, there was a \$1000 earmarked for signage for that project. He said that he and Mr. Bohannon are figuring out what to do as there may not be a local option; he will be talking to Gemini shortly.

b) Amenities: Survey, Shade Trees

Mr. Schoefmann stated that the survey can be put on hold and Mr. Horner can speak more about how to improve the pedestrian experience. Mr. Horner shared that when they pursue work related to amenities, they maybe should consider shade tree to improve the pedestrian experience. He asked Mr. Bohannon if the City has a tree planting project. Mr. Bohannon replied that the budget for tree planting is \$3K; therefore, the City does not have an urban forest tree program. Mr. Blomquist stated that Council has only funded emergency work or removal and new tree plantings are placed in the right of way. Mr. Horner said that is good to know, because shade trees could garner support in the community and there may have grants available for that need. Mr. Redfern stated that with shade trees cone tree roots and roots gravitate towards pavement, therefore, they should look at trees where the root system does not tear up the trails at the surface as that has happened at certain sites. Ms. Lacy stated that solar panels, canvas, and other amenities can also provide shade and should be considered. Mr. Blomquist added that if there is no money to take care of trees, it can create problems over time and until the community wishes to fund an urban reforest program it is problematic. If a tree creates problems, it will be removed. The budget is greater for removal than replacement. Many of the trees were put in 80 years ago, before the roads have expanded. Mr. Bohannon said in Goose Pond Forest last year, tree removal cost \$7K, so he was over budget in July of last year. Ms. Lacy added that tree removal volunteer work could be an option as well. Mr. Blomquist replied that it gets complicated with electrical wires, so it is not that simple. Dr. Russell shared that developing a fundraising committee for this group could be beneficial and begin earmarking funding sources such as environmentally funded grants, or arts funded grants that may be out of the purview of what the committee typically look at especially as they head into the fall. Ms. Lacy noted that ensuring that trees are native and pollinator friendly is key.

c) Sidewalks: Proposed Budget Acceleration

Mr. Blomquist stated that there was a proposed budget acceleration for sidewalks. There has been talk in the Council about sidewalks but there was not much to gain in terms of the budget; he said right now Mr. Lussier is working on an asset management plan for sidewalks. Then they will go back to the capital improvement program and present in the fall to City Council. He said any increase in sidewalk will go into the work for the City. Mr. Blomquist stated there are about 52 miles of sidewalk and they get replaced with concrete with an estimate of \$3.2M in deficit to bring the poor sidewalks up to a C. He said sidewalks are funded by property taxes and most likely they will talk about the timeline for the sidewalk projects. He said the sidewalks are in the purview of BPPAC and feedback will be important; however, the challenge will be in educating the public about increased cost and the timeline as the public is hesitant to pay more in taxes. Mr.

Horner asked if the \$3.2M is the cost to replace the poor sidewalks with concrete and Mr. Blomquist replied yes.

d) Bike/Pedestrian Counts: EcoCounter Grant

Mr. Schoefmann stated that Mr. Davern reported that they should have a determination on the EcoCounter grant at the end of the month or early August. He said the goal was to have them out in the summer.

e) Big E Expo Presence

Mr. Redfern stated that the Expo is scheduled for September 17-October 2. He said most days are open, in four-hour shifts or more. He stated there is one member working with Granite State Ambassadors to have coverage for the Rail Trails of NH and his goal is to promote Rail Trails in this area. Mr. Redfern asked if members have availability in that timeframe, they can pick a date and come in to volunteer with free parking. Chair Benik said they will revisit this opportunity in August as the date approaches.

5) Regular Project Updates

Mr. Schoefmann stated that the TAP grant for Marlborough Street has been earmarked for the new federal transportation bill for infrastructure. Mr. Blomquist shared that the City put in for one of the two projects for Keene, as the State has a two-year funding plan. Mr. Redfern said that the TAP grants submitted for Eastern Avenue to 101 has gone to the State. Mr. Blomquist stated that the legislative process is long. Mr. Schoefmann stated that the Stone Arch Bridge portion of the Transportation Heritage Trail will require some planning and funding for next year, 2022.

6) New Business

Dr. Russell stated that the Wall Dogs executive committee had a meeting, and they are enthusiastic about a mural as they have a bit of leftover money for new murals, about \$7K. He said there are three potential murals that have historical relevance and that may comprise one of the sites, as it has high visibility. He said they will keep discussing potential sites and potential grants. He stated that there could be 2-3 different subjects. Mr. Horner asked how visible the abutments are from the bypass, Dr. Russell replied that the middle ones are visible but the ones that are set back are more visible from Walker's as they are more enclosed. Dr. Russell stated that murals tend to repel graffiti as well.

7) Adjournment

Chair Benik adjourned the meeting at 9:17 AM. Next meeting date – August 11, 2021.

Respectfully submitted by,
Ayshah Kassamali-Fox, Minute Taker

Additional Edits by,
Will Schoefmann, GIS Technician

Additional Edits by,
Katie Kibler, Clerk's Office