

City of Keene
New Hampshire

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN PATH ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, June 14, 2023

8:15 AM

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

Members Present:

Drew Bryenton, Chair
Todd Horner, Vice Chair
Dillon Benik
Jan Manwaring
Michael Davern
Dr. Rowland Russell
Charles Redfern, Alternate
Sam Jackson, Alternate
Autumn DelaCroix, Alternate
Janelle Sartorio, Alternate
Councilor Andrew Madison
Dr. Chris Brehme, Alternate

Staff Present:

William Schoefmann, GIS Technician
Don Lussier, City Engineer
Andy Bohannon, Parks & Recreation
Director
Kürt Blomquist, Public Works
Director/ACM

Members Not Present:

All Present

1) Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Bryenton called the meeting to order at 8:18 AM.

2) Approval of May 10, 2023 Minutes

With no edits or corrections, Chair Bryenton asked for a motion to approve the May 10, 2023 minutes. Dr. Rowland Russell motioned to approve with a second from Mr. Dillon Benik. With unanimous approval, the motion passed and the May 10, 2023 minutes were approved.

3) Jeff Speck Workshop Opportunity Follow-Up

Chair Bryenton noted that it was great to see a number of the other members at the workshop. Ms. Sam Jackson shared that she thought Mr. Jeff Speck was great. She thought he did a great job at keeping attention by making it entertaining to listen to.

Dr. Russell noticed there were several people there that have not been present in any of the previous meetings. Mr. Todd Horner shared that he has a couple of neighbors that have not been

plugged into the conversation. He was surprised at the number of people that are just realizing there is a project underway.

Mr. Benik asked if it was well attended and Mr. Horner responded that there was approximately 150 people there. Ms. Jan Manwaring shared there were a number of councilors there. She spoke with Mike Giacomo briefly and he seemed quite impressed with some of the new ideas.

Dr. Russell noted that the closure of Washington Street closure seemed to start conversation and get people thinking. Chair Bryenton noted that the single lane with turnaround idea seemed to be immediately dismissed.

Dr. Russell felt the presentation to be an affirmation of what the group has been advocating since the beginning.

Mr. Horner felt the presentation was particularly effective because of the presenter challenging everyone, no matter where they fell in their opinion. An example was people obsess over the number of parking spaces on Main Street and he made a conscientious effort to preserve all those spaces in one of his designs. Mr. Horner was interested to find that Mr. Speck did not seem to have an opinion one way or the other regarding having bike lanes sidewalk versus street grade. He discussed the potential benefit to street grade Mr. Speck mentioned. Mr. Speck's idea did not simply rubber stamp; he created his own design that relied on signalized intersections. Mr. Horner thought Mr. Speck brought a fresh perspective and that his ideas served to surprise and even challenge those in attendance.

Dr. Russell wanted to emphasize how Mr. Speck suggested conserving the parking in the middle and considering putting many trees and using the space as an event space. It was a new idea to the conversation. Ms. Jackson noted that one of his ideas also conserved parking spaces in front of Stage and The Pour House, whose business owners have been vocal opponents. He tried to address their needs while also looking at potential green space and how to maximum it. Mr. Andrew Bower and Councilor Andrew Madison joined and were recognized by the Chair. Chris believed Mr. Speck tempered it by saying how far do you want to go in terms of making it better because there is the risk of gentrification. He thought that resonated with some people in the audience who are against change.

Dr. Russell thought it was also good that he emphasized the need for more housing. Others mentioned how he focused on the heights of the buildings, building up rather than out to try and address the housing needs and the intertwining of housing and transportation.

Ms. Autumn DelaCroix discussed Mr. Speck's suggestion of the central parking being opened to Farmer's markets and used as an event space, which she believes would be a good way to appeal to Keene's obsession with the widest Main Street.

Chair Bryenton recognized Kurt Blomquist.

Chair Bryenton asked for an update from Mr. Horner about any conversation about moving forward. Mr. Blomquist shared that he believed the City Council will be addressing it on their July 6th meeting. The plan is to do their regular business first and then move into the downtown discussion.

Chair Bryenton asked if there was a formal way to submit ideas to City Council. Mr. Horner shared that they already have Mr. Speck's slides. He mentioned that Mr. Speck will be on the air today on the Dan Mitchell Show at 9 for a recap of the conversation and follow-up questions. Mr. Horner plans to connect with Roger and see if he has any thoughts of next steps. He suggested those who were present to reflect and maybe gather thoughts on specific aspects that resonated with them. For those that weren't present, he suggested viewing the recording and doing the same.

