



**Amherst Bicycle & Pedestrian
Advisory Committee**

Meeting Minutes - APPROVED
July 14, 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/88974757496>

Or by telephone: (929) 205-6099

Password: 446963

Meeting attendees: Chris Buchanan – Chair, Rick Katzenberg – Vice Chair, Judy Shenk, Chris Shenk, Simon Sarris, and Wendy Rannenberg.

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

Chairman Chris Buchanan called the meeting to order at 6:07pm.

John Harvey (Alternate), Tom Christensen (Non-member Volunteer), George Bower, and Carolyn Mitchell (Alternate) entered

2. Public Trails on Private Land

Chris Buchanan explained that he has taken the edits for this document and started to implement them. He has spoken with George Bower about how to approach private land owners. George Bower also mentioned that the Amherst Land Trust (ALT) can be a resource. Chris Buchanan thus reached out to Sally Wilkins, of the ALT, for her consideration. He believes it's a good idea to incorporate the ALT into this document in some way. The Committee will hold one role, the Conservation Commission another, and the ALT another. It will be a good way to give land owners several options.

George Bower explained that the ALT helps facilitate and structure agreements with land owners. He stated that sometimes people want to donate their land but don't know what to do and thus do nothing because there's no one to represent them; this is part of what the ALT does.

Chris Buchanan suggested that the group delay certain projects/initiatives until there is clear direction through the document and strategy around it.

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3. NH DOT 10-Year Plan

Chris Buchanan explained that the DOT 10-Year Plan is an infrastructure organizational process for the DOT. Having a project in the 10-Year Plan is not a guarantee it will take place, but instead helps to formalize the project and prepare it for other funding sources, such as grants. He explained that planning for the next 10-Year Plan (2030-2040) has begun. NRPC has asked the group to provide possible projects and their rank.

Chris Buchanan explained that there are a couple of project remaining that were originally proposed by Gordon Leedy, which could be included in the Plan. One project is the B&M Rail Trail. This runs from Thornton Ferry I to Mulberry Lane, Pinefields Condos to Merrimack Road, Merrimack Road to Hodgman State Forest, and Hodgman State Forest to River Road. This could essentially connect from Souhegan High School into Amherst Village and out to the Bedford area. Another option is the project proposed by Senate Bill 707; a side path that runs along the length of Route 122 from Amherst to Hollis. Currently the status of this senate bill is that it has been returned for an interim study, basically meaning that it will not be voted on in this legislative cycle.

Chris Buchanan asked the group if there are any other projects they'd like to see included. Only certain projects are eligible, such as those affiliated with state routes, highways, and other routes dealing with state projects. This proposal is due August 15, 2020.

In response to a question from Carolyn Mitchell, Chris Buchanan stated that he has spoken with Senator Chandley, that she is aware of the projects and is willing to help.

4. "Souhegan Valley Rail Trail" Project

Chris Buchanan explained that this project runs alongside the Route 101A corridor. A section of the railway, from Nashua to Wilton, is owned by the Boston & Maine Corporation, a subsidiary of Pan Am Railways. The owner currently intends to sell all of this real estate. This has heightened the interest of NRPC to organize this project, as there is now a real ability to purchase this land. This will be an expensive area to purchase and would need to be done through a grant. Grants have been used in the past to purchase similar properties, such as in 2019 to build and complete the East Coast Greenway in the eastern part of the state. He explained that the Souhegan Valley Rail Trail project will be organized by NRPC. The Committee can help by contributing and supporting the project. There is a possibility that another rail line tries to purchase the railway, but this does not seem to be profitable or viable for many reasons.

In response to a question from Wendy Rannenberg, Chris Buchanan explained that Pan Am Railways owns the portion of the railway from downtown Nashua to Wilton. The State owns the section from Wilton to Bennington, NH. The goal is to convert the rail line from Nashua to Wilton into a rail trail, and the rest of the railway will be rail *with* trail.

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Tom Christensen explained that Chris Buchanan has done a tremendous amount of work on this project. The NH Rail Trail Coalition was happy with the questions produced by Chris Buchanan and would like the questions to be answered by all of the rail trail groups in New Hampshire. Then others who wish to start creating a rail trail can benefit from the knowledge gained through this process. The data produced by Chris Buchanan's research can be compiled into a database for common discussion.

Chris Buchanan explained that NRPC will be holding a meeting on this project next Tuesday, 21st at 1pm.

5. Project Status

a. Purtell Easement

John Harvey explained that the Amherst Conservation Commission recently authorized the purchase of a hiker sign for this trail at the Old Milford Road entrance.

Chris Buchanan stated that, once the trail names are decided on, the Committee will publicly help to celebrate the ACC's work on this project. He stated that he has walked the trail and enjoyed it.

In response to a question from Carolyn Mitchell, John Harvey explained that there is one trail on this easement, from Old Milford Road out to Amherst Street.

The group had a brief discussion on naming trails.

