

City of Keene
New Hampshire

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN PATH ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, April 12, 2023

8:15 AM

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

Members Present:

Todd Horner, Vice Chair
Dillon Benik
Jan Manwaring
Michael Davern
Rowland Russell
Charles Redfern, Alternate
Jeanelle Sartorio, Alternate
Sam Jackson, Alternate

Staff Present:

William Schoefmann, GIS Technician
Andy Bohannon, Director of Parks,
Recreation, & Facilities

Members Not Present:

Drew Bryenton, Chair
Councilor Andrew Madison
Dr. Chris Brehme, Alternate

1) Call to Order and Roll Call

Vice Chair Todd Horner called the meeting to order at 8:15 AM. Attendance was done by roll call with introductions for alternate members.

2) Approval of March 8, 2023 Minutes

Mr. Dillon Benik noted that he was not in attendance at the last meeting. Strike Mr. Benik's name from attendance of last meeting. With no other corrections, Dr. Rowland Russell motioned to approve. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Jan Manwaring and unanimously approved.

3) Downtown Infrastructure Project Update

Vice Chair Horner shared that City Council broke up the discussion into three parts: Central Square, Main Street, and Gilbo Ave. It seemed to him as though support for expanded park/event space was fading a bit and over all, support for some sort of consolidated intersection was low. Dr. Russell shared the same sense. He added the signalized option and leaving the footprint alone seemed to get the most positive support.

Vice Chair Horner said there was discussion of bike lanes for Main Street and that there does seem to be some support for bike lanes downtown. However, it seems as though there is a significant pull to move those bike lanes to the periphery and get them out of downtown.

Dr. Russell shared that a friend, Mr. Dave Moor, attended and wrote a letter to all his councilors as well as mayor pointing out that off Main Street is already much safer than Main Street is for bicyclists. The proposal to move it off Main Street will also be at an increased cost as it is not in the footprint of the current infrastructure proposal.

Dr. Russell shared that he and Vice Chair Horner talked after the last meeting about some of the advocacy points that this group can make, one of which is the economic benefits of protected bike lanes. Afterwards, he did a deep google search on “protected bike lanes economic impacts” and noted that not a single negative study came up. He plans to share a spreadsheet he created of those studies and some of the documented benefits. The most surprising benefit and one that is a big factor for Keene was that there were several studies about the perceptual biases that businesses have about protected bike lanes in terms of people that come to their stores. He said there is a clear underrepresentation of multimodal transport versus driving transports because typically the only people the business owners hear from are the drivers who have struggled to find parking and complain. It was noted that country wide, there is more space devoted to parking than to low income housing.

Vice Chair Horner mentioned the Gilbo Ave area and how one plan was to convert it into a one-way street. The intersection would have a raised plaza to create a gateway effect. He noted that it does not seem as though there is support for the one-way concept nor the raised plaza. There is however, considerable support for raised crosswalks throughout all of downtown.

Mr. Mike Davern asked if any councilors had suggested routes for going around downtown in the bypass concepts. Vice Chair Horner clarified that there is no viable route and that is the problem. Mr. Andy Bohannon suggested reminding the councilors that they adopted the plan offered by the UNH Trails study. Vice Chair Horner pointed out that there is already an example of a bike bypass, which is the roundabout that goes below the Colony Mill. Folks drop down on Island Street, cut over through the Liberty Utility property and cut back up through the Rail trail. He estimated that ninety percent of people go through the parking lot as a shortcut.

Dr. Russell said one of the city councilors suggested having more protected parking for those that need it the most (the aging and disabled) and noted that the focus should really be protecting the interests of everyone coming downtown.

Vice Chair Horner suggested hammering home the idea that this committee is not anti-car. Dr. Russell said the focus of the committee should be on inclusivity of all modes of transportation, which is also pro-business.

Vice Chair Horner shared that in a conversation with Roger Weinrich, owner of the Good Fortune Building, they discussed the funding opportunities that the city is presumably going to

be pursuing to fund this project. Many of the those opportunities score based on if/how the project includes multi-modal transportation options. If they put back their auto-centric option, he feels as though they are not going to score well, which could impact future funding.

Ms. Sam Jackson shared that maintenance of car based roads is far more expensive than maintenance of bike or multimodal roads.

It was pointed out by Dr. Russell the lack of focus from the council on “climate change” and how that could be a promotional focus for the committee.

Mr. Redfern noted there have been some great suggestions made during the meeting. The question remains of where it goes from here. He wondered how to get the word out.

Vice Chair Horner responded that he believed one on one conversations with councilors thought to be on the fence will be the most impactful.

Ms. Autumn DelaCroix asked if they had names of councilors they believed to be on the fence. Dr. Russell shared that Ms. Bettina Chadbourne seemed very against. Councilors Bryan Lake and Raleigh Ormerod were relatively positive, but not vocally so.

Mr. Mike Kowalczyk asked if it was allowed to invite councilors to the meeting. Vice Chair Horner responded that while it was allowed, he did not know how receptive they would be. Mr. Schoefmann spoke to Mr. Redfern’s point on identifying the call to action and suggested focusing on that. He believed the call to action was now or never. He pointed out that the committee has no social media presence and suggested that as an area to look into. Vice Chair Horner suggested focusing on what changes the committee as a whole is most interested in and believed a primary focus should be on protected bike lanes.

One of the arguments Dr. Russell heard against changing the square was they wanted to drive the events towards the Gilbo space, while others argued that there is no soul to that area and people want to be downtown. He noted that the disconnect between those two arguments was never addressed.

Ms. Janelle Sartorio shared that the biggest pushback they had for the Pride Festival was from the fire department with regards to the trucks being able to get through and did not see how that would be addressed with the suggested ideas. Mr. Mike Kowalczyk suggested continuing to go after everything knowing it won’t all be achieved.

Dr. Russell shared there is supposed to be some business development going in on Gilbo Ave, but there are not specific details yet. He wonders if maybe there will be some development in the future that will push people down Gilbo Ave more than what currently occurs.

Ms. Sartorio wondered about capacity of Gilbo compared to downtown. Dr. Russell believed it would be similar if it was street level.

Mr. Bohannon noted that one thing the city does not capture is what the financial impact is of the events to the City of Keene and the more these events can begin to capture that data, the more the committee can use that information to be able to drive this forward.

He stressed the importance of identifying what the value is to improving the arts culture, what is the value to making a particular improvement and being able to identify how that will benefit the city. Dr. Russell offered to collect and share any information they had gathered from the Wall Dogs event.

Vice Chair Horner believed there is a second community input workshop coming up. He was certain it was a Thursday evening and suspected April 22, but was unsure of the exact date. He suggested reaching out to the appropriate councilor and engaging directly with them. Dr. Russell suggested taking some of the talking points and working them up into infographics to be used on social media and offered to take lead on that for the time being.

4) **Safe Streets for All Grant**

No new information. Topic tabled until next meeting.

5) **Covered Bike Parking Demonstration Opportunity**

Mr. Schoefmann sent a separate e-mail to the group on an opportunity through a bike advocacy group in Concord. They have a pop-up covered bike facility that gets distributed and utilized in various areas of the state. He suggested thinking about the location and if the committee is interested, the next step would be to work with parking on the location and permissions. It can be requested for a certain time- possibly the art walk or food festival.

6) **Old Business**

A) **Public Art and Trails Update**

Dr. Russell is waiting to hear from John Rogers and Jesse Rounds if there were any objections to that mural being a sign versus a mural.

B) **Volunteer Opportunities**

i) ***Earth Day 12:00 PM–4:00 PM***

Pathways has a booth and is willing to share. Monadnock Rail trail collaborative will be in the booth next to theirs.

Vice Chair Horner is not able to be there nor will Mr. Benik. Mr. Redfern offered to wear two hats, but requested literature such as rack cards, flyers, hands outs, etc. Mr. Scheofmann offered to drop them off to Mr. Redfern.

ii) *Green Up Keene and Trail Clean Up*

Clean-up will be at 9AM with a meetup at Emerald Street. Dr. Russell will send a reminder to the group.

iii) *Bike Friendly Community*

Mr. Schoefmann shared that they have to reapply for the Bike Friendly Community status. He needs to download the application, which is due in August. Be on the lookout for more information and possibly requests for assistance from committee members.

7) **Regular Project updates**

A) **Project Scoring**

Mr. Schoefmann explained the scoring of projects and asked the committee to go through and score them based on their degree of importance. He will e-mail the information and once he receives it, he will then reconcile that with the available funding and potential timetable, cost, and scope.

B) **Striping**

Mr. Schoefmann is working with highway to help with his budget analysis in striping. They are looking to try and get an idea of what is out there, how much it costs, and how to trim the budget a bit.

C) **Bike Racks**

The Highway department is supposed to be putting them out and if they are not already out, they will be soon.

D) **Marlborough Street Tap Project**

This project is starting to pick back up. Engineering is working on design elements for that.

8) **New Business**

Vice Chair Horner requested everyone to complete Mr. Schoefmann's rating exercise as that will be on the agenda for next meeting.

Mr. Schoefmann is hoping to have news on the Safe Streets for All Grant and asked that be left on the agenda for next meeting. Dr. Russell suggested keeping the Bike Shelter as well.

9) **More Time**

A) Lower Winchester Street

Nothing to add. Mr. Schoefmann to ask Don Lussier or Kurt Blomquist for next meeting.

B) Facilities

Mr. Bohannon has some information to get back to them with.

C) Trail Kiosk Signs

Mr. Schoefmann is waiting on the go head from the City as they are in the process of rebranding.

10) Other

Mr. Kowalczyk shared that he rode over the stone arch bridge today and one of the grates is missing. This is a recurring issue that happens yearly. He wonders if a one-point weld might prevent it from happening. Mr. Bohannon suggested letting Scrap It know so they can be alerted when people show up those types of items. Mr. Kowalczyk also mentioned that there is a group through the collaborative in Westmoreland and Surry that is going to start working on the Amy Brown Trail this summer. This will be at the Keene/Surry town line going through Surry and Westmoreland and will include ditch and culvert cleaning, tree removal, etc. Walpole also has a grant and will be working on their section as well. It was suggested to Mr. Kowalczyk that he should coordinate the mowing with Mr. Bohannon and Mr. Blomquist, to which he agreed.

11) Adjournment

There being no further business, Vice Chair Horner adjourned the meeting at 9:30 AM.
Next meeting is scheduled for May 10, 2023.

Respectfully submitted by,
Amanda Trask, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Will Schoefmann, Community Development Staff