

City of Keene
New Hampshire

BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN PATH ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, January 8, 2020

8:15 AM

**2nd Floor Conference Room,
City Hall**

Members Present:

Dillon Benik, Chair
Drew Bryenton, Vice Chair
Brad Dufresne
Christopher Brehme
Charles Redfern
Todd Horner

Staff Present:

Andy Bohannon, Director of Parks,
Recreation, & Facilities
Tara Kessler, Senior Planner

Members Not Present:

George S. Hansel, Mayor

1) Roll Call

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

2) Mayor Hansel

Mayor Hansel introduced himself to the committee and stated that he is responsible for nominating people to the committee. He said that he respects the committee's recommendations and asked Chair Benik to put together a prioritized list of nominations. He said that he would like to meet nominees in person. Mayor Hansel stated that he is happy to answer any questions committee members may have.

Mr. Schoefmann stated that he sent a list of nominees to the City Clerk, Ms. Patty Little, and he will forward that list to Mayor Hansel as well as there are a number of people already interested in BPPAC membership. Chair Benik added that BPPAC has discussed switching membership roles within the committee and accruing new membership for 2020 as they are aiming for a full board. Mayor Hansel replied that the committee could get in touch with him through email and the City website. He said his office hours are from 11:00 AM -12:00 PM, Monday-Friday and he is open to meeting with members.

3) December 11, 2019 Minutes

Mr. Schoefmann stated that there were many changes from Mr. Wink Faulkner that he forgot to add to the minutes from last month, however, he would add edits to the minutes as staff changes.

Chair Benik moved to accept the December 11, 2019 minutes, Mr. Dufresne seconded, and the motion passed unanimously

4) Elections

Chair Benik stated that Mr. Schoefmann had previously suggested waiting until February to perform the elections to see how much BPPAC can fill out their membership before then and make any official membership changes. Mr. Schoefmann stated that at the most recent Council meeting they did not do much business except welcome the Mayor, and the next full Council meeting will be held at the end of the month and the Mayor will make his nominations then. He said the first cycle in February is when new member confirmations will happen. Chair Benik asked if they are allowed to move the elections and Mr. Schoefmann replied yes, as they did the same thing last year to include newer membership in that decision-making.

Mr. Dufresne agreed that it was a good idea to have all members on board to nominate a Chair. Mr. Bohannon stated that they could make nominations when full Council meets next week. Chair Benik moved to delay elections until the February BPPAC meeting, Mr. Dufresne seconded, and the motion was passed unanimously.

5) Old Business

a. Fall Bicycle & Pedestrian Counting Update

Mr. Schoefmann stated that he is half way through inputting the results of the bicycle and pedestrian counting tally sheets. He said because they had student help the spreadsheet is larger and as soon as he completes the data entries will email the results spreadsheet or upload it to the Google Drive.

Mr. Brehme asked if the February counts would be available before or after their next meeting. Mr. Schoefmann replied that the results will be available the last week in February or the beginning of March.

b. Winter Plowing Methodology

Mr. Schoefmann said he forwarded an email to the committee and asked for member thoughts. Mr. Bohannon stated that the Category 3 trail that is mentioned in the summary is the only trail that the City plows. He noted that Category 3 trails are plowed last. He said that the sidewalk plows go out immediately after the storm and are included in Category 2. He stated that Category 1 trails include all the main streets. Mr. Schoefmann said five sidewalks routes can take up to 15

hours each depending on the type of snow there is and they are using either snow blowing attachments, or just plowing, which takes from 6-9 hours. He said that is the current methodology. Mr. Brehme added that it would be nice if they were prioritizing where elderly people are, for example, West Street. Chair Benik said they might just be prioritizing those streets informally. Mr. Horner stated that he is impressed that the City plows all of the sidewalks as that is not typically the case, for example, cities bigger than Keene often require residents to shovel their own sidewalks and are penalized if they do not. He said that plowing 52 miles of sidewalk is a great place to be, although it would be nice to have a sense of what the prioritized routes are, even if it is a paper map.

Mr. Bohannon said they have a map with the zones and have certain sections they prioritize but it is up to the discretion of the plow drivers. He said they have a prioritization review at the beginning of the year. Mr. Horner said if a map does exist of the zones that would be nice to see, however, he does not want to create extra work for plowers. Mr. Schoefmann said he would try to follow up with additional information with Mr. Billy Byrne. He stated that the Department of Public Works (DPW) plows the Cheshire Rail Trail all the way up to the Kohl's "dog leg."

6) Project Updates (Note: BPPAC Master Plan Documents available on google drive)
a. Transportation Heritage Trail Project

Mrs. Kessler, staff liaison for the Heritage commission (HC), stated that HC is also interested in becoming a partner in the Stone Arch Bridge project. She said they were involved in the improvements for that project and see it as a key piece in the phasing of the project. She said right now DPW owns the bridge, and the City of Keene has procured grants to make improvements to the bridge as there were drainage issues and the City has repaired the deck. However, there is a lack of railing and fall protection on the bridge today and HC is interested in installing granite capstones to restore the bridge. Ms. Kessler stated that HC also wants to utilize their expertise on inventorying historic elements along the trail as well as investing in more research for collecting the history of the trail. She said they are also interested in performing outreach in the community for what is being proposed. Ms. Kessler stated that HC has asked that she visit with BPPAC and gauge their interest in working together with the City on these initiatives.

Chair Benik responded that BPPAC was excited about the whole project concept and they understand it would take collaboration to keep the project moving. He asked if HC meets tonight and Ms. Kessler replied that they do. Mr. Schoefmann stated that the project falls nicely into the outreach and promotional element of their objectives and maybe this presents a good opportunity to start meaningful work. Mr. Redfern suggested that somebody from Pathways for Keene (PFK) be involved in the project as well as they are prioritizing a historical corridor (not Stone Arch but the other bridge they want to see re-used which crosses 101). He said they have some money to put towards a local share and will be doing additional fundraising make this plan a focus for the years ahead. Mr. Redfern said they should make PFK aware of the effort for public outreach.

Chair Benik stated that last month Mr. Faulkner said that there is some money available from PFK for smaller projects that would help build the foundation for the bigger projects to get things going and remove barriers that are creating drag. He said PFK could be a financial solution for some of these issues. Chair Benik agreed that it would make sense to involve Councilor Manwaring at this time as her name was mentioned as a potential Councilor representative for BPPAC for 2020.

Mr. Horner stated that the City Engineer has shared his vision for the entire segment of trail but he asked if that vision has been documented. Mr Schoefmann replied that it is in the supplemental section of the CIP. Mr. Bohannon added that it is it is up against another community need project and would increase the tax base as the two projects combined are 7 million dollars and it would require a public hearing to keep it moving forward. Mr. Redfern asked what the competing project is and Mr. Bohannon replied that the other project is the Robin Hood pool which will be closed in about five years if they do not take care of it soon.

Mr. Bryenton asked Ms. Kessler if the abandoned corridor that goes from Eastern Avenue to 101 is part of the project. Ms. Kessler replied that it is. Mr. Bryenton stated that BPPAC had discussed creating an end pocket park at the end instead of 200 yards of abandoned rail yard. Ms. Kessler replied that is a good idea and HC is excited to be a part of and if there are other entities that want to meet and brainstorm a plan with City staff for how they can jump into this and offer idea and think about grant resources. She said the Stone Arch Bridge is on the National Registry of Historic Places so they would need to address the standards and will need to be opened up before anything else can take place.

Mr. Brehme said that BPPAC has talked a lot about promoting the trails for tourism and it would be nice to have a pocket park where tourists can pull off and learn about the Stone Arch Bridge. Chair Benik added that BPPAC and HC could work together on development phases, as well as formalize some sort of advocacy strategy and think about how to sell it to people. Ms. Kessler said that more work need to be done on the City side in terms of identifying what the plan is for this project, for example, mapping out a phased approach. Mr. Bohannon said they have it in phases in the budget and they need to get the Engineering side done first and then go out to bid on all of the documents. He said right now advocating for it in the public hearing on March 5 is next step. He said they should look at that in the next meeting but City staff is moving it forward in the CIP and it is in the Council's hands from there.

Ms. Kessler said that HC was hoping that a subcommittee could be formed with BPPAC to brainstorm how to collaborate as they only meet every other month. She said she could gauge their interest in meeting outside of the BPPAC meeting as a subcommittee. Chair Benik agreed that the idea is aligned with BPPAC's objectives and asked what the next steps they should take. Ms. Kessler said that HC applied for a grant for the Stone Arch Bridge that they were denied but their agenda is packed for tonight. Chair Benik added that members could reply to himself and to Mr. Schoefmann and Ms. Kessler about their interests.

b. Tap 2019 Project for Marlborough Street

Mr. Schoefmann said they are working on filing the appropriate paperwork in order to get to a point with DOT to allocate funds to make this project happen sooner rather than in 2025.

c. Arts & Culture Corridor

Mr. Schoefmann stated that some BPPAC members attended some of the Arts and Culture Corridor workshops. However, they are still unsure where that project stands right now. He said there would probably be a report for City Council regarding the forums and the public input sessions and he can convey that information when it becomes available.

d. Cheshire Rail Trail – Park Avenue Loop

Mr. Schoefmann stated that this project is still planned for bid and construction this summer. He said the project realignment happened last year where DPW requested for the resurfacing and utilities work to be moved up and coordinated with the new bike infrastructure.

Mr. Bohannon stated that a new trailhead would be going in on Whitcombs Mill Road and near Summit Ridge in a dirt lot that the snowmobilers use. He said Whitcombs Mill trailhead would accommodate six cars. Mr. Redfern asked why they call it to the Food Network and Mr. Bohannon replied it is owned by CNS.

Mr. Schoefmann stated that the trail over by the Monadnock Co-Op is due to reopened next week. Mr. Brehme stated that the Magical History Tour could be used as an example of wayfinding. Mr. Bohannon said that there has been a push for a trailhead by the pocket park concept at the end of Emerald Street. He said they would order a second kiosk for that location as well as it is a good signage location.

e. Master Plan

Mr. Schoefmann stated that he reached out to Mr. JB Mack at Southwestern Regional Planning Commission regarding the possibility of using state funds to help complete the Master Plan. He said he would keep BPPAC posted on that conversation.

7) New Business

a. Items to be Included for Next Meeting

Chair Benik stated that they have talked about a new subcommittee and perhaps it is a good item for February due to the new membership coming up and he recommended moving that item over to next meeting. He said that members would like to launch little advocacy projects through the subcommittee for awareness and advocacy for pedestrians and cycling as they feel that they miss these opportunities with their regular meeting times. Chair Benik said their goal for a subcommittee is to cultivate these ideas further.

Mr. Mike Davern introduced himself as the current President for the Brattleboro-Keene chapter of the New England Mountain Biking Association, which advocates for mountain biking trails all across New England. They opened up trails in Pisgah State Park, which did not pan out well. However, they have a memorandum of understanding with the City of Keene to maintain trails in Goose Pond and Wildwood Park and other projects. He stated that he is interested because the paths the City has tie trails together from Drummer Hill to West Keene to Stonewall Farms for cyclists. He added that they maintain the Stonewall and Food Network trails and they currently have about 116 members, which vary month to month but maintain about a half a dozen active busy members.

Chair Benik stated that as trailheads go in on the trails they will see more traffic and asked if they have any plans for formal mapping. Mr. Davern replied that he is a GIS specialist and he would love for there to be a public map but it becomes tricky when several different landowners have separate wishes, however, they have not broached the topic of maps with all of the landowners. He said they do have permission to maintain the trails on the private land and maps are on the radar as the trails are not a secret and people ask about the all of the time.

Chair Benik asked Mr. Davern what is on the Club's radar for projects. Mr. Davern replied that they are working on a bike park in Wheelock Park with the City, as well as hosting a trail school in Keene and performing routine trail maintenance with volunteer groups, for example, at Drummer Hill. Mr. Bohannon agreed that the City should send the Club a support letter for their projects and they are working together on trail maintenance in the Goose Pond and Drummer Hill area. He noted that the Club maintains great trails and keeps open communication with the City. Therefore, the City is invested in helping the Club to work on projects and to secure funding over the next year or two.

Mr. Brehme asked what happened to the signage on the bridges that they had previously discussed. Mr. Redfern added that he will be checking in on DOT and find out why it is taking them so long to respond to the City's request for the signage. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he would follow up on his end first because last time they had an update DOT had reached out to Mr. Lundquist. Mr. Bohannon added that there is an approval needed on the language of the signs and he will ask Mr. Lundquist when he returns to work next week.

Mr. Horner stated that PKF is looking for new projects and the City is looking for better lighting along trails and perhaps wayfinding is a productive direction to go. He proposed the idea of a pilot wayfinding system as there is a cheap way to try out signage with nice design values, for example, "Ten minute bike ride/walk to Wheelock Park" which is cheap and effective way to test out signage other cities have used and can be an interesting approach to take if the City is interested in testing wayfinding signage that can later be upgraded if successful. Mr. Brehme said the Ashuelot Rail Trail plan proposed 1/2 mile or 1 mile markers that could be tested out with that approach as well. Chair Benik suggested adding that idea to next month's agenda.

Mr. Bohannon said this idea has been on his radar for a while and it is a matter of time and execution. He stated that Mr. Brehme has tried some of these approaches out and he has had conversations with Mr. Peter Poanessa who is also interested in creating the signage. He said they have money designated in the CIP and Mr. Bohannon would like to make it universal between all of the parks as the Keene trails are on the verge of becoming a destination location. He said cyclists come into town for a day, however, they are close to people staying overnight in Keene and making an economic impact through the trail system.

Mr. Bohannon stated that they have had conversations with Swanzey about the next phase with Cheshire Rail Trail and the bridge component, and they will be holding a webinar regarding multi-regional planning and execution of trail systems. He supported the idea of accomplishing successful wayfinding in 2020 and he welcomes support from the committee. He stated that PFK has made wayfinding their priority project for 2020 so there is some potential seed money there as well. Mr. Redfern noted that in November there were 66 people that stayed in Troy who were exclusively in town to ride the Keene trail system. Mr. Bohannon asked why they stayed in Troy and Mr. Redfern replied because of the bike storage. Mr. Brehme added that consistency in the signage is the most important thing and Chair Benik agreed that currently there is a frail system of wayfinding that needs to be remedied. Mr. Bohannon stated that he would set up a meeting with Mr. Poanessa and report back to BPPAC on that conversation. Chair Benik noted that they would place that on the February agenda.

Mr. Schoefmann stated that the Wintastiquet-Monandock trail runs along a portion of the Cheshire Rail trail and they are talking about siting campground locations and there is one scheduled from Troy. There is one on the west side of Pisgah State Park and there is talk of a third one on Conservancy Hill easement somewhere around the Colony Project. He said he would keep BPPAC posted on that initiative, as it will bring multi-night backpackers through the City on the trail system.

8) More Time

- a. Public Outreach & Events Subcommittee**
- b. Downtown Bike Racks & Winter Parking**
- c. New Trailhead near the Food Network Trail System**

9) Adjournment

Next meeting date February 12, 2020.

There being no further business, Chair Benik adjourned the meeting at 9:17 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Ayshah Kassamali-Fox, Minute Taker

Additional Edits by,
Will Schoefmann, Community Development Dept. Staff