



**Amherst Bicycle & Pedestrian
Advisory Committee**

Meeting Minutes – APPROVED: May 12, 2020
April 16, 2020

1. Meeting Venue & Date Change

Please be advised that the Amherst Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee will be meeting online and at a moved date for the month of April. The meeting will be held at 6:00pm on April 16, 2020, via Zoom.

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

<https://zoom.us/j/92508113216>

Or by telephone: (312) 626-6799

Webinar ID: 925 0811 3216

If you have trouble accessing the webinar, please call (603) 440-8248

Meeting attendees: Chris Buchanan – Chair, Rick Katzenberg – Vice Chair, George Bower, Eric Hahn (Non-Voting Advisory Member), Tom Christensen (Non-member Volunteer), Judy Shenk, Chris Shenk, Matt Waitkins (NRPC), John Harvey (Alternate), and Wendy Rannenberg (Alternate).

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

Chairman Chris Buchanan called the meeting to order at 6:05pm.

2. Committee Organization

A. Re-appointment of members

Chris Shenk and Judy Shenk stated that they have expressed written interest in being reappointed to the Committee for three year terms. Chris Buchanan explained that it is up to the Board of Selectmen to make reappointments. He will reach out to Simon Sarris, who is also up for reappointment as an alternate member, to gauge his interest.

B. Committee Reorganization

Chris Buchanan nominated Rick Katzenberg as Vice Chair of the Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee. Judy Shenk seconded.

Roll call vote: Chris Buchanan – aye; George Bower – aye; Rick Katzenberg – abstained; Judy Shenk – aye; Chris Shenk – aye; Wendy Rannenberg – aye. Motion carried.

April 16, 2020

APPROVED

Wendy Rannenberg sat for Patrick Daniel. John Harvey sat for Wes Robertson.

Rick Katzenberg nominated Chris Buchanan as Chairman of the Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee. Judy Shenk seconded.

Roll call vote: Chris Buchanan – abstained; Rick Katzenberg – aye; George Bower – aye; Wendy Rannenberg – aye; John Harvey – aye; Chris Shenk – aye; Judy Shenk – aye.

Motion carried.

Chris Buchanan introduced the Committee's new minute taker, Kristan Patenaude.

3. Amherst Street Sidepath

Chris Buchanan reiterated his thanks to the Committee members for their tireless work on the Amherst Street sidepath project. He mentioned the exhaustive effort by the group on the information campaign to the townspeople, the neighborhood canvassing, and the promotional materials. He stated that the budget created to promote the project has been covered, thanks to generous donations by the Committee members and other townspeople.

A. Updates from DPW

DPW Director, Eric Hahn, stated that an RFP is currently being evaluated by contractors to create right-of-way stakes that delineate Amherst Street from end-to-end. From Middle Street to the traffic light at the Route 122 intersection, it will need to be determined how close the gas pumps are to the edge of the right-of-way, how to control the intersection for pedestrian traffic, if the traffic light is properly timed, etc. The Board of Selectmen recently approved an RFP for scarifying lines and crosswalks in town. This unit pricing will be used to obliterate the lines on Amherst Street between Miles Road and Juniper Drive. At this point, he doesn't believe construction on the side path should begin prior to July 4th, due to increased traffic around that time. He believes construction would then continue through July and August, and the side path would be ready to open around the time school starts in the fall. He expects the bids for identifying the right-of-ways along the street back by Thursday. This item needs to be completed before road layout plans can be completed.

Carolyn Mitchell (Alternate) entered.

B. Conference Call: Asphalt Colorant & Paving Company

Chris Buchanan stated that a conference call will be arranged with asphalt coloring and paving companies.

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

Chris Buchanan stated that, in January, he requested that the Board of Selectmen look into an on-road treatment from Courthouse Road to Birch Park along the NH Route 122 part of Amherst Street. Restriping along this route would allow for an alternate

April 16, 2020

APPROVED

configuration of the roadway, similar to that which will exist between Miles Road and Juniper Drive, providing multimodal space.

Eric Hahn explained that he inquired about this project with the DOT Engineer for District 5. It was stated that the town would need to pay for any changes to the striping costs. Eric Hahn stated that he has not been able to get back in touch with the Engineer but that he doesn't believe there are any negative feelings about moving the lines while restriping this section of road.

Chris Buchanan stated that restriping this section of road would add an additional 0.7 miles to the multimodal pathway, expanding it to 2.6 miles in total. The multimodal path would then run from the Milford Town Line to Birch Park/Baboosic Lake Road.

D. Consideration multimodal treatment at the intersection of Courthouse Road and Amherst Street

George Bower explained that modifying the end of Amherst Street at this intersection could allow for a better connection to Joshua's Park. A small parking area along Courthouse Road would allow for overflow parking for Joshua's Park, which is much needed, and a small amount of parking at the terminus of the side path. This concept will continue to be refined with Eric Hahn.

