



**Amherst Bicycle & Pedestrian  
Advisory Committee**

Meeting Minutes - DRAFT  
September 13, 2022

1 Meeting attendees: Chris Buchanan – Chair, Wendy Rannenber, Judy Shenk, Michael Merra,  
2 Rick Katzenberg, George Bower (remote) [7:40pm], Patrick Daniel, and Tom Christensen.  
3 Staff present: Eric Slosek – DPW Director, Kristan Patenaude – Recording Secretary (remote)

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5 Chris Buchanan called the meeting to order at 7:02pm. He invited DPW Director Slosek to  
6 give an update on any DPW-related projects.

7  
8 DPW Director Slosek explained that the bench project on Amherst Street is coming along.  
9 The footings have been dug out and the concrete should be able to be poured tomorrow.  
10 Sometime next week, the benches will likely be installed. The DPW is also working to install  
11 the bike/ped counters along Amherst Street. The counters will be located just before 130  
12 Amherst Street, heading toward Milford, and just after a fire hydrant on Milford land just after  
13 Balsam Lane. He explained that the counters send out a reflective beam from a post and are  
14 placed to not pick up vehicles. 2” deep cuts will be made in the ground to place the wires.

15  
16 Chris Buchanan explained that data from the counters will currently be collected by hand,  
17 using a phone app. There is a cloud-based service, but this was a much more expensive  
18 option. Data can be collected as often as the Committee wants but is recommended to be  
19 collected quarterly. He noted that these counters came through a grant from the Bean  
20 Foundation.

21  
22 In response to a question from Tom Christensen, Chris Buchanan explained that these  
23 counters can distinguish between a pedestrian and a bicyclist. The deduction loops in the  
24 ground can detect metal, from a bicycle or scooter, passing over them.

25  
26 DPW Director Slosek stated that the Town is on the Nashua Regional Planning Commission’s  
27 (NRPC’s) list to have a traffic study done on Old Manchester Road at some point this fall.  
28 This will help move along the shoulder project. He noted that NRPC is currently completing a  
29 Road Surface Management Study (RSMS) in Town.

30  
31 Regarding paving along Amherst Street, DPW Director Slosek explained that the section  
32 between Foundry Street and Juniper Drive will be milled tomorrow in order to move the  
33 center line over, away from the sidepath, to create equal lanes along Amherst Street. Paving  
34 will happen shortly thereafter.

35  
36 Chris Buchanan explained that the Committee has been strongly encouraged to obtain  
37 preliminary engineering for projects upon submittal to increase chances of success for grant

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opportunities. He asked how to get any level of engineering completeness on proposed projects. DPW Director Slosek stated that the DPW could consider seeking to place funding for some level of engineering in its budget moving forward. This would depend on if the scope of the project is already known.

Chris Buchanan stated that every time he has been through the TAP process, Nashua has won, because the smaller surrounding towns cannot produce as competitive of an application. He explained that the Committee since 2017 has looked to find cost effective ways to do things and reduce taxpayer funding spent on projects by utilizing volunteer labor and not overcommitting to projects too much or too early. He noted that the Committee has maybe gone too far in that way. It has missed numerous grant funding opportunities that likely would have been competitive because engineering was not prepared nor was money set aside for the applications. Regarding Amherst Street, the Committee went to bat for the project with a one-year timeline and a conceptual level view of what the project would be. The project would then evolve if approved by the voters, because the engineering happened after the project was funded. As a result, some of the residents in Town were disappointed that the final execution deviated from the original concept in a few ways, but there was no other way for the Committee to do it. Due to lack of funding, the project could not be engineered prior to, and the Committee could not get an engineering vision for the project. The Committee was stuck with a concept only. This project panned out, thanks to the DPW and other volunteers. He would prefer to have fully engineered projects complete early on to have viable funding opportunities and clear visions for the taxpayers.

DPW Director Slosek stated that price increases on materials and an unpredictable construction market also make this process more difficult.

### **1. Safe Streets and Roads for All Grant Update**

Chris Buchanan stated that a small side group of the Committee was committed to developing a vision for this grant. He then cancelled it unilaterally. He still believes that Amherst continues to be a uniquely attractive applicant for this grant and is surprised by the language in it and how it feels like it is written for places like Amherst and the Village project. This grant opportunity will be available annually in September for five or six years. The town of Hanover is applying for it this year and have asked for all of the work that this Committee has put into the process to help inform them. He wished Hanover well because if Hanover is able to successfully obtain a grant then hopefully they would provide the Committee that same help next year. Hanover is seeking to do the same thing that Amherst is, which is to rehabilitate a National Historic District downtown during scheduled road reconstruction into a general shared space scheme informed by public input.

Chris Buchanan explained that he has not had the time nor physical ability to put in the amount of time needed in order to accomplish this task and he didn't want to shirk the responsibility onto others. He also believes that there are a couple of steps that the Committee needs to go through, in order to have a viable grant. Beginning work with Mobicon now on the Village project is a great start. That includes grant writing and engineering. This is what

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will make the Village project a possible recipient of a grant. He believes it would be best to apply next year for the project that is already defined, using input to be received from the public and the engineering from Mobicon to make a more viable application. The application is due in two days.

Wendy Rannenberg agreed.

In response to a question from Patrick Daniel, Chris Buchanan explained that the Committee has identified a scope of work but has not prescribed what will be placed in the area. This is only a project concept at this time. Mobicon will help to determine what the public wants to see for this project. This product will determine how the application looks. Hanover will receive feedback, either positive or negative on its project, and would likely be open to collaborating to share this information with Amherst.

Chris Buchanan explained that one requirement to submit the application is a Safety Action Plan, which is essentially a Complete Streets Plan. In this, the Town enumerates roads and streets and what it wants to do to them. There are specific criteria which will need to be added to the Multimodal Master Plan in order to make sure it can be considered a Safety Action Plan for the grant. This will need to be completed as an administrative item before next August.

*George Bower joined the meeting remotely.*

George Bower stated that he would help augment the Multimodal Master Plan. He stated that he believes the absence of structural support which agencies are looking for has been part of the problem in achieving grants.

## **2. Village Engineering Work Overview**

Chris Buchanan explained that a kickoff meeting has been held between Mobicon and representatives from the Town to initiate the Village engineering project. The intent of that first meeting was to lay out a schedule and set up the public input process. There will be two meetings upcoming in October to start that public input process: a stakeholder meeting and a general public meeting. The stakeholder meeting is intended to be a collaborative, remote, meeting between those who live, work, or own businesses in the Village and representatives from various Town boards/commissions. This will be held on October 4, 2022, from 9am-11am. The public meeting, for anyone in Town interested, will be held by Mobicon on October 18, 2022, tentatively at Wilkins School. He will make these posted Committee meetings in order to drum up interest.

## **3. Congressional Designated Funding Update**

Chris Buchanan shared feedback received regarding the Congressional Designated Spending request. This feedback was provided for both Amherst and Milford. He explained that Amherst applied for roughly \$1.7M for the School Campus project, specifically a bridge over the Souhegan River, which accounted for approximately 80% of that project cost. Milford applied for \$1M for the design and rehabilitation of Amherst Street, between the Amherst

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Town border and the swing bridge, including a design overhaul of water infrastructure, and drainage, as well as installing a sidepath on the northern face of the road continuing the sidepath where it is now to the swing bridge in the Oval. Both of these projects were supported and selected by Senator Shaheen for federal funding and submitted to the US Senate Appropriations Committee. Both proposals were seen as strong applicants, but eventually were both cut from the subcommittee of the US Senate Appropriations Committee. Senator Shaheen's Office indicates that the projects were strong applicants and encourages for them to be resubmitted in 2023.

Chris Buchanan explained that the Committee also received information on how to draft a stronger application for next year. First, unless the project is very small or the community has established poverty-related needs, usually the municipality is expected to contribute something to the project. Both of these applications were 100% federal funding applications. Secondly, the towns might consider working together on these projects in order to indicate that they are regional projects. Third, infrastructure projects should at least include preliminary engineering. The greater degree of engineering completeness, the stronger the application. Next, these projects should be included in the Metropolitan Planning Organization's Short-term Infrastructure Plan. NRPC puts this together and the NRPC Commission votes on it. This would allow the projects to become established regional priorities.

Rick Katzenberg asked about removing the bridge from Amherst's project proposal. He noted that Amherst's proposed projects do not seem to have anything to do with Milford's proposal. He believes Amherst should strengthen its application and go it alone.

Chris Buchanan stated that he believes there is plenty of time to work on next year's application submission. He asked the Committee to discuss budgeting and future planning. He noted that these projects were submitted under the larger Baboosic Greenway Project. The feedback suggested that collaborating with Milford opens the projects up to multijurisdictional funding opportunities.

George Bower stated that he does not believe it is difficult to assert that these projects together are regional because Amherst is working on and has completed some pieces of this larger project, and Milford continues to work on its pieces. This could be a real regional network. He believes that these projects did not make it to the final round of the funding because engineering was not in place and there were not matching funds. These items need to be fixed for the next application process. The Town also needs to examine its in-kind work on this project, such as DPW budget funds and volunteer hours.

Wendy Rannenberg stated that she believes the Strategic Plan needs to really emphasize the need for the engineering work to be funded. This could be emphasized using some of the feedback received from this grant. She stated that she would work on updating this document.

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Rick Katzenberg stated that he believes engineering needs to be in the budget and not through extra warrant articles.

George Bower stated that the Town's application was not denied because of what was in it; it was denied because of something not included, namely the engineering. The Town's application didn't include the resources the Appropriations Committee was looking for.

The Committee agreed that it would like to see incorporation of a sum of money into the DPW budget, specifically for engineering purposes. Also, it would like to see the continuation of the Multimodal Capital Reserve Fund (CRF) for matching funds and construction funds for the projects.

Chris Buchanan stated that, in the past, the Committee has requested \$100,000 for engineering and \$75,000 for the warrant article for matching funds. George Bower agreed with the \$100,000 for engineering but suggested no less than \$125,000 for the matching funds. For the \$1.7M project, the Town needs to have a minimum of \$200,000-\$250,000 in matching funds. The Town needs to be able to show it can raise matching funds for grant applications. Chris Buchanan noted that the CRF currently has approximately \$65,000 in it.

Chris Buchanan noted that the \$75,000 CRF request was rejected this year by voters. He is concerned with attempting to raise the amount this year to \$125,000-\$150,000. George Bower stated that, without matching funds, the Committee does not need to submit another request for an earmark amount. Without being receptive to the feedback received, this project application will not make it through Senator Shaheen's Office. Using the feedback received to make this point will be a powerful tool for the Committee.

Wendy Rannenberg stated that the Committee has nothing to lose by simply proposing a warrant article for \$125,000-\$150,000 to the Board of Selectmen, with the associated feedback.

Chris Buchanan did not disagree with the idea but has concern with selling this item to the public.

Rick Katzenberg stated that he believes the CRF warrant article failed due to fear from the public about the large school project warrant article passing and the financial implications.

Chris Buchanan noted that almost every warrant article passed, other than those associated with the schools, including the Committee's article.

*George Bower left the meeting at 8:15pm.*

Chris Buchanan noted that the suggestions are for \$100,000 for the DPW budget and either a warrant article for \$75,000 or one for \$125,000-\$150,000.

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Tom Christensen suggested that there could have been an issue with the Committee's marketing of the warrant article last year. A key element of the success will be a marketing program. Wendy Rannenberg stated that it is hard to know why the failure happened, but it does seem to revolve around the association with the schools.

In response to a question from DPW Director Slosek regarding completion of the eastern portion of Amherst Street, Chris Buchanan stated that the first round of money from the CRF was intended to go to the Village engineering study and, in the next year, a portion of that would contribute to this paving project.

Rick Katzenberg suggested that the Committee present a proposed warrant article for \$125,000-\$150,000 to the Board of Selectmen for input. Chris Buchanan noted concern regarding giving a range of numbers.

Patrick Daniel stated that he believes the feedback gives the Committee the best chance to try to increase the amount to \$150,000.

Rick Katzenberg asked, if the Town raised the \$150,000, reapplied through the Senator's Office and was again rejected if the money would have to be spent. Chris Buchanan stated that it would not have to be spent for that project, and the Town would have then raised enough to apply for a myriad of conventional grants, including the TAP Program. Rick Katzenberg stated that this is a great selling point for the warrant article.

Chris Buchanan noted that there are two other projects the Committee should strive to raise money for, such as the Village project and the State 10-Year Plan. What the Committee chooses to do for this year does not set a precedent for future years.

Chris Buchanan noted that the suggestions are for \$100,000 for the DPW budget and a warrant article for \$150,000 to further discuss with the Board of Selectmen.

In response to a question from Michael Merra, Chris Buchanan explained that the \$150,000 was determined in 2019. The School Campus project was estimated at that time to cost \$225,000, split into three years for gradual fundraising amounts of \$75,000. This has now become a four-year vision because the warrant article was rejected and there are likely price increases. This was created simultaneously with the Amherst Street figure and likely does not include engineering.

DPW Director Slosek stated that the engineer estimated that the increased costs to bridge work is approximately 20% for construction related costs and design engineering. He noted that there are likely even more increases from costs based in 2019 than the 20%.

Wendy Rannenberg stated that this should solidify the Committee's increased request for \$150,000.



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Chris Buchanan stated that the Committee could seek the funding to construct the smaller portion of the School Campus project, located only directly in front of the schools, and that would double as a local match for the larger portion.

Chris Buchanan stated that he is uncomfortable with these numbers and will be expecting assistance to market this to the public before the next vote. It is difficult to communicate the feedback and reasonableness of this request.

#### **4. Strategic planning and budgeting**

The Committee discussed this as part of the previous agenda item.

#### **5. Path furniture: donated benches and counters**

The Committee already discussed this item.

Chris Buchanan stated that the Baboosic Greenway has been submitted to NRPC for inclusion on the State 10-Year Plan, along with a couple of other projects. He will be presenting this to NRPC tomorrow at 12pm.

Chris Buchanan stated that, regarding the State portion of Route 122, he sent an e-mail communication to District 5 and New Hampshire DOT in July about the bridge rehabilitation work being done over Route 101 and the restriping scheme. This will allow the sidepath to be continued via paint from Courthouse Road to Birch Park. The design was approved, and he believes this work is ongoing. He will follow-up on this via email.

Tom Christensen made a presentation regarding trash along the sidepath. He stated that the sidepath is working. People are enjoying the experience, walking, and meeting each other along the way. He stated that, in his travels each day along the path for 44 days, there was no trash generated by anybody walking on the sidepath. Any trash along the sidepath was the same trash that has been there for years. He borrowed a cargo bike from Manchester Moves and noted that the group runs a program to help kids bike to school. There has been some interest in starting a similar program in Amherst.

Tom Christensen noted that one of the larger concerns he had during his trash cleanup each day, was the number of cigarette butts thrown from cars along the sidepath. He suggested a semiannual trash collection along the path. The most popular items he cleaned up were beer cans, bottles, and nip containers. Over seven days, 21 trash items were collected, and this appears to be a typical amount. He did not get the sense that there is an overabundance of trash along the route.

Wendy Rannenbergs stated that there was some concern regarding people sitting on the benches along Amherst Street and leaving trash behind. Thus, the Board of Selectmen asked the Committee to speak to abutters and garner support. The data from Tom Christensen helped in this effort.

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**6. July 12, 2022 Minutes**

**Rick Katzenberg moved to approve the meeting minutes of July 12, 2022, as submitted. Seconded by Michael Merra.**

**Vote: 7-0-0, motion carried unanimously.**

**Rick Katzenberg moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:47pm. Seconded by Wendy Rannenberg.**

**Vote: 7-0-0, motion carried unanimously.**

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Kristan Patenaude*