

City of Keene
New Hampshire

BICYCLE/PEDESTRIAN PATH ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, February 10, 2016

8:00 AM

2nd floor Conference Room

Members Present:

Linda Rubin, Chair
Christopher Brehme, Vice Chair
Charles (Chuck) Redfern
Thom Little
Don Hayes (until 9:02 AM)
Emily Coey

Staff Present:

William Schoefmann, Planning
Don Lussier, Engineer

Members Not Present:

Chair Rubin called the meeting to order at 8:11 AM. The committee called Chuck Redfern who joined the meeting via speaker phone. Mr. Schoefmann stated that Mr. Redfern is attending via cell phone from Florida because he is on holiday and unable to attend the meeting. He continued that Mr. Redfern is a voting member via phone.

1) Roll Call

Roll call was conducted.

2) Accept Minutes of January 13, 2016

Mr. Little made a motion to approve the minutes of January 13, 2016 with the following amendments, which was seconded by Mr. Hayes.

- Page 4, paragraph 3, change “Mr. Little indicated that it is in the agenda packet in the email” to “Mr. Little indicated that it is in the agenda packet in the email from Councilor Van Ostern and is also available online.”
- Page 9, paragraph 2, change “by a vote of 4-0” to “by a vote of 4-1.”

The motion passed by a unanimous roll call vote.

3) Project Updates

a) Roundhouse T Phase II

Mr. Schoefmann reported that at some point in the spring, staff will investigate the safety concerns that Mr. Little brought up. Mr. Little replied that someone should soon look at the diagonal cable that is at the end of the street, and make a determination, or else someone will get hurt. He continued that the other items can wait, but this one cannot.

b) Chehsire Rail Trail Phase II

Mr. Schoefmann reported that they are monitoring the drainage on the southern side that was completed, at the Hurricane Road approach.

c) Jonathan Daniels Trail

Mr. Schoefmann reported that Parks & Recreation & Facilities Director Andy Bohannon is getting an estimate for the drainage and resurfacing work that was discussed.

d) Jonathan Daniels Trail Phase II

Mr. Schoefmann reported that this \$20,000 project for a trail study is in the City's CIP for fiscal year 2017.

e) Cheshire Rail Trail – Park Ave. Loop

Mr. Schoefmann reported that the City reopened the Request for Quotes (RFQ) because they only had two firms submit and the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT) requires a minimum of three. He continued that the submittal period is open until February 29.

Mr. Redfern asked if the RFQ has been issued broadly, instead of just locally. Mr. Schoefmann replied that they put it in the major newspapers in Manchester, and they have already received two inquiries. He continued that last time they had not received any inquiries, so this bodes well. He will check in with the Purchasing Department this week. The two firms planned on resubmitting.

f) South Bridge

Mr. Schoefmann reported that NHDOT awarded the bid in September and construction is due for this year. Mr. Little suggested they use the term "within budget" for clarity (instead of saying that the budget status is "even.") He continued that the project updates list says "N/A" for the finish date for South Bridge and he suggests it be changed to "October 28, 2016," which is the absolute drop dead date, the last day they can process a change order. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he can change that.

Mr. Little added that the Governor's Council approved South Bridge on January 13. He checked with NHDOT on February 8 and there is no change in the project.

g) Bike Racks

Mr. Schoefmann reported that there has been no change. He continued that they did not move a bike rack under the Wells Street deck because the spot he had in mind is being taken up by materials to repair the surface/seams in the deck. That is a City project that has been going on since last summer/fall and will complete this spring.

h) Complete Streets

Mr. Schoefmann reported that he sent out the implementation guide for the committee to look at. He can give higher resolution copies if necessary.

i) Master Plan

Mr. Schoefmann stated that they will work on priorities ranking today. He continued that they are looking to have a plan completed by the end of the summer.

j) Mayor's Challenge

Mr. Schoefmann reported that the Mayor has the document summarizing the BPPAC's input sessions and he will get them a copy. He continued that he is working with the Mayor on a PSA. The BPPAC will see whatever comes out of the Mayor's office.

k) Signage

Mr. Schoefmann reported the trail etiquette signage is going up. He continued that they have installed some trailhead maps and are working on getting the three-foot passing law signage up that the Monadnock Cycling Club gave them. They have ongoing, internal meetings looking at wayfinding strategies and how to get a wayfinding plan off the ground. It will be after the BPPAC's intended completion of the Master Plan so the BPPAC will have input in that area with the release of the Master Plan.

