

City of Keene
New Hampshire

BICYCLE/PEDESTRIAN PATH ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, January 13, 2016

8:00 AM

2nd floor Conference Room

Members Present:

Linda Rubin, Chair (arrived at 8:19 AM)
Christopher Brehme, Vice Chair
Charles (Chuck) Redfern
Thom Little
Don Hayes

Staff Present:

William Schoefmann, Planning
Andrew Bohannon, Parks & Recreation
Kürt Blomquist, Public Works (arrived at 8:34 AM)

Members Not Present:

Greg Pregent

At 8:15 AM, Mr. Redfern made a motion for Mr. Brehme to serve as Acting Chair to open the meeting, and spoke positively of him. Mr. Little seconded the motion. Mr. Schoefmann asked Mr. Brehme to start the meeting off as Acting Chair.

1. Roll Call

Roll call was conducted. After brief discussion, the group decided to skip the second item until Linda Rubin arrived.

3. Accept November 10, 2015 Minutes (No Quorum for December)

Mr. Little submitted changes to the November 10, 2015 minutes:

- Page 1, change “Roll Call: Roll call was conducted” to “Call to Order and Roll Call: In the absence of the Chair and Vice Chair, Mr. Little was selected as Acting-Chair for the meeting. Acting-Chair Little called the meeting to order at 8:00 AM. Roll call was conducted.”
- Page 1, 3), change “to the Ashuelot Rail Trail” to “to the completed asphalt section of the Ashuelot Rail Trail.”
- Page 4, paragraph 4, change “that the bike path process was overturned” to “that the Bypass Project was terminated.”
- Page 5, paragraph 1, change “on Main Street” to “on Main Street?”
- Page 7, 7) Adjournment, change “Meeting adjourned at 9:32 AM” to “Acting-Chair Little adjourned the meeting at 9:32 AM.”

Mr. Little stated that he thinks there should be December minutes saying there was no quorum, so people know. Mr. Schoefmann replied that usually no minutes are created when a meeting does not happen but they could talk with the City Clerk’s Office. Discussion ensued. Mr. Redfern stated that having this month’s minutes reference the fact that there was no quorum in December is sufficient. Others agreed.

Ms. Rubin arrived at 8:19 AM.

Mr. Hayes made a motion to approve the amended minutes of November 10, 2015, which was seconded by Mr. Redfern. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

Acting-Chair Brehme turned the meeting over to Chair Rubin.

2. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Mr. Schoefmann explained that they take nominations and the BPPAC votes once they have a number of candidates. He reported that Mr. Pregent submitted a letter of resignation due to scheduling conflicts with work and no longer being able to attend regular meetings. Vice Chair Rubin asked if that is effective immediately. Mr. Schoefmann replied that as of yesterday Mayor Lane had not yet received his letter of resignation but Mr. Pregent's lack of presence today speaks to its immediacy.

Mr. Redfern nominated Chris Brehme as Chair. Mr. Brehme replied that he is uncertain because he goes on sabbatical in the fall and may not be in the area. Discussion ensued. Vice Chair Rubin asked if he would consider Vice Chair. Mr. Hayes suggested Vice Chair Rubin be Chair. She replied that she would be open to that.

Mr. Redfern made a motion for Linda Rubin to be Chair and Christopher Brehme to be Vice Chair of the BPPAC. Mr. Hayes seconded the motion.

Vice Chair Rubin asked if anyone else is interested, before they vote. Hearing none, she called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Project Updates – see attached table

A) Roundhouse T Phase II

Mr. Schoefmann reported that this has been completed. The one update he has, not included, is that Mr. Little brought up safety concerns that the Public Works Department is in the process of investigating. He continued that Mr. Little took and submitted photos that he can share with the BPPAC if they have not seen them. Mr. Little replied that he emailed the photos to everyone.

B) Cheshire Rail Trail Phase II

Mr. Schoefmann reported that this is completed and drainage around the Hurricane Road approach is being monitored by the Public Works Department. There have been issues with washouts in big storms. They are monitoring that situation and looking to improve it. Discussion ensued about the location. Mr. Little stated that there is a drainage problem by Stonewall Farm that they had discussed needing attention. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he will ask Mr. Blomquist about that and they will have to look at it in the spring. Mr. Bohannon stated that he was not aware of this problem. Ms. Rubin asked Mr. Little to further clarify the area, which he did, and Ms. Rubin agreed that that is a spot to check out. Mr. Bohannon replied that they will take a look.

C) Jonathan Daniels Trail

Mr. Schoefmann stated that they are in the planning phases for the Jonathan Daniels Trail, getting an estimate for drainage and surface maintenance. Mr. Bohannon replied that he has had conversations with folks but there is nothing official, project related. Mr. Schoefmann replied that they are trying to get a scope first. Mr. Bohannon replied that his rough estimate is \$90,000. Mr. Hayes agreed that it needs work. Mr. Schoefmann replied that as that project develops they will keep the BPPAC updated.

D) Jonathan Daniels Trail Phase II

Mr. Schoefmann stated that this is in the Planning CIP. He continued that it was listed before at \$20,000. He asked Mr. Bohannon if he remembers what year it is slated for. Mr. Bohannon replied no. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he will confirm that at the end of the month when the CIP book is made public. He summarized that the project entails looking at alternative routes for connecting the Ashuelot River Trail/Jonathan Daniels Trail that goes up the river and intersects Appel Way.

E) Cheshire Rail Trail – Park Ave. Loop

Mr. Schoefmann reported that they are in the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process as part of the grant process set up by the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT). He continued that they have a bidding process and are awaiting approval from NHDOT. He will keep the BPPAC updated. Chair Rubin asked if the finish date is based on the approvals. Mr. Schoefmann replied that they have a required timeline with certain gates/windows to the project scheduled. It would be 2017 construction.

Mr. Blomquist arrived at 8:34 AM.

F) South Bridge

Mr. Schoefmann asked Mr. Little to speak. Mr. Little reported that he included a handout of information provided by NHDOT at various times. He continued that South Bridge is on the Governor and Council agenda for today's meeting for approval of the contract. He has no idea how to predict it and will not try. Construction completion date is October 2016. Mr. Schoefmann replied that the Governor and Council are responsible for approving all NHDOT funding. Mr. Blomquist clarified all state contracts of \$500,000 or more. Mr. Little showed what was in the agenda packet for the Governor and Council meeting and reported that the dollar amount is \$1,536,742.

Mr. Redfern stated that Councilor Colin Van Ostern has been in contact with him and Mr. Little and thinks there would be no problem in getting this approved. They would like that the cost has been cut in half. It is important that the Council understand that there was a court order to enforce the settlement when reached, to do South Bridge when funds are reasonably available, so Councilor Van Olstern does not anticipate problems with approving this.

Mr. Redfern asked what happens when the Governor and Council approves this. Does the City negotiate with the State? Mr. Blomquist replied that it is a State project and there is no need for negotiations for the construction. Like any other State project, it goes

into the NHDOT machine. Mr. Redfern asked if the State is responsible for maintenance. Mr. Blomquist replied yes, but they do not perform maintenance; they do not plow.

Mr. Little stated that there was a hearing/meeting in Keene and Keene had the opportunity to provide any input they wanted to on the project. He continued that all of it was fairly straight forward. It is an extrapolation on the North Bridge project with some pleasant changes because it does not have as many constraints as the North Bridge project. He would like this document that he has from NHDOT captured in the minutes. Mr. Redfern asked if that document can be emailed or electronically transferred. Mr. Little replied that it is in the agenda packet, in the email.

Chair Rubin asked whose responsibility it is to publicize the South Bridge approval news. Mr. Schoefmann replied the State. Mr. Blomquist replied that it is an item of interest to the City so they will spread the word, too, like with the Base Hill Road project. They will post on social media. Chair Rubin asked if they can do a press release and Mr. Little stated that he was hoping for a picture. Discussion ensued. Mr. Blomquist stated that City staff will suggest to the Keene Sentinel that they write an article about South Bridge.

G) Bike Racks

Mr. Schoefmann reported that the Southwest Regional Planning Commission (SWRPC) successfully completed another round of “Rack it Up” and he thinks they are planning on moving forward with another phase of that for this coming bicycle season. He continued that he will get in touch with Mari Brunner and see what information she has, and keep the BPPAC updated. Most of the bike racks downtown have been taken up due to winter maintenance operations. He is still investigating getting a bike rack at the Wells Street parking deck.

H) Complete Streets

Mr. Schoefmann reported that the Complete Streets resolution was adopted by the City Council (in November) and he can send the BPPAC a link so they can see that, if they have not already. He continued that this was pretty momentous, having been in the works for years. They are now working on organizational policy. Mr. Blomquist replied that they also adopted the design guidance booklet that accompanies the resolution. He and Tara Germond are briefing the Planning Board at their next meeting and then there will be copies available at the Planning Department website. This document will be available for looking at projects from the Complete Streets perspective.

