

City of Keene  
New Hampshire

BICYCLE PEDESTRIAN PATH ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, February 13, 2019

8:15 AM

City Hall, Second Floor  
Conference Room

**Members Present:**

Dillon Benik, Chair  
Drew Bryenton, Vice Chair  
Brad Dufresne  
Christopher Brehme  
Charles Redfern  
Todd Horner  
David Souther, Alternate  
Thom Little, Alternate

**Staff Present:**

Will Schoefmann, Staff liaison

**Members Not Present:**

Linda Rubin

**1. Roll Call**

Chair Benik called meeting to order at 8:15 am and roll call was conducted.

**2. January 9, 2019 Minutes**

Mr. Little moved to accept minutes as submitted, Mr. Bryenton seconded and motion passed unanimously.

**3. Project Updates** (Note: BPPAC Master Plan Documents available on google drive)

Mr. Schoefmann stated that the first table in the agenda contains the February project updates.

***Bike racks***- Mr. Schoefmann stated that there is a memo in the packet they will be reviewing today regarding downtown bike racks and the DPW bike plan. He said the letter/memo is completed in draft form.

***Lighting***- Mr. Schoefmann stated that the portion of the trail behind Antioch University and Island Street has been lit with the help of Pathways for Keene (PFK) and installed by Lumens for Less. Mr. Schoefmann said there is a problem with the timing of the lights as they are motion-activated and he said he will reach out to Councilor Jan Manwaring, the representative from PFK working on the light project to find out more. He said PFK is looking to donate and install more lights on the trail this year. Mr. Schoefmann asked Mr. Redfern if he knows where PFK will they will be placing more lights this year and Mr. Redfern said Councilor Manwaring and Mr. Bohannon are in charge of that process and to reach out to them.

***NH-DOT TAP Grant 2019***- Mr. Schoefmann stated that Keene was selected as a grant recipient for Complete Streets improvements to Marlborough Street, which includes Complete Streets improvements, replacement of infrastructure, resurfacing and economic development goals around the Cheshire Rail Trail and all other bike-walk components on that side of town. He said

the project was ranked number four coming out of the regional TAC (Transportation Advisory Committee), and Keene is one of three towns receiving a TAP (Transportation Alternatives Program) grant in the region, with Jaffrey being the second selected for 650K and Swanzey as the third. He said Keene's grant is just shy of 480K, and they will also get a big slice of the TAP funding that is coming up this year and another round of the Complete Streets grant from the NH Charitable Foundation will be distributed by MAST. Mr. Brehme asked if they know the details of the Swanzey portion of the grant. Mr. Horner said that it is focused on Swanzey Factory Road through Marlborough town line and then the Ashuelot rail trail from W. Swanzey down to the town line.

***Bicycle Mayor-*** Mr. Schoefmann said the Bicycle Mayor, Ms. Mannion, is hired for the tail end of the Safe Routes to School funding that went along with the Maple Acres improvements and shared use improvements around Pako Avenue. He said Ms. Brunner from the Community Development department is managing that project and Mr. Schoefmann has also provided input. Mr. Schoefmann said several components of that project will be a Safe Routes to School toolkit which includes a strategy brochure for setting up Safe Routes to School programs. He said Symonds was the strongest school in Keene for that program but has fallen behind after their Program Coordinator left, so the City is currently trying to invigorate the project at the Keene Middle School. He said it is the only school around where the infrastructure was installed to hold the sort of event that the grant monies are allocated for. Mr. Schoefmann said Ms. Mannion aims to integrate the programming into the school's Health and PE curriculum during Bike to Work Week.

***Cheshire Rail Trail-Park Avenue Loop-*** Mr. Schoefmann stated that the Engineering division is managing the Cheshire Rail Trail-Park Avenue Loop project now and the preliminary Engineering plans were approved by NHDOT and Federal Highway. He said negotiations are under way with the buyers, which includes C&S and a Condo association off Summer Ridge Drive and he believes there is a meeting tonight that he will attend with Mr. Lussier. Mr. Schoefmann said so far conversation with C&S—one of the major property owners there—is going pretty well.

***Downtown Pedestrian Wayfinding-*** Mr. Schoefmann stated that there is continued development of "pedestrian-level" wayfinding downtown and he is still looking for feedback from members about the signage and if they consist of appropriate street and pedestrian-level wayfinding.

***Main Street-Complete Street-*** Mr. Schoefmann stated that DPW has a Downtown Revitalization CIP that is continuing this year, and it would be good to find out how BPPAC fits into that initiative. He said he can figure have Mr. Lussier come into to speak with BPPAC and discuss their potential involvement.

Mr. Benik stated that surveying pedestrians about the wayfinding might be a good way to assess the effectiveness of the pedestrian-level wayfinding downtown. He thinks the signs are placed way too high and there are too many of them and thinks people are not actually seeing them. Mr. Schoefmann says he notices them while driving. Mr. Benik recommended that members go downtown and look for themselves. Mr. Brehme asked what the City's criteria are for wayfinding signage. Mr. Benik stated that it seems like the wayfinding lack consistent criteria.

Mr. Redfern asked if Mr. Schoefmann has announced the signs by the bridges that will be installed. Mr. Schoefmann said that Mr. Redfern reached out to DOT about having trail wayfinding installed on the bridges at the request of BPPAC. Mr. Schoefmann said that NH

DOT is amenable to the idea and will be installing signs on the bridges with the trail names on the bridges that face the highway. For example, South Bridge will have Ashuelot Rail Trail on it and North Bridge will have Cheshire Rail Trail listed on it. He said he thinks they will be installed when the nice weather hits and when he knows more he will inform BPPAC.

Mr. Bryenton asked if they know about the time line for Cheshire Rail Trail-Phase 4. Mr. Schoefmann said it will not change anything this fiscal year, but maybe next fiscal year and perhaps BPPAC can advocate for that. Mr. Redfern asked if they can get Mr. Lussier to come in to speak with BPPAC and Chair Benik said they can ask him and see if they can arrange a meeting or a phone call.

Mr. Brehme asked if there is an opportunity to have input in the design of the bridge signs. Mr. Schoefmann said that would probably drag the process out, the signs are going to be green with white lettering. Mr. Brehme said brown signs with white lettering would be nice. Mr. Schoefmann said if BPPAC wants to provide input he can relay a message but he recommends they just let it be as they are getting free signs. Mr. Redfern said he asked NH DOT for the signs to be brown but they replied they have to be green to conform to some color criteria.

Mr. Bryenton asked how long the Main Street-Complete Streets project been in the pipeline. Mr. Schoefmann said it has been on BPPAC's priority list since the committee identified their priorities. He said he is not sure if Downtown Revitalization's focus was making Main Street a Complete Street but there are elements that they are trying to focus on. He said it would be good to have Mr. Lussier come in and speak to the committee about Downtown Revitalization and the Transportation Heritage corridor. He said he included a couple of CIP pages in the packet as well and one of them was for Marlborough Street. Mr. Schoefmann said another item that was added in the CIP for this year is trails and open space maintenance which will start next fiscal year and Mr. Bohannon will have an annual 25K to do trail and park maintenance. Mr. Schoefmann stated that Mr. Bohannon is aiming to have the money focus on the trails and that is a big step towards maintenance. He said he can do resurfacing, drainage and foot bridges but they can speak to him about how Mr. Bohannon will allocate those funds. Mr. Schoefmann said this is working towards a Master Plan Maintenance section which the committee had discussed previously.

#### **4. Old Business**

Mr. Little asked if there was a response to the questions that were asked in the last meeting and Mr. Schoefmann replied that Mr. Lussier never got back to him. Mr. Little said he is confused about the approach on the projects. He stated that the North Bridge project was around for a long time and the estimated cost was 640K, however, when it was built the cost was 2.4M. Mr. Little said the federal highway appropriation came forward through a political chain that was unexpected and they gave them 80% of the estimated cost through federal funds. He said that is what they should be prepared for. Mr. Schoefmann said Mr. Redfern forwarded an email from a representative at the State as he was trying to put together a list of "pet" projects in the region with a financial guesstimate (CIP page). Mr. Little replied that BPPAC never voted and made a recommendation about those "pet" projects and his understanding is that the body exists for that very reason and asked Mr. Schoefmann why they did not take a vote on this before it was published. He said there are alternative projects that may or may not make sense. He stated that for fifteen years before he came to Keene he provided acquisition expertise to the US Airforce for a \$4B project and through that he learned that the most cost effective place that you can provide input to a project is when it is starting. He said the longer you wait the more expensive it is to make changes. Mr. Schoefmann suggested that he give Mr. Little Mr. Lussier's email and

he can try reaching out to him himself. Mr. Little said he just wants answers to the questions he had asked at last month's meeting. Chair Benik agreed that they should get the answers to the questions and discuss them at the next meeting. Mr. Little said they should get the answers and then vote to figure out their position on this.

***Bike Counting: Schedule 2019-*** Mr. Schoefmann said he needs to submit a Doodle Poll to BPPAC with dates/times for Feb 26-March 2 so members can get into the field and spend a couple of hours counting pedestrians and a few cyclists. He said they need counts for the locations of the intersections of Island Street and West Street, the intersection of Pearl Street and West Street, and the dog leg of the Rail Trail and West Street. He said Mr. Schoefmann will provide forms from the DOT that serve as a guide.

***Bike Racks Memo Review and Approval-*** Chair Benik stated that the past couple of months they had discussed that the bike racks were not put out and they decided to draft a memo to the City asking for a planned inventory. He said the memo Mr. Schoefmann drafted is in the packet. Mr. Little asked if the draft had been sent. Chair Benik replied no it is a draft that is up for discussion today and asked members to take a moment to read over it. Chair Benik stated that the memo includes an inventory of the current bike racks owned by the City, a map of the current bike racks placement sites with a log of total number of spots, a request for making a plan of installing bike racks annually by April 15 and removing and storing them by December 1, as well as an assessment of the percentage of bike racks owned by the City that align with the guidelines of the ABPB. Chair Benik said this draft was scooped out of the packet by the City and he was written a critical response by Mr. Blomquist. He said Mr. Bohannon's response was copied to everyone else on the memo and his main concern is that he feels it is inappropriate that they are tasking the City directly with all of these requests and he provided suggestions so they can discuss if that together.

Mr. Schoefmann stated that the role of the body is advisory to City Council so the common path is to go to City Council where the City Manager is typically involved, and then after the request is made, the City Council committee then hears the recommendation, makes a motion, it goes back to Council and is accepted and then from the City Manager things get directed. Chair Benik said his only stipulation is that BPPAC can make recommendations to the City and the Council and it is up to them as the functions of the guidelines say they can go straight to the City. He said it is due February 2 so as far as the Plan goes, Mr. Bohannon does not feel it will be accepted this year. He instead suggested a dialogue with BPPAC and if the committee is interested in making a bike rack plan, they can also discuss what they can do about making a schedule. Mr. Schoefmann said having a discussion with Mr. Blomquist and Mr. Bohannon would be advantageous as that was the purpose of the memo. He said Ms. Rubin can speak to a lot more of what she included in the memo but he can see why DPW would be overwhelmed with the request. Mr. Little said they can change the verbiage to "suggest" instead of "request." Chair Benik agreed and said they can find out how many bike racks they have, where they will be and when they will be out this year. Mr. Schoefmann said there is a map from five years ago indicating where the bike racks are being set out, from Subway to Citizen's Bank but over the last two years the consistency with which the racks have been put out is kind of spotty. He said specifically last year, the City was applying for the Marlborough Street-Complete Streets grant and they were attempting to figure out what they had for bike racks to help match the grant and Mr. Blomquist invited him to come down to the garage. Mr. Schoefmann said he observed a bunch of bike racks in storage that should have been put out and that is where the idea for the memo originated. Chair Benik said everyone copied on the memo has read it now and read Mr.

Blomquist's request and the cage has been rattled, so he would suggest Mr. Blomquist and Mr. Bohannon's be invited to come to the meeting in March. Mr. Little agreed and Mr. Schoefmann said it will appear better at Council that they have had a discussion with DPW and Department of Parks and Recreation instead of going to the City Manager directly. Chair Benik said "people like ideas that they are part of."

Mr. Bryenton agreed and said that there are guidelines for ABPB, but they should go ahead and get the bike racks out this year. Mr. Benik said business owners downtown have expressed concerns about the bike racks and Mr. Bohannon has to work with everyone, so the long term plan will be a process, however, they can start with getting bike racks out for 2019. Mr. Bryenton said they could even have MAST people go and talk to business owners about the benefits of bike racks. Mr. Schoefmann said he suggested that some of the memo would be included in the Master Plan. Mr. Dufresne asked if they would miss the calendar cycle. Chair Benik said developing and justifying any new program would be for the next fiscal year. Mr. Schoefmann stated that the turn of budget year is July 1 for the City so if they want a program, they should look at FY'21 and the CIP. He said they have projects in their goals list and update table, but they also need to consider how they will get some of these projects enrolled into the CIP, and getting some of them on there now for the next fiscal year is the right timeline moving forward.

Mr. Little moved to table the memo as written until after the meeting with Mr. Blomquist and Mr. Bohannon in March, Mr. Dufresne seconded and motion passed unanimously.

#### **5. Public Outreach and Events**

Mr. Schoefmann stated that the MAST annual meeting was held last Monday and they were able to get folks involved in the NH Bike Pedestrian Master Plan. He said Alta Design and Planning is contracted to do the outreach and they held a forum where people gave their input and he has is happy to share what they went over. He said MAST is supporting Safe Routes to School, alternative transportation ride sharing, bike walking and other commuting initiatives which they will be brainstorming shortly at MAST and Complete Streets grant selection and review subcommittee. He said after successfully completing two years of the NH Charitable Grant Foundation they agreed to do another 100K for NH Complete Streets projects.

#### **6. Council Referral: Nancy Sheldon/Shaldu Properties Inc. -Old Rail Spur Acquisition Ralston Street/Vicinity of Ashuelot Rail Trail**

Mr. Benik said that Mr. Schoefmann sent out a revised agenda and BPPAC has been referred for comment about the Old Rail Spur Acquisition Ralston Street and Emerald/Vicinity of Ashuelot Rail Trail. Mr. Little said Council is looking for a recommendation and the timing is suboptimal. Mr. Schoefmann stated that they were referred this by Council at their last meeting on Thursday. He said the property owner is seeking to acquire a rail spur (directed members to the packet). He said there is a rail spur coming off the Ashuelot Rail Trail that used to go into an old industrial building in between the Rail Trail and Ralston Street. He said the property owner of one of those is planning on purchasing the abutting property, but it is split by an old right of way that is part of the old rail mine. Mr. Schoefmann said in the updated packet, there is documentation of the committee's last determination in 2011 and at that time the State thought it was their land, however, after some research the State said it was City property because it is attached to the rail corridor. He said in the discussions that have occurred between Mr. Lamb, Director of Community Development, the City Manager and the property owner, it depicts a highlighted portion along Emerald Street, and anything affecting the Rail Trail and its access to Emerald

Street is off the table. The only request that Council is hearing is the little spur that nobody has used in over 30 years and they are asking to purchase it. Mr. Schoefmann said BPPAC's recommendation was that they sell that spur to the property owner in 2011. Mr. Breyenton asked what the reason is that they did not buy it back then. Mr. Redfern said at the time they wanted a piece that affected the bike path and Mr. Lamb said it could be problematic and so they dropped it. Mr. Schoefmann said the southern spur is not on the trail and if you look at it from an aerial photo it has been used for storage for the past 30 years.

Mr. Little said he looked at it in Google Maps, and if you read the minutes, the guidance is that the committee should be focused on the trail and nothing else and from his point of view there are only two things he does not understand. He said for one, if this spur is removed, how does that affect the right of way for the main trail as there is no detail provided yet to demonstrate that and there should be guarantee that the spur abuts the right of way for the trail as they are not in a position to give away a square foot of the trail. Mr. Little said secondly, there appears to be a very simple path. Mr. Schoefmann said it is a fence and Mr. Little said he does not have a question then. Mr. Redfern stated that he agrees with Mr. Little if the spur does not affect the trail system but if it impedes the trail they would be opposed to that. Mr. Little agreed. Mr. Schoefmann said that is in line with BPPAC's last finding in 2011. Mr. Little stated that it is ambiguous but the diagram needs clarification as to what is happening on it just past Davis Street as it branches off from the main path. He thinks the City should have a guarantee that the main trail is protected in this transaction. Mr. Schoefmann said last time Mr. Little moved for the preservation of the existing trail corridor. Mr. Little agreed that he wanted to preserve the right of way, and that might be larger than the actual trail. Mr. Brehme said he thinks the trail come south further to the left at Emerald Street and does not approach the corner of Ralston and Emerald at a curve like that. Mr. Brehme said just to make the case that is on the west of the far side of this parcel that they are discussing. Mr. Horner asked if development on the right of way would ultimately disturb the trail. Mr. Schoefmann said any encroachment on the rail trail corridor would have to go through the City and there are two access points within 1/8 of a mile to get to the rail trail.

Chair Benik moved to not oppose the sale of the spur with the caveat that the main corridor of the Ashuelot Rail Trail and its right of way be maintained as is, Mr. Redfern seconded and motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Horner suggested that they recommend that proceeds be invested back into the maintenance of the rail trail. Members stated that it may not be worth the recommendation as it will be a marginal amount of money and the Council wanted their advice on how this decision would impact the trail, not what to do with the money. Mr. Little asked what the rush was in getting this decision through and Mr. Schoefmann replied it has been a discussion point for a while and Council wanted BPPAC's recommendation.

## **7. New Business**

Mr. Schoefmann said they will have Mr. Bohannon and Mr. Blomquist come in to discuss bike racks on March 13. Members suggested having Mr. Lussier coming in as well.

Mr. Schoefmann stated that he hopes to have another section of the Bicycle Pedestrian Master Plan prepared for the committee. Mr. Dufresne said they should also have some preliminary figures of bike counts. Mr. Little suggested they have Mr. Bohannon and Mr. Blomquist present first next meeting so they do not have to wait out the entire meeting's agenda. Mr. Benik

suggested he or Mr. Schoefmann invite Mr. Bohannon and Mr. Blomquist to the March 13 meeting. Mr. Schoefmann stated that he submitted a bicycle-friendly city application at the last minute earlier this month, and through that process he was able to find a 10-11 year point GIS file of pedestrian-car accidents in Keene. Mr. Brehme asked if he could have access to those data and Mr. Schoefmann replied yes. Mr. Bryenton stated that Ms. Neptune of the League of American Bicyclists generates a survey of third party input of perceptions of Keene. Mr. Schoefmann said hopefully they will have a favorable review of their application and he will distribute the survey via email and social media.

**8. Adjournment**

Chair Benik adjourned the meeting at 9:31 AM.

Next meeting date – March 13, 2019

Respectfully submitted by,

Ayshah Kassamali-Fox, Minute-Taker

Additional edits by,

Will Schoefmann, Community Development Staff