

City of Keene
New Hampshire

BICYCLE PEDESTRIAN PATH ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, April 14, 2021

8:15 AM

Remote Meeting via Zoom

Members Present:

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

Staff Present:

Andy Bohannon, Parks, Recreation &
Facilities Director
Kürt Blomquist, Director of Public Works
William Schoefmann, GIS technician

Members Not Present:

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

1) Roll Call

Mr. Schoefmann read the Zoom meeting platform rules aloud and roll call was conducted.

2) March 10, 2021 Minutes

Councilor Manwaring moved to accept the March 10, 2021 minutes with amendments, Mr. Horner seconded, and the motion was passed by unanimous vote.

Amendments are as follows:

- Remove Councilor Manwaring's name from the attendee list for last month.
- Moving forward, refer to Mr. Brehme and Mr. Russell as Dr. Brehme and Dr. Russell.

3) Old Business

a. Wayfinding

Mr. Bohannon stated that he had a good conversation with Ms. Sharon from UNH Extension and it appears that they will need a simple contract between the UNH Extension and the City of Keene to cover the cost of \$3,000 to for the work and training that will be performed by the UNH Extension office. He said the Downtown and Trails program will involve the UNH Extension office coming in to create a committee similar to BPPAC and train those members to

perform intercept surveys for people using the trails and determine the connections of Downtown. He stated that the town of Bristol did this a few years ago with success and the City of Keene is ripe for this sort of program as the City currently does not have information about the economic impact of trails on the Downtown area and if they want to improve infrastructure and connectivity this is one approach.

Mr. Bohannon shared that Mr. Redfern had a survey conducted to him on the rail trail off of Island or Pearl Street and that was part of a statewide initiative. This project would be more local to Keene and he is hoping to get it done this fall. Mr. Redfern asked if the surveyors can be identified by their clothing, for example, by donning bright orange vests and clipboards. Mr. Bohannon replied that they will ensure that volunteers are recognized as surveyors, as well as be conducting a widespread media campaign to create awareness. Dr. Russell suggested placing signage to give cyclists a heads up that feedback is being requested. Chair Benik asked Mr. Bohannon how many volunteers they are looking for in how many locations. Mr. Bohannon replied that those details have not been fully worked out yet with UNH, however, they will probably want at least 6-12 individuals engaged in the process from start to finish. He noted that BPPAC members will likely be key participants in the process, including a few other members of the community. Dr. Russell asked what the timing is for the survey and Mr. Bohannon replied that it should take place in the fall.

b. MAST Grant

Mr. Schoefmann reiterated that the City of Keene was awarded the MAST grant, however, they recently discovered that the Walk Your City campaign and website seems to be defunct. Mr. Schoefmann shared that he was not able to access information or get a hold of anybody even after creating an account on the website. He proposed that BPACC consider alternative options that they can then bring to the Southwest Regional Planning Commission (SWRPC) and MAST. He asked Mr. Horner for his thoughts on the situation as he had suggested that the services they were providing are not too hard to replicate, however, Walk Your City did provide a one-stop-shop. Mr. Horner replied that the Walk Your City social media channels have gone dark as well. Chair Benik asked if members know of any similar organizations or would they be starting from square one to find those resources and piece them together. Mr. Schoefmann replied that one option is to conduct the test signs with a local sign vendor, however, they would need to utilize City staff or SWRPC staff in order to organize the campaign. He proposed that the other option is to conduct a public outreach survey like they were going to do anyway, however, they would not put up temporary plastic signs and instead they would launch a survey to leverage the outreach and garner public interest. He said the amenities survey is also aligned with this sort of approach so it could provide a twofer opportunity. For example, the survey content could solicit feedback about what locations are important in town to direct people to, the mileage and also provide some designs that people could offer feedback about. Mr. Schoefmann stated that they could still use the Walk Your City survey, but it would not be pushed out through temporary plastic signs. Mr. Bohannon stated that they can take advantage of the synergy and utilize the signs that are created through this project for a secondary project and explore ways to garner information about usage, economic impact, amenities, and other ways to achieve gold status for the City. Mr. Schoefmann clarified that the signs Mr. Bohannon is talking about are the signs on the periphery of the system, for example, regional trails identifying signage with logos for the

City Parks and Recreation and Pathways for Keene (PFK) and there may be an opportunity to place a QR code sticker for people to access surveys. Mr. Schoefmann stated that hammering out a good public outreach survey is a better use of resources and development of more permanent signs. Mr. Kowalczyk asked what the MAST grant is covering. Mr. Schoefmann replied that it would provide about \$1,000 to cover the temporary, plastic signs.

