

City of Keene
New Hampshire

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN PATH ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, October 11, 2023

8:15 AM

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

Members Present:

Todd Horner, Vice Chair
Jan Manwaring
Michael Davern
Rowland Russell
Councilor Andrew Madison
Charles Redfern, Alternate
Autumn Delacroix, Alternate
Janelle Sartorio, Alternate

Staff Present:

William Schoefmann, GIS Technician
Kürt Blomquist, Public Works
Director/Emergency Mgmt
Director/ACM

Members Not Present:

Drew Bryenton, Chair
Dillon Benik
Dr. Chris Brehme, Alternate

1) Call to Order and Roll Call

Vice Chair Horner called the meeting to order at 8:16 AM.

2) June 14, 2023 and September 13, 2023 Minutes

Dr. Rowland Russell motioned to approve the June 14th minutes, seconded by Councilor Andrew Madison. With all in favor, the minutes from June 14, 2023, were approved.

Mrs. Jan Manwaring motioned to approve the September 13 minutes, seconded by Councilor Madison. The minutes from September 13, 2023, were unanimously approved.

3) Safety and Outreach Working Group

Dr. Russell shared that the safety and outreach group did meet. There were several different facets that were discussed. Ms. Autumn Delacroix and Ms. Samantha Jackson were to take the lead on e-bikes and alternatives. Mr. Edward Haus and Dr. Russell are taking the lead on communications and asset mapping.

Dr. Russell explained that he compiled all the different documents their group had created or collected into a google drive and plans to consolidate it even further. The drive will eventually be made available to others on the committee to serve as a resource.

He went on to explain what while mobility issues were not originally on the radar, they did discuss them and believe that it should be added. It has been decided that meetings will occur monthly, but a specific time has not been chosen yet. Likely there will be changing and/or rotating roster based on timing of meetings and agenda items.

Mr. Charles Redfern asked Dr. Russell if the working group might be able to come up with a potential study of other municipalities that are known to have regulations and how they vary.

Dr. Russell said he does have links to various studies and how it is improved. Some items of note he found during his research were speed limit on protected bike lanes and restricting certain classes. He suggested to Ms. Delacroix that when her group is doing their research, they look for regulations on those matters.

Dr. Russell said one other aspect they did talk about was getting someone certified to do workshops on safety. Both Ms. Delacroix and Ms. Sartorio were interested in participating. Dr. Russell shared that he plans to follow up on this topic as having more local trainers increases the capacity to expand and increases sustainability.

Mr. Todd Horner said a potential ally with this might be the Kiwanis Club as they do a bike safety event which includes the Keene Police handing out helmets.

Mr. Schoefmann said it usually happens in May.

Mr. Redfern said there is also a statewide nonprofit called Bike Walk Alliance New Hampshire and they do pedestrian safety, bike safety and make recommendations to the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT) to handle certain matters and this would be one of them. He went on to explain that they have professional trainers that could come in to help design a program. He suggested Dr. Russell look at the website and see if it is something they might be interested in. Mr. Redfern suggested Dr. Russell circle back if he had any problems making contact. He explained that Paula Bedard is the point of contact and head.

Dr. Russell responded that once they get the information pulled together, they will share with the group and committee members can add any resources they missed.

Kurt Blomquist stated he thought the work being done was awesome and needed to continue moving forward. He was not sure if anyone else had noticed that there have been increasing numbers of bicyclists downtown. He noted that recently there were a couple of young children weaving in and out of pedestrians. This becomes a detractor for the mission and goal of the committee and offers up something for opposers to point at as an example of why it should not

happen. He believed it would be critical and sustainable to involve the Kiwanis, but encouraged the group to bring a police representative or have discussion with them because at the end of the day it comes down to enforcement. With the police department being tight in staffing and with no expectation of the staffing shortage increasing anytime soon, there may not be a drastic change in the enforcement side. They are presently down 6 out of 42 and they have priorities of which they are performing the enforcement issues.

He said these are things that as you are developing and getting the groups together to be keeping in mind these things.

He went on saying while you can write all the ordinance you want, unless they can be enforced, it does not matter how many you create as they will not be successful.

