



**Amherst Bicycle & Pedestrian
Advisory Committee**

Meeting Minutes - APPROVED
January 10, 2023

1 Meeting attendees: Chris Buchanan, Wendy Rannenberg, Judy Shenk, Chris Shenk, Michael
2 Merra, Rick Katzenberg, George Bower (remote), and Tom Christensen.
3 Staff present: Eric Slosek – DPW Director, Kristan Patenaude – Recording Secretary (remote)

4
5 Chris Buchanan called the meeting to order at 7:02pm.

6
7 **1. Baboosic Greenway North-03**

- 8
 - **CMAQ Grant**
 - **Philanthropic and Public Fundraising Campaign**
 - **Interim restriping proposal**

9
10
11
12 Chris Buchanan stated that the Town submitted its CMAQ application to the Department of
13 Transportation last week. If the Town is awarded the grant, this could be worth approximately
14 \$1.2M of funding but would require a \$305,000 local match.

15
16 Wendy Rannenberg stated that the Board of Selectman does not seem thrilled about this idea.
17 It appears as though, if the Town is granted the \$1M, the Board believes the Town will first
18 need to raise the \$1M and then be paid back. In two years, the Town will be spending over
19 \$1M that it does not have to buy a fire engine. Thus, the Board is concerned regarding some
20 serious budget issues. The idea of the Town coming up with \$1M, to pay for a side path along
21 a section of road that it does not even own is concerning to the Board. The Board did however
22 agree to go ahead with this grant application.

23
24 DPW Director Eric Slosek agreed that the Board has reservations. The Board agreed to accept
25 the grant application process for now and revisit funding sources later. The Town would need
26 to allocate where the matching funds will come from.

27
28 Chris Buchanan noted that most State-managed grant opportunities for infrastructure are
29 reimbursement. This is not unique to CMAQ. It is very common for towns to apply to this
30 program and the TAP grant as well. He stated that this issue is not unique to Amherst. He
31 stated that the Committee needs to do a little bit of education and try to figure out what it can
32 do. If the town is incapable of pursuing reimbursement grants, the Committee is going to be
33 out of luck for grant funding. He stated that the Board seemed to draw a comparison between
34 this project and the side path along the municipal portion of Amherst Street. This is somewhat
35 of an unfair comparison which requires further education. Unfortunately, the higher amount is
36 the normal amount. To construct this along a State highway requires the Town to go through a
37 process which seeks State intervention and approval. The higher costs, included in the CMAQ

January 10, 2022

APPROVED

application, are required for projects along State roads. Construction of the side path along Amherst Street involved incredible cost savings by coinciding with scheduled road reconstruction. Pursuing TAP or CMAQ grants in 2019 to construct the side path for the same amount of funding would have cost approximately \$2M+, to go through federal grant programs administered by the State. Instead, the Town municipally raised approximately \$300,000 to construct this project at the same time as road reconstruction. That is an incredible bargain for 1.9 miles of infrastructure. Thus, it is a false comparison to look at 1.9 miles of Amherst Street along a municipally managed road and extrapolate a comparable rate per linear foot for a State highway.

DPW Director Eric Slosek noted that the Thornton Ferry Toad I bridge project had increased engineering costs due to federal funds being used. The figure was somewhere around an additional 20%. The proposed extension of a culvert and the new culvert proposed under Baboosic Lake Road are fairly extensive areas of work that were not part of the Amherst Street project.

Chris Buchanan stated that the Committee needs to work on educating its primary audience, which is the five people on the Board of Selectmen, to be more knowledgeable regarding the pros and cons, and the benefits of the Committee's efforts. Rick Katzenberg stated that there are few vehicles available to accomplish public outreach. It is very difficult to get the word out easily. He suggested a subcommittee for communications.

Tom Christensen suggested clear events for people to walk up and down the side path. There needs to be discussion on how to get people to embrace these items.

Chris Buchanan noted that there will be a ranking of the CMAQ applications at the end of March. Awards will likely be a couple months later.

2. Survey funding donation, update

Chris Buchanan explained that Milford was considering working on the gap between Amherst and Milford's sidewalks, but it was found that to rehabilitate the Milford portion of the side path there will be millions of dollars of underground utility work needed, leading to likely a multiyear project. Thus, the philanthropist who was seeking to help fund the inclusion of a side path in that area has expressed willingness to work with the Committee in the short term. That person has offered to put up between \$35,000-\$50,000 towards the CMAQ local match. That person has asked for the Committee to find another nonprofit to be a vehicle for private donations. The Committee could ask the Bean Foundation for capital fundraising. This group does capital fundraising for up to 3%-4% of a project and this could be eligible for that match. As a result, the Committee could have up to approximately \$100,000 of match funding available through donations.

Rick Katzenberg suggested that the Amherst Community Foundation may offer the Committee to open an escrow account for this project. Wendy Rannenberg explained that the

January 10, 2022

APPROVED

Community Foundation is a 501c3 nonprofit. The purpose of the group is specifically to allow the Amherst community to donate to certain projects in Town. Past projects including lighting the Christmas tree on the Green, the Community Church steeple, and projects at Joshua's Park. If a project is chosen, the Foundation will create a website specific to that project. Rick Katzenberg suggested that the Committee come up with a Plan A, to find a nonprofit vehicle, and then an alternative Plan B, specific to the same project but finite and to be accomplished when the \$100,000 goal is hit.

Judy Shenk stated that the selling part of this project is the Greenway. Rick Katzenberg stated that this would also reduce the Town's burden. He suggested a small subcommittee of this group to further discuss this. Judy Shenk, Chris Shenk, Chris Buchanan, and Rick Katzenberg agreed to be part of this subcommittee.

Chris Buchanan discussed the interim striping proposal along the Baboosic Greenway. While CMAQ is for an optimal solution, the restriping is the fairly inexpensive, quicker option. Engineered drawings have been completed, which were requested by the Department of Transportation (DOT). The DOT is not committed to this proposal necessarily, but they wanted something to review. There are two different versions these drawings. One of them is a fixed-width facility with an 8' width the whole way, and the other one is a variable width facility that would expand, and contract based off space in the shoulder area. He stated that his concern is the Beaver Brook box culvert are of the road.

Eric Slosek noted that this section of road would be restriped every year, to keep up with the retro reflectivity. He noted that the State likely would require the Town to sign a maintenance agreement for the striping to perpetually become the Town's responsibility. He stated that he would review the plans with the State's project manager for this project. In 2017, the Board of Selectmen had discussed milling away the old lines and then repainting new ones, but it is not yet clear exactly what will be actually done. The cost for striping and maintenance of this area should not be excessive.

In response to a question from Rick Katzenberg, Eric Slosek explained that maintenance in perpetuity only includes the striping proposed. It does not include plowing, repaving, etc.

In response to a question from Judy Shenk, Chris Buchanan explained that two requests were made to District 5 DOT. One was for this restriping project, which former Community Development Director Gordon Leedy started. The other was for a proposed recreation trail through Town.

Chris Buchanan thanked the Shenks for donating to the Town funds for surveying along the Baboosic Greenway.

3. Village Streets Study (Communications Update)

January 10, 2022

APPROVED

Mike Merra stated that he met with Eric Slosek in early December to get more information about the Village streets project. The intention is to have a public information meeting in March. He and Eric Slosek worked to form 6 basic FAQ questions for this project, including: Why do we want to make changes to the Village streets? Who is Mobycon? Why can't this wait until a later date? Will the public have input? Who has the final say on this proposed project?

Wendy Rannenberg asked if there has been a discussion with some residents who live directly in the Village. She noted that someone may want to reach out to these residents, as their concerns were about problems in the Village today that they want to have addressed. Eric Slosek noted that this was expressed by Doug Chabinsky regarding concerns with traffic speed, noise, etc. in the Village. Wendy Rannenberg explained that this would be an opportunity to get direct feedback on some of these items from residents who have already voiced concerns.

4. AMS/SHS School Campus Project

- **Warrant Article 29 & Communications**
- **FY2024 Congressional Designated Funding Opportunity**

Chris Buchanan explained that the warrant article for the School Campus Project will be #29. The request is for \$75,000. The article has passed once and failed once. The article passed when the Committee undertook communications efforts, and the article failed when the group did no communications efforts. Judy Shenk stated that she believes part of the reason it failed the second time was that it was so closely tied to the schools, and most of the school items failed that year.

Wendy Rannenberg stated that, at last night Board of Selectmen's meeting, the Board went through the entire Deliberative Session presentation. She stated that Selectman Bill Stoughton did a great job presenting this warrant article.

Chris Buchanan noted that the congressional funding application for this project made it very far last year. That was a 100% federal funding opportunity for this project. The feedback was clear; the project needed preliminary engineering and needed to have a local match. To date, \$65,000 has been raised, a bit of engineering has been completed, and there is an opportunity to raise another \$75,000 this year. The ballot is in March, the federal funding opportunity is in April, and the application is already put together. The feedback received from the Senate was that this is a very attractive project, if the two items are completed. These details need to be incorporated.

Chris Buchanan explained that a preliminary engineering report for the School Campus project, similar to that completed for the Baboosic Greenway North 03 project, completed by VHB, exists. This could lead to a stamped engineered report for the School Campus project. There would likely be some sort of funding associated with this request. This is likely a reasonable request to bring to the Chair of the Board of Selectmen.

January 10, 2022

APPROVED

In. response to a question from Eric Slosek, Chris Buchanan stated that, for some federal grant opportunities, funds expended on a project may/may not count toward the local match. Thus, by expending any dollars currently in the fund for multimodal work for this project, that could reduce the local match capability for specific grant opportunities.

In response to a question from Wendy Rannenberg, Chris Buchanan explained that this estimated \$1,000 is to have VHB modify an existing preliminary engineering report and incorporate Hoyle Tanner's engineering work to create a report that is stamped by an engineer for the federal government.

Rick Katzenberg suggested obtaining a firm number before requesting the Selectmen release funds for this item.

Wendy Rannenberg stated that she is amazed there is not already survey data for this area of the Town. Eric Slosek stated that, unless the original surveyor is contacted, it would likely be unclear that this data exists. He stated that he will check Town records for information on this.

5. Other updates

In response to a question from Tom Christensen, Chris Buchanan explained that annual Town Meeting is March 14th. The Committee can ask the DPW Director for permission to stand with signs at the Transfer Station the weekend beforehand. The Deliberative Session is on February 8th at 7pm.

Tom Christensen noted that Bartlett Common has a new leadership team. The group has asked for a new request from the Committee to place a bench at the entryway for consideration.

Eric Slosek stated that the pedestrian counters will be installed along the side path this month. Tom Christensen suggested a group to annually walk the side path to clean it up. Wendy Rannenberg noted that the Town's Annual Clean-up Day is generally hosted by the Conservation Commission.

George Bower stated that a petition warrant article was presented to the Planning Board to change the zoning along scenic roads. The Planning Board heard this item and has adopted it as its own article. This will change certain lot dimensions and is intended to limit the number of house lots and developments that can be done in Town. This is poorly thought-out and conceived, along with being disadvantageous to the goals of this Committee, as it denies the landowner to develop a lot of land. Conservations were occurring with a number of large landowners who were amenable to donate a portion of the lots to extend existing or planned multimodal facilities. As a result of the Planning Board placing this on the Town ballot, a number of the landowners have backed away from these previous commitments. The optimal routing defined for some of these paths could become an issue for these landowners based on the new requirements. The Town can decide to either purchase land from these landowners or

January 10, 2022

APPROVED

negotiate donations. He suggested that Committee members review this proposed warrant article. This only requires a simple majority vote to pass.

Eric Slosek noted that there is an additional warrant article to reclassify Christian Hill Road as a scenic road. George Bower stated that this item is directly related to the other, as it targets another specific large parcel. These items will likely bring the Town back to court.

Wendy Rannenberg stated that the proponents of this article state that it's a great way to preserve land in Town. She hopes that the Committee can work to bring true knowledge about this to the forefront. George Bower stated that there are ongoing efforts to educate the public. The Committee itself likely should not take a particular stance on these items but should work to get the word out. This diminishes the ability to create multimodal path and what landowners can do to protect the land. This will change the building envelope on these lots. Wendy Rannenberg stated that this changes zoning for all who live along scenic roads in Town. George Bower agreed that it would make many of these lots nonconforming and require landowners to visit the Zoning Board of Appeals for variances to make certain changes.

6. November 8, 2022 & December 13, 2022 minutes

Wendy Rannenberg moved to approve the meeting minutes of November 8, 2022, and December 13, 2022, as presented. Seconded by Rick Katzenberg .

Vote: 6-0-1, motion carried [C. Buchanan abstained].

Rick Katzenberg moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:22pm. Seconded by Wendy Rannenberg.

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

*Respectfully submitted,
Kristan Patenaude*

Minutes approved: February 14, 2023