

City of Keene
New Hampshire

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN PATH ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, December 14, 2022

8:15 AM

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

Members Present:

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

Staff Present:

William Schoefmann, GIS Technician

Members Not Present:

Charles Redfern, Alternate

1) Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Bryenton called the meeting to order at 8:17 AM.

2) Approval of November 9, 2022 Minutes

Chair Bryenton asked if anyone had any corrections or edits to the minutes. Mr. Dillon Benik motioned to approve the minutes with a second from Mr. Rowland Russell. Minutes were approved unanimously.

3) Approval of 2023 Meeting Schedule

Mr. William Schoefmann shared the meeting schedule for 2023 and requested a vote to accept. Mr. Russell offered a motion to approve with a second from Mr. Benik. The meeting schedule was approved unanimously.

4) Downtown Infrastructure Project Update

Steering committee meeting last night that was well attended by a specific demographic of vocal Keene residents.

Chair Bryenton asked Mr. Russell to share his experience in the meeting. Mr. Russell shared some misconceptions he heard. Most bizarre one was that allowing bikes downtown would put businesses out of business. He heard a lot of resistance to bikes and bike lanes. He mentioned that someone at the meeting had asked what the footprint of the work to be done was. Mr. Curt Hanson responded that it was building front to building front. If everything is to be torn up, it all eventually has to be put back together. The misconception around that is people think that adding bike lanes will significantly increase the cost. Mr. Russell believes the BPPAC can and should be prepared to educate and eliminate those particular misconceptions by pulling the data and cost analysis together.

Mr. Benik added that once the public left; only Mr. Scott was left. This allowed for some debate of the role of the steering committee, as there was some discouragement among members. City Manager Dragon spurred them on to discuss each item and get a consensus. While it was not unanimous, the consensus that is being recommended is for expansion of Central Square Northward and protect bikes lane either at sidewalk or road grade (to be determined by design), design some sort of interactive, multiuse space from Railroad to Gilbo and that we implement a mini roundabout. The only resistance was Mr. Filiault. The Mayor did recommend to Stantec to go back and see if we can get net zero on parking somehow.

Mr. Russell noted that it was interesting because the mini- roundabout resulted in more lost spaces than the light and the signaled option only lost one space.

Mr. Benik responded that Natalie Houder made the point that the spaces lost are the most underutilized spaces in the City of Keene.

Mike Kowalczyk is planning to ask the Swanzey Trail Committee to send a letter with their position on this. It was suggested by Ms. Manwaring to send it to Mayor and City Council. Mr. Benik said there would be a lot of forthcoming discussion about the history of downtown Keene and the history of the circle. Mark Rebillard brought some nice big glossy photos of the history of the square showing how many changes have occurred over the years. This idea that it has been this way since 1755 is false. Community Development posted some nice photos of the circle when it was reconstructed in the 1960's.

Mr. Andy Bohannon pointed out that it is only the minority "out there chirping".

Mr. Todd Horner was curious how everyone found out about the meeting. Mr. Bohannon mentioned that there is downtown planning group that pushed the meeting and Mr. Schoefmann mentioned that a number of social media groups were pushing it.

Mr. Horner mentioned that some feedback is that the meetings need to be publically noticed. The timing of 3pm was challenging for many young professionals. He mentioned that Natalie Houder of Keene State College has plans to promote it on campus, as there are a number of kids that are in support and would utilize the bike lanes.

Mr. Horner mentioned that parking garages are often empty, signage is minuscule and noted that low awareness and limited knowledge all contribute to that. Mr. Bryenton said there is clearly a huge fear of change and resistance.

Mr. Kowalzyck added that as far as the parking, if you promote transportation that is more active you have fewer cars and in turn, less parking. He asked if there would be a benefit to this committee creating a document that counters all of these misconceptions.

Mr. Horner mentioned that this should be on the project website and maintained by DPW, ideally. He suggested coming up with a list of questions or misconceptions and then give DPW the opportunity to respond.

Mr. Davern mentioned that when the street is torn up, people are going to get around by bikes and foot, there will not be driving because there will not be roads.

Mr. Bryenton will create a google document to be allow for everyone to work together on it. In terms of next steps, he noted there is not a council champion and suggested working towards identifying who that would be.

The committee discussed ways to go make the survey more accessible and less intensive to the public and how they might get the meat of the information to the public. Mr. Bryenton thanked Mr. Russell for reaching out to art groups and Mr. Davern for reaching out to the cycling and mountain bike community. He asked if there are additional groups to reach out to and Mr. Schoefmann mentioned it would be good to get a statement from PFK (Pathways for Keene) and discussed the need to get people to show up. The group discussed various individuals and community members to reach out to. Mr. Russell noted the need to polish and share the talking points and encourage op-eds to The Sentinel and The Shopper News.

Mr. Bryenton asked what is next. Mr. Davern pointed out they are not scheduled to meet again, but there will be a public outreach scheduled some time soon in the future. Mr. Russell reiterated the need to get the education around misconceptions out there and provide the details of the survey for the public. Mr. Russell suggested identifying legislators are and who can be reached out to. Mr. Davern offered to get in touch with Maryanne at Hannah Grimes.

5) **BPPAC Website**

Mr. Schoefmann requested Ms. Manwaring to send him the word document and Mr. Russell asked if she could send it out again to the committee as a whole. Plan is to review, edit and vote on it in January.

6) **Old Business**

A) **Public Art and the Trails update**

Mr. Russell noted that there is nothing new on Peter Poanessa. He is still waiting on cost from Railroad signal. There is no December board meeting so further discussion will not likely come up until January.

Ms. Manwaring noted that Ashuelot was spelled wrong on the kiosk.

B) Volunteer Opportunities

Mr. Russell said it was great to collaborate with Pathways of Keene. He suggested collaboration around Green up Keene and continue to do a Fall cleanup.

7) Regular Project Updates

Mr. Schoefmann said the City of Keene's designation as a "Bicycle Friendly City" has lapsed and needs to be renewed. The process includes data gathering for a report/application. Deadline is March 1, 2023. In order to complete it in time, he requested the group's assistance in completing it. He will share the questions.

8) New Business

The question was asked whether the potential member needed to be a resident. It was noted that the City prefers it.

9) More Time

A) Wayfinding/Amenities

No updates. Funding has been secured for the first section.

B) Bike/Pedestrian Counts

C) Kiosk Updates

10) Adjournment

Next meeting date: January 11, 2023. There being no further business, Chair Bryenton adjourned the meeting at 9:31 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Amanda Trask, Minute Taker

Additional edits, Katryna Kibler, Clerk's
Office

Reviewed and edited by,
Will Schoefmann, Community Development
Staff