

City of Keene
New Hampshire

BICYCLE PEDESTRIAN PATH COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, April 8, 2015

8:30 am

2nd Floor Conference Rm, City Hall

Members Present:

Greg Pregent, Chair
Linda Rubin, Vice Chair (arrived at 8:35 AM)
Thom Little
Charles (Chuck) Redfern
Andrew McCarron (arrived at 8:32 AM)
James Duffy, Councilor
Christopher Brehme

Members Not Present:

Staff Present:

William Shoefmann, Planning
Andrew Bohannon, Parks and Recreation
(left at 9:05 AM)
Kürt Blomquist, Public Works (arrived at
8:50 AM)

Others Present:

Mari Brunner, Southwest Regional
Planning Commission (SWRPC)
Tara Germond, SWRPC

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Pregent called the meeting to order at 8:30 AM. Roll call was conducted.

2. Approval of Minutes – March 11, 2015

Mr. Little made a motion to approve the minutes, which was seconded by Mr. Redfern and passed by unanimous vote.

3. Education and Outreach

Chair Pregent shared information about “Community Bike Day” on Saturday, April 18, 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM on Marlboro Street, hosted by Christopher who does the Pedals 4 People program in town, donating bikes to children in need. He encouraged people to check out the Facebook page to see more information about the event and to help spread the word.

Mr. McCarron arrived at 8:32 AM.

Mr. Bohannon reported that the CTM map they did last year is going forward again this year, with more sponsors than last year. He continued that they are on target for May 1. Things are moving right along and he is pleased. Chair Pregent asked if they can hand those out at the Cool Wheels event. Mr. Bohannon replied yes, if they are printed in time.

Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee meeting minutes,
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Mr. Redfern stated that April 25 is Earth Day and the BPPAC should have some promotional materials at the Earth Day events at the Monadnock Food Co op, hosted by Antioch University New England (AUNE). Pathways for Keene (PFK) has reserved a spot.

Ms. Rubin arrived at 8:35 AM.

Mr. Redfern continued that the Monadnock Region Transportation Management Association (MRTMA) will also have a table there. He would be glad to put BPPAC materials out on the PFK table if City staff has any already, or the BPPAC can have their own table. Discussion ensued about the details of the event. Chair Pregent stated that he will be there, as a member of PFK and BPPAC. He continued that his radio show will have a special about Earth Day. Councilor Duffy stated that he assumes the Cities for Climate Protection (CCP) Committee is involved with the Green Business of the Year Award again this year and it might be good to share a table with them. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he will check with Karen Purinton, the staff liaison for that committee. Chair Pregent encouraged BPPAC members to attend the event for whatever amount of time they have available. Discussion continued about the logistics and location of the event.

Ms. Rubin asked about Bike Week and the Mayor's Challenge. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he has a memo drafted that Mr. Lamb has to look at, to go to the Mayor – it is in the works.

4. Project Updates

A) Roundhouse T Phase II

Mr. Schoefmann reported that he will send the BPPAC final design papers this week. He continued that the City is on track with the New Hampshire Department of Transportation's (NHDOT's) schedule. Mr. Redfern asked if these plans have been approved by the NHDOT. Mr. Schoefmann replied yes. Mr. Redfern asked what it is next. Mr. Little replied that at the City Council meeting it was stated that it would go out to bid in May. He continued that Mr. Donison was getting extra money for the additional engineering work. The State and Federal government is paying 80% of that.

Mr. Schoefmann asked if the BPPAC wants to see the Request for Quotes (RFQ). Chair Pregent replied that he is more interested in the plans. He asked how long the RFQ would be out. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he expects bids would be back in June, and he is not exactly sure when construction would be; it depends on the proposal that is chosen. Mr. Redfern asked how widely this will be advertised, for design, engineering, and construction. Mr. Schoefmann replied that there is a list of standard firms that they have dealt with in the past and it gets posted on the Purchasing Department's website. He continued that he will find out from Mr. Donison and Mr. Blomquist. Mr. Redfern stated that he is concerned because Cheshire Rail Trail II only had one bidder and the bid was over budget; he would like to see a more competitive process. He continued that he suggests casting a wider net. Mr. Schoefmann replied that the Purchasing Department sends it out to many firms. Discussion ensued about the process and the bidders.

Mr. Little asked what the required date for construction is, and whether there are constraints that would reduce the number of bidders. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he will have to check. Discussion continued and Mr. Little asked more questions about the requirements from the State.

He continued that the faster they tell the contractors they want something to happen, the higher the cost. Mr. Bohannon replied that the City Engineer's office is driving the process and he is not familiar enough with it to comment on it. Councilor Duffy wondered how deeply this committee needs to get into these details. He continued that maybe they should use their time in other ways. Chair Pregent agreed. Mr. Redfern disagreed. He spoke of the importance of reviewing these projects in depth, and the importance of the BPPAC helping staff track deadlines and understand what can lead to cost overruns. He stated that they are not getting into too much minutiae. Anything that can affect the jeopardy of a project is important. Chair Pregent replied yes, this is their purview, but he agrees that they do not need to get so deep into it.

Mr. Blomquist arrived at 8:50 AM.

Discussion continued about the particulars of the project and the BPPAC's role and purview. Chair Pregent stated that they want to ensure they do not have to rely on secondary funding and he sees no problem with looking at constraints that may cause that problem. Mr. Schoefmann stated that he will get a copy of the bid documents.

B) Cheshire Rail Trail Phase II

Mr. Little stated that the extra \$500,000 was for engineering work for a change that had to be done because of Eversource Energy (formerly Public Service of New Hampshire) changes that were required. He continued that it was a last minute thing that had to be taken care of. Mr. Blomquist reported that the project is scheduled to start in the next 30 days or so. He continued that everything is on track. Mr. Little stated that he thought the increase in cost was due to the timing – it was a 90-day contract to be done at the end of the year and he heard that meant they would have to pay people overtime. People were not working over the winter. Mr. Blomquist replied that the project was underfunded originally and it had nothing to do with the bids. He continued that the estimates were higher than the budget available. It was always planned to be a two-season project because they wanted to get going in the fall to show the community that they were taking action. Mr. Little replied that this committee discussed that it had to be done last year and that was what was driving the cost. He continued that if that statement was incorrect, fine, but if it was correct, will they get money back from this project that could be spent on another project? Mr. Blomquist replied no.

C) Jonathan Daniels Trail

Mr. Schoefmann reported that there is no change in the status. He continued that it is a matter of looking for alternative funding sources for the study. That is ongoing. Mr. Redfern stated that they were going to contact the Conservation Commission to test the waters with them and see which areas would need to be addressed. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he has inquired with Ms. Purinton but he has not heard back from her. He continued that he thinks she will bring it up with the Conservation Commission this month. Mr. Redfern replied that he thinks that bringing the Conservation Commission on as a partner from the beginning would yield better outcomes.

D) Cheshire Rail Trail Park Avenue Loop

Mr. Schoefmann reported that they will be doing a walk again of the Ami Brown Road on Friday to confirm the plans they have done historical research for and the plan from 2004, and to make

sure everything is set regarding the right-of-way so they can negotiate about ownership. Mr. Redfern asked if BPPAC members can come. Mr. Blomquist replied that it is just for staff.

E) South Bridge

Mr. Blomquist stated that rumor has it that there may be some leftover Transportation Enhancement (TE) money and South Bridge would be the place to put the money. He continued that he is waiting for confirmation of this rumor. He has called the NHDOT Project Manager to find out. Mr. Little asked if they have feedback about how far along they have gotten with the design. Mr. Blomquist replied that that is part of his questions to the Project Manager. Mr. Little replied that if they have the entire design and they are just waiting for money to start construction, which he understood as the strategy, he wonders if they have any insight into that at all. Mr. Blomquist replied no. Mr. Redfern asked if Mr. Blomquist can ask whether it will be like North Bridge or a multi-use bridge, and what that means for snowmobilers. Mr. Blomquist replied that he expects that the intent is to allow snowmobiles.

F) Bike Racks

Tara Germond and Mari Brunner, of the Southwest Regional Planning Commission (SWRPC), distributed copies of handouts – a flyer about Rack It Up, and a flyer about Bicycle Benefits. Chair Pregent asked how the Rack It Up flyer will be used. Ms. Brunner replied that they just finalized it; they will give it to business owners to give them information about the program. She continued that they are getting ready to launch the program by Earth Day. She showed the logo, which will be printed on cards soon. They will give them to people so they can give them to businesses to raise awareness about the program. She will give some of these cards to the BPPAC next month and they will be available at Earth Day. There is also a Bicycle Benefits flyer that will go to businesses. It is a program that incentivizes biking to local businesses – people with a sticker on their helmet can receive a discount at participating businesses. She asked the BPPAC to spread the word about that. It will be for businesses participating in Rack it Up. The Monadnock Food Co op has expressed interest, for starters, and she is talking with another business that might be interested. They have not widely advertised this opportunity yet. There will be a form on their website – monadnocktma.com/rackitup, for interested businesses to sign up.

Ms. Germond added that a subcommittee will be doing direct outreach and a mailer to businesses they think most warrant a bike rack or have large numbers of employees. She continued that there will be an application process for them to receive bike racks; they have funding for approximately 100 bike parking spaces in Keene and Swanzey. They hope to have the first wave installed in June. The program year ends in September but they will seek to extend it another year through the PICH grant from the CDC.

Mr. Brehme asked if a business that is part of a shopping plaza can participate. Ms. Brunner replied yes, each business offers its own discount; it has to be done individually. She continued that the Colony Mill as a whole, for example, could not do it, but each business in the Colony Mill could. Ms. Germond added that the Colony Mill, however, could be a participant in Rack It Up. Discussion ensued.

Chair Pregent asked if they said they have 100 businesses to approach. Ms. Brunner clarified that they have funding for 100 bike spaces, and some bike racks have space for two bikes. It may be less than 50 businesses. Chair Pregent asked if you have to belong to Rack It Up to participate in Bicycle Benefits. Ms. Brunner replied no. Ms. Germond replied that businesses have to purchase the stickers and sell them to the public, but for this initial start up kit, businesses would receive the stickers for free so there is a benefit to them if they are participating in the Rack It Up program.

Chair Pregent spoke positively about Rack It Up and the Bicycle Benefits program and thanked Ms. Germond and Ms. Brunner for their presentation. Ms. Brunner asked for BPPAC members to let them know about businesses they recommend. She continued that she can send them the target outreach list if they want to look at it or add to it.

Chair Pregent asked if the City is on track to put the bike racks out. Mr. Blomquist replied yes, that will happen soon as the Parks & Recreation staff gets the parks cleaned up and the benches out, probably by the end of April or the beginning of May. There are still some snowbanks and mucky places.

G) Complete Streets

Mr. Blomquist reported that they are presenting tonight to the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure (MSFI) Committee to give an update on the schedule for the Complete Streets policy. He continued that the goal is to have the draft policy to the MSFI Committee in July or August. The group is talking about doing a demonstration event. They will host a workshop for the local area to get aboard. They do not yet know if it will be aimed towards road agent people or one level up to department heads. All of this will be part of and completed by September. They are excited.

Chair Pregent asked if the demonstration is about setting up a temporary, faux Complete Street and if that will happen in the fall. Mr. Blomquist replied yes, probably in the Marlboro Street area; there has been lots of interest in that area. He continued that it is an educational opportunity so the community can continue to learn about Complete Streets. The goal is for Keene and the towns to work together as a region. Ms. Germond replied that Swanzey will also have a demonstration.

H) Planning Projects

Chair Pregent asked if there is any news about the student housing at the Mills. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he saw a communication from NHDOT saying that the trail access is within "local purview." He continued that he is still trying to piece together what is going on. Chair Pregent asked when the project will be complete. Mr. Blomquist replied that they expect it to be complete by the end of summer. He continued that the developer committed to put in a solar flashing crosswalk there where the trail crosses Winchester Street and some solar lights that will be turned over to the City. If those work as well as they hope they will, the City will use more solar lights elsewhere. Solar lights would be less expensive than running power to certain areas. Ms. Brunner asked if bike racks are planned. Mr. Blomquist replied that he does not know. He continued that she can get contact information from Mr. Schoefmann's office if she wants to contact the developers.

5. Maintenance

Mr. Schoefmann reported that they are looking at getting bike racks out as Parks & Recreation staff cleans up. Chair Pregent asked if there is anything out of the ordinary regarding maintenance. Mr. Schoefmann replied no. Chair Pregent stated that the trails seem to be in good shape except there is a lot of water near Wheelock Park. Mr. Blomquist replied that this summer they will be paving some of that area so hopefully it will not be as wet.

6. Old Business

Mr. Schoefmann stated that they had a BPPAC Master Plan meeting on Friday. He continued that they caught up a bit on the goals sheet. They are looking at setting priorities for a lot of the activity items under each goal. They shoehorned the overall goals into an outline, which he will produce and bring back to the Master Plan Committee. Chair Pregent asked if they will schedule another meeting. Mr. Schoefmann replied yes, they were thinking of another 90 minutes in about three weeks with no date set yet.

Mr. Redfern asked if Eversource had been wanting permission to go down the bike lane to access their facility (near Wheelock Park) and if an alternate route has been figured out and approved by Eversource. Mr. Blomquist replied yes, he believes so.

Mr. McCarron asked about the status of the Colony Mill and Center of Keene area where the owners opened it up to through traffic between the two parking lots then there was a barrier up. Other committee members noted that the barrier is not there now. Staff stated that the City approved the project that opened up the two parking lots. Discussion ensued about the area and about the pedestrian and bike traffic that continues through the parking lots despite the physical alterations the owners made to the area.

7. New Business

Mr. Little stated that when the protagonist in the movie “Wild” was hiking she came to stations where there were old fashioned log books where she could log the date and time and hikers could share information with each other. He asked if there is a way to attract that sort of participation here in Keene. It is different because Keene is a city environment, but perhaps they could have a station on both ends of a trail, so they could start attracting some feedback from the users. It could be as informal as possible. Maybe a handwritten old-fashioned log could be part of a station that gives people more information. Chair Pregent replied that it is something to think about with kiosks, like a suggestion box. Mr. Redfern replied yes, a suggestion box might be something to consider. He continued that people would have to write on their own paper. Mr. Little replied that it is nice to be able to read previous notations from hikers who came before you. Chair Pregent replied that it could be a good idea but vandalism is always a concern. Maybe they could try it and see what happens. At least a comment box is not a bad idea.

8. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:27 AM.

Respectfully submitted by
Britta Reid, Minute-taker

Additional edits by
Will Schoefmann, Planning Staff