Dr. Russell said that underscores that communication and education are central for all of this and that there is opportunity to get ahead and control the narrative. He stressed that this is why we need a dedicated space for that as it is not safe for pedestrians.

Mr. Blomquist shared that Main Street will be coming back on the radar sometime after the first of the year and he knows that there are candidates who have indicated that they are looking to change it or eliminate things, so it is not over.

Dr. Russell said the one that they have not resolved as a group and will need to figure out is that they do not have a social media space to put information out. We need something for more than just the people who get it and will get the information out to the people who need it.

Mr. Horner said he thinks it is great to educate people about bike safety, but he does not want to lose sight of the fact that he thinks motorists also need education just as much as anyone else. He said it is often a coin flip as to whether people are going to yield to him when he is walking in the sidewalk, even with a stroller. He has had large SUVs fly by without any hesitation and firmly believes that while it is good to educate the bicyclist, he thinks the education should really be to the whole community. He would posit that in terms of safety, it is really the motorist education that will likely have the biggest impact on that front.

Ms. Delacroix said our police do not know the laws that relate to how bikes interact on the road. She explained that she had had several calls from them where somebody did something that they very much should not have. While they were able to get ahold of them and talk with them, all they would do it talk to them. They would not offer any citations. She explained that they were under the impression that intent is necessary to prove for every traffic violation because they were making the claim that it only qualifies under reckless driving as opposed to six other state statutes that she is aware of which can dock points from people's licenses that they were ignoring. She argued it was not just the motorists, but also falls to the lack of proper education around enforcement.

Mr. Blomquist responded that they are probably not ignoring. They go through twelve weeks of training on all New Hampshire motor vehicle statutes. He challenged everyone in the room to learn everything that there is to know about motor vehicle statutes. He argued that he probably knows more than most people because he must do that for design. While he agrees that motorists are responsible and should be part of the strategy, he believes that if they are not going to change the detractors right now who drive vehicles. He reminded the group of the committee's name and said that the educational component for bicyclists just takes away one argument and that they would lose on the drivers.

Mr. Horner responded that he was trying to go against the dual standard in which bicyclists are being upheld to a perfect standard and drivers, who are the biggest safety concern, are not.

Mr. Blomquist said he did not disagree. He has spent 30 years dealing with people wanting the city to address speeders because people drive too fast. He does the speed study and determines that they are not, but according to the complainant, they are, and the complainant is quick to disclose which neighbor is the guilty party. He reassured the group that he understood their point, but wanted to make the point that he thought it was important for them to look at the detractors and get out there.

Dr. Russell suggested a tab to include in the resource document highlighting the interface between pedestrians and bicyclists and automobiles with the regulations.

Mr. Horner said to close the agenda item, he asked Mr. Blomquist how this relates to the safety for all work that the city is part of right now.

Mr. Blomquist responded that this is part of that work, and that the project will be looking at the data that exists on motor vehicle accidents, motor vehicle versus pedestrian, motor vehicle versus bicycle. The last time that he did a pedestrian/bicycle/vehicle five-year look, there were four accidents, and they were all around Davis Street when the bar was there. All the incidents were between 6 and 11pm. There are certainly a lot of close calls and that is one of the things that has been talked about during the interview with the consultants asking how that can be measured. It was asking how to measure and gather that information when there is not data or data says there are no accidents or no severe accidents.

Mr. Horner asked if the interviews had already been completed. Mr. Blomquist responded that they had been. The council had approved the consultant last week and authorized the manager to enter and negotiate and execute the federal highway grant application and they appropriated their match out of unallocated fund balance. Engineering is finishing up scope negotiations with VHB from the consultant. Hopefully in the next few weeks they will have a contract and can go on their way. The goal was to have the work completed by June of 2024. There will be a public engagement as that is required for this program as it has some very prescriptive things you have to do. It brings up the question of what public engagement is and how do you get them engaged. Given that winter months are coming, they are trying to look at some different

ways to be able to try and engage the public around this safety question when there is no data. The bottom-line question is where people feel unsafe and how to extract that in some way that makes it valuable.

Mr. Schoefmann stated it would be a challenge. There are places where people feel unsafe depending on the mode of transportation they are using and then it comes down to figuring out what those factors are. He referenced the Keene State attitudes of public safety study saying most people believed Railroad Square was unsafe. However, when looking at the data of actual crimes committed or at least reported to police, that was not a hotspot.

Mr. Blomquist responded that is the challenge. He questioned how you gather that other information because all good engineers say you need to show data or you need to show accidents, but what do you do when there is not any data to support that there is a problem.

Dr. Russell wondered if there was a volunteer opportunity here to get volunteers out on the crosswalks that get violated the most and do counts.

Mr. Blomquist responded that there are two levels of teams. There is a steering committee that will have representatives from the college, school district, and he believed even representative from Southwest. Then there is the working committee which has community development on it. He believes this committee will have an influence and particularly if they have already been identified as one that needs to have conversations with the consultant as part of the service.

4) Membership

Mr. Schoefmann displayed the list of members and their term expiration dates. He explained that Mr. Horner is still working to resolve his situation. His first term was a partial term.

Chair Drew Bryenton will be timing out in December. Mr. Dillon Benik is on his second term, which is set to expire in December as well.

Mr. Horner said pending resolution of his partial term, the committee will need a new chair and vice chair. Members interested in assuming more leadership should keep that in mind. He shared that it was not a hard job.

Ms. Janelle Sartorio asked if that would take effect in January, to which Mr. Schoefmann confirmed.

Mr. Horner asked if alternates converting to full membership required an appointment. Mr. Schoefmann responded yes, and that the mayor would make the recommendation.

Mr. Horner suggested figuring out and confirming who many are timing out will help to identify how many full membership slots there will be to then determine which of the full members are interested in becoming full members.

Dr. Russell asked what the upper limit was for the group. Mr. Schoefmann explained that they are currently at the upper limit. There is an alternate limit of five.

Mr. Schoefmann explained that it is an anomaly for city committees to have this much interest. Should the nomination from the mayor not come in time, membership will continue as is for a few meetings until the replacements happen. It is like a grace period.

Ms. Manwaring clarified that usually the appointments are before the city council in December and usually there is only one meeting in December because of the holiday.

Mr. Schoefmann's plan is to get those memberships sorted out by confirming with the clerk and then write a memo to have ready to go to the new mayor.

Ms. Manwaring suggested doing it in December with the mayor that is familiar with the committee.

Mr. Schoefmann told Diana Duffy that if she is interested, now is her time. Ms. Duffy asked if she could be on two committees at a time. It was noted that multiple people are serving on more than one committee.

5) Project Priorities- Wrap Up

Mr. Horner thought they made it through the list last time. Mr. Schoefmann confirmed that they had regarding the priority numbering. Contained in the agenda packet was a chart showing how things teased out in terms of level of importance versus level of organizational support. The committee previously ranked on importance level. The organizational support ranking was based on an amalgamation of whether there was funding, is it in the CIP, is there regulation or guideline support for the initiative, etc. He explained that typically the committee chooses 3-5 projects to focus on. His question was is there a need for more discussion on this. Mr. Russell asked to go through them.

Mr. Horner read the projects off that both city staff and the committee ranked high as the Cheshire Rail trail, Eastern ABT to New Hampshire 101, the Joanthon Daniels Trail maintenance, Cheshire Rail trail- NH Route 101 overpass Stone Arch Bridge, Appel Way assessment and maintenance, wayfinding facilities and signage, Main Street Marlborough Street Bicycle pedestrian master plan and amenities.

Mr. Horner said he sees a couple of things missing, one of which is the lower Winchester Street project. The other piece is the plant work along 101 and this could be lumped with the Cheshire Rail trail NH 101 overpass potentially.

Mr. Schoefmann said that when he did the regular project updates, the DOT 101 improvements were put under the Transportation Heritage Trail section of the project updates. He believes they discussed the Winchester Street project last time, but likely just didn't add it. He will go back and add it in.

Mr. Blomquist said that it will come up on the MSFI agenda on November 21st and the scuttlebutt is that they are ready to make a recommendation. It was noted that this is something to keep on the radar as a key piece of that project is making it multimodal.

Mr. Horner said in his understanding he thought the city was interested in combining the bridge over 101 with the planned work for NH Route 101 and asked Mr. Blomquist for confirmation. Mr. Blomquist said they have started initial conversations with NHDOT about potentially doing at a minimum the abutments for that project. As part of the same project, they are trying to work on the water main project down 101.

Mr. Redfern asked if abutments would have to go into the 10-year plan. Mr. Blomquist said that is part of the question. There is no money for this phase yet. There would be grants, but that is all in the soup now.

6) Regular Project Updates

Mr. Schoefmann announced that Stantec was selected for phase one of the Transportation Heritage Trail port leave. He was not sure where that stood but assumed that they would probably be out there doing survey work.

He said Don Lussier was trying to coordinate the response from the city. He believed they had a presentation to the council, which Councilor Madison confirmed. Mr. Schoefmann asked if there was any note to share. Mr. Madison said it did not really go into the pedestrian. It was mostly focused on the roundabouts.

It was asked if the presentation was on the council website. Mr. Madison said he was not sure, but he knew that it would be in the minutes.

There was a misunderstanding about which area Mr. Schoefmann had asked about, which he clarified that it was Route 101. Mr. Madison responded that the location did not go through council, and it went through a committee instead.

7) Volunteer Opportunities

A) Fall Fun-Ride Kick Off

Mr. Horner has been working with a Keene resident to organize a social group ride from Monadnock Coop to Frisky Cow Gelato on the 22nd at 3:00 PM. Linda Rubin, owner of Frisky Cow, is excited to welcome the group of cyclists to her shop. It is supposed to be an opportunity for fun, connection with other cyclists and create some visibility downtown.

Mr. Russell asked that photos be taken. Mr. Horner agreed and added that he had purchased some horns and bells for people to use on the ride.

He asked members to spread the word. Mr. Russell suggested reaching out to the Sentinel for publicity. Mr. Horner responded that he's trying to strike a balance between getting people there and not having it grow too big.

B) Trail Clean-up

Mr. Russell said they have not pulled their group together, but they are looking at the first two weekends in November.

8) Old Business

A) Downtown Infrastructure Project Updates

Mr. Blomquist discussed earlier in the meeting that it was going before council.

9) New Business

A) Items to be included for the next meeting.

Mr. Horner suggested keeping the safe streets for all study on their radar and the safety and outreach working group on the agenda. Mr. Russell asked that the crosswalk counts be added as a volunteer opportunity.

Mr. Redfern suggested safety improvements for the Stone Arch Bridge.

10) More Time

A) NHDOT North/South Bridge Signage

Mr. Schoefmann said from last time, the sign design was supposed to be approved by NHDOT. Mr. Blomquist should have the greatest knowledge of where that stands, but he had left the meeting.

B) Kiosk Map Updates

Mr. Schoefmann said that as more tasks have been designated to him, the map updates have taken a back seat. The last component to the update before those can be put onto fancy signs is the distances that were requested by this group on the trail segments. He needs to figure or at least interpret from the data what those distances are.

Mr. Redfern asked if that could tie into the map update as far as the Keene side of the map. Mr. Schoefmann said possibly.

C) Public Art and the Trails Update

Mr. Russell said the calendar was full for 2023, but for 2024 they want to look at more sculpture installations along the rail trail. They still have Peter Poanessa's railroad sign that they want to restore and have installed and are hoping to get more for 2024.

D) BPPAC Website

Mr. Schoefmann rediscovered his ability to edit certain portions of the website, which is nice. Hopefully, he can get that information uploaded and include more information and address the list of improvements that the group had identified.

Mrs. Manwaring thanked Mr. Schoefmann for his work on that.

E) Bike/Pedestrian Counts

Mr. Horner clarified that they have some automatic counters deployed at a couple of trailheads. He does have the full location count, but once they have that they should have counts for some of the trails.

11) Adjournment

There being no further business, Vice Chair Horner adjourned the meeting at 9:15 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Amanda Trask, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Will Schoefmann, Community Development Staff