Chair Rubin stated that she knows Mr. Blomquist is away but she would like him to come to the next meeting to present the Complete Streets design guidance documents. Mr. Schoefmann replied that Tara Germond could do that, too. He continued that he will arrange that for the next meeting.

4) BPPAC Master Plan

- a) Priorities Tool Matrix**
- b) Review Priorities Categorization**
- c) Discussion**

Mr. Schoefmann asked everyone to take a few minutes to review the materials he emailed last night – staff's ranking of projects (the X axis of "organizational support"), the printout of the matrix tool, and the priorities list, which he updated through information gleaned from his notes and the meeting minutes from October, November, and January. The Y axis, looking at the projects' importance level, needs BPPAC input.

Chair Rubin asked what criteria staff used for ranking priorities "low," "medium," and "high." Mr. Hayes asked if "staff" means Mr. Schoefmann plus others. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he did the ranking himself based on his knowledge of the projects. He continued that he ranked projects that are currently underway as "high." Also, he considered whether a project is in the CIP or relates to a policy, like Complete Streets.

Mr. Schoefmann continued that he took notes on the BPPAC's criteria, which he thinks they could hone down a little more and then rank the priorities. For example, the BPPAC had mentioned West Street as an important priority. There is nothing in any City funding source to look at re-doing that street. That is where Engineering comes into play, to see when they are re-doing West Street. To his knowledge, it is not for some time. And they do not have any policies that are shoving them in that direction. So the general concept of looking at West Street is a low priority from staff's standpoint. There are existing sidewalks on the street. "Streetway safety" is a high priority, for West Street and across the board. "Facility improvements" for West Street is ranked "low," which represents the

financial impetus of the organization at the moment. The “West Street bypass” is a concept the BPPAC had, going around the backside of Hannafords from the Ashuelot River bridge - it is the first time the City has considered it so it does not have as much clout as, say, working on the Rail Trail from Eastern Avenue to Rt. 101, and thus, the “West Street bypass” is ranked “low.” That is an example of his rationale.

Chair Rubin replied, so, it is not really cost related. Mr. Schoefmann replied that finances played a little bit of a role. He continued that if you look at “Amenities,” next on the list, you can see that they are already doing outreach for kiosk/trailhead facilities (ranked “high”), and they have trailhead facilities (ranked “high”) already budgeted in a number of projects. Trailside facilities are already going out, and they are doing presentations to organizations to try and get cost sharing to supply these items. So, yes, finances weighed in, but the rankings were not just based around money.

Chair Rubin stated that she was not at the meeting at which the BPPAC prioritized the list in the document called “BPPAC Master Plan Priorities List.” Mr. Schoefmann replied that they are not necessarily prioritized – this is just the way he broke it down and categorized everything. The first two pages are notes. The second two pages were the priorities that came out of the October, November, and January meetings. “Connections and Access” was a focus area. Mr. Hayes stated that how he put this together is helpful.

Mr. Brehme noted that Mr. Schoefmann ranked West Street as a whole as “low” but “streetway safety” on West Street is ranked “high.” He asked if that buries “streetway safety” as a priority. Mr. Schoefmann replied that streetway safety is a high priority because it ties in with the Complete Streets initiative. He continued that the other items for West Street, like the trail bypass, are ranked “low” – he does not know if that is three years away, ten years away, etc., or if the City has any funds dedicated to it specifically from the Highway Improvement side.

City Engineer Don Lussier stated that within the 5-year CIP there is no specific plan for rehabilitating or reconstructing West Street. He continued that it is one of the busiest streets in the city so there will be small, ad hoc maintenance projects almost every year. Mr. Brehme asked if this process can influence that at all. Mr. Schoefmann replied that the X axis/“ability to implement” rankings are a gauge of how hot these projects are in the Planning Department’s hopper. He continued that the part where the BPPAC gets to have influence is in the Y axis, ranking the priorities’ importance levels. Mr. Lussier stated that in 6 months he will start preparing the CIP for the next 5-year window. He continued that information about which projects are high priorities to the community will weigh into his calculations. This is where the BPPAC has an impact.