He suggested using those reflections to come up with a statement regarding what the committee's thoughts are.

Kurt Blomquist suggested continuing with the emphasis on the importance of Mr. Speck's presentation and the importance of integrating the pedestrians, bicyclists, and all users. While the single lane idea is not new, Mr. Speck has several other elements that could be used to highlight the importance of the integration. He mentioned that the Steering Committee looked at the single lane idea and did some traffic analysis on it. As the committee will not have another meeting between now and the time the City Council meets, he suggested There is information from the Council and as they start talking about it more, the committee would indicate that they will not be having another meeting, it is important to get that statement or position together about how bicyclist/pedestrians are key to the downtown area.

Dr. Russell shared that he had talked to Roger Weinrich and Jen Risley after the breakfast the next day and a couple of the ideas that came up included the idea of engaging youth and their input along with their parents' input. Roger had suggested doing something before the event in the Redwood Square or in Central Square with ice cream or pizza to draw them in and collect their feedback.

If there are points the group wanted to make, one idea is to work with Jen to do infographics. Mr. Horner suggested one of Mr. Speck's metrics around the statistics is being more likely to die from a vending machine than being hit by a bike for those infographics.

Chair Bryenton asked the committee's thoughts on pulling together a statement on the roundabout.

Mr. Horner said one of his key take-away's was that there are trade-offs for example, two lanes mean losing center parking. To him, it's worth looking at this idea of one lane preserving all the on-street parking on Main Street and the protected bike lanes.

Chair Bryenton asked Councilor Madison about any gaps or things he's looking to hear. He shared that he was on the initial ad hoc. From his standpoint, he understands it well and the councilors are entrenched in their positions and unlikely to change their positions at this point. He suggested sticking to advocating for the bike paths and that it's probably best for individuals to reach out on their own to get a larger volume of voices coming in. He thought it would be important for everyone in the group to write their own letter and not to send in the same letter. The little differences will mean that the letter gets read and will be a little different from everyone else's, which tends to make more of an impact. He shared that there's many councilors who are in favor of bike lanes, a handful who are just adamantly against and then an equal number who are on the fence.

Dr. Russell asked if he thought members should get in direct contact with those councilors who they think to be on the fence and Councilor Madison responded yes.

4) Kiosk Map Updates

Mr. Schoefmann shared the new city branding and how it incorporates some of the revisions that the committee was asking for. He presented an example of one that would be positioned at Eastern Ave Trailhead. It contained a title for where you are at, where downtown is, the city logo and branding, and incorporated a couple of other edits that he thought the group was looking for in terms of making sure the bridges were named. If anyone has any comments or edits, he asked them to be sent to him by the end of the week.

Mr. Redfern suggested a run of a new pamphlet that includes more of the details of the map that Mr. Schoefmann presented (side street detail). He mentioned that Ted's Shoe and Sport is constantly getting requests for maps and information on the trails. Mr. Redfern talked with C&S Wholesale Grocers and they are interested in helping. It would be a printing grant, which would require approval from Pathways and would just require their logo somewhere on it.

5) Downtown Infrastructure Project Discussion

Chair Bryenton hoped Councilor Workman would be able to join, but unfortunately, she was not. He shared that he had a good conversation with her. He asked Don Lussier to share the details on the proposal that had bike lanes included in it and go over some of the details in terms of what it looks like, buffer zones.

Mr. Lussier spoke and started by saying that he is not pushing the roundabout. The graphic he presented was just the only one printed out in his map room.

What Stantec has proposed is that the bike lane will be six feet with two-foot buffers on either side. His question was genuine. He hasn't resolved in his own mind the best option. By putting it at sidewalk grade, it provides better protection from vehicles parked next to it or encroaching into that space versus street grade which provides better protection/ buffering from pedestrians

and bikes. He was hoping Mr. Speck would have the answer but at the end of the day, there is no right answer. It is a tradeoff either way from a maintenance perspective. He asked Mr. Blomquist if he preferred that the bike lane be at the parking grade. Mr. Blomquist responded no because for snow collection purposes, street grade is easier.

Ms. DelaCroix shared that one of the problems she has is that by having it at street grade, there is a risk given the growing size of vehicles and the likelihood of them encroaching on the bike lane. She asked about a buffer between the parking space and the bike lane. Mr. Lussier explained that there is a two-foot overhang between the parking space and the start of the bike lane. He explained there are also ways to differentiate the spaces in the buffers with different colors, textures to make it obvious that it is a space for bikes and pedestrians.

