



**Amherst Bicycle & Pedestrian
Advisory Committee**

Meeting Minutes - DRAFT
April 9, 2024

1 Meeting attendees: Wendy Rannenberg (Chair), Chris Buchanan (remote), Jeff Thompson,
2 Rick Katzenberg (Vice Chair), Chris Shenk, Judy Shenk, Tom Christensen

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4 Staff present: Kristan Patenaude – Recording Secretary (remote)

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6 Wendy Rannenberg called the meeting to order at 7:03pm. She explained that she is filling in
7 as Chair until next year's term.

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9 **1. Committee membership**

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11 The Committee discussed its membership and taking on new members.

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13 There was discussion regarding the goals of the Committee and recent work/projects. Tom
14 Christensen noted that the Committee's goals and projects may change as new people come
15 on board as well. Rick Katzenberg stated that he would like previous sets of minutes to be
16 reviewed in order to bring people up to speed. Chris Buchanan stated that he would give a
17 presentation in May regarding the status of the Committee's projects.

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19 **2. Overview of current project status**

20 **• Baboosic Lake to Walnut Hill**

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22 Chris Buchanan stated that this project is a rail trail from Baboosic Lake Road in the area of
23 Birch Park to Walnut Hill with a spur to the Post Office area/Meeting Place Mall. This area is
24 already largely owned by the Town. In 2018, the State awarded the Town a place for this
25 project in its 10-year plan. Originally, this project was to be built in 2029. Last summer, the
26 DOT reached out to offer to build the project over the next 3-4 years. An agreement was
27 signed by the Board of Selectmen to start the process, after a Warrant Article passed regarding
28 interest in the project. Over the next 3-4 years, the Town must determine how to finance 20%,
29 or \$336,600, of this project. This could be done through a budget line item, a capital reserve
30 fund, which would need to be approved by the voters every year, or via fundraising to
31 supplement this amount. \$70,000 has been raised from the Bean Foundation to date. The first
32 two years of this process will include preliminary engineering and design with various routes
33 considered. In the third year, the right of way portion of the project will occur through the
34 State and the route will be solidified.

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36 Tom Christensen asked if there is a way to make the public aware of this area in order to
37 promote support for the project. Wendy Rannenberg stated that many people already use the

April 9, 2024

DRAFT

area and there is a Town-owned trail that is currently managed by the Amherst Conservation Commission (ACC). Chris Buchanan suggested putting together some type of education to alert those who already use the area of the proposed project.

- **School Campus**

Chris Buchanan stated that this is an initiative to build a side path in the area of the Amherst Middle School and Souhegan High School. This has been a goal of the Town's for decades. The Committee sought 20% funding from an infrastructure grant, which has been raised over the course of three years through Warrant Articles. An application has been filed with Senator Shaheen's Office for congressionally designated funding. A determination will likely be given in August. If selected, the project has to wait for a federal budget to be passed.

Rick Katzenberg asked if there is an option to move this project forward under already allocated funding in the Infrastructure Act. Chris Buchanan stated that he does not believe so. If funding is not achieved, he would recommend applying to the Transportation Alternatives Program.

Wendy Rannenberg explained that a bridge over the Souhegan River nearby would increase the cost of the project by approximately 125%. It was thus determined to remove this portion from the project in order to move it forward.

- **Shenks easement**

Chris Buchanan stated that Attorney Tom Quinn has submitted the easement information to the Hillsborough County Registry of Deeds. This should formalize the project's process in the area of Mulberry Lane and Boston Post Road. It is unclear if the DPW has plans to install a culvert in this area soon.

Chris Buchanan explained that there was an intention to construct a bridge across Beaver Brook in this area, at a cost of approximately \$100,000. The bridge is eligible for a State RTP microgrant. Applications are due June 14th. \$20,000 would need to be raised on behalf of the Town and the Shenks have already donated \$5,000 toward this. The Board of Selectmen was asked to include funding for this project in the budget, which was rejected. Wendy Rannenberg noted that the Ways & Means Committee was in favor of including this funding in the budget, but the Board of Selectmen was looking for ways to reduce the increase in the budget. The Board did a great job in reducing the increases that came from health insurance and other obligations.

Chris Buchanan explained that this area also ties into the rail trail. The Town has a significant rail bed that runs through it, but this has been split into many private parcels over the years. The goal is to gather easements in order to create a safe multimodal trail for users throughout Town. The total Baboosic Greenway runs through five local towns, totaling approximately 23 miles. Amherst contains several potential segments of this route.

April 9, 2024

DRAFT

Wendy Rannenberg suggested hosting walks at areas along this route in order to educate the public about the project. This could be done in conjunction with the Recreation Department. Rick Katzenberg suggested that this could also be a community service project for high schoolers.

3. Upcoming planning board development conversations

- **County Rd postponed to Apr 17**

Wendy Rannenberg explained that this applicant previously agreed to place a path through this area as part of the development. The developer recently requested a postponement of its hearing until the Planning Board meeting on April 17th.

- **Christian Hill not yet scheduled**

Wendy Rannenberg explained that this applicant has decided to move forward with a 37-house development in this area. Chris Buchanan sent a letter to the Planning Board regarding a path along Christian Hill Road. The developer suggested this would cost too much and there seemed to be some agreement on the Planning Board. Wendy Rannenberg stated that it would be a mistake to not add a path in this area that has a blind corner and is dangerous for those who travel it. She plans to attend the Planning Board meeting to speak to this. She also plans to write a personal letter to the Planning Board advocating for this.

Tom Christensen expressed how important it will be to connect this development to the Village using a safe pathway.

Wendy Rannenberg stated that there is also a potential application for a development on Brook Road. This would include 18 houses and 79 acres of conservation land.

4. Fundraising over the next several years

- **Grants already applied for**

Wendy Rannenberg noted that the Committee has applied to numerous grants over the years. Some of the applications can potentially be reused in order to reapply. If the Town had had the matching 20% funding, these applications may have been more successful.

- **Grants coming up**

Chris Buchanan stated that the only upcoming grant in 2024 that he is aware of is the RTP microgrant.

- **NRPC assistance with grants**

April 9, 2024

DRAFT

Wendy Rannenberg stated that there may be assistance available through NRPC to write grants. She will look further into this.

- **Amherst Community Foundation**

Rick Katzenberg stated that there is a good relationship between the Committee and the Foundation. There is a portal available for people to donate money to. This could be better marketed to the public.

In response to a question from Tom Christensen, Chris Buchanan explained that there is an opportunity through the Community Development Finance Authority. This is a State agency that allows businesses who pay enterprise taxes to fund similar programs. The Town has 80% funding for projects using \$2,832,703.20 in State funding, which is available for the Baboosic Greenway portion near Walnut Hill. The Town's 20% match is approximately \$700,000 which is needed by 2030. The Committee could consider a CDFA application in the first quarter of 2025. The Committee could consider speaking to local businesses prior to an award to seek support for the application.

Wendy Rannenberg noted that the Committee has projects listed in the CIP and needs to make sure these are kept up to date.

Chris Buchanan noted that the County receives funding that could be available for certain projects of the Committee.

5. Scheduling a walk to collect counter data on Amherst St.

- **Suggested for week of April 28th**

The Committee agreed to set a date between April 30-May 2 for this walk to collect data. The public could also be invited to this meeting.

6. Approval of minutes of March 7, 2023

Rick Katzenberg moved to approve the meeting minutes of March 7, 2023, as presented. Seconded by Chris Buchanan.

Vote: 6-0-0, motion carried unanimously.

7. Other Business

None at this time.

8. Adjournment

Rick Katzenberg moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:02pm. Seconded by Judy Shenk.
Vote: 5-0-0, motion carried unanimously.

TOWN OF AMHERST
Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee

April 9, 2024

DRAFT

169
170 *Respectfully submitted,*
171 *Kristan Patenaude*