Mr. Schoefmann stated that going back to West Street bypass idea for a minute, as someone mentioned, the Cheshire Rail Trail is an existing corridor to take pedestrians from downtown to west Keene, the same travel pattern. That is another consideration for how he ranks priorities – if a project’s intent was to get pedestrians and bicyclists to an area they cannot already access, it would be higher priority.

Mr. Little asked if the two columns are mislabeled. Mr. Schoefmann replied that the axes (X – Organizational Support, and Y – Importance Level) are correct but he mislabeled the values. He was supposed to use “difficult” (to implement), “moderately difficult,” and “easy.” He will change it. “Low” means “difficult,” “medium” means “moderately difficult” and “high” means “easy.”

Mr. Brehme stated that the X axis says “Ability to implement (based on citizen/Council/staff support).” He asked if Mr. Schoefmann, as staff, thus did one piece of the X axis. Mr. Schoefmann replied he is giving the BPPAC sole reign over the Y axis and using the City’s institutional knowledge and documentation to fill out the X axis.

Chair Rubin stated that if projects are not in the 5-year CIP, they are not considered priorities. She continued that this group could influence the next 5 years but not necessarily the coming 5 years. Mr. Lussier replied generally that is correct, but if something is a critical concern, the CIP is just a plan; it is not set in stone.

Chair Rubin asked if the X axis rankings should be based on what is in the 5 year plan now. Mr. Lussier replied that existence in the CIP is just one factor. Mr. Schoefmann replied yes, and there is the question of how to quantify the City’s investment in Complete Streets. They do not have a solid method for quantifying how projects relate back to it. Chair Rubin replied that this group can do that. It seems like there is already a quasi-priority list through the 5-year plan, with the potential to influence it.

Mr. Lussier replied that some of these projects would not include capital improvements, such as public art. He continued that the City will not have a capital program to do that. It will happen organically through the community. This is not just about focusing on the CIP. Mr. Schoefmann agreed and added that the Active & Passive Master Plan from the Parks & Recreation Department has art initiatives. There could be another category of “Nope, have not even heard of it yet,” but public art would not fall under that. It is just on the lower scale of how much “gumption” there is behind it on the City’s side.

Mr. Lussier stated that the CIP is about larger more complicated, more expensive, Public Works programs, like bridges, road rehabilitations, sewer replacements, and so on and so forth. He continued that it would not capture all of the initiatives on the BPPAC’s list. Mr. Schoefmann stated that it is dangerous to tie it back to the budget and the CIP process. He continued that by doing so they would miss out on projects that are not necessarily tied to the money. Complete Streets is a great example of something that has not cost the City money but is supported by the City Council and staff, because Ms. Germond and Mr. Blomquist created the Design Guidance and citizens started the whole thing by asking the City to create the Complete Streets policy.

Chair Rubin replied that Mr. Schoefmann did consider both the CIP and public and Council support when he was ranking items. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he considered policy support and financial support when ranking priorities.

Mr. Little stated that he thinks the BPPAC should have a master list of priorities but it would be constantly undergoing change. He continued that there are things they have no control over. For example, the Ashuelot River Trail asphalt gap is now a high priority, but six months ago it would not have even been listed because at that point the South Bridge was still several years out. That is an example of a project with importance that has gone up because of an external factor. They could spend forever talking about the external factors; they just have to recognize that they are there. They need a mechanism to update this list yearly. It will feed the CIP, the Ten Year Plan, and the annual budget. The question is what the BPPAC recommends as important. The funding sources are weird. For example, Roundhouse T Phase II moved up because a federal program disappeared and they had funds and the City has a great reputation of finishing projects they start so NHDOT gave them the money.

Mr. Schoefmann replied that there is a planned mechanism, for when they finish this, that allows the BPPAC and staff to go through a shorter process on an annual basis to review and re-rank priorities in the Master Plan. Mr. Hayes added, and possibly take some off.