Chair Bryenton asked if it was too granular at this point to get an idea of costs. Mr. Lussier responded that they really have not drilled down into that level of detail. They have experimented with different types of treatments and ways of doing things. The treatment they are using now on crosswalks are thermal plastic with the look of pavers. It can be repaired in place, which is a nice benefit.

He discussed the “furniture zone” which is a space that has been reserved for things like benches, trees, and trash receptacles. There is a whole level of additional design work that will decide the details.

Ms. Manwaring asked Mr. Lussier to explain the bike lane on Washington. Mr. Lussier explained and demonstrated the flow on the map.

Mr. Redfern suggested setting a priority today designating a particular amount of space for bike lanes to prevent from getting thrown into the pro-roundabout bucket.

Chair Bryenton asked if Councilor workman had any questions during her meeting with Mr. Blomquist. He responded no, and after speaking with her she seemed to be more comfortable with the idea of having multimodal space in the project.

It was asked about grant opportunities. Mr. Blomquist explained that there is a rating system that awards points. The ranking criteria is given when you apply for a grant. For certain types of implemented criteria, you are awarded scores. The higher you score, the more likely you are to be awarded a grant.

Councilor Madison reiterated that focusing on integrating bike lanes will be a winning strategy. Chair Bryenton put forth a motion stating, “BPPAC continues to advocate for protected bike lanes at sidewalk grade on both sides of Main Street. Lanes should be placed between parking spaces and the sidewalk. Lanes should be six feet wide, with a two-foot buffer on each side of the lane”. Ms. Manwaring seconded the motion. Chair Bryenton asked if there were any further discussion points. Being none, a vote was called and the motion was unanimously approved.

6) Old Business

A) Volunteer Opportunities

i) *Trail Clean-ups (Planned)*

Nothing scheduled until fall.

ii) *Bike Friendly Community*

Mr. Schoefmann to send out the application for Bike Friendly Community to Chair Bryenton and he will delegate tasks. Mid- August is the deadline. Collaboration will occur virtually.

7) Regular Project Updates

Staff are working to get something in the CIP for 2024 or 2025, but it is currently looking more like 2025.

The GIS Tech is working with Highway to inventory in street bike marking for budget purposes. Bike boxes and downtown sharrows have been remarked.

DPW Highway have put out some bike racks. Mr. Schoefmann is confirming rack locations for summer/fall 2022. There are gaps in where historically placed.

Appel Way Trail Paving has been pushed out to 2025.

Engineering division of DPW is managing the Safe Streets for All Grant opportunity. City of Keene has been selected as a TAP grant recipient for Complete Street improvements to Marlboro Street that tie into other planned improvements, infrastructure, economic development goals and the Cheshire Rail Trail. The project is ongoing- trail/sidewalk connector in Engineering Design Phase.

Jess Gelter with Arts Alive has taken a scaled down version of the Arts and Culture Corridor concept. Gilbo Avenue to School Street is still part of the scope.

The next steering committee meeting for Lower Winchester Street project is slated for July 18th. The hope is that they will be ready to make a recommendation to the Council on which of the different options to move forward with.

Mr. Lussier updated on the transportation heritage committee. Proposals are due in a couple of weeks. One of the consultants has decided not to move forward, but they had five other consultants attending that meeting interested in the project.

Chair Bryenton discussed the green staging boxes around Central Square. Last year they were repainted, but they only went a couple of feet into the lane and to be official bike boxes, they

should take up the whole width of the lane. The boxes are appropriate, but the lead up lane is what is squishing traffic.

Mr. Blomquist pointed out that part of the task of the committee is education and many people do not know what those boxes are and how this is a good opportunity for community education. Mr. Blomquist to look at MUTCD and make sure they are in compliance.

8) New Business

A) Items to be Included for Next Meeting

9) More Time

A) Public Art and The Trails

B) Project Priorities

C) BPPAC Website

D) Wayfinding Amenities- North and South Bridge Signage

Mr. Redfern shared that it took five months for Salem to do it and they did it through the state. Covid shut them down. City took up the project and it has been three years. Mr. Blomquist to put stakes in the ground and share the coordinates, which should happen in the next few weeks.

E) Bike/Pedestrian Counts

10) Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Bryenton adjourned the meeting at 9:28 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Amanda Trask, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Will Schoefmann, Community Development Staff

Additional edits by,
Katrnya Kibler, Clerk's Office