



Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Commission

Meeting Summary

February 22, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.

NAME	REPRESENTATION
Rebecca Brouwer (RB)	City
Matt Engwall (ME)	City
Katy Jones (KJ)	At-large
Chelsey Morrison (CM)	Orange County
Sylvia Sichi (SS)	City
Jason Smith (JS)	Alamance County ETJ
Cy Stober (CS)	Development Director
Aaron Davis (AD)	Recreation & Parks Director

Sarah Elder (SE) had an excused absence.

Public Participation: James Allen joined the Zoom call.

INTRODUCTION OF KATY JONES & JASON SMITH

The BPAC welcomed two newly appointed members – Katy Jones and Jason Smith.

JS has lived in Mebane for 2.5 years. He learned of the BPAC after attending an event the BPAC hosted at Reed's. He has been attending BPAC meetings off and on and saw an opportunity to join. JS enjoys hiking and biking.

KJ has lived in Mebane for 13 years. She and her family live Downtown and chose that area for its walkability and connectivity. Professionally, KJ spent about 10 years at a UNC research center focused on active living and has conducted research on the impacts of bikeability and walkability on healthy living.

APPROVAL OF JANUARY 25, 2021, MEETING SUMMARY

RB conducted a roll call vote to approve the January meeting summary.

A unanimous vote supported approval of the meeting summary.

ELECTION OF BPAC CHAIR & VICE-CHAIR

RB reviewed the responsibilities of the BPAC Chair and Vice-Chair.

AO reported no nominations were received via email.



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RB nominated ME for the role of BPAC Vice-Chair. She asked if anyone had interest in the role of BPAC Chair, noting her willingness to continue in the role. Hearing no nominations, RB nominated herself for BPAC Chair, which was seconded by ME.

Unanimous roll-call votes supported the election of RB as BPAC Chair and ME as BPAC Vice-Chair.

REALLOCATION OF FY21 IMPROVEMENT FUNDS

AO reviewed the need to reallocate improvement funds that had originally been assigned to crossings of NCDOT-maintained streets due to an extended encroachment agreement process. Additionally, AO and CS asked the BPAC to consider allocating funding for crossings initially discussed in the fall with the resurfacing schedule. AO and CS recommended the BPAC prioritize the three crossings of City streets (N Charles, W Crawford, and N Fifth) for presentation to the City Manager and City Council who will determine if BPAC's discretionary funding or another source will be used to support the improvements. CS indicated the BPAC would present its priorities and staff would report back on the City's decision.

The BPAC began reviewing the crossings, starting with the high-visibility crossing of N Charles.

ME expressed a desire for rethinking how the BPAC prioritizes sidewalks and suggested using a framework that focuses on connecting destinations.

RB commented on the "potential impact" scale included on the project evaluation slides, noting connectivity could be added. She suggested continuing with the review of the projects and then discussing how to prioritize.

JS agreed.

AO reminded the BPAC the recommended crossings correspond with the resurfