

**CITY OF KEENE
New Hampshire**

BICYCLE PEDESTRIAN PATH ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, April 10, 2019

8:15 AM

2nd Floor Conference Room, City Hall

Members Present:

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

Staff Present:

Kurt Blomquist, Public Works Director
Rhett Lamb, Community Development Dir.
Mari Brunner, Planner

Members Not Present:

Dillon Benik, Chair
Brad Dufresne
Linda Rubin

1) **Roll Call**

Vice Chair Bryenton (filling in for Chair Benik) called the meeting to order at 8:15 AM.

2) **March 13, 2019 Minutes**

Mr. Horner moved to accept the March 13, 2019 minutes as submitted, Mr. Brehme seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

3) **Old Business**

Downtown Bike Racks: Update

Ms. Brunner stated that Mr. Schoefmann went out with Ms. Wendy Walker, the Parking Enforcement Operations Manager, to assess potential sites for bike racks that are under Ms. Walker's purview. Ms. Brunner directed members to a memo in the packet from Mr. Schoefmann which includes a map with red stars which show the potential locations for bike racks. Mr. Blomquist said they did not coordinate with Mr. Bohannon and himself but there is not much difference in the locations they identified.

Mr. Blomquist said one of the challenges they face downtown is the multi-uses, as they have to consider merchants who want to have outdoor seating. He directed members to the map. He said

there are two bike racks under the City Hall parking facility, there is one under the general parking area primarily used by the City and one used by Keene Housing and Central Square Terrace. Mr. Lamb said only one of those are the City's and Mr. Blomquist replied that Mr. Bohannon takes care of both of them. Mr. Blomquist said there is also a bike rack in front of City Hall.

Mr. Blomquist stated that they are looking to put one on the corner of Church Street and Main Street to replace the bench that was there. He said they will also try to put one underneath Well Street after talking with Parking Enforcement. He said there is a striped off area that could allow parking on both sides, however, that area is a collection point for trash and if that becomes a problem that will move the rack underneath the stair tower. He said they will put one on the corner of Railroad Square. Mr. Blomquist said they have a bike/bench combo and they may place one on one of the sides of Railroad Square and they will leave it there permanently.

Mr. Blomquist said they will put a small rack in front of Amicci's on the corner of Cyprus and Eagle Street. He said they can no longer place a rack in front of The Works as they now have outdoor seating so they must place one further down. He stated coming north, they are looking to place one or two racks in front of the Corner News as there is an indent that they can line. He said they have a small one that they can add a few more rungs to put in between the Transportation center and the corner building. Mr. Blomquist stated that they had two meter post racks already out and they will add a few additional ones in that area.

Mr. Blomquist said as they change downtown, they cannot put place meter post-type racks on the flower gardens as they are placing benches in those pathways. He said that is the plan right now and they have chosen areas that they have generally not yet had any complaints from merchants. Mr. Redfern said there used to be a rack in the vicinity of Greenwald Realty that was crowded. Mr. Blomquist said those bikes were from the people who lived upstairs and the bikes did not move regularly and were piling up on the sidewalk. He said the sidewalk cut outs were designed for trash cans and benches and they are trying to fit bike racks into those spaces. Mr. Blomquist said they need to be able to move the ones on the grass belts for mowing so they cannot permanently anchor them.

Mr. Bryenton asked if there is an idea of the total capacity that the bike racks can hold. Mr. Bohannon stated that the large racks hold a capacity of 8 bikes with 4 loops on each side which is the largest rack that they currently have. Mr. Redfern asked if this is the plan for every year and Mr. Blomquist replied that this is the plan for every spring as long as they do not receive complaints. He said it may change in a couple of years with the revitalization of downtown. Mr. Blomquist said the challenge with the Farmer's market rack is that it was placed on the green belt and they complained it interfered with the Market's activities. Mr. Bohannon said there is a new proposal for outdoor seating in Council.

Mr. Blomquist said he is currently talking about with his sign guy about adding bike parking signage. He said he gets pressure to put signs up and also to take signs down as some people consider the signs as clutter and pollution. Mr. Little asked if they plan to put a bike rack on the piece of private property to free up Central Square. Mr. Blomquist replied that they cannot

provide the equipment due to liability and the City cannot take care of private property so it would be up to the property owner to take care of it.

Mr. Redfern asked if they can have a brief update on the Phase 3-Cheshire Rail Trail Park Avenue review and Mr. Blomquist replied that it is under DOT review and he is hoping to have construction start this season.

Vice Chair Bryenton asked if members have any more questions for Mr. Blomquist about the plan bike racks. Mr. Blomquist stated he is aiming to have his employees track how many bikes are in the racks to reassess their placement for the future. He said he is not expecting complaints from business owners as the racks are being placed far enough away. Mr. Horner asked what types of racks are going up on Main Street and Mr. Blomquist said they are the horseshoe shaped ones. Mr. Bohannon said the single arch racks were the ones that they got from the Racket Up program and they will be putting those together to maximize space. Mr. Horner said the inverted "U" ones are the easiest to use.

Ms. Brunner stated that Mr. Schoefmann and Ms. Walker went out to identify sites for bike racks that are under her purview and she directed members to Mr. Schoefmann's memo in the packet to see his map of proposed sites and pictures. Mr. Bryenton asked Mr. Blomquist if they have an idea of capacity for Mr. Schoefman's proposal and layout. Mr. Blomquist said it will probably be about the same as his. Mr. Bryenton replied that his understanding was that there were plenty of racks in storage and the issue was that they were not put out last year. Mr. Blomquist replied that they will not know the total amount of racks until they put them all together. Mr. Bohannon said Public Works will put racks together, perform an inventory and then report the inventory at BPPAC's next meeting.

Mr. Brehme stated that he likes having racks in the Gilbo Avenue lot even though the General Manager of the Farmer's Market does not care for the racks. Mr. Souther asked where the contentious spot is for the bike racks at the Farmer's Market and Mr. Blomquist replied the rack was placed in the middle of the Market on the grass belt. He said they may try to put a rack on the north side of the lot in the grass belt area. Mr. Bryenton said that Mr. Schoefmann is proposing a rack for Gilbo Avenue, the Transportation center and the Wells Street parking garage, which are similar areas to Mr. Blomquist's sites. Mr. Blomquist stated that there is space underneath both of the stairwells for one side of the racks and because they are under cover they can remain there permanently.

Mr. Lamb stated that the activity level is poor for the racks under the stairwell and only side of the rack can be accessed. Mr. Blomquist said he will keep track this summer of how many bikes are being used under the stairwell. Mr. Little said the area underneath the Wells Street garage stairwell is a very popular place for people to gather year-round and they may want to consider placing bike racks in a different location on the lower level of the garage. Mr. Blomquist stated that the main idea behind placing bike racks in that location was to dissuade some of that activity. Ms. Brunner said the area they are looking at is the one shown in the packet. Mr. Little said there are a number of no-parking areas that may be possible locations and Mr. Lamb said that is the area that Mr. Schoefmann is proposing. Mr. Little suggested they place a bench under the stairwell instead. Mr. Bohannon said there is a new tenant going into the restaurant space at

12 Gilbo Avenue and they will have outdoor seating in the proposed area for racks so when they are putting them out they should consider what is available around that general area.

Vice Chair Bryenton said that the main difference between the two proposals is that Mr. Blomquist is suggesting a decentralized placement and Mr. Schoefmann is proposing two bike corrals on either side of Main Street off the rail trail. Mr. Horner replied the two plans do not have to be mutually exclusive. Vice Chair Byenton agreed.

Mr. Bohannon said that BPPAC should get this plan in place this year, perform the inventory and keep in mind that downtown will be reconfigured in the next few years. He recommended using the data they collect to reassess their placement and advocate for bike racks when it comes time for public sessions in the redesign of downtown. He suggested advocating for some of the stronger locations for bike racks to create public awareness of what BPPAC does. Mr. Blomquist said they are looking at placing a rack around Brewbaker's as well. He said he is aiming to get a rack out on every block but some blocks are easier than others. Mr. Blomquist said he will aim to place racks where he can so they are visible and available but cannot guarantee the same placement every year. He said when they redesign downtown they need to create a space for a large bike parking plaza. Mr. Souther asked if they can update the data on the map each year so they have a solid plan for placement every year. Mr. Blomquist said there is no reason not to do that and he is also planning to keep track in summer months. Mr. Souther replied that BPPAC can provide feedback as well.

Vice Chair Bryenton stated that this is a dynamic plan and the only limiting factor he sees between the two proposals is the time needed to put racks together and performing the inventory of the racks. He said there is no reason not to have both plans in effect for the next season or two while they get baseline counts of highest rack utilization and then formalize a plan based on the data they collect. However, he said the permanence of racks from year to year is also an issue, so they should aim to at least have permanent racks placed in all of the cardinal directions and then place other racks ad hoc.

Mr. Little asked if there is a possibility of creating a "no-overnight bike parking" ordinance to solve the problem of bikes being left in racks. Ms. Brunner said there are cities that do that but the ordinance would require enforcement. Mr. Blomquist said the Police Department would not prioritize it so it would not even be worth it. He said people who do not have an interest will not comply so creating another ordinance that is not enforced does not make sense. He said the issue is not overnight bike parking as the complaints arise when bikes sit out for a week or more. Mr. Bohannon stated that a perfect example is the bike rack underneath City Hall where the bikes are not moving. Mr. Little suggested a voluntary program for a long-term bike parking area in the Wells Street garage for Keene citizens to reduce some of the load in critical areas that would eliminate the need for enforcement. Ms. Brunner stated that they could write a Complete Streets grant through MAST for that idea. Mr. Blomquist replied that they be cautious with grant applications as they need to have a long-term plan for the area.

Mr. Lamb asked if they know how many bikes would go under the Wells Street lot and Mr. Bryenton replied that the memo stated two racks with ten bikes each. Mr. Lamb said maybe there is a way to divide the short-term and long-term parking on either side of the racks. Mr. Blomquist said they would have to be able to move the racks around for maintenance. Mr. Lamb

replied that they would need to move the racks for maintenance anyway. Mr. Bohannon said the long-term bike rack area could be an invitation for crime, however, and the bike locker idea could be feasible for the long-term parking as the city is reconfigured. He said this is good timing to get some data for long-term planning and to create a bike locker space in the City in the future. Ms. Brunner stated that most of the information out there recommends bike lockers for long-term bike parking as they are more secure.

Mr. Bryenton asked if they could add Mr. Schoefmann's plan to Public Work's distribution map. Mr. Blomquist replied that he does not have the capacity numbers yet; however, he will build the racks until they run out.

Mr. Redfern stated that the proposal for the Ashuelot Rail Trail abutment purchase from Mr. Tousley was not presented to BPPAC for review. Mr. Blomquist said they are not ready to talk about it yet. Mr. Lamb stated that the determination was made that the Ralston area is owned by the City but they have not yet determined the ownership for the other side and they will refer the information to BPPAC once the ownership issue is resolved. Mr. Redfern replied as long as they do not forget to refer it to BPPAC. Mr. Lamb replied that it had not been referred before because the research had not been completed. Mr. Little stated that he received new information that the City was determining who owns the parcel in question and if they determine it is the City the letter will be referred to BPPAC. Mr. Bryenton said that item is not on the agenda so they can table it.

Vice Chair Bryenton moved that City staff work with Department of Public Works to implement both proposed plans for bike racks, Mr. Redfern seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Brehme suggested focusing on the proposed capacity would be helpful and Mr. Blomquist agreed that would be done.

Mr. Redfern said that he will report to the Councilor that BPPAC refused to discuss what he had requested they do. Mr. Lamb stated that the item is not on the agenda and it has not been referred by City Council yet and it is inappropriate to discuss a matter that involves a petitioner without Council's referral. He said the petitioner would need to be at the table as well. Mr. Bryenton said this item is not on the agenda so they will move on.

West Street Bike Counting- Schedule 2019

Ms. Brunner said last year the bike counting took place on the week of May 13 but this year the Safe Routes to School event is taking place during that week, so they will schedule bike counts for the week before May 3 or the week after. Mr. Bryenton asked members to check their calendars and send potential dates to Mr. Schoefmann. Mr. Brehme asked why Mr. Schoefmann does not want to do bike counts that week and Ms. Brunner replied it is just a matter of staff time.

Public Outreach and Events

Ms. Brunner said they are having a Safe Routes to School event happening Wednesday, May 15 with a rain date of May 16. She handed out flyers. Ms. Brunner stated that Ms. Mannion is working with Keene Middle School and on Wednesday May 15th there will be a bike/walk to

school day starting at the YMCA and kids will walk with volunteers to school. She said they are looking for volunteers and the deadline for signing up as a volunteer is this Friday as volunteers must have a background check first. She encouraged members to spread the word and sign up as volunteers.

4) Project Updates (Note: BPPAC Master Plan Documents available on google drive)

Ms. Brunner stated that there is an updated spreadsheet in the packet for member review. She will refer questions to Mr. Schoefmann as she is not familiar with all of the projects.

Vice Chair Bryenton said the Wayfinding project does not look like much is happened. Mr. Horner asked how BPPAC would fit into the Downtown Revitalization project. Mr. Blomquist replied that BPPAC would serve as any other advocacy group and there will be opportunities for public input. He said there are loud voices out there that are resistant to change so BPPAC will need to engage the public on the committee's important as there was public pushback on bike lanes and open spaces in the downtown. He said when the concept plans go before the City committees for acceptance he would encourage BPPAC to be involved in that process to help balance the voices out there. Mr. Blomquist said a few of the concepts may have been a little far beyond what people were willing to accept, however, some of the basic concepts like having the bike lanes run north and south received strong negative comments. He said BPPAC has constituency groups and they need to use those voices and encouraged the committee to participate in the planning and the eventual Council process.

Mr. Lamb asked for the timeline of the public process plan. Mr. Blomquist said the plan is to begin public processes in the fall of 2019 with the goal of having conceptual plans to Council after the first of the year in 2020. Mr. Horner asked when the previous rounds of conceptual plans were submitted and if they are available to see. Mr. Blomquist replied that he can provide them to Mr. Schoefmann. He said they had public gathering sessions for three days and then they did a survey and received over five hundred inputs and the ideas were representative of the feedback. He said there were some cool ideas and it was surprising how much of a visceral reaction some people had over the revitalization of the downtown and that feeling is still out there. Mr. Souther asked if someone asked him why they need to rehabilitate the downtown what would he say. Mr. Blomquist replied that he would say the infrastructure needs to be redone. He said they have really 1899 water lines and 1930s sewer lines so the work needs to be done, the main question after that is what should be overlaid on top. He said the design worked really well for the past 31 years and the question is what the design should look like for the next 30 years.

Jonathan Daniels trail maintenance

Mr. Bohannon stated that the project is in the CIP in the Open Space and Trails project and it is scheduled for FY 21 or 22. He said the CIP was adopted with \$25K seed money to go after grants or matches and funds would be used for that project. He said estimates are completed for that project.

Cheshire Rail Trail-Park Avenue Loop

Mr. Blomquist stated that the project is up for DOT Review and once they get notification that is accepted they will move into the next phase. It includes amendments to Amy Brown road area

and they are anticipating starting construction this season and completed in the 2020 construction season.

5) New Business- Items to be included for next meeting

Ashuelot Rail Trail Purchase

Mr. Little stated that the recent request to acquire the “spur” by Ms. Nancy Sheldon was presented to BPPAC for review. It was then summarized by FOP, presented at City Council and passed unanimously. There was no mention of the need to maintain the Ashuelot Rail Trail right-of-way in the FOP summary or motion. Mr. Little stated at the last meeting the question of acquisition of that property was never referred to BPPAC, and there was a vote in the last meeting to put it on the agenda and it was not placed on the agenda. He said it seems to have been overtaken by events and it is not needed on the agenda until staff determines who owns the property and then it will be referred to BPPAC for review. Mr. Lamb stated that from the very beginning this subject was brought to City Council and when they are ready to refer it to BPPAC, they will. He said there has never been any time when a sale of a bike path or bike trail has not been referred to BPPAC. He said the City will be sure to refer it to BPPAC and the Mayor has already spoken about it so there should not be concern that it will not be referred. He said the FOP committee can remind the Council to make a referral to BPPAC and it does not make much sense to discuss it until the ownership question is established as there are still remaining questions. Mr. Little agreed with Mr. Lamb that the discussion is moot.

Mr. Little stated that the sale of the spur was passed unanimously by FOP, however, they did not mention Ashuelot Rail Trail right of way and they only mentioned the presence of a “bike path.” He said the Ashuelot Rail Trail is a one-lane wide road with shoulders on it and “bike path” suggests it is a lot smaller than it is. Vice Chair Bryeton asked if Mr. Little wants to add this item to next month’s agenda. Mr. Lamb stated that FOP authorized the City to negotiate the sale of the property and he is happy to bring the issue back to BPPAC after the sale to the owner. He said the term “bike path” in the minutes refers to the Ashuelot Rail Trail. He said they would retain the mainline rail trail right-of-way so they can maintain the bike path into the future. Mr. Little said that the trail runs over South Bridge and Keene State College allows motor vehicles on it because they have provisions to unlock the gates on both sides of South Bridge.

Vice Chair Bryeton said that BPPAC made a recommendation based on that topic and once that comes back around they can discuss it.

6) Adjournment - Next Meeting Date is May 8, 2019

Vice Chair Bryeton adjourned the meeting at 9:21 am.

Respectfully submitted by,
Ayshah Kasmmali-Fox, Minute Taker

Edits by, Will Schoefmann, City Staff