

Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee

Town of New London

Meeting Minutes, December 12, 2024

Whipple Memorial Town Hall

Present: Members Erica Brown, Vice-Chair Emily Campbell, Woody Canaday, Judy Ferreira, Chair Russ Moore

Excused: Selectman Bebe Casey, Ed Condict, Grant Smith

Also present: Alex Belenz, Associate Planner, SE Group; Sandt Michener, NHDOT ADA Level II Coordinator; Adam Ricker, Town Planner

Call to Order: Russ Moore called the meeting to order at 5:10

Minutes from the October 15<sup>th</sup> Committee Meeting prepared by Emily Campbell were unanimously approved with a motion by Woody Canaday and second by Judy Ferreira.

Russ Moore updates on conversation with Selectman Casey regarding the DPW budget, which is still being deliberated. Russ meet Tim Paradis, Chair of the Planning Board, for coffee and conversation. Tim was supportive of the BPAC's goals and invited the Committee to give a presentation probably in late spring or early summer to the Planning Board.

Russ thanked Adam Ricker, Town Planner, for participating in the meeting and setting up the guest speaker presentation. Russ introduced Alex Belenz as the guest speaker. Alex is the Associate Community and Recreation Planner, SE Group, a private engineering firm. In 2022 and 2023 Alex worked with the New London Bike Walk Coalition in his previous professional role as a planner for the UVLSRPC. This collaboration included designing and implementing a Downtown Bike Traffic Stress Assessment. He also provided input into the design and implementation of the 2022 Community Bike Walk Survey.

Alex presented slides illustrating examples of Streetscape Planning for several towns in NH and VT, including St. Albans and Lyndon VT, and Bethlehem, NH, with additional references to Lebanon and Burlington. The scope of planning is broad and includes accommodating biking and walking, public spaces, traffic, landscaping, aesthetics. Discussion included the objectives of each town, collecting community information, and testing different approaches in a pilot phase to collect data. Russ shared with the Committee some of the unique challenges of our downtown area as our Town gradually evolved around a busy state road and therefore did not have the classic town center nexus with a wide boulevard that accommodated different modes of transport such as in Newport or Claremont.

Alex noted three tiers of implementation: 1) demonstration projects and Quick-Build improvements, 2) Permanent Spot Improvement, and 3) Permanent Corridor Improvement, which is typically a longer-term and aspirational goal. Quick Build projects are low risk to experiment with and can be used both to gather information from town members and to generate ideas and support for the longer term. Adam and Alex have discussed QB projects potentially from the Green to the former Alioops! and at the Pleasant Street/ Main Street/ Library area. These could be followed by a charrette after a year or so.

Sandt Michener commented on the role of the State re: ADA II and along the Main St/ 114 State Route corridor. NHDOT must buy in to any plans, e.g. regarding plowing. Negotiating will be needed, as an example the state plows Rte 302 in Littleton, while the town plows parking areas

Russ notes that the town has aspirational goals based on its master planning document: bike and walk access, safety, use of Complete Streets methodology. Some towns also have a bike-pedestrian master plan. Alex notes that parking along a main street corridor is always challenging for bike traffic – use of side streets can provide relative safety.

From the floor, Bob Bowers asks about the challenges of property liens, telephone poles and guywires especially on the west end of Main St. Alex responds that civil engineers are typically involved and coordinate with utilities.

Russ briefly reviewed the draft long-term budget for Highways and Streets. The projected pace of sidewalk repair and improvement has been slowed by the water main project, with capacity for only limited projects in FY 2026 and 2027, and is expected to pick up after the water line settlement period. Russ shared with the committee the projected Sidewalk Capital Reserve Fund allocations FY 2026-2031. These projections were reviewed at the last Planning Board meeting. Russ noted that the Board of Selectmen, at their 11/21/2024 meeting reduced the Sidewalk Capital Reserve Fund allocation by \$50,000, reducing the FY 2026 allocation from \$100,000 to \$50,000. Bebe conveyed to Russ previous to this meeting via phone that the rationale for this action was that the excess monies would not be spent on sidewalks in FY 2026 by the DPW. Adam conveyed that the Sidewalk repair and reconstruction funding is at this point still under review by the Budget Committee and the Board of Selectmen.

The potential role of the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission was discussed. Russ met with Megan Butz and Tim Josephson of the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission. Gerry Coogan and Peter Nichols, New London's UVLSRPC Commissioners were also invited to the meeting. The regional planning commission's services and expertise were reviewed with a particular emphasis on any

assistance that could be provided for the Downtown Infrastructure Improvement Study and/or the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan. Subsequently, Meghan did provide some cost projections, not a full proposal, for these studies to Adam and to the BPAC. Given that the Town is now considering very significant financial outlays for a proposed police station, improved water infrastructure and affordable housing units the Committee agreed that the studies could not be initiated until FY 2027 at the earliest. The federal Transportation Alternatives Program grant deadline was briefly discussed. Kim, Adan and the Committee agree that the Town is not in a position to pursue this round of funding but it is a definite possibility in the next round of funding.

Russ passes along information from Grant Smith off-road mountain bike trails.. Grant attended the NE MTB Trail association's annual conference and learned more about the trail design, funding and the regulatory approval process. The association can also provide some level of funding for small-scale incubator projects. Grant also met with the CSC Athletic Director and members of the Colby Sawyer Outing Club, who interested in working on this initiative.

Public Comment: Bob Bowers wrote a note to the BPAC and presented on the topic of material selection for sidewalks. He urges the Committee and DPW to give due consideration to the advantages and long-term cost-benefit of concrete sidewalks and not just to default to asphalt in all circumstances.

The next BPAC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 20, 2025, 5PM in Whipple Hall. The meeting was adjourned at 6:28.

Respectfully submitted,

Woody Canaday