Chair Rubin replied that this is another big accomplishment for the City to celebrate. Mr. Blomquist briefly explained what the design guidance documents are. Chair Rubin asked if he can highlight what it would look like. Mr. Blomquist replied that in many ways Keene has been doing this for some time, but this formalizes it. He gave examples – streets are categorized (as “slow streets,” “bicycle routes,” etc.) and each category has a checklist of considerations, such as bike lanes, sharrows, public transportation capabilities, etc. There is variety within neighborhoods. Wider roads have more options.

Mr. Blomquist offered to bring copies of the design guidance booklet to the next meeting. Chair Rubin replied yes, that would be great, and a run through of how it works. Discussion continued. Chair Rubin thanked Mr. Blomquist and everyone who was involved with the Complete Streets resolution. She continued that it would be great to go over the design guidance at the next meeting so this group can understand more so they can speak about it intelligently to the public.

I) Master Plan

Mr. Schoefmann reported that they have a priorities list to go over. He continued that the goal is to finish the project in the summer, and for him to have a draft for the BPPAC to review then so they can wrap this up in late summer or early fall.

Mr. Little stated that there is a project that needs to be added to the list from the November 10 meeting: paving the Ashuelot Rail Trail from where the pavement ends to the South Bridge. Discussion ensued, regarding whether it should be on the list of projects that the BPPAC receives updates on at each meeting, or the list that is in the agenda packet entitled “New Priority Discussion BPPAC Master Plan 2015-2016 – Points from BPPAC 10/14/15 meeting,” or both. Mr. Little asked for it to be on the latter list. Mr. Redfern suggested it be on both lists. Chair Rubin questioned whether it should be on the Project Updates list if they have not yet prioritized it as a project. Mr. Redfern spoke about why it is a priority, with South Bridge coming soon, and the necessity of soon beginning the conversations with Keene State College (KSC), since the area is most used by their students. Discussion continued, and Mr. Schoefmann determined that this project is on the list of priority projects to be added to the Master Plan and it is also associated with the South Bridge project on the Project Updates list.

J) Mayor’s Challenge

Mr. Schoefmann reported that Mayor Kendall Lane has a summary packet about the Mayor’s Challenge (which he can provide to the BPPAC as well) and it includes the BPPAC’s review and self-assessment work. He continued that the Mayor really appreciates the BPPAC’s work. Staff is working on a PSA for the Mayor to release, discussing the importance of safe roads for all users and it will highlight some of the focus areas the community identified. He will keep them updated.

K) Signage

Mr. Schoefmann reported that he is working on getting the 3-foot passing signage that the Monadnock Cycling Club has in possession installed at the designated locations, on major gateways into town. He continued that they are shooting for April or May. Also, there is an internal, staff-driven process to try and define wayfinding strategies and the concept of wayfinding signage.

5. BPPAC Master Plan

Mr. Schoefmann stated that he included the item Chair Rubin sent him, a matrix that is a tool for prioritizing projects. He continued that he provided a list that, as Mr. Little noted, cited the October 14 meeting.

Chair Rubin explained how the matrix works as a prioritizing tool, and about how they can prioritize the laundry list of potential projects into three tiers, which they can define. She continued that the idea is to take each project and compare it across the two axes – the example axes are “the ease of which it would be to implement the project” and “the importance to improving overall walkability and bikeability in the community.” They can change the axes if they want. It could be “alignment with the Master Plan,” for example.

Discussion ensued. Mr. Little spoke of the importance of using cost and safety as criteria for determining priorities. For example, North Bridge and South Bridge were prioritized due to safety. Mr. Schoefmann stated that he thinks it is a great tool and the portion the committee can focus on is certainly the axis that is about a project’s importance to improving walkability, bikeability, and/or safety. Staff would be more likely to give input on the other axis, about a project’s cost, support from the City Council, and what staff can do. Chair Rubin agreed that that is a great way to do it – staff can determine the criteria for the axis “ability to implement.” It would be nice if staff and BPPAC could prioritize the projects together, but they could also do it separately. It would be good for the group to understand the criteria staff uses to place projects where they do.

Discussion ensued about the process. Mr. Schoefmann stated that the idea was to spend significant time on the Master Plan at each meeting since they are meeting earlier. The BPPAC’s next step, before he can start writing the draft, is to prioritize the list. Discussion continued, about whether to do that separately or together. Chair Rubin suggested that staff come up with the criteria for the “ability to implement” axis and the BPPAC come up with the criteria for “improving bikeability and walkability” and then they do it together and come to consensus about where on the matrix the projects would fit, at the next BPPAC meeting. Mr. Schoefmann replied that for the next meeting, he will confer with other staff about the criteria for the “ability to implement” axis – e.g. cost is one factor that will affect where the projects fall on the matrix based on staff’s perspective. Chair Rubin stated that she recommends they create a document for the Master Plan that ranks where the projects fall on the matrix, and they would prioritize them from there, considering both axes. She continued that for example, a project might be rated “moderately difficult” to implement but have high priority for safety or walkability and they might thus choose to have it jump over the low-hanging fruit projects. Discussion continued.

Chair Rubin recapped that staff will flesh out the “ability to implement” axis and see where this list of priorities would fall based on their criteria. The BPPAC will come up with the criteria for the “bikeability and walkability” axis. She suggests they come together to see where everything falls, combine what they have, and create one document. She clarified that they will not be making an actual decision; the list instead says, “These are what the citizen group says are most important.” Mr. Schoefmann agreed and stated that it helps guide how the City builds the system and what they focus on. Chair Rubin asked what others think. Others agreed.

Mr. Redfern stated that tonight the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure (MSFI) Committee is discussing the Victoria Street extension project. Mr. Blomquist

replied that Vickie Morton will be telling the MSFI Committee why she thinks the City should do this project, and his response will be to inform them that the project is in the CIP for FY 22, tied into the Marlborough Street Re-zoning efforts, and he recommends they accept her input as informational. Mr. Redfern stated that he and other members of the community believe a bridge should be put there. He asked if it is not imperative to discuss it tonight. Mr. Blomquist replied no, it would be more appropriate to talk about it in four years as the project approaches.

Chair Rubin suggested they talk about walkability and bikeability. She continued that they had four goals: 1) increase the availability of pedestrian infrastructure, 2) increase the accessibility to the network, 3) improve the sustainability and maintenance of the network, and 4) increase community usage of the network. She asked for their thoughts, and suggested that the sustainability/maintenance goal, which includes money, might be more in staff's bucket. She asked if those are the correct "big picture" areas that would be the filters/the more detailed definition of "importance." Mr. Hayes agreed.

Discussion continued and the BPPAC decided that maintenance is more appropriate for staff's bucket and will be crossed off the BPPAC's list of criteria, as it is associated with cost. Mr. Hayes stated as BPPAC members, "They are the dreamers."

Chair Rubin summarized that the BPPAC's 4 criteria: safety, availability, accessibility, and community usage. She continued that at the next meeting they will use those criteria as they consider the projects in the list and give them each a number. She asked Mr. Schoefmann to look at the November minutes and add anything they missed to the list.

6. Old Business

a) Trail Lighting

Mr. Schoefmann reported that per the BPPAC's request, he has drafted a letter, ready for Chair Rubin's review and signature, to NHDOT regarding lighting on the South Bridge. Then it will go to the City Council for their approval. Mr. Blomquist replied that NHDOT's position will be that if the City wants lights on South Bridge the City can do it. He continued that the City talked about it when NHDOT representatives were here in August. Trail lighting as a whole might be an appropriate topic for the BPPAC to discuss. He continued that the Public Works Department's position has been to not light the trails, although they have been experimenting with solar lights that the owners of the Mills project installed per the City's request. The City will evaluate those solar lights.

Mr. Blomquist continued that they have never had a conversation about the purpose of trail lighting and what criteria would be used to determine whether and which trails should have lights and how it should work (e.g. urban vs rural areas, intersections, spacing, etc.) The BPPAC can put this into the list of amenities to talk about. His perspective is that the general public does not need lighting on the South Bridge – it would mostly be used after dark by people going to KSC's athletic fields. Generally the City Council's philosophy is that if it is not for the general community, the specific users should participate more. If KSC has a concern about lighting they should talk with KSC. This, and lighting in general, is something for the BPPAC to think about moving forward.

Chair Rubin thanked Mr. Blomquist and agreed with the importance of the topic. She continued that she thinks the BPPAC should discuss it and put recommendations in the Master Plan regarding trail lighting. The BPPAC needs to understand best practices. Due to her personal experiences and research she has done, she can speak to benefits of trail lighting and concerns that it can mitigate. Mr. Blomquist added, or concerns it could create. Chair Rubin replied that there are best practices and maybe someone from SWRPC would come speak with them. Mr. Blomquist replied that the Public Works Department and Parks & Recreation Department will help with this conversation; it is important for the BPPAC to add this to their list and take it on.

