



**Amherst Bicycle & Pedestrian
Advisory Committee**

Meeting Minutes – APPROVED (1/12/2021)
December 8, 2020

1. Meeting Venue

Meeting attendees: Chris Buchanan – Chair, Rick Katzenberg – Vice Chair, Judy Shenk, Chris Shenk, John Harvey (Alternate), Tom Christensen, George Bower, Carolyn Mitchell (Alternate), and Simon Sarris (Alternate).

Staff present: Natasha Kypfer – Town Planner, Kristan Patenaude – Minute taker.

Chairman Chris Buchanan called the meeting to order at 6:04pm, with the following statement. As Chair of the Amherst Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, I find that due to the State of Emergency declared by the Governor as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and in accordance with the Governor's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, as extended by various Executive Orders, this public body is authorized to meet electronically.

Please note that there is no physical location to observe and listen contemporaneously to this meeting, which was authorized pursuant to the Governor's Emergency Order. However, in accordance with the Emergency Order, I am confirming that we are: Providing public access to the meeting by telephone, with additional access possibilities by video or other electronic means:

We are utilizing Zoom for this electronic meeting.

All members of the Board have the ability to communicate contemporaneously during this meeting through this platform, and the public has access to contemporaneously listen and, if necessary, participate in this meeting through dialing the following phone #929-205-6099 and password 870 0800 8244, or by clicking on the following website address: <https://zoom.us/j/87008008244> that was included in the public notice of this meeting.

Providing public notice of the necessary information for accessing the meeting:

We previously gave notice to the public of the necessary information for accessing the meeting, including how to access the meeting using Zoom or telephonically. Instructions have also been provided on the website of the Planning Board at: www.amherstnh.gov.

Providing a mechanism for the public to alert the public body during the meeting if there are problems with access: If anybody has a problem, please call 603-341-5290.

Adjourning the meeting if the public is unable to access the meeting:

In the event the public is unable to access the meeting, the meeting will be adjourned and rescheduled.

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Please note that all votes that are taken during this meeting shall be done by roll call vote. Let's start the meeting by taking a roll call attendance. When each member states their presence, please also state whether there is anyone in the room with you during this meeting, which is required under the Right-to- Know law.

Chris Buchanan – alone; Chris Shenk – in the room with Judy Shenk; Judy Shenk – in the room with Chris Shenk; Carolyn Mitchell - alone; Tom Christensen – alone; John Harvey – aye; Simon Sarris – alone; George Bower – alone; and Rick Katzenberg – alone; all present.

2. Proposed 2021 Warrant Article

Chris Buchanan explained that the initial proposal for this Warrant Article was made to the Board of Selectmen on October 26, 2020. The Ways & Means Committee heard the presentation for this Warrant Article on November 23, 2020. The Board and Committee will vote soon to support/not support all of the proposed Warrant Articles. The group should now begin to try to communicate the complicated concept of this Warrant Article to voters. He explained that this will be a challenge. The Warrant Article contains language about establishing a Capital Reserve Fund (CRF) and it needs to be communicated that the purpose of this CRF is to establish a side path along the road near Souhegan High School. The practical application for these funds is to either fund 1/3 of this project or use to funds towards 20% of a potential matching grant.

In response to a question from Simon Sarris, Chris Buchanan stated that the Ways & Means members who were present last year understood the Warrant Article idea, but the new members were confused regarding how the Warrant Article worked in conjunction with a potential grant. Some of the members wanted more information about the grant and the associated possible minimum project cost. Unfortunately, this information is not currently available. Some of the members also seemed confused about the side path project itself, although they agreed they would prefer not to have kids walking along that road.

The Committee discussed the wording of the Warrant Article and the included wording about seeking to fund the CRF with an amount each year for the next three years. Simon Sarris stated that he preferred to communicate to voters that the Committee will continue to go after grants and solicit donations before asking voters for more money.

George Bower explained that the concept of a CRF is that the impact of a project is spread out over a number of years. This is the same process that the Town currently uses to fund fire trucks. Voters need to understand the target project and the estimated cost of the project that they are being asked to fund.

Rick Katzenberg stated that this is a very popular project that most know about. He stated that the Committee should be precise in communicating its strategy and the time it will take to complete it.

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Simon Sarris expressed concern that the group's other side path project has not yet been completed and, thus, there is no example to point to. He suggested that, for year two, the Committee could communicate that it will be asking local businesses for donations to help with the project, before asking for additional CRF amounts.

In response to a question from Tom Christensen, Chris Buchanan stated that the Warrant Article is written that the funds will be spent on multimodal infrastructure in Town and that the Board of Selectmen will be the agents of the fund.

Chris Buchanan suggested that the group gather a list of possible questions and well-defined answers for them. The group needs to communicate that the CRF will be a place to hold funds for multimodal infrastructure. The included CRF language allows the funds to be expended for other projects, but the intention will be to use the funds for this specific project.

Judy Shenk suggested that the group should emphasize why this project is the first project on the group's list. She also suggested that the group work to publish the schedule for the Amherst Street side path construction, in order to add transparency to the process.

Rick Katzenberg suggested that the group communicate to all interested stakeholders, including the soccer club, graduates of SHS, parents, etc.

Chris Buchanan explained that he has scheduled time for two public work sessions, for Committee members to discuss possible communications items related to the Warrant Article: December 10, and December 22, at 7pm.

3. Public Trails on Private Land

Chris Buchanan stated that the Amherst Conservation Commission recently completed a new trail that connects the B&M Rail Trail to the Pond Parish area.

4. Souhegan Valley Rail Trail

Chris Buchanan explained that CSX has announced its intentions to purchase all of Pan Am Railway's real estate holdings. The US Surface Transportation Board is the federal board that has regulatory authority over this transaction. There will be a time for public comment on this transaction. He suggested that someone from the Committee should submit a letter in support of a rail trail within the right of way and the associated project. The Board of Selectmen could then be asked for their support of the letter.

Chris Buchanan explained that someone has suggested that the Souhegan Valley Rail Trail change its name to one that evokes imagery of a rail with trail concept. This suggestion has been pushed back on, as there has already been some amount of marketing done for projects under the existing name.

Rick Katzenberg exited the meeting.

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5. Project Status

a. Amherst Street Sidepath

Chris Buchanan explained that the DPW has communicated that the survey work is complete along Amherst Street. Nearly all of Amherst Street has a 66-foot-wide right of way. The road itself is generally situated in the middle of the right of way and is approximately 35 feet wide. This allows for generous space for the side path project to work within. There are some areas that are narrower than this, but no area is too narrow to accommodate the plan as presented.

b. Boston Post Road Sidepath (Proposal)

This project was already discussed earlier in the meeting.

c. Eversource Transmission Lines & Public Access to Buck Meadow, Parkhurst Place, SHS, AMS, Bean Fields, Horse Hill Nature Preserve (Merrimack)

There is no update at this time.

d. Old Manchester Road

Chris Buchanan explained that the Board of Selectmen heard a presentation on this project from DPW Director, Eric Hahn. There was a generally positive reception to the idea. The Board asked Eric Hahn to schedule a public meeting for information on the project. This hasn't yet happened.

e. Amherst Village Multimodality Project

There is no update at this time.

6. Other Updates

Chris Buchanan stated that he was contacted by a civil engineer who is interested in volunteering for this Committee. However, this person is unable to meet at the general 6pm meeting time. He asked the Committee members if they would consider moving the meeting time to 7pm. The Committee members present were in general agreement. Chris Buchanan explained that he would reach out to any members not currently present.

7. Approval of Minutes

John Harvey moved to approve the meeting minutes of November, as amended [add Carolyn Mitchell's name to the attendees.] Chris Shenk seconded.
All in favor.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:59pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristan Patenaude

Minutes approved: January 12, 2021