

City of Keene
New Hampshire

BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN PATH ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, May 13, 2020

8:15 AM

Remote Meeting via Zoom

Members Present:

Drew Bryenton, Vice Chair
Aaron Shields
Michael Davern
Todd Horner
Councilor Jan Manwaring
Dr. Chris Brehme, Alternate (voting)
Charles Redfern, Alternate (non-voting)

Staff Present:

William Schoefmann, GIS Technician
Rhett Lamb, Community Development
Director/ Assistant City Manager

Members Not Present:

Dillon Benik, Chair
Brad Dufresne

1) Call to Order

Vice Chair Bryenton called the meeting to order at 8:19 AM and read the executive order authorizing a remote meeting: Emergency Order #12, issued by the Governor of the State of New Hampshire pursuant to Executive Order #2020-04. Pursuant to this order, the Vice Chair called roll. All members were calling alone from their home addresses, minus Mr. Redfern who was present at home with his wife, son, and grandson. Mr. Schoefmann was calling alone from City Hall. Vice Chair Bryenton recognized a guest, Mike Kowalczyk of Swanzey, who was calling alone; he is Chair of the Swanzey Cheshire Rail Trail Advisory Committee and leads the Monadnock Region Rail Trail Collaborative.

2) March 11, 2020 Minutes

Revision: Dr. Brehme was present at the meeting.

Mr. Horner moved to approve the minutes of March 11, 2020 as amended, which Mr. Shields seconded, and the motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

3) Old Business

a. Downtown Bike Racks (Councilor Hooper)

Councilor Hooper was not present and so Mr. Redfern spoke to some of the Councilor's concerns. Mr. Redfern said that Councilor Hooper was contacted by a constituent who was concerned about too few bike racks downtown. Councilor Hooper sought information from this Committee on: bike rack counts, what is in surplus, where bike racks are supposed to be placed, and when racks are picked-up. Mr. Redfern said this information was mostly discussed in a conversation six months ago with the Public Works Director, Kurt Blomquist. Mr. Redfern did not feel equipped to provide the Councilor with all the information he sought, which is why Councilor Hooper wanted to meet with this Committee. Mr. Schoefmann referenced a 2019 map from the Highway Department identifying where downtown bike racks were supposed to be located. BPPAC members concurred that most of those bike racks are not in place at this time. Mr. Schoefmann will inquire about the status of the racks as it is May and it seems they should be out by now. Mr. Schoefmann will keep the Committee and Councilor Hooper informed via email. Vice Chair Bryenton also suggested directing the Councilor to those meeting minutes describing the conversation with Mr. Blomquist. Mr. Schoefmann will ask the Highway Superintendent about the status of the racks. Vice Chair Bryenton wondered if the bike racks were not out perhaps to limit social gatherings during Covid-19.

b. Outreach Subcommittee

Mr. Schoefmann said the subcommittee was unable to begin before Covid-19 and so he thought it was on hold. Still, he was working to schedule something with members of the Heritage Commission. He asked if members are available for the subcommittee. Vice Chair Bryenton thought the goal of the subcommittee was to be mobile and meeting with other groups, which is challenging right now, but he felt strongly about continuing the Stone Arch Bridge project with the Heritage Commission. The Vice Chair thought that a general outreach subcommittee might not be needed at this time but he wondered if some members of this Committee were willing to interface with the Heritage Commission to keep this project moving forward in the interim. Mr. Redfern was willing to participate as a member of Pathways for Keene as well as two other groups that he said should be considered as liaisons: the Energy & Climate Committee (with a transportation focus) and the Conservation Commission. He thinks it is important to understand the importance of the project from the perspective of those three committees, which he said would be helpful when seeking/applying for grants and writing letters of support. He offered to attend their meetings as a member of the public, explaining why BPPAC will need their support when these projects arise, which is still a few years out.

Vice Chair Bryenton recognized Mr. Kowalczyk, who would like to be involved because this relates to the entire region's rail trail plan. Mr. Schoefmann said that the Monadnock Region Rail Trail Collaborative is working to promote the rail trail network throughout the region, specifically how the Ashuelot, Cheshire, and Fort Hill Rail Trails can interconnect with other trail systems and destinations in the region. Mr. Kowalczyk is interested in presenting on this work to the BPPAC at a future meeting and interfacing with a member of this subcommittee as work progresses. Mr. Kowalczyk possesses many resources, all of which he said are at this Committee's disposal if useful.

Dr. Brehme reminded the Committee that he would be advising at team of three students this fall, who are focusing their senior projects on the Cheshire Rail Trail south, which includes the Stone Arch Bridge. As such, Dr. Brehme would like to be involved with this subcommittee.

Mr. Schoefmann will work with Mr. Redfern to compile a list of the various committees and groups whose work aligns with this project for next month's meeting.

Mr. Horner recalled prior BPPAC consensus that coordinating with other committees and City government would be a good first step to getting on the same page of what this Transportation Heritage Trail project is. That way when public outreach begins, there are concise talking points on what the project's key elements are and why it is worth pursuing. He thought that if these various entities reach consensus at the beginning, then the project would be a greater success. He was happy to liaise with the Heritage Commission or another. Vice Chair Bryenton agreed that this is a good place to start before attempting broader public outreach, which seems to be stalled consistently because the project is too open-ended. Mr. Redfern said there is a description of the Transportation Heritage Trail's importance on page 52 of the last Capital Improvement Program.

Mr. Shields thinks Zoom meetings are easier to attend, which could enhance Committee participation in developing consensus on these projects.

Mr. Schoefmann will coordinate with Mr. Davern, Dr. Brehme, and Mr. Horner to confirm their availability and find out what groups they are interested in liaising with and connect them with those groups, such as those of which Mr. Kowalczyk is a member.

c. Bike Counts

Mr. Schoefmann apologized for being late in scheduling due to Covid-19. He would send some counting dates and time slots following this meeting, with a goal of counting in late May/early June. He might have some help from an intern to collect summer counts as well. Last fall Dr. Brehme's students counted and there was intention to do so in the spring also but that was not possible due to Covid-19. Vice Chair Bryenton said all help is welcome and members will be on the lookout for an invite and report summary of the previous counts from Mr. Schoefmann.

4) MAST Complete Street Grant 2020

Mr. Schoefmann cited an email to towns that have complete street policies in place stating that there is another round of funding for complete street grant projects, which the City Manager, Community Development Director, and Public Works Director received. Staff wanted to make the Committee aware that applications were pending and to seek ideas. Mr. Redfern recalled that the City Manager asked Pathways for Keene recently if they could fund wayfinding signs for the heritage transportation corridor in a few years and he did not think Pathways would be able to

accommodate. Therefore, he thought that wayfinding signs around town would be excellent purpose for the grant application.

Mr. Schoefmann said he spoke to City Planner, Mari Brunner, about wayfinding because it has been a long-term high priority of BPPAC. The Director of Parks, Recreation, & Facilities, Andy Bohannon, is also in favor of wayfinding on the trail systems and so staff agrees that wayfinding is a good match for this grant. Mr. Schoefmann knew that MAST likes to distribute funds throughout the region and so a scalable project between many towns is amenable. He and Ms. Brunner also talked about transition streets between the trail network, including a potential trailhead at Emerald Street and the Ashuelot Rail Trail, as well as at the entrance to the Ashuelot River Park/Jonathan Daniels Trail. Mr. Redfern said that adding wayfinding signs is listed as a priority in the Keene Comprehensive Master Plan.

Mr. Horner said that \$90,000 is available and the application deadline is July 31. Regarding wayfinding, he said that the Southwest Region Planning Commission found that wayfinding would be beneficial at many points on the Ashuelot Rail Trail, where points run very close to town centers throughout the region, but are unknown to trail-goers. He agreed that that multi-town wayfinding, with uniform branding across the region, would be compelling for this grant.

Dr. Brehme was enthusiastic about the benefits of wayfinding but wanted to know if wayfinding along trails would be relevant to a complete streets grant. Mr. Schoefmann said that he and Ms. Brunner discussed transition zones such as Emerald, Island, and West Streets, where the trails interface with City infrastructure, which he thinks could make the case for integrating wayfinding. Vice Chair Bryenton agreed that wayfinding seemed applicable.

5) Wayfinding

a. <https://walkyourcity.org/>

Mr. Horner recalled from a few months ago that there has been a lot of interest on the topic and he has shared with the group a potential approach to expand wayfinding in Keene. The Director of Parks, Recreation, & Facilities, Andy Bohannon, is also very interested and there is now funding for a kiosk at the intersection of the Ashuelot and Cheshire Rail Trails. He suggested this particular wayfinding system because it is cheap, easy, and would be a way to determine the most beneficial locations for wayfinding signage and key destinations. He also noted observing more people walking and biking than ever before Covid-19, which suggests a need for wayfinding and the potential for a greater impact.

Mr. Horner said an advantage of the system is a clear toolkit for starting a campaign and he wanted to focus on the first two steps at this meeting to decide if the Committee wants to consider this approach. Therefore, he wanted to discuss what the goals of a wayfinding system are. From his perspective, a goal was promoting economic vitality and supporting businesses and organizations, such as promoting walking/biking to key destinations from suburban areas surrounding Keene. He said one goal of this program is to change perception of how long it takes

to walk or bike to a key destination from the rail trails. Another potential goal he considered is raising awareness of this Committee's work, among many other entities working on walking/cycling issue. He said QR codes could be placed on wayfinding signs that take the user to resources. He said that establishing goals from the beginning is essential when identifying the focus area for signage in this program. He thinks that this Committee is a good place to determine what this program could achieve or if it makes sense as a part of greater wayfinding efforts in Keene, without being redundant with what already exists. He said this project could be implemented sooner than later and would provide useful information for future more permanent and higher level investments. He asked what other Committee members' wayfinding goals are.

Vice Chair Bryenton asked what it would cost to complete phase one or two of Walk the City signage. Mr. Horner said in the hundreds of dollars for plastic signs affixed with zip ties. Mr. Horner said they are attractive but not intended to be permanent, but rather a first step in alerting the public to walking and cycling advocacy. Vice Chair Bryenton asked if there are means to quantify that increased awareness. Mr. Horner suggested tracking who is scanning the signs, including hashtags on the signs that people can use to contribute ideas, or installing automatic counters before and after installation. Dr. Brehme suggested a second sign below the main sign asking, "Is this sign helpful," and directing people to a survey. He added that because this is such a small grant, it could be written that these funds would be used to identify more permanent wayfinding sign locations and funding sources for the permanent effort.

Councilor Manwaring asked if there are signs up currently directing people where to go with the North and South Bridges closed. Mr. Schoefmann said the state installed signage of closure but no one had seen signage directing to an alternate route. Councilor Manwaring supported the wayfinding effort and asked if it was worth having Mr. Horner come to Pathways for Keene as a potential funding source, to provide a better understanding of the benefits of wayfinding, which could be helpful with the bridges closed currently, for example.

Rowland Russell supported the effort as a pilot study.

Mr. Schoefmann would create a list of potential campaign areas, key destinations, possible sign locations, and current sign locations. Mr. Horner presented the map of a potential area, focusing on the rail trails and main commercial corridor of downtown Keene. He suggested a greater conversation at the next meeting of boundaries, sign locations, information on signage, etc., with a list of potential locations, and how they relate to the complete streets grant created by staff.

The Chairman recognized Mr. Kowalczyk who liked the idea and could envision this expanding into Swanzey with signs branded similarly directing to key areas in Keene and other towns. Mr. Redfern agreed that Swanzey should be included because having at least two towns involved enhances chances of getting the grant. Mr. Redfern suggested planning for the second phase of branding more permanent signage and he thanked Mr. Horner for his presentation.

6) Project Updates

Cheshire Rail Trail Park Avenue Loop: The final design was accepted by NH Department of Transportation and City staff is revising those designs in preparation for a bid package for construction. The Committee received recently an email from Mr. Schoefmann with abutters' concerns about developing the Ammi Brown Road as a component of this project, which the Municipal Services, Facilities, & Infrastructure Committee would hear the evening of this meeting. BPPAC support of the project could help reinforce positive input from public sessions in 2017. Councilor Manwaring said the primary concern would be about parking and more traffic so she thought support from BPPAC would be helpful.

7) New Business

a. Items to be included for next meeting

1. Wayfinding – Invite Andy Bohannon
2. A presentation by Mr. Kowalczyk

There was an event presented by MAST, the Monadnock Food Coop, and the Monadnock International Film Festival – a free screening on May 28 of the film *Motherload*, about cargo cycling and it promotes a more inclusive cycling community.

8) Adjournment

a. Next Meeting Date – June 10, 2020

There being no further business, Vice Chair Bryenton adjourned the meeting at 9:27 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Katie Kibler, Minute Taker
June 1, 2020

Additional Edits by,
Will Schoefmann, GIS Technician
June 4, 2020