

City of Keene
New Hampshire

BICYCLE PEDESTRIAN PATH COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, January 14, 2015 8:30 am 2nd Floor Conference Rm, City Hall

Members Present:

Greg Pregent, Chair
Linda Rubin, Vice Chair
Thom Little
Christopher Brehme
Andrew McCarron
Charles (Chuck) Redfern

Staff Present:

Kürt Blomquist, Public Works (arrived at
8:43 AM)
Will Shoefmann, Planning
Andy Bohannon, Parks and Recreation

Others Present:

Members Not Present:

James Duffy, Councilor

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Mr. Pregent called the meeting to order at 8:33 AM. Roll call was conducted.

2. Election of Officers

Mr. Redfern nominated Mr. Pregent for Chair. Ms. Rubin seconded the motion.

Mr. Little stated that Mr. Pregent said the previous meeting was his last one. Mr. Pregent replied that the Mayor reappointed him for another term, and he accepted and took his oath for another two-year term.

The motion passed by unanimous vote.

Mr. Redfern nominated Ms. Rubin for Vice Chair. Chair Pregent seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

Mr. Schoefmann distributed copies of the 2015 meeting schedule. He noted that the Wednesday the BPPAC would normally meet in November is a holiday so they need to reschedule.

Mr. Little made a motion for the BPPAC to accept the revised schedule. Ms. Rubin seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

3. Minutes - Accept December 10, 2014

Mr. Little made a motion to approve the minutes of December 10, 2014. Mr. Redfern seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

4. **Education and Outreach**

Mr. Schoefmann asked if Mr. Bohannon has an updated on the maps. Mr. Bohannon replied no. He continued that he reached out to the CTM contact in December, and yesterday, to see if the project will go through. The video is on the E-Tractions website.

Mr. Bohannon reported that a personal goal of his this year is to increase views to the Keene Paths Facebook page and engage the public more, to increase the public's awareness of what is going on and make connections to all that is going on in the city, such as Healthy Monadnock, Pathways for Keene, and so on and so forth. Chair Pregent replied that that is a great idea and philosophy. He continued that he encourages people to share links.

Mr. Redfern reported that on May 4 and 5, Keene will be hosting the state-wide tourism council, which is supported by the Department of Resources and Economic Development (DRED). He continued that it will be an all-day event at the Colony Mill, attended by the Governor and other tourism industry officials who are involved in scheduling events and bringing in visitors. He is talking with Mr. Bohannon and Mr. Schoefmann about having a BPPAC or Pathways for Keene presence at the event. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he will send out updates as Mr. Redfern gets them. Chair Pregent stated that the radio station can help promote this, and could maybe do a remote broadcast if it is before 10:00 AM.

Mr. Blomquist arrived at 8:43 AM.

Ms. Rubin stated that she apologizes for not getting back to Mr. Schoefmann to schedule a meeting with him and Councilor Duffy. She continued that she would like to schedule that, and they can incorporate topics brought up today, such as Facebook and the tourism event. Mr. Schoefmann stated that he, Ms. Rubin, and Councilor Duffy will meet to talk about events the BPPAC can be involved in this year, especially Bike/Walk to Work Week. Chair Pregent replied that he wants to have a Bike Summit, too, like they had a few years ago with Steve Ellis.

5. **Project Updates**

a) **Roundhouse T Phase II**

Mr. Blomquist reported that on Friday they are submitting the final design to the NH Department of Transportation (NHDOT). Chair Pregent asked what the time table is. Mr. Blomquist replied that the City must submit change orders by June in order to receive 80% reimbursement with the TE money; after June, the community pays 100%. He continued that they will go out to bid in March, award the project in April, and begin in May. They are structuring the contract so the work that has the highest chance of change orders will be done first. For example, culvert work will be done before sidewalk work. By the late summer the project should be done.

b) **Cheshire Rail Trail Phase II**

Mr. Blomquist reported that the project is shut down for the winter and will begin again in April.

c) **Jonathan Daniels Trail**

Mr. Schoefmann reported that the study is not in the CIP for Planning this year. He continued that when he and Mr. Lamb were going over the CIP projects, they saw that since it was taken out last year due to the reallocation of funds it was not put in the CIP this year. They can submit

it for 2017 if the committee wants or they could find another way to fund it, such as looking for grants. He asked what the BPPAC wants to do – think about it and revisit it? The total project was about \$20,000 for the study, which is not a huge CIP project.

Mr. Redfern asked if they should refer this to the Conservation Commission. He continued that he would like to get their input, because he has encountered resistance from them in the past, regarding putting trails through certain areas. Before they seek money for the Jonathan Daniels study he would like to get a feel for whether they will have the Conservation Commission's support or not. Chair Pregent asked if the completed boardwalk behind the Keene Middle School (KMS) would change the conversation, since it is an existing destination. Mr. Blomquist replied that the City's trail will not connect to it. He continued that KMS does not want people to access it while school is in session.

Mr. Blomquist suggested that instead of referring a particular project to the Conservation Commission, the BPPAC think of it more holistically and begin a conversation with the Conservation Commission about the trail system in general. He continued that they could talk about the purposes of the trail system and commonalities the two groups might have, such as a desire to get people out in nature, then from there, talk about the sensitive areas. Dialogue is a good idea. He and Mr. Schoefmann can coordinate with the staff liaison for the Conservation Commission regarding how to approach this.

Chair Pregent stated that Mr. Redfern has a good point that the Conservation Commission should be contacted. Mr. Blomquist replied that when a wetlands permit is needed, that is where they really come into play. Mr. Schoefmann stated that he has walked the area and there is already an existing loop trail. He continued that he assumes the Conservation Commission is most concerned with the state of the swamp, and whether there would be heavy machinery in there for bridges or boardwalks.

Mr. Little asked if anything come of the available bridge that was discussed at least meeting. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he (Mr. Little) passed the contact on to him, but he has not heard back from the contact. He continued that he can reach out again. Mr. Little stated that there were four possibilities for the trail but one is really problematic due to wetlands. He continued that it is illogical to keep that one on the table; really they should be talking about three possibilities. That way they would not need the conversation with the Conservation Commission. The bridge is a possibility, although he does not know much about it.

Mr. Blomquist replied that talking with the Conservation Commission is still valid, from a big picture point of view, since any project that impacts wetlands needs to go through that commission first. He continued that helping the commission understand the goals and direction of the trail system helps in the long run. The commission could say no to putting a bridge over the water. One committee talking with another about where they are going is a good idea. The two groups have commonalities – part of the Conservation Commission's goal is to encourage people to be out in nature. Mr. Little replied that he did not know that the Conservation Commission could weigh in on crossing the river. He continued that in that case, the BPPAC talking with the commission is totally logical.

Mr. Schoefmann stated that if they went up the highway, and got State cooperation with that, there are wetlands there. He continued that potentially there would be run off from the trails going into the wetlands, so they would have to go to the Conservation Commission anyway. It is good to reach out to them. Maybe he could give a presentation at one of their meetings, with a memo from the BPPAC. Chair Pregent agreed that it is good to connect with them. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he will reach out to Ms. Purinton.

Chair Pregent stated that the BPPAC can think about whether to put this project back in the CIP. Mr. Blomquist replied that they have until August to think about it. Mr. Schoefmann added that they will be putting together department budgets.

Mr. Little asked what the earliest time is that the study could happen, if this goes back into the CIP. Mr. Schoefmann replied 2017. Mr. Blomquist replied that they could try submitting it to the operating budget, as a supplemental item, but that is always tight, due to the City Council's fiscal policies. Mr. Schoefmann added that staff will look at the options and come back to the BPPAC with more information next month. Ms. Rubin replied yes, the BPPAC will want to know what the steps are for getting it into the operating budget, and what their chances are with that – e.g. should they give it a shot to show that this project is important, or submit it for the CIP if that does not work?

d) Cheshire Rail Trail Park Ave Loop

Mr. Schoefmann stated that they are waiting to hear back from the State. He continued that that the State was supposed to have projects ranked by the end of the year. Mr. Bohannon added that they should hear by the end of the month. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he will email NHDOT.

Mr. Redfern stated that he heard from someone that the rankings are complete and NHDOT will be making a formal announcement any day now. Chair Pregent asked what happens if they do get the money. Mr. Blomquist replied that the Ten Year Transportation Plan process starts. This project is in the CIP under Parks & Recreation. The City Council would need to approve it. Then they would go through the implementation process. Mr. Bohannon replied that right now it is slotted for 2017. He continued that they will make a presentation to the City Council two Thursdays from now, and the public hearing is the first Thursday in March. Mr. Blomquist added that the question is where this ends up in the overall ranking in the Ten Year Plan, whether it is 2017 or out.

Mr. Little asked if there is any impact from the new way that NHDOT is making payments. He continued that now the community has to pay 100% up front and then be reimbursed by NHDOT after the fact. Mr. Blomquist replied that many of the City's projects are done that way, and at this point it is not an issue for the City. He continued that he does not know all of the details, but he knows that the City is able to float the cash during construction while simultaneously requesting reimbursement, which comes in 60 to 90 days. Mr. Little replied that he has not heard before that reimbursement is incremental, as opposed to only at the end of a project. Mr. Blomquist replied that reimbursement has always been a result of submitting monthly bills. He continued that reimbursement might also be in increments related to different components of the project, such as getting paid back for the whole design phase, then the construction phase, then the final phase. He continued that Finance Director Steve Thornton can give more information.

e) **South Bridge**

Mr. Redfern stated that he heard this is moved out to 2025. Mr. Blomquist replied that they do not know yet. He continued that the current, approved plan, signed by the Governor, has it in 2022. NHDOT has started internal discussions for their next Ten Year Plan but no one else will know the results of that until they publish their draft in a few months. If the project moves out they will have to go to the meetings and advocate for the project. The BPPAC can submit a recommendation to the City Council asking them to tell NHDOT not to move it out. They typically have a public hearing here. They will have someone from the BPPAC go and encourage others to go and speak as well, such as Sen. Molly Kelly. The legislature can make adjustments. They will marshal the forces as necessary when they see what the new program suggests.

f) **Bike Racks**

Mr. Bohannon stated that they have plenty of bike racks and everyone is always asking at the Planning Board, "Where's your bike rack?" and encouraging businesses to have bike racks. He continued that they will put the bike racks out once the weather warms up.

Mr. Schoefmann asked Ms. Rubin how many bike racks there are for the community. Ms. Rubin replied that Mr. Mack (of the Southwest Regional Planning Commission [SWRPC]) has the numbers. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he will contact him. Chair Pregent asked if they are concerned about not having enough homes for the bike racks. Mr. Bohannon replied that there will be some that need homes, but if they create more of a campaign to increase people's awareness of them, they will find homes. Chair Pregent replied that if they remind him in the spring, he will create a short PSA for the radio, aimed at local businesses, reminding them that the City has bike racks. Mr. Schoefmann added that Mr. Mack has pamphlets. He continued that he drafted a PSA and sent it to Chair Pregent. They can spread the word on social media, too. Discussion continued about how to get the word out.

Mr. Redfern asked if the Planning Board says bike racks are a requirement, and if they let petitioners know. Mr. Schoefmann replied that it is not a requirement, just encouraged. Mr. Redfern asked if the Planning Board can let people know the bike racks are available. Mr. Blomquist replied that the Planning Board cannot, but staff can.

Ms. Rubin stated that the SWRPC will have a lot more capacity through this CDC grant to address active transportation strategies, including the Rack It Up program. They will have funds for more racks. They will have transportation personnel focusing on Complete Streets, the Rack It Up program, and so on and so forth; they will be supporting communities outside of Keene to move towards Complete Streets policy and design; and there will be communications pieces to some of what they are doing, too, from them and Healthy Monadnock staff. They have to hire a full time communications and evaluation manager. There will be increased resources in the community to get the word out about events, bike racks, etc. It would be good to get this committee to weigh in on what the priorities might be, once that gets up and running.

g) **Planning Projects**

Mr. Schoefmann reported that there is nothing relevant right now to BPPAC. He continued that regarding the student housing being developed on Ralston Street, he has not heard anything from

Brickstone, regarding whether or not the developer applied to the State for permission for a trail connection. A Brickstone representative is coming in for a meeting this week so he will talk about it then.

Ms. Rubin stated that last month's minutes say that a design engineer for Brady Sullivan had asked City staff if they could see the old plans for the trail that would go through the Colony Mill. She asked if there is any update on that. Mr. Schoefmann replied that Michele Chalice was working on that with them, and she gave the design engineer the old plans/TE application that he was looking for. He continued that when Brady Sullivan returns to the Planning Board, they will see if Brady Sullivan does anything with the information they were given. Mr. Bohannon replied that in December, Brady Sullivan went to the Planning Board for retroactive site plan approval for their connector project between the two parking lots, and he thinks the Planning Board already decided and approved it. He continued that he recommends looking at the meeting minutes. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he thought the Planning Board was continuing it and asking Brady Sullivan to bring something else forward, but he will check. Chair Pregent asked if the Planning Board required Brady Sullivan to add a painted lane or anything similar. Mr. Bohannon replied no.

6. Maintenance

Mr. Bohannon reported that Bike Path Country did a demonstration recently for the City, regarding their business – putting sponsored signs along the bike paths. He continued that a percentage of the revenue would come back to the City for trail maintenance. The presentation was not the best and they are still talking about it. They are investigating it to see if there are other companies out there that do this. The City needs to check the company's references.

Ms. Rubin stated that there was very little information on the website. She asked if a business sponsors the sign for a long period of time and if a piece of the money comes back to the City. Mr. Schoefmann replied yes, the sponsorship is either annual or more long-term. Mr. Blomquist stated that the signs could be sponsored by, say, Ted's Shoe and Sport or Pepsi. He continued that advertisements such as these, or on buses, etc., are controversial in communities. Chair Pregent replied that people will not want to see large corporations such as Walmart advertising on the trails. Mr. Bohannon replied that they could target local businesses first. He continued that based on the presentation he is going to take a hard look at this. Chair Pregent asked if the pricing is friendlier to large corporations. Mr. Bohannon replied that the company has determined that if they can get a large corporation on board for 50 miles of trail, it is better leverage than, say, a mom and pop store in one town sponsoring one mile. This all needs more investigation. Mr. Redfern added that they said the signs are made of compressed cardboard, and he questions the durability. Chair Pregent asked staff to keep the BPPAC posted.

Chair Pregent asked how the plowing of the trails is going. Mr. Bohannon replied that they are plowing the main trail from Eastern Ave to West St. Mr. Redfern stated that he will request that next year they plow a portion of the Ashuelot Trail that is heavily used. Mr. Blomquist replied that the policy is that where there are sidewalks, which there are on Ralston St., the trail is unplowed. He continued that trails that are plowed are based on requests from the community, so Mr. Redfern would have to petition the City Council.

Mr. Brehme asked if the college has plowed this trail section. Mr. Schoefmann replied the section from Winchester St. to the bridge. Mr. Blomquist replied that encouraging the college to plow would be part of the discussion; the college will participate if they think it is in their best interest. Chair Pregent asked if Mr. Brehme knows people at the college. Mr. Brehme replied Bud Winsor. Mr. Blomquist gave more information on how trail sections that get plowed have been at the request of the community. Mr. Schoefmann stated that they will have to see if this official trail connection goes through (with the upcoming student housing) and see what Brickstone says.

Mr. Little stated that Mr. Bohannon was talking about revenue from the sponsored signs being used to offset the cost of trail maintenance. He asked what the annual maintenance cost for the trails is. Mr. Bohannon and Mr. Blomquist replied that they do not know/there are no specific accounts right now. Mr. Little replied that knowing this figure would help the decision making process.

7. **Old Business**

Mr. Schoefmann suggested they schedule a meeting to talk about the Master Plan. Brief discussion ensued. Chair Pregent asked that they schedule it via scheduling software on the Internet.

8. **New Business**

Mr. Redfern reported that soon it will be time to apply to renew the City of Keene's designation as a Bike Friendly Community. He continued that he and Mr. Schoefmann are working on the application to extend that.

9. **Adjournment – Next meeting date February 11, 2015**

The meeting adjourned at 9:33 AM.

Respectfully submitted by
Britta Reida, Minute-taker