Chair Rubin asked the BPPAC members what their criteria should be for ranking the importance level (Y axis) of the priorities. She continued that one is “importance to improving walkability and bikeability.” Mr. Little replied that “safety” is another. Chair Rubin added that “alignment with Complete Streets document design guidelines” is another. She continued that the design guidelines do not say certain streets are more important than others, but this committee could say that slow streets are more important to prioritize for projects than, say, gateway streets. Slow streets would have the most bike and pedestrian traffic and thus the projects on those streets will have higher priority.

Mr. Schoefmann replied that that process may bog the BPPAC down – that is something staff is looking at. He continued that it is important for the BPPAC to consider Complete Streets and what it has to offer, regarding influencing how these bike and pedestrian facilities are implemented, but it could be onerous to cross-reference all of the projects with Complete Streets. Chair Rubin replied that walkability will of course be more of an issue in an area where there are more people, and safety will be more of an issue in an area where there are more people. She continued that she is not sure that it is not a good idea to at least think about the kinds of things that went into categorizing the streets, such as population, density of vehicles, speeds, etc., which are factors that affect safety.

Discussion continued and Mr. Schoefmann stated that what Chair Rubin is getting at is: what are the criteria that the committee wants to use? They could just have it happen organically while discussing priorities. They could go through the Complete Streets guidelines if they want.

Mr. Little stated that he believes Washington St. is dangerous to bicyclists and described a layout that could make it (or similar streets) safer. Chair Rubin replied that he is speaking about the Complete Streets guidelines themselves, which is a separate topic. The BPPAC can and should look at those guidelines and make recommendations if they feel something was missed, but that is not what they are doing right now.

At 9:02 AM Mr. Hayes left.

Discussion continued about Washington St. and design guidelines for bike lanes. Mr. Lussier stated that City staff did not invent the design guidelines; they use ones developed by Department of Transportation officials across the nation. Mr. Schoefmann added that some newer guidelines talk about adding like a foot that separates the bike lane from the parking and he sees what Mr. Little is saying. He is talking more about a bike boulevard that runs parallel to the street like you would find a big city but Keene does not have the means to do this. Mr. Lussier replied that in New England they are limited to working within the right-of-way. He continued that the overarching concept of Complete Streets is to accommodate all users. The facilities in the plan are trying to balance the needs of vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians, and it will never be perfect.

Chair Rubin returned the conversation to determining criteria, such as walkability, bikeability, and safety. Mr. Schoefmann stated yes, they should nail the criteria down and determine a course of action for ranking items at the next meeting.

Mr. Little asked if cost is part of what Mr. Schoefmann considered when he ranked projects on the “ability to implement” axis. Mr. Schoefmann replied yes, if it was tied into the CIP or operating budget he factored that in. In between now and the next meeting he will go through the list with Mr. Lussier to make sure it is conclusive.

Mr. Brehme noted that last month’s minutes have the criteria that the BPPAC discussed – walkability and bikeability, safety, availability, accessibility, and community usage.

Mr. Redfern stated that “funding availability” should be a criterion instead of “cost.” Mr. Schoefmann replied that the BPPAC should not be considering funding so much – he does not want that to restrain how the BPPAC prioritizes the projects.

Mr. Little stated that “timing” is another criterion. For example, one project was discussed at last month’s meeting and staff recommended tabling the discussion for 4 or 5 years until the project was about to happen. Some projects are further out in the future which would affect what the relative importance is. Chair Rubin replied that that is covered more on the other axis/staff’s assessments. Mr. Schoefmann stated that there will be an annual meeting for staff and the BPPAC to review the priorities list included in the Master Plan for the coming year. He continued that that process will include looking at funding sources and timing.

Chair Rubin asked if anyone disagrees that “safety” is a criterion. No one disagreed. Discussion ensued about the other criteria. Mr. Schoefmann stated that “availability” could be about access points, trail amenities, or availability of information. It is a great, overarching criterion to have. Mr. Brehme stated that there may be an outreach component to increasing the accessibility to the network. Chair Rubin replied that connectivity is part of it. Mr. Schoefmann added, and points of access. People want to know (via their smart phones) how to do a trail, before they even get there.