Mr. Little made a motion for the BPPAC to withdraw their request to have a letter submitted to the New Hampshire Department of Transportation requesting lighting on South Bridge.

Mr. Little stated that he thinks these discussions have to go forward and the timing for the South Bridge project is pretty tough right now. Mr. Hayes asked what the letter says. Mr. Schoefmann replied that the BPPAC had wanted to request that NHDOT consider installing lighting or run conduits to make that possible, and Mr. Blomquist says the likelihood is low.

Mr. Hayes seconded the motion.

Mr. Redfern spoke in favor of having the letter go forward – NHDOT’s answer will be no if they do not even ask. He continued that if NHDOT says no they can address it at the City level and with KSC, regarding South Bridge. They should ask the State first.

Mr. Blomquist replied that it has already been bid, so it would be a Change Order and the conduit is not part of the design. If they wanted conduits it should have been a request two years ago during the design process. He shies away from wanting to put conduits there anyway, because where would they run power from? This is not simple. It is a bigger conversation. For example, if lights are on the bridge, do they also put them on either end? How far down will they light it? There is much to decide beforehand.

Mr. Schoefmann stated that the project the BPPAC has prioritized, the asphalt connection between South Bridge and KSC, is an opportune area to focus on trying to get lighting incorporated around the bridge. They might not get it *on* the bridge; it might be more reasonable to light either side. Approaches are most dangerous part of a bridge of that stature. Mr. Little replied that he thinks that is what Mr. Blomquist was suggesting. Mr. Blomquist replied that there are not a lot of folks going that far south into Swanzey after dark. Mr. Little replied that they might be able to light South Bridge without having anything installed on the bridge. Mr. Blomquist replied that if the concern is for people going back and forth to the KSC athletic fields it is in KSC’s interest and should be discussed with them.

Chair Rubin stated that aside from the motion, they have already said trail lighting is an important discussion. They should list it as a “project” on the list.

Mr. Redfern again spoke in favor of sending the letter to NHDOT, considering Mr. Schoefmann has already drafted it per the BPPAC's previous vote. Discussion continued and Chair Rubin called for a vote.

The motion to not send the letter passed by a vote of 4-1. Mr. Redfern was opposed.

7. New Business

Mr. Schoefmann stated that Eloise Clark was here for a portion of the meeting and left before making her intended announcement about the upcoming retreat/input session. Mr. Bohannon clarified that Ms. Clark and Friends of Open Space are hosting a public gathering at the Recreation Center. He continued that the Friends is a citizens' group of people who have concerns about conservation lands and about activities happening in the city. Ms. Clark is inviting City and non-City committees to gather on April 12 from 7:00 to 8:30 PM to talk. The Ashuelot River Park Advisory Board is in support and she is seeking the BPPAC's support as well. Chair Rubin added that Ms. Clark is asking the BPPAC to attend so they can share what they are doing and any interested citizens present that night can learn more about them and see if they are interested in supporting them. She read a portion of Ms. Clark's letter out loud.

Mr. Schoefmann replied that he will likely be there on April 12. Mr. Hayes, Mr. Brehme, and Chair Rubin replied that they can be there as well. Mr. Redfern replied that he will be in Florida. Mr. Schoefmann stated that he will send a reminder to the group as the date approaches.

Mr. Little stated that on Roundhouse T Phase II there are sections of the trail which are shared with sidewalk and a section that is not. He continued that the sidewalk section was plowed in the last snowstorm and the other section was not. He asked how they can get that plowed. Mr. Blomquist spoke of his department's practices and how they determine what gets plowed. Mr. Bohannon stated that Mr. Little is talking about a brand new section of trail and it might just be that this section has not been brought to the attention of the person doing the route. Mr. Little asked if he needs to petition the City Council for this. Mr. Bohannon replied no, in this situation it is just an oversight and he will bring it to the attention of the route driver.

8. Adjournment – Next Meeting February 10, 2016, at 8:00 AM

Chair Rubin adjourned the meeting at 9:42 AM. Brief discussion ensued about the meeting start time and the BPPAC decided to stick with 8:00 AM for now.

Respectfully submitted by
Britta Reida, Minute-taker
Additional Edits by
Will Schoefmann, Planning Staff