

City of Keene
New Hampshire

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN PATH ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, March 9, 2022

8:15 AM

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

Members Present:

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

Staff Present:

William Schoefmann, GIS Technician
Andrew Bohannon, Director of Parks &
Recreation

Members Not Present:

Michael Davern

1) Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Bryenton called the meeting to order at 8:15 AM. Roll call was taken. Mr. Redfern was present via zoom.

Also Present via zoom were Mike Kowalczyk from the Monadnock Rail Trail Coalition, and Alyssa Grosso and Robert Kenfield, students from Keene State College.

2) Acceptance of Minutes

Mr. Russell made a motion to approve the December minutes as presented. Mr. Benik seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Mr. Horner made a motion to approve the February minutes as presented. Mr. Russell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

3) Membership

Mr. Schoefmann stated he put membership on the agenda because they have an open spot on the committee and felt it may be something they want to think about.

Chair Bryenton stated Mr. Davern had someone in mind and he will follow up with him on that.

Mr. Russell stated one of the UNH report recommendations was for them to have business representation and he felt Mark Rebillard from Deep Roots Massage would be a great fit. He mentioned that Mr. Rebillard has been very responsive to the committee in the past and he also maintains and produces the tourist maps you can obtain at the Chamber of Commerce. He has some interpretive signage ideas for Downtown as well. Mr. Russell also mentioned Chuda Mishra from Keene International Market.

Mr. Schoefmann suggested they think of people who are in proximity to the trail.

Chair Bryenton asked if any of the individuals Mr. Russell mentioned are on the Chamber. Mr. Russell stated he was unsure but believes Mr. Rebillard was Chair of the Downtown Group at one point. Mr. Schoefmann suggested they try and attend the Downtown Group's next meeting and make a pitch. There was general agreement with trying to recruit a member from either the Chamber or the Downton Group.

Mr. Russell stated, with regards to alternates, he will reach out to a couple of Antioch University alumni who live in the region and use the trails. He added that they are both women and it would be good to have some more diversity on the committee.

Mr. Kowalczyk mentioned that he recently made contact with the Monadnock Travel Council, who does marketing in the region, and stated they might be another group to reach out to. Mr. Horner asked how active they are and if they meet regularly. Mr. Kowalczyk stated he believes they do meet regularly and showed an example of some of the brochures they've made, pointing out one about covered bridges in the region.

Mr. Schoefmann stated he will get clarification on whether or not alternate members need to reside in Keene.

4) Old Business

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

Mr. Bohannon stated he sent over the report from Shannon and Giada and hasn't had a lot of time to dive into it; however, it's a well written report that gives them good direction. He mentioned that it talks about a connection between businesses and trails and how they can do a better job of that. Mr. Bohannon reminded them that the City is currently working on a rebranding, which is separate than the Chamber's efforts, and, along with the report, will be very helpful. He further explained that the report mentioned the great Walldogs projects and how they would like to see more structural art around the trails. Additionally, they would like to see businesses included in trail system conversations, making them more aware of what is going on with regards to the trails.

Mr. Bohannon reported that he reached out to the Downtown Business group to request a meeting and have Shannon and Giada share the report. He added that the last step before they make this report final is to get that group's input. He further explained that this will allow people to know what to expect when they come into the downtown footprint to visit, and this will all benefit the bigger downtown trail vision. Mr. Bohannon made note that Keene has a little bit of everything for anybody; however, they need to connect people who are using recreation facilities to the downtown area so they are aware of what's there. He added that thoughts on how to do that are included in the report.

Mr. Russell asked who the Chair of the Downtown Business group is. Mr. Bohannon stated he wasn't sure but had the email to the group and copied Luca Paris, Chamber president.

Mr. Schoefmann reminded them that they are looking for membership and trying to get in to the downtown businesses for that. Mr. Bohannon stated if he can make the connection he will definitely throw that pitch out there.

Mr. Bohannon stated he has an upcoming meeting with Shannon and Giada on March 14th and requested that the committee get their feedback to him before that time. Chair Bryenton requested that Mr. Bohannon send the report out to everyone after the meeting.

B) Sidewalks – Council Proposal

Mr. Schoefmann reported that there are some additional annual funds planned for sidewalk facilities going forward. Ms. Manwaring mentioned the amount is \$200,000. Mr. Schoefmann stated the Department of Public Works (DPW) has a process in terms of how they ranked, which was proximity analysis to other facilities such as schools, transit stops, etc. As well as a conditions score in terms of quality of the sidewalk. Those two components were combined into a score and that is what DPW used to decide where to replace things. Mr. Schoefmann stated the next step is a gap analysis in the pedestrian system.

Mr. Benik stated when there's new construction and they are digging up the sidewalks it typically becomes a priority to see if they can upgrade the sidewalks at the same time. Mr. Schoefmann stated he believes there's a threshold that determines whether or not they re-do the sidewalks, mentioning the Belmont Avenue project where they resurfaced the street but the sidewalks did not get redone. He added that there may be a difference with regards to a resurfacing project versus a full utility project and timing and expenses. Mr. Benik added that if resurfacing the sidewalk won't make it easier to navigate, then that makes sense. Ms. Manwaring stated the sidewalks didn't get redone on Roxbury Street either and they tore the whole street up with that project.

Chair Bryenton stated \$200,000 a year would likely not cover very many miles of sidewalk. Mr. Schoefmann stated the CIP does have a list of the segments of sidewalk that are proposed per year, which tells how many feet they estimate. He added that if the group has more questions

they could invite Don Lussier, City Engineer to a meeting. The committee decided to discuss this further when discussing project updates.

C) Bike/Pedestrian Counts – 2022 Plans

Mr. Schoefmann stated they typically do March/April counts for spring, some summer counts in May through August, and a fall counting. He suggested focusing on a specific area so it's not so intensive, considering they are doing annual counts and it can get tedious. He mentioned the Transportation Heritage corridor is a place that could use some counts and noted that they'd probably want to touch base with Don Lussier to see where to set that up. The Trailhead at Eastern Avenue and Water Street Crossing were mentioned as locations, as well as where Ashuelot and Cheshire meet by the pocket park on Emerald Street.

Mr. Horner stated it's fairly easy to set up the automatic counters for the trails and noted that they have 3 infrared counters currently.

Chair Bryenton asked if there is a benefit of doing it for 2 weeks versus all summer. Mr. Horner stated the reason for having them deploy for a shorter period of time is because they have other count locations to do. He mentioned that 3 weeks should provide a good assessment.

Mr. Horner stated they do have count data for Water Street Crossing but there have been issues with the data vendor so he hasn't been able to pull that data yet.

Mr. Redfern stated, for the Eastern Avenue Trailhead, UNH they did trail counts for the City last year and suggested those be considered to be incorporated for a trend into 2022. There was clarification that the aforementioned was for intercept surveys and Mr. Schoefmann stated he will see what those numbers look like.

Chair Bryenton stated Water Street could potentially grab baseline numbers for Russell Park pre-renovation. Mr. Schoefmann stated the intersection at Water Street should get them those numbers in terms of trail users. He added that if they think it's worth it they could do counts of users entering the park but there's not a formalized trail connection there. Mr. Russell stated they could position it on the basketball court side.

Mr. Bohannon joined the meeting at 8:45am.

Mr. Kowalczyk asked if they had looked at Street Lights Data. He explained that it's an online service that track's people's phones and GPS systems throughout the country and you can purchase the data for reports of what's happening in your region. He added that they claim to be able to tell you differences between walkers, bikers, motorized vehicles, direction, starting points, etc. Mr. Schoefmann stated he hadn't had a chance to look at that yet but he will. Mr. Russell stated a combination of that and their infrared counters could be a good idea to be able to compare data.

Mr. Schoefmann suggested still doing some manual counts as well. Chair Bryenton agreed and suggested manual counts at intersections because infrared might not catch all the nuances of an intersection.

Dr. Brehme asked if they were no longer interested in West Street. Mr. Schoefmann stated they have 3 years' worth of data on that, maybe more, so they should be all set with that location. He added that they could check in on that area and test out a technology other than the manual counting. Mr. Benik stated the Street Lights Data could be useful for West Street. Dr. Brehme mentioned Safe Graph data which is attached to commercial businesses.

Chair Bryenton wondered if they want to extend out along the Marlborough Street dead end. Mr. Schoefmann stated they should consult with Don Lussier about that.

Chair Bryenton summarized that the focus areas will be the Eastern Avenue Trailhead, Water Street crossing, and the pocket park where the Ashuelot Trail and Cheshire Trail meet, with a combination of manual and infrared counting.

Mr. Bohannon asked how much data they have for Ashuelot and Cheshire Trail. Mr. Schoefmann answered that they don't have a lot. Mr. Horner stated they have some count data for Ashuelot trail.

Mr. Schoefmann stated when he reaches out about scheduling infrared counters he can ask about a secondary deployment through West Street corridor.

Chair Bryenton asked if they will target in spring, summer and fall and Mr. Schoefmann stated he will see what is available in terms of scheduling for the infrared counters.

Mr. Russell stated, having suggested the pocket park, maybe further down towards the south bridge they could count how many Keene State students peel off to go to campus versus going to the trail. Dr. Brehme stated most students don't use the trail. Mr. Schoefmann agreed, guessing that maybe 1 in 10 use the trail.

D) Walldogs – Potential for Additional Mural along Trails

Mr. Russell requested that they change the item name to "Public Art." He stated one of the things that struck him about the UNH report is the sculpture elements. He stated he'd like to follow up with The Friends of Public Art on that topic and mentioned that he's also had some contact with the Food Co-op general manager about the space there.

Mr. Russell next reported that Antioch University has a lease on the building but the new owner, Monadnock Family Services, formally takes over on June or July 1st. He will need to talk with them about what happens with the mural they installed along the Rail Trail and is hopeful that

they can keep it there, as it's a prime location. He added that Peter Poanessa's bucket truck is broken so they haven't been able to fix a piece that blew off of the mural, but he will work on getting that done. Lastly, he stated that anything with Walldogs will be taking place a year or two down the line.

E) Kiosk Map Updates

Mr. Schoefmann stated it is in his queue to produce the various kiosk locations and some map graphics that are similarly stylized to the mapping he provided Peter Poanessa for the Ashuelot Rail Trail kiosk he installed for them. He will get that to Mr. Bohannon to proof and they can move forward from there with printing, laminating and mounting. They should be deployed sometime in April.

5) Regular Project Updates

Mr. Bohannon shared that April 11th is the start date for the Cheshire Rail Trail phase 3.

Bike Racks Project: Mr. Schoefmann stated he needs to touch base with the highway foreman who is charge of deploying bike racks and street furniture downtown. He should be able to get that information for the next meeting and then they can provide feedback. He added that the bike racks should be going out downtown in mid to late April.

Mr. Russell stated if they have a map of where the racks were placed in the past that might be helpful to review.

Ms. Manwaring asked if the project includes bike repair stations. Mr. Schoefmann replied that it does not. Mr. Bohannon stated those are located at the kiosks on Eastern Avenue, Ashuelot Trail and at Antioch University.

Mr. Russell mentioned that they may need to relocate the bike repair station to Pearl Street if Antioch moves its location.

Arts and Culture Corridor: Mr. Schoefmann reported that Jess Gelter and Arts Alive were in the Community Development Department to do an initial meeting. He explained that they are looking to do a smaller scale version of the arts and culture corridor concept, and are in the preliminary phases of trying to revitalize it in some manner. He added that he will update the committee as he hears of how the project progresses.

Mr. Russell stated there was a community forum held by Ms. Gelter, with about 60 attendees, and it was very exciting.

Mr. Horner announced that Arts Alive is holding a community design workshop on March 22 – 24th. He explained that they won a grant to bring in a design firm to help work through ideas and

developments. They have started outreach to different groups and he thought members of BPPAC might be interested in participating.

Downtown Infrastructure Project: Mr. Schoefmann reported that Mr. Blomquist recommended the committee track and be involved in this project and the steering committee. Mr. Bohannon stated a request was made to the Mayor but there has been no announcement yet. Chair Bryenton stated he will follow up if needed.

Lower Winchester Street Project: Mr. Schoefmann stated this was another project Mr. Blomquist recommended they keep an eye on. He believes they are possibly putting together a steering committee for the project and will rely on Mr. Blomquist for the details of that.

Mr. Schoefmann stated there hasn't been too much movement outside of the aforementioned.

Chair Bryenton asked if Mr. Schoefmann had the top five and priority ranking to remind the group. Mr. Schoefmann stated there's a master list that he will get published to the BPPAC website for easy reference and explained that it's a ranking list that will be included when they completed the bicycle and pedestrian plan. He went on to state that in the past they've gone through a whole matrix exercise to rank the projects and suggested it may be a good idea for the Transportation Heritage Trail projects, since they are formulating and starting to happen. General consensus was to plan on having a more in depth conversation on the matter at the April meeting.

Mr. Russell stated the UNH report will help them adjust priorities. Chair Bryenton agreed and stated they have a forward moving group so it would be good to delve further. Mr. Schoefmann added that bringing the Heritage Commission together with this group, with regards to the bridge project, will be a good partnership since it's on the National Registry.

Mr. Bohannon suggested making implementation a priority with regards to wayfinding.

Mr. Horner inquired about a timeframe for the City branding effort. Mr. Bohannon stated he added in money from his budget to focus on trails within the branding aspect. In other words, to make sure parks and trails are a component of branding Keene. Part of their responsibility is to get the committee some actual wayfinding signage, which is one of their priorities. His guess was that after they do some public sessions it will likely be around September that they have some direction. He added that they should have everything ready to go by fall to set them up for implementation around this time next year, hopefully sooner.

6) New Business

Mr. Redfern pointed out that April 23rd is Earth Day at Railroad Square and along the bike path. He stated Pathways for Keene will have a tent there and mentioned that if the committee is interested in being represented they can get a tent for the day as well. He suggested they discuss at the next meeting.

Mr. Redfern also pointed out that Keene Green Up day is on April 23rd and there might be a need for assistance cleaning the trails. Mr. Bohannon stated Andrea Madaglia at Public Works is working on that and it will start to be promoted within the next week or two. He added that anyone who wants to participate should be directed to the website for Green Up Keene.

Mr. Russell stated Antioch University adopted the area from West Street to the pocket park and he will arrange some sort of cleaning there eventually. He will keep the group updated.

Chair Bryenton stated whenever the timing seems right to join with HC they should make sure that happens. Mr. Schoefmann stated they need to see when that project will start to gain traction so he will get in touch with Don Lussier and inquire about how both groups can help out. He mentioned that they are looking at building up abutments and installing railings for a safety feature as a major component of the project. Mr. Schoefmann explained that typically the HC goes after certified local government funded projects and Keene is a certified local government through the NH Division of Historic Resources. He suggested for the next grant round they look at hiring a consultant to get baseline documentation to be able to include when applying.

Mr. Horner suggested an outreach strategy of getting a committee t-shirt, which could serve as a walking billboard and a great conversation starter to spread awareness about the committee. He also stated a colleague at Southwest has been attending statewide meetings for the state Rail Trail plan. He mentioned that the plan will include prioritization of segments of trail for improvement; however, the current draft doesn't include any segments in their region. He suggested they may want to consider drafting something as input.

Mr. Schoefmann stated he will find out who to contact. Mr. Russell suggested signing a joint letter between BPPAC, Mr. Kowalczyk's group (MRRTC), and Pathways for Keene.

Mr. Kowalczyk stated he attended the last state Rail Trail meeting and advocated for their region, letting them know that in total they have 3 major trails and about 82 miles with the connectors. He mentioned that they are working to connect to their neighbors and that there is an active working group in the Winchendon area, so they can connect the Cheshire Trail in Fitzwilliam to Winchendon. He reiterated that they have a significant amount of Rail Trail which makes significant connections.

Mr. Redfern added the Swanzey committee as another group that could sign. He suggested that he and Mr. Kowalczyk work on the letter together and inquired about a deadline. Mr. Horner stated he will find out about a deadline but encouraged them to put it together over the next month. Mr. Kowalczyk mentioned that they are aiming to release the plan in June. Mr. Russell stated there's also a group in Walpole who could sign.

7) **Adjournment**

Chair Bryenton reminded everyone that the next meeting will take place on April 13, 2022.

There being no further business, Chair Bryenton adjourned the meeting at 9:26 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Nicole Cullinane, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Will Schoefmann, Community Development Staff