Chair Rubin stated that in addition to points of access, connectivity to the larger network, outreach so people know how to access the trails, and safety, there is “community usage.” Mr. Schoefmann replied that that could summarize “availability and accessibility” or it could be its own thing. Chair Rubin replied that “availability” was more about the need for more infrastructure. Mr. Schoefmann replied that “availability” is the end product, while “accessibility” is the means to getting people to the end product. That could be printed media or information, or a trail or sidewalk.

Mr. Brehme stated that “accessibility” could include compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Mr. Schoefmann asked if that is part of “accessibility” or its own thing. Chair Rubin and Mr. Brehme replied part of “accessibility.”

Mr. Schoefmann stated that he thinks “community usage” is the idea of having a space or facility for the community to come to or gather. It is not necessarily captured in “availability” or “accessibility,” although those two match up to improve community usage. Chair Rubin replied that “community usage” is more of an umbrella topic and maybe they do not need it, if they think about the three others. They are all addressing the needs of the community to increase safe, active transportation. If you have better infrastructure, good safety guidelines that tie back to the design guidelines, and if you are aware of having everything connected with multiple access points, that is what will contribute to the availability to the public. So those might cover it.

Mr. Brehme stated that another thing to consider is being more explicit about connectivity to places of interest, like workplaces and shopping plazas. Besides wooded trails it helps to have trails that follow people’s established routes. Chair Rubin asked if he wants “connectivity” to be a fourth criterion instead of being wrapped up with “availability.” Mr. Brehme replied yes, he sees it as separate.

Mr. Little stated that the City requires ADA-compliance when a funding source requires it, instead of having an overarching position such as wanting to make everything ADA-compliant. Mr. Schoefmann gave an example of a voluntary measure the City took to increase ADA compliance in some places. Mr. Redfern stated that he hesitates to put ADA requirements in the Master Plan. He continued that they can try and make it as accessible as possible but there are no ADA requirements for recreational trails. For some trails ADA compliance would be nearly impossible. Ed Guyot stated that years ago the BPPAC had a very in depth discussion about ADA compliance and decided to not mandate ADA compliance in their plans. Discussion continued on this topic. Mr. Schoefmann stated when the BPPAC is ranking projects they can think about whether projects help the City be more ADA-compliant, but they do not need to worry about complying with the requirements of funding sources – staff is on top of that. Chair Rubin stated that when they are looking at whether a project is increasing accessibility, one thing to think about is that they want all users to be able to access the system, including people in wheelchairs and using mobility devices.

Chair Rubin summarized that they will rank the projects using the criteria of how important a project is to increasing safety, increasing accessibility, increasing availability, and increasing connectivity. They will rank the projects high, medium, or low, based on these criteria. Mr. Schoefmann replied that for the next meeting, he will summarize the BPPAC's criteria as discussed today and include it in an updated version of the matrix, so they can begin the ranking process at the next meeting. He will change the values from "low, medium, and high" to "easy, moderately difficult, and difficult."

5) Old Business

a) Trail Lighting

Mr. Schoefmann asked if the BPPAC wants to address the topic of trail lighting in some manner. Chair Rubin replied that it was going to get added to the "project updates" list so they could discuss it. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he will do that.

6) New Business

a) Annual Council Report

Mr. Schoefmann stated that on Wednesday, February 22, the BPPAC chair is due to give a report to the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee, regarding the BPPAC's activities over the past year. Chair Rubin replied that she will not be here and asked if it can be a different date. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he will look into that, but if another date is not possible, another person – most likely the BPPAC vice chair - would be giving the report. Mr. Brehme replied that he is available. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he will check about the date and keep the two of them in the loop.

b) Other

Mr. Little spoke about the importance of people arriving on time so the meeting can start at the scheduled time. Discussion ensued about whether to keep the 8:00 start time and the group decided yes, 8:00 works best. Chair Rubin reiterated Mr. Little's request for people to arrive promptly.

7) Adjournment

At 9:34 AM, Chair Rubin adjourned the meeting. The next meeting is March 9, 2016.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker