



**Amherst Bicycle & Pedestrian
Advisory Committee**

Meeting Minutes - APPROVED
August 8, 2023

1 Meeting attendees: Chris Buchanan, Wendy Rannenberg, Rick Katzenberg, Judy Shenk, Chris
2 Shenk, Tom Christensen, and George Bower (remote)

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

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6 Chris Buchanan called the meeting to order at 7:12pm.

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8 **1. Offer by NH DOT to begin project Baboosic Greenway North-02**

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10 Chris Buchanan explained that the State Department of Transportation (DOT) reached out to
11 the Committee regarding its project for the Baboosic Greenway North-02. The Town
12 submitted this project to the State of New Hampshire 10-Year Plan process in 2017. This was
13 largely coordinated by the Community Development Office and the project was placed into
14 the 10-Year Plan for 2026-2029. This project area runs from Baboosic Lake Road to Walnut
15 Hill Road, with a spur to the Post Office, including the ramp from Baboosic Lake Road down
16 to the railbed. Much of the route is already in use and managed by the Conservation
17 Commission. The question is if the Town is interested in accepting the offer from the State to
18 move the project forward right now. This can only be determined by the Board of Selectmen,
19 as it would involve an agreement between the Town and the DOT. If the Town chooses not to
20 act on this right now, it will be placed back into the State's regular schedule, to begin
21 engineering in 2026. Similar to any project in the State's 10-Year Plan, this is an 80/20
22 project, with 80% to be reimbursed by the State on a monthly basis. Chris Buchanan
23 explained that he will be presenting this proposal to the Board of Selectmen next Monday.
24 The Committee could consider attending the meeting to encourage the Board of Selectmen to
25 move the project forward.

26
27 In response to a question, Chris Buchanan explained that the State will not provide the 80%
28 opportunity without knowing the Town is committed to it, outside of something such as a
29 warrant article. The likelihood of getting these opportunities is so few and far between. The
30 advice from the Town at the time this was applied for was to apply to anything and
31 everything, with the thought that it would be entertained if it came to pass.

32
33 Tom Christensen encouraged Chris Buchanan to put some form of pressure on the Board of
34 Selectmen to approve this. Chris Buchanan noted that there has been general support from the
35 Board over the years and the merits of the project speak for themselves. This project has been
36 on the back burner in Town for decades and this is an opportunity to only have to pay for 20%
37 of it while having it all built.

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Chris Shenk asked if this project stops at Walnut Hill Road. Chris Buchanan noted that it does and any continuation beyond that would be completely separate. This initiative deals with a defined segment from 2017.

Judy Shenk asked if the land involved is mostly Town-owned. Chris Buchanan stated that he believes approximately 60% is Town-owned.

Chris Buchanan noted that he has never heard of a project being moved up in the State's 10-Year Plan. George Bower agreed that this is a very significant opportunity. No one should assume that this will be approved by the Board. People need to make it very clear to the Board, either in person or in writing, that this is a project that needs to be advanced because it is part of an overall network that is essential to the Town in the future. This may be one of the first times that a plan like this has gotten moved up in the 10-Year Plan, putting emphasis on bicycle and pedestrian projects because the State currently has funding through the federal government for infrastructure projects.

George Bower explained that the State is currently looking at covering increased costs for projects and there is a downside to the Town saying it is not interested. There is a concern that the State will then not offer opportunities like this in the future. When the State presents offers of this type to towns, it expects that towns will take advantage of them. He stated that he will send along these points to Chris Buchanan for inclusion at the Board meeting.

2. Private fundraising campaign update

Regarding the private fundraising campaign, Rick Katzenberg stated that there was a phone meeting and an in-person meeting to try to reenergize the Amherst Community Foundation. There is a plan to solicit potential board members. A Zoom meeting is planned to see who is interested in being on that board with the idea that, if people in the community have projects they would like to see funded, there will be a simplicity of running it through the Community's 501(c)3. By mid-September the timing and scope of this should be better known.

Wendy Rannenberg stated that the Amherst Land Trust is in the process of trying to raise funds as well. There are always groups in Town looking for money.

Chris Buchanan explained that the local philanthropist that has expressed interest in supporting some of the proposed projects is still waiting with matching funds. There is also a T-Mobile-based Community Development grant that he is working on for \$50,000.

3. Status updates:

- **Survey work along rail bed**

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Chris Buchanan explained that survey work has been completed by Meridian in the area of Boston Post Road. There is more work that Meridian is ready to do in the area of LaBelle Winery, but this is on hold until explicit permission has been given. This survey document will be given to the Town and can be used as part of an easement process.

- **CMAQ (Baboosic Greenway North-03)**

Chris Buchanan explained that there will be no final word on the CMAQ grant until next year.

- **FY2024 Congressionally Designated Funding (Baboosic Greenway South-04, AMS/SHS School Campus Project)**

Chris Buchanan explained that, in the spring, the Committee applied for congressionally designated fund spending from Senator Shaheen's office. This is regarding the school campus project. There is no update yet but there could be one within the next several weeks.

4. Fall budget discussion

Chris Buchanan explained that, for the past several years, the Committee has proposed a Warrant Article for \$75,000 at Town Meeting to fund the school campus project. He suggested attempting this request again. The Committee requested double the amount last year to try to complete the project, but the Selectmen adjusted it to the \$75,000 figure which passed by the widest margin yet. He stated that the Selectmen will likely want to see the request at \$75,000 again. If this amount was approved again this year, it would complete the project from a 2017 perspective, which is no longer the case. He stated that he needs to check with VHB on an updated quote.

Chris Shenk asked if this article would be for the school campus project. Chris Buchanan explained that technically the warrant article is for a Capital Reserve Fund for multimodal projects, but articles in the past have been marketed for that specific project. Funds received should then, ethically, only go toward that project.

Rick Katzenberg noted that the community seems to be comfortable with the \$75,000 and this would make sense to proceed with.

Judy Shenk asked if there would be enough money for the Town's match if the Shaheen funds are received. Chris Buchanan stated that this would be great to have, but still not enough funding overall. Another request for \$75,000 is needed.

Tom Christensen asked if money can be spent toward the project before being awarded the grant. Chris Buchanan agreed that this can be done, but any dollar spent on the project prior to an award of grant is a dollar lost and will never be reimbursed.

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Chris Buchanan explained that the Committee will need to decide on this article within the next month. Much of this may come down to what happens with the DOT's offer to move up another project in Town. If that offer has a budgetary impact, he will feel less comfortable asking for more money from the Town.

5. Good of the order

Tom Christensen asked about the sidepath into Milford. Chris Buchanan explained that there was a joint ARPA application with the county that Amherst submitted with Milford. Milford unilaterally pulled out of that because it got funding for a water treatment facility. This proposal is not necessarily dead but on hold for the moment. He expressed disappointment that Amherst was not consulted regarding the withdrawal of that application. Milford will still need to do comprehensive, substantial underground infrastructure work in that area, which would be the most opportune time to do sidepath work.

Tom Christensen noted that the Amherst sidepath is very clean.

Chris Buchanan noted that the Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) has been collecting data from the counters on the sidepath and more people use it than one may think. On average, 80-85 people per day use the site. He will send the data out to the Committee. The counters can now also distinguish bikes.

6. Approval of minutes of May 9, and June 13, 2023

The Committee agreed to table discussion of the May 9th minutes to a future meeting.

Rick Katzenberg moved to approve the meeting minutes of June 13, 2023, as presented. Seconded by Chris Shenk.

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

7. Adjournment

Wendy Rannenberg moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:56pm. Seconded by Judy Shenk.

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

*Respectfully submitted,
Kristan Patenaude*