Dr. Russell stated that he likes the idea of combining the surveying because they are both centered on information gathering and publicizing. He said temporary signs seem less important than acquiring good information about where they want permanent signage placed. Chair Benik asked if they could combine all three surveys or would they need to be conducted the UNH survey separately. Dr. Brehme asked if they could use the UNH intercept survey to ask participants about what points of interest they would want directions and time distance to and asked if survey sites could be located at places where signs are likely to go. Mr. Bohannon replied that the UNH survey is very focused on the economic impacts of the trails for the Downtown area, therefore, they may not want to put too much else into that survey. However, he understands that there is an opportunity to garner information for that piece and to work with students or interns related to the opportunity. Dr. Russell noted that it is advantageous to have more than one survey point with the UNH survey that is driven by social media and electronic outreach with the signage and combining the information from the MAST and amenities surveys. Mr. Schoefmann agreed that the opportunity for the signage and amenities pair well together, and the more economic impact and Downtown information that UNH will do in the fall provides a good timeframe. He proposed that they launch the signage and amenities survey by late May and close that by mid-summer, that way they can prevent bleed over and information overload for the public.

Dr. Russell asked to hear more from Mr. Kowalczyk and Mr. Horner about whether it makes sense to coordinate these surveys on a regional level and not just centered on the City of Keene. Mr. Kowalczyk replied that surveys should be kept short and perhaps change over time to gather different types of information, for example, questions about the City of Keene and about the region are pertinent. He said if they surveys include a few questions about the local municipality and the region that would be beneficial. Mr. Schoefmann asked Mr. Kowalczyk if he could send a template of one or two questions focused on the region, as that might help the case regarding SWRPC and MAST in terms of integrating the local municipality and the region. Mr. Horner stated that in terms of using a survey to identify appropriate locations for signs, they would need to be very creative about how they develop the survey because signs are needed where people are perhaps unaware of the need for a sign, therefore, questions aimed at testing respondents' awareness of nearby destinations would provide information about respondents' familiarity with a given location and spatial awareness of how a sign could help connect the trail with nearby locations. He added that in terms of how to connect MAST funding from Walk Your City to something else, the City staff should have a good sense of what the design would look like and if further design work is needed in order to land on an appropriate design that could work both for the City and also be potentially adapted to other locations on the regional trail network. Mr. Bohannon replied that the City has a fairly solid concept of the signage, however, they still need to work out further details.

Mr. Schoefmann promoted Mr. Kowalczyk as a co-host in order to share a photo of the sign design as it appears now, without the PFK logo included. He said the sign is a wayfinding sign

and the top shows the trail location, as well as the road that is being approached and also the next three points of interest down the trail. He said the sign also includes three places on the bottom for information: regional information, and two spaces for information from the local municipality in which the sign is located, for example, the Town of Swanzy, where the sign he presented is located. He stated that every municipality can decide what they want to do with that information. Mr. Kowalczyk stated that this wayfinding sign is an experiment that they put up on the Cheshire Rail Trail and they have already received feedback from the snowmobile club and the State, and they will be gathering this feedback to do a spin of this for people to provide feedback on. Mr. Schoefmann asked what other towns are using this template and Mr. Kowalczyk replied that Marlborough is using it. Mr. Kowalczyk stated that they are already placing Townline signs so that people on the trail are aware of what town they are in. He encouraged members to go out and take a look at the signs that are already up and provide him with feedback regarding size, font, color, etc.

c. Amenities

Dr. Russell stated that there is software that allows people to interact with and provide feedback on where they would like to see amenities located. He said this is an important tool in the public outreach campaign in mapping out amenities. Chair Benik asked how the software works. Mr. Schoefmann replied that the software includes a Google map of an area and it records where users ping the image and then those locations can be integrated into Arc GIS or other mapping software. He said there a few ways to use the software to create a visual map of where the locations are and determine which locations are most identifiable and select locations closest to the trailheads and have people rank file them in order of importance. He noted that this can increase the length of the survey so they may need to break apart the surveys, however, they can cross that bridge when they come to it.

d. Public Survey Bike/Pedestrian Counts: New Locations

Mr. Schoefmann stated that Mr. Lussier would probably like for BPPAC to perform bike counts so he will reach out to him about appropriate locations. He noted, however, that there may not be enough bandwidth within the committee for bike counts at this time with the concurrent development of the surveys. Mr. Bohannon shared that he and Mr. Schoefmann are also discussing the possibility of implementing automatic bike counters which would allow them to gather a lot more data. He suggested they discuss this more at the next meeting. Mr. Schoefmann shared that he will be attending a webinar focused on automatic counters. Chair Benik stated that he would also like to join the webinar. Mr. Horner noted that the SWPRC has several eco-counters available, including two that can distinguish between bikes and pedestrians, as well as the simpler models that use infrared technology. He strongly encouraged the City to contact Mr. Henry Underwood at SWRPC regarding borrowing the counters.

4) Regular Project Updates

a. Bike Racks

Mr. Schoefmann stated that bike racks have been set out at various locations and those locations may change based upon what the City may see as sidewalk café locations. He said he should be getting a final bike rack location list soon.

b. Cheshire Rail Trail-Park Avenue Loop

Mr. Schoefmann stated that the bid was readvertised after approval by NH DOT and Federal Highway and the bids were over budget again, however, they were more in line with than with the previous attempt. He said the City Engineer will be putting together a request for additional funding that he will be taking to City Council to make up the difference.

c. Cheshire Rail Trail Phase Four-Transportation Heritage Trail

Mr. Schoefmann stated that the grant was submitted to the State and he is unsure when they will make announcements but will get more details from Mr. Lussier. He noted that it is time to reconsider the effort that BPPAC had considered with the Heritage Commission, because LCHIP, the historic resources grant funding source, announced that they are accepting another round of grant applications and he is working with Ms. Kessler on the grant and will probably need assistance from the Heritage Commission and BPPAC. Mr. Redfern said he would like to assist with the grant especially in terms of the Stone Arch Bridge. Mr. Schoefmann asked if other members are interested. Councilor Manwaring volunteered to assist with the grant. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he will discuss this with Ms. Kessler and identify what portions of the grant they will need assistance with and report back to the committee.

d. Amenities Survey

Mr. Schoefmann reminded members that there is a Google doc available to provide amenities feedback. Mr. Bohannon added that they will be installing a new kiosk at the Keene Bike Park that will also show connectivity to trail systems in the entire region. He encouraged members to check it out at the Keene Bike Park Facebook page. Mr. Kowalczyk added that Mr. Poanessa and he are talking about standardizing the local trail systems as they appear on the kiosk maps. Mr. Schoefmann asked Mr. Kowalczyk to contact him about updating the digital maps to match the look and feel of the kiosks.

5) New Business –

~~-Permanent automatic bike counters-~~ Chair Benik asked Mr. Kowalczyk to please share literature to the Google doc for members to review.

~~-Wayfinding and Amenities surveys~~

~~-NH Rail Trail Coalition-~~Mr. Redfern stated that the NH Rail Trail Coalition will be participating in the Big E expo in Springfield, MA and they will be distributing rack cards for PFK, and perhaps the City of Keene could advertise tourism at the pavilion for tourism to promote Keene businesses. He said he will provide Mr. Kowalczyk the dimensions for the rack cards as the Granite State Ambassadors like them to be standardized.

6) Adjournment

Chair Benik adjourned the meeting at 9:17 AM.

Next meeting date – May 12, 2021

Respectfully submitted by,
Ayshah Kassamali-Fox, Minute-Taker

Additional Edits by,
Will Schoefmann, Community Development Staff