

City of Keene
New Hampshire

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN PATH ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, February 9, 2022

8:15 AM

**2nd Floor Conference Room,
City Hall**

Members Present:

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

Staff Present:

Andrew Bohannon, Director of Parks &
Recreation
Kürt Blomquist, Director of Public
Works

Members Not Present:

All Present

1) Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Benik called the meeting to order at 8:18am. Roll call was conducted.

Mr. Redfern was present via Zoom.

2) Elections

Chair Benik reported the first agenda item as elections for Chair and Vice Chair and stated he was told he can no longer be Chair because of term limits. He added that his schedule will be changing so he would not be able to make the commitment required of a Chair any longer.

Dr. Russell made a motion to nominate Mr. Bryenton for Chair. Councilor Manwaring seconded the motion. Dr. Brehme made a motion to nominate Mr. Horner for Chair. Chair Benik seconded the motion. Mr. Bryenton stated he would have eligibility for one year and would certainly accept if the committee desired; however, he felt it may be time for someone new to step into the role. Mr. Horner stated if Mr. Bryenton is willing to serve as Chair for the next year he would be willing to serve as Vice Chair. He explained that he and his wife are expecting a baby in April so Vice Chair may be a better role for the time being. Chair Benik commented that he feels the committee will continue to work well together as a unit and will be okay to function either way. He suggested that they have Mr. Bryenton serve as Chair and once they get through the year they can hand off the

position of Chair to Mr. Horner, if he has the time for it. After short discussion, Chair Benik called for a vote for those in favor of nominating Mr. Bryenton as Chair. The vote passed unanimously. Chair Benik then called a vote for those in favor of nominating Mr. Horner as Vice Chair. The vote passed unanimously.

Dr. Russell welcomed Councilor Manwaring as an official committee member.

Mr. Bohannon thanked Mr. Benik for his time and efforts serving as Chair.

There was short discussion with regards to obtaining a new Council member and the one vacant position on the committee. Both the mountain bikers and Monadnock cycling groups, as well as Antioch University graduate students, were some suggestions for outreach. Mr. Benik suggested adding more women to the committee and Mr. Horner suggested potentially reaching out to high school seniors to be a part of the committee to get the younger generation involved. Mr. Bohannon stated Mr. Horner's and Mr. Bryenton's terms expire at the end of 2023 and Mr. Benik's term expires at the end of 2024. Chair Bryenton asked how many alternates they could have and Mr. Bohannon stated he believes up to 5, but will need to check the code specific to this committee.

Mr. Bohannon stated they will review the December minutes at the next meeting, as they were not distributed yet.

3) **Master Plan Update**

Mr. Bohannon stated staff has reached out to J.B. Mack and they are very interested in the project; however, they cannot work on it until late summer due to their current workload. Mr. Benik asked how long it would take for them to complete the project and Mr. Bohannon anticipated it would take a good 8 – 10 months, including public engagement and reviewing recommendations. Dr. Russell stated that delayed timeframe will give the committee a chance to get back into the work they were doing with UNH.

4) **Kiosk Map Updates**

Mr. Bohannon stated that Mr. Schoefmann has produced a map and they just need to print and mount them. They are looking at an install in April.

5) **Old Business**

A) **Wayfinding/Amenities: UNH Downtown Trails Update; Other Updates**

Mr. Bohannon stated with regards to the UNH Downtown trail update, he had a great conversation with Shannon and Giada and they are finalizing a rough draft. As soon as he receives the draft he will distribute it to the committee for review. He added that they do want to have one more engagement session with the downtown businesses. They were happy with the survey responses they obtained and extracted that data from the perspective of a non-resident. He noted that they saw comments from residents that they would normally see from non-residents. Mr. Bohannon

summarized that they will have the recommendation by the end of the month, do one more engagement session, the committee will review and discuss, and by April they should be able to accept the project officially.

Mr. Benik asked if there was a targeted timeline for when the downtown engagement will take place. Mr. Bohannon stated they are looking to get it done in mid-March. He added that Mr. Paris wanted to have a downtown group meeting with everyone so they are trying to coordinate that along with the Chamber and the committee, and open it up to the public. Mr. Bohannon mentioned that they presented to the Rotary Club back in December and asked them to send out the survey to all marathon participants and all 4 on the 4th participants, but they did not hear back.

Mr. Redfern asked Mr. Blomquist if there was a status update on the signage for the two bridges that will identify the rail trails that pass over the highways. Mr. Blomquist stated he did not have an update and Mr. Redfern stated he would contact Bill Watson.

Mr. Horner stated it would be great to have a draft of the report UNH is putting together for the committee to review, before the meeting with the downtown group. Mr. Bohannon stated he will get the draft report to them as soon as he receives it and either he or Shannon will be leading the presentation.

B) Sidewalks: Council Proposal

Mr. Bohannon stated there was a plan put forward in the CIP related to the sidewalks so it is on the forefront of the Council's mind. He added that when the Council had their Strategic Governance meeting there was a lot of conversation about sidewalks and the topic is part of their goals. He was not present at their goals session in January but imagines that they've incorporated that thought process into the CIP.

Mr. Blomquist stated Public Works put forward a proposed program for increased maintenance, about \$200,000, and will be presenting to the FOP committee soon. He went on to state that on March 3rd the public hearing on the FY23-29 CIP will take place, which will include sidewalks, Transportation Heritage Trail and a number of other bicycle/pedestrian associated projects. He encouraged the Chair or a designated member from the committee to be in attendance and provide input.

Mr. Blomquist explained that the current concern is budget. He stated their operating budget is only proposed to go up 2.69%, which does not cover most of the cost of materials, and their bids are coming in around 30% over budget. He noted the Upper Winchester Street project had only 2 bidders and stated this is likely to be a problem that will be around for some time, reiterating that it will be important for committee representation on March 3rd to ensure the Council of the project's importance.

Mr. Bohannon added that another project that will be included in the hearing is open space and trails, which is a program, and for FY23 will be \$50,000. In FY24 the program will be repaving

Appel Way between Court Street and Wheelock Park and it will be \$35,000 from that point forward, which will be seed money for all of the different trail projects.

C) Bike/Pedestrian Counts: 2022 Plans

Mr. Bohannon reported that UNH mentioned that Mr. Horner and his crew did great work on the Ashuelot Rail Trail obtaining counts. He stated that Mr. Davern got great counts last year related to trailheads as well. He wondered if that was something they'd want to look at doing in a similar way this time around, or switch it up.

Mr. Benik added that when they obtain the December minutes they'll be able to review this further because they laid some groundwork during that meeting. He suggested delving into the item during the March meeting.

Chair Bryenton stated he will check with Mr. Schoefmann and discuss tabulating the prior counts. He asked Mr. Bohannon if there was capacity for UNH, since they've been tabulating some of the other data, to add in other counts the committee has done. Mr. Bohannon stated if they have them they could likely do that and he will check to see if Mr. Schoefmann has shared that data. Chair Bryenton stated that would allow UNH to process the data.

Mr. Bohannon added that they would want downtown, centric counts like Railroad Square, Emerald Street Trailhead at the intersection of the Ashuelot Rail Trail, Island Street, or Jonathan Daniels trailhead in Ashuelot Park. Dr. Russell suggested covering Emerald Island since there's been a lot of talk about a potential pocket park there. Mr. Benik added Water Street Crossing which will demonstrate people using the trail, beyond just the trailhead.

Mr. Horner stated the Planning Commission has count data for Cheshire Rail Trail by Water Street. There were issues with the data platform, which he believes have been resolved, so he should be able to pull that data and share with the committee next meeting. He added there's also an opportunity for additional counts using automated counters, it's just a matter of getting on the rotation because they deploy the counters all over the region.

D) Walldogs – Potential for Additional Mural Along Trails

Dr. Russell stated the agreement has been signed and finalized. There were many players involved including Walldogs Executive Committee, Arts Alive and the Historical Society. He stated there will be a Walldogs subcommittee formed and there won't be any new murals this year but reported that the three murals that have been discussed all have Transportation Heritage Trail involvement. He briefly described ideas for some of the murals: 1) A 30's style car from an old showroom ad against the backdrop of Mount Monadnock, 2) steam mobile, and 3) abutments at the North Bridge with the caboose at one end, the engine at the other end, and towards the bridge would be a tunnel. He added that the car and Mount Monadnock example will likely be the first one done because Showroom has contracted with Peter Poanessa.

Chair Bryenton wished Dr. Russell a happy birthday.

6) Regular Project Updates

Mr. Bohannon stated the loop trail project has been awarded and they are waiting for spring for it to begin. Other top priority projects on the list include the Master Plan and Jonathan Daniels Trail maintenance, which is part of the open space and trail program he mentioned earlier.

Mr. Bohannon went on to state that they received the TAP grant for Eastern Avenue, which is to take place in 2028.

Mr. Blomquist added that they are on the state's 10 year transportation plan which is year 23 to 32, and Eastern Avenue out to 101 is in that plan. He explained that the plan is done every other year with local public hearings held by the executive councilor overseeing the particular area. He continued to state that the first two years of the plan goes into the state's budget and then the other years are placed into their long term planning and identified as a project to be receiving funds.

Mr. Bohannon stated Mr. Redfern has been a great advocate for the project, contacting state and US representatives and continuing to search for grants and obtain community partners to support financially. He thanked Mr. Redfern for his hard work. He also mentioned, with regards to the Transportation Heritage Trail, Don Lussier, the City Engineer has been great about applying for grants and added that the committee is welcome to send over potential grant opportunities if they know of any.

Mr. Blomquist encouraged the committee to keep the 10 year plan in mind as they look at succession planning. He added that the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act has been authorized but it hasn't been funded yet, noting that it's important to continue to encourage Federal delegation so they can start seeing those funds be utilized by the state and municipalities. Mr. Horner added that a contact from the NH Department of Business and Economic Affairs recently reached out looking for trail projects that are ready to begin, because the Division of Travel and Tourism is anticipating money coming from the US Economic Development Administration. Mr. Bohannon requested that information be sent to him to further explore funding opportunities with regards to wayfinding.

Mr. Redfern asked if there was any word on the EDA grant the City applied for. Mr. Bohannon and Mr. Blomquist replied that there was no update yet.

Chair Bryenton stated the committee typically does a review of priority items in January and suggested they review that quickly in March and make sure their top 5 priorities are still the same. Mr. Bohannon stated the recommendations coming from UNH will be prioritized as well which the committee can incorporate when reviewing their list.

7) New Business

Mr. Russell gave an informational update. He stated that Jessica Gelter from Arts Alive hosted an extensive arts corridor meeting kicking off a reinvention of that project. Highlights that connect to the committee were a lot of voices wanting restroom facilities, and an established design company that will be including public input. Mr. Russell next stated that Jay House, Arts Administrator and member of the Swanzey Rail Trails Advisory Committee, is interested in facilitating art along Rail Trail corridors.

Mr. Horner brought up the Main Street project and stated if there is going to be an ad-hoc committee he proposes someone from the BPPAC be part of it to represent bicycle and pedestrian issues. Mr. Blomquist stated he will mention that to the Mayor and explained that there will be a council appointed ad-hoc steering committee of 9-11 members and the Mayor will be the Chair of the committee. They have suggested downtown business and residents as representatives, along with those outside of downtown businesses. He suggested Chair Bryenton reach out to the Mayor to express the committee's interest.

Mr. Horner asked if there was a timeline for appointment of the committee and Mr. Blomquist stated hopefully within the next month. The goal is to have a contract with a consultant by the end of February with an alternative plan set in place by September. He mentioned that the downtown construction will likely last 3 years.

Mr. Blomquist suggested lower Winchester Street as another project the committee should keep their eye on. He explained that they are in the process of signing agreements to rework Winchester Street from the Route 101 roundabout on the Keene side to the town line, and Swanzey is going to have some improvements down to the Market Basket facility. He stated the design process will be kicking off in early summer and there will be an ad-hoc committee for that as well. The goal of that project is to make it more of a gateway entrance into the City and there have been discussions of creating additional pedestrian/bicycle facilities along Winchester Street. Mr. Blomquist added that the project will involve replacement of the bridge by Krif Road. The project is scheduled to begin in FY25.

Chair Bryenton stated he will add the aforementioned to new business and reach out to the Mayor. Mr. Horner stated he is willing to serve on the committee.

8) Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Bryenton adjourned the meeting at 9:20 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Nicole Cullinane, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Will Schoefmann, Community Development Staff