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

Chris Buchanan explained that Rick Katzenberg found someone to speak with at Eversource regarding this project. Chris Buchanan has spoken with this person and has reached out to the Merrimack Conservation Commission to inform them. He is currently working to edit a document that he will then submit to Eversource for this potential project. Eversource has made it clear that they do not want a paved trail in this area, as their equipment still needs to be able to access the site. Chris Buchanan explained that this is not the type of trail being sought for this project.

Tom Christensen suggested that the document being created for this project could be made into a small handbook. He made a few editing suggestions as well.

In response to a question from John Harvey, Chris Buchanan explained that he plans to work with Eversource first to obtain permission from them for the project. Chris Buchanan explained that the Committee can then work to discuss this potential trail with private land owners along the route.

c. Boston Post Road Sidepath (Proposal)

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Chris Buchanan explained that the document for this proposal should be very similar to the document created for the Amherst Street side path proposal. He believes this document needs to be completed within the next month. The Board of Selectmen then needs to be briefed about the proposal. He explained that the proposal should note that the project will look to begin with a section in front of Souhegan High School out to Homestead Road. This proposal will be the Committee's flagship project for 2021.

In response to a question from Simon Sarris, Chris Buchanan explained that a very rough estimate of the cost for this project might be about \$42/linear foot. The water crossing on this road could be a big problem. Chris Buchanan explained that he will work with Eric Hahn, DPW Director, to get more exact numbers for the water crossing part of the project.

In response to a question from Carolyn Mitchell, Chris Buchanan explained that Eric Hahn is investigating some alternative solutions to the water crossing issue, such as a modular, temporary bridge.

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

Chris Buchanan explained that this project should probably wait until the public trails on private land document is complete, as all of this proposal is located on private land.

e. Coordination with Milford for Amherst Street

Chris Buchanan explained that he will call Milford again regarding the project. The last time he spoke with Milford, their plan was to rebuild their section of road along Amherst Street in either 2021 or 2022, and they are interested in continuing the Amherst Street side path into Milford.

f. Town request for restriping NH 122 between Courthouse Road and Birch Park

Chris Buchanan explained that this project is a solution from Eric Hahn to extend the Amherst Street side path with a painted separation option along the highway stretch of Amherst Street/NH 122. The DOT has not yet painted the lines along this stretch of road, although it was scheduled in March. He explained that Eric Hahn has been trying to reach the DOT District 5 rep to get a memorandum of understanding for this project. Chris Buchanan stated that the best course of action would be for the town to take over the responsibility of line striping this section of road, in order to make this project possible.

6. Grant and Other Funding Opportunities

a. Consider request for DPW Budget to include annual multimodality enhancements

Chris Buchanan explained that the intent of the Committee's Master Plan is to implement multimodal improvements along town roadsides during scheduled construction. The Amherst Street side path warrant article did that in an unusual way. The warrant article was needed because the proposed side path was more money than a standard project. The

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warrant article was also an audit to see if the town had an appetite to pay for multimodal infrastructure.

In response to a question from Simon Sarris, Chris Buchanan explained that a good source of long-term funding for this Committee's projects might be a line in the DPW's budget – part of road construction, but for multimodal enhancements. A budget line item could fund most minor projects during road construction, while larger projects could still be funded through grants, warrant articles, etc.

Simon Sarris explained how the Downtown Improvement Committee of Nashua is able to fund their projects – partially through funds taken in from parking tickets. He explained that the group is also able to take in donations, which this Committee doesn't currently have the ability to do.

The group discussed the possibility of a warrant article to reserve some amount of car registration fees for multimodal projects.

Chris Buchanan explained that he would like to approach the Board of Selectmen and loop them in, as well as the Ways & Means Committee.

Simon Sarris noted that there is no funding mechanism as important as getting an account set up for the Committee that can accept donations. He suggested that the Committee take advantage of the fact that the Amherst Street side path warrant article passed, and create a public relations and donation campaign for any future projects. This general account can then be spent at the group's discretion, with oversight by the Board of Selectmen. He agreed with running this idea by the Board of Selectmen and not spending from the account, unless approved by the Board.

Chris Buchanan stated that he will look more into this idea, and loop Simon Sarris and George Bower into any conversations with the Board of Selectmen or Town Administrator.

7. Other Updates

a. Updates from DPW

Chris Buchanan explained that he met with Eric Hahn regarding updates on the Amherst Street side path. At its last meeting, the Board of Selectmen approved surveying and monumenting of Amherst Street. Construction of the side path is slated to begin in April 2021.

8. Approval of Minutes

Rick Katzenberg moved to approve the meeting minutes of June 23, 2020. Chris Shenk seconded.
All in favor.

Wendy Rannenberg agreed to be an admin for the Committee's Facebook page.

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216 **Wendy Rannenberg moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:09 pm. John Harvey**
217 **seconded.**
218 **All in favor.**

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223 *Respectfully submitted,*

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225 *Kristan Patenaude*

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227 *Minutes approved: September 15, 2020*