E. Other projects

Chris Buchanan stated that he, George Bower, Rick Katzenberg, and Eric Hahn met to discuss other secondary projects around town that could be taken on to improve multimodality. He explained that Old Manchester Road is scheduled for some amount of road construction this year. Potential treatment candidates for this road include advisory shoulders or restriping.

He explained that Gordon Leedy, the previous Community Development Director for Amherst, discussed with Michael Williams, a national expert on advisory shoulders, the possibility of the town receiving a professional consultation regarding possible streets that would be eligible for this type of treatment. He wants the Committee to remember that there are smaller treatments of this type that can be used to improve secondary roads wherever possible. However, the Committee currently doesn't have a budget to hire an expert in this field.

In response to a question from George Bower, Chris Buchanan stated that there isn't currently a concept in mind for Old Manchester Road, but that it fits certain criteria that are needed for an advisory shoulder treatment, such as volume, speed, and sight distances.

Eric Hahn stated that he has a lot of roads in mind for projects, but he believes it would be a good idea for a project to have connectivity to it.

April 16, 2020

APPROVED

Chris Shenk agreed that Old Manchester Road might not be the best road and that it would be great to find a road with higher connectivity.

George Bower stated that, because Old Manchester Road is slated for some road construction this year, it gives the Committee a good opportunity to pursue a project that can demonstrate this application as valuable for local traffic, as well as point-to-point traffic. This type of project could also demonstrate to the community that the Committee is working to serve small neighborhoods as well as activity centers.

Chris Buchanan explained that the cost for an advisory shoulder treatment is actually fairly low. If the town decides to hire a professional consultant ahead of time, this could be expensive. An example of an advisory shoulder exists in Hanover, NH and is certainly doable in this area.

George Bower agreed that this type of treatment is relatively inexpensive. The route would also need informative signage along the way.

In response to a question from Chris Shenk, Chris Buchanan explained that changing the color in an advisory shoulder treatment generally does make it more effective, but is considered optional.

In response to a question from Carolyn Mitchell, George Bower explained that yellow lines always separate traffic moving in opposite directions, and white lines always separate traffic moving in the same direction. White lines are used for advisory shoulders.

George Bower explained that the sight distances along Old Manchester Road are not necessarily optimal, but are not bad. The road only services local traffic and so, within a week or two, everyone who uses it would understand what they will be walking/driving on.

Chris Buchanan explained that the idea has merit, but the group must first determine whether to hire a professional consultant or not. One of the primary purposes of an advisory shoulder would be to provide an example of this type of treatment in this region.

In response to a question from John Harvey, Chris Buchanan explained that some of the criteria necessary for an advisory shoulder appropriate road are vague, which a consultant could help with. The consultant would also allow for an independent third party for the project.

George Bower stated that he could do the advisory shoulder analysis, but that he wouldn't put a PE (Professional Engineer) stamp on it.

Eric Hahn stated that he has concerns regarding the depth of some of the ditches along Old Manchester Road. He and George Bower agreed to go look over the areas.

April 16, 2020

APPROVED

F. Coordination with Milford

Chris Buchanan explained that Lincoln Daley, Milford Director of Community Development, was unable to join the Committee's meeting this evening, but that this conversation will continue in the future.

4. Development of Boston Post Sidepath Proposal

Chris Buchanan explained that this proposal involves creating a planning document for a sidepath between Route 122 and the Merrimack town line. This project would be very expensive and complicated. A planning document would be a good first step in order to allow the public access to the information, as well as to have for any future grant funding opportunities. The draft process has been started.

5. General Funding Considerations for Future Projects

Chris Buchanan stated that the group received some feedback during the Amherst Street sidepath project regarding different funding mechanisms for future proposals. He explained that the CIP (Capital Improvements Project) Committee wants to discuss possible projects and their costs over the next several years with the group.

In response to a question from Rick Katzenberg, Eric Hahn explained that there is not currently money in the budget to look at the engineering for the Boston Post Road project near the schools.

George Bower suggested that a subcommittee look into the cost for the design and engineering of a path in the area of the high school over the next couple of months. A solid plan will be needed if a warrant article is going to be used for this project in the future.

Matt Waitkins, NRPC, stated that a round of TAP funding through the DOT should be coming up soon. This provides the town with 80% funding, for a 20% match. Chris Buchanan stated that the application for this funding will be pulled together.

Chris Buchanan stated that Amherst has been passed up for similar funding in the past because the municipality match portion was not allocated ahead of time. Matt Waitkins explained that the Board of Selectmen needs to commit to raise the match portion if the funding is granted. He also stated that the DOT will probably look favorably on the passage of the Amherst Street sidepath project.

John Harvey suggested that the Committee look into a Capital Reserve Fund (CRF) warrant article in the future, in order to continue to fund projects each year. George Bower agreed that this is a good idea. This could give the Committee a cushion to fund a 20% match or to assure the public that funding is in place.

6. Trail Projects

A. Purtell Easement (John Harvey)

April 16, 2020

APPROVED

John Harvey stated that this trail, not yet named, has one terminus on Old Milford Road. The trail is about 90% completed and blazed in orange. The short section that is left, out towards Amherst Street, is a briar patch. The DPW will be helping to clear this area next Tuesday or Wednesday.

In response to a question from Wendy Rannenberg, John Harvey stated that the trail is 0.6-0.7 miles long, but feels longer.

B. Old Mail Road (John Harvey)

John Harvey explained that the ACC currently maintains approximately 4 miles of trail from Winterberry Drive to the Educational Farm at Joppa Hill. The trail is unsafe at one point, along Horace Greely Road. He is suggesting a pathway along the right-of-way, possibly using leftover material from the Amherst Street project. The length of this area is about 275 feet and will cross two right-of-way driveways. The completion of this would create a safe pathway from Winterberry Drive to Pulpit Rock. Some of the area has been flooded by beavers, so he is also suggesting looking into putting higher bridges in these spots.

In response to a question from Chris Buchanan, John Harvey stated that the area from Route 101 to Winterberry Drive is considered a Class 6 road. The area from Winterberry Drive to New South Road is classified as a Class B trail. There is another approximately 100 foot area that is deemed a Class 6 road. And finally, from New South Road to Horace Greely is considered a Class B trail.

In response to a question from Chris Buchanan, Matt Waitkins stated that NRPC will conduct a traffic study in the area, if requested.

Chris Buchanan stated that this should be left as an agenda item. The traffic data will determine which type of treatment should be used in this area. The group will also interface with DPW to determine how best to move forward without a budget.

Town Administrator Shankle stated that this Committee's budget will eventually come through the DPW's budget. There may be money in the budget that can be leveraged towards these types of projects and future matches for grant funding.

C. Eversource Property & Easement (connection to SHS, Horse Hill, Buck Meadow)

Chris Buchanan explained that he reached out to Eversource in November regarding a piece of their property that stretches from Stearns Road, to Souhegan High School, out to Horse Hill in Merrimack. Eversource owns this area outright and there are several informal trails already on the land. He still has yet to receive a definitive answer from Eversource. This project could provide cross country trails for the high school, as well as a path from the high school out to the new recreation fields at Buck Meadow.

April 16, 2020

APPROVED

John Harvey stated that the ACC owns land nearby on the Merrimack border, which could give the opportunity to join this proposal into a network of existing trails.

John Harvey stated that the potential Buck Meadow trail has been flagged, although the new property is not open quite yet.

D. Jasper Valley Trail

Chris Buchanan stated that the homeowners in this area have been contacted and all expressed some interest in trails in the area. He explained that the group needs to now have a meeting with the landowners to discuss what it means to have a public access trail on their property. There are several similar opportunities to this in town that are waiting for meetings to be arranged.

Wendy Rannenberg stated that a formalized communication regarding what it means to have a trail in your backyard needs to be drafted.

E. B&M at Pinefields Condominium Complex

Chris Buchanan stated that the management team for the Pinefields Condominiums are also ready to have a similar conversation with the Committee.

Wendy Rannenberg stated that the deeds for this area do not contain any restrictions, other than no motor vehicles on the trails.

7. “Souhegan Valley Rail Trail” Project

Chris Buchanan explained that NRPC is currently investigating the possibility of a rail trail along the NH Route 101A corridor. This would run from Wilton to downtown Nashua. NRPC is currently looking into the appetite for this project and to see if champions from the six communities that it would span can be identified. NRPC is also willing to discuss interest in this project with other property owners.

8. Grant Funding Opportunities

A. Granite State Wheelers \$2,500 grant

Chris Buchanan explained that a grant proposal was submitted to purchase a traffic counter. This proposal was unfortunately rejected, due to the fact that the Committee is a municipal entity and, thus, disqualified. It was hoped that this traffic counter could be placed along the new Amherst Street sidepath in order to get accurate counts to further inform the public.

Matt Waitkins stated that NRPC currently has a portable Eco-Counter that Amherst can use on the path for a period of time.

The Committee welcomed the new Town Planner, Natasha Kypfer.

Rick Katzenberg moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:53 pm. Judy Shenk seconded.

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April 16, 2020

APPROVED

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309 *Respectfully submitted,*

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311 *Kristan Patenaude*

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