



**Amherst Bicycle & Pedestrian  
Advisory Committee**

Meeting Minutes - APPROVED  
June 23, 2020

**1. Meeting Venue Change**

Please be advised that the Amherst Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee will be meeting online via Zoom.

In order to participate in the public ZOOM meeting, please click the following link to join:

<https://zoom.us/j/83478856029>

Or by telephone: (929) 205-6099

Webinar ID: 874 7033 4432

Meeting attendees: Chris Buchanan – Chair, Rick Katzenberg – Vice Chair, Tom Christensen (Non-member Volunteer), Judy Shenk, Chris Shenk, Patrick Daniel, Simon Sarris, and John Harvey (Alternate).

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

Chairman Chris Buchanan called the meeting to order at 6:03pm.

**2. Workshop and Document: Public Trails on Private Land**

Chris Buchanan explained that he sent the draft document to the group yesterday for review. He explained that the function of the document is to be a single reference document for landowner trails on private land and to answer any frequently asked questions that may arise during the process. The document is lengthy because it is meant to be a reference material. He suggested that the Committee members review the document and that it also might be sent to the Amherst Conservation Commission (ACC) for their edits. He believes that the document could be condensed into a single brochure and/or presentation in order to garner interest.

Patrick Daniel stated that the document is very well done and professional. He believes it highlights many key items. He believes it will be a wonderful tool and nudge people toward having conversations that they might not otherwise have.

Chris Shenk stated that he and Judy Shenk agree with Patrick Daniel. He wishes he had the completed document when talking recently with a neighbor of his regarding access through the neighbor's land.

June 23, 2020

**APPROVED**

Chris Buchanan explained that he, Tom Christensen, Kristan Patenaude, and Wendy Rannenberg all worked together on the document. He hopes the document can be used to spark conversations and find a middle ground for mitigating concerns about any potential issues. The information from the document can be used to sit down and have conversations with specific land owners.

Simon Sarris stated that he believes about a page of the document could be edited out. He would also like to see the example agreement located directly after the letter of invitation. He believes the document should be laid out to tell what it is, how it could benefit the reader, what the reader would sign if agreeing to the document, and then the other details that can be examined. The letter of invitation should answer the question of how this will benefit the landowner and town.

Rick Katzenberg suggested that the document be run by Craig Fraley, Recreation Department Director.

Patrick Daniel stated that the document will allow the group to drive community involvement in a grassroots effort. He suggested having a public forum to review the document, once it's in a final stage.

John Harvey stated that he doesn't believe the ACC has any statements from landowners who have trails on their private property. He explained that stewardship of a non-town-owned trail on private property may/may not be taken on by the ACC.

Chris Buchanan explained that the purpose of the document is to target any landowner anywhere in town to show that all trails can lead towards more connectivity. The document aims to answer some commonly asked questions and make people more comfortable with the process.

In response to a question from Simon Sarris, Chris Buchanan stated that the main objections to this idea are liability, decline in property value, and other miscellaneous items. These concerns are all addressed in the frequently asked questions section of the document.

Chris Buchanan explained that one of the miscellaneous concerns was regarding crime on the trails. He would suggest that, fortunately, there isn't much crime in Amherst and that there are ways to engage the Police Department in regard to new trails.

John Harvey explained that the ACC has only had to call the Police Department about three times in the past 10 years, mostly for ATV use on town lands.

John Harvey explained that the ACC has a few trails that would fall under the category of public trails on private land. In these cases, the ACC usually tries to enlist the abutters to do the trail stewardship.

June 23, 2020

APPROVED

Chris Buchanan stated that some of these properties might yield testimonies from the owners about their reactions to having trails on their properties. He will reach out to Wes Robertson, John Harvey, and Jared Hardner from the ACC to have a conversation about this document. He hopes to wrap up work on this document by the Committee's next meeting and then find a way to communicate the information to the public to inspire participation.

Tom Christensen suggested that they take the knowledge from the document and edit it to make an audio or visual presentation. These could be no more than 10 minutes and contain two or three of the items in the document.

Rick Katzenberg suggested that these types of presentations could be used on the town's cable access channel or in other places.

### **3. NH DOT 10-Year Plan**

Chris Buchanan explained that the state's plan currently runs from 2020-2029. This has gone through the legislature and will now be signed into law. Preparations for the next plan, running from 2030-2040, have begun. NRPC has sent a letter requesting any specific projects to include in the 10-year plan process. The intention of including any projects on the plan would be to thus make it easier to the Committee to seek grant funding for these items. The Committee must decide which projects it would like to have added to the plan and then formalize the process with NRPC.

Rick Katzenberg stated that he would like to see these projects added to the Master Plan as well.

Chris Buchanan explained that the 10-year plan includes the sidepath along Route 122, and the rail bed from Manchester to Milford. The State sought to fund the full acquisition of the rail bed through state and federal funds. One segment of this route is in the 10-year plan; others could be included. The DOT also has eminent domain along this route, is needed, but it is preferred for the effort to be a collaborative one.

In response to a question from Simon Sarris, Chris Buchanan stated that there needs to be a balance between submitting too few and too many ideas to be included in the plan. If a barrage of projects is sent in, the State will say no to them. The Committee needs to decide which projects it has that are state funding eligible.

### **4. Amherst Street Sidepath Updates**

Chris Buchanan explained that he doesn't have any updates on this item right now. He will touch base with both DPW Director, Eric Hahn, and the town of Milford regarding their plans.

### **5. "Souhegan Valley Rail Trail" Project**

June 23, 2020

APPROVED

Chris Buchanan explained that he was contacted by NRPC to help/spearhead the project's operation by coordinating with professionals from Nashua through Wilton. He believes the initial concept will be completed within a month.

Tom Christensen suggested that a similar concept was developed for the Rail Trail Coalition, which could be helpful.

Chris Buchanan explained that Charles Martin, from the Rail Trail Coalition, complimented Tom Christensen on what he's seeking to do with this document.

## **6. Other Project Status**

### **a. Purtell Easement**

John Harvey explained that the Purtell Trail is now traversable end-to-end, both on foot and by bike. The ACC has decided to put up a sign on the Old Milford Road entrance to the trail, and not on the Amherst Street entrance, for safety reasons. The trail is 0.6 miles but feels longer. Later this summer, heritage sites will be marked along the trail.

In response to a question from Rick Katzenberg, John Harvey explained that the easement given to the town encompasses the trail. The trail is open to the public for recreational use, per the deed.

In response to a question from Judy Shenk, John Harvey explained that the section running out to Route 122 is too wet to make a trail through right now. There is a possible idea to put a boardwalk trail on it eventually, or to look at a nearby abutter whose land is dry.

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

Chris Buchanan showed the group a map of the proposed Eversource trail. Eversource has been more responsive at this time to the request. The proposed trail would run from Stearns Road to the front of Souhegan High School, under the power lines there and continuing to the Merrimack town line. In Merrimack, the trail would continue to Horse Hill Nature Preserve and connect to existing trails there. All of this land is owned outright by Eversource. There was some reluctance on Eversource's part due to a recent issue in Keene with a similar request, but with a paved trail. Eversource needs to have continued access to this area in order to repair their powerlines. Chris Buchanan explained that all the town is looking for is formalized access to this area, but that Eversource can suggest how this trail would best work. Eversource would like a description of the trail and will then formally consider it.

Chris Buchanan explained that there is a small section of trail that could also run out towards the new Buck Meadow property. If the trail could run to that property, a great amount of town connectivity in this area could be made.

June 23, 2020

APPROVED

**c. Boston Post Road Sidepath (Proposal)**

Chris Buchanan explained that he will be asking Natasha Kypfer to help him write a document, similar to that for the Amherst Street sidepath, in order to make it an official project proposal. He is also checking to see if the road can be considered as part of the State's 10-year Plan. Either way, this should open the doors for some possible federal funding opportunities.

In response to a question from Rick Katzenberg, Chris Buchanan explained that the proposed project runs from NH 122 to Route 101A in Merrimack – the entire segment of BPR. The project would be phased, with the first phase being right in front of schools.

**d. Quohquinnapassakessananagnog Trail (Trail proposal through village near Beaver Brook)**

Chris Buchanan explained that this is a trail suggestion from the public. The proposed trail runs past Wilkins School and then could go towards Jones/Mack Hill Road, and/or towards Beaver Brook Park, and eventually to Amherst Street. This would require the use of the public trails on private land document discussed earlier.

Simon Sarris explained that there is a small trail that leads from the back of the Congregational Church down to the water. He suggested that, if something could connect to a dock there, and out to the school, it would be a great trail.

The group agreed the idea was something to discuss into the future.

**7. Grant and Other Funding Opportunities**

Chris Buchanan explained that there is two trillion dollars in federal infrastructure money being debated currently and could become available in the future.

**8. Approval of Minutes**

**Rick Katzenberg moved to approve the meeting minutes of May 12, 2020.**

**Patrick Daniel seconded.**

**All in favor.**

**The meeting adjourned at 7:15pm.**

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Kristan Patenaude*

*Minutes approved as submitted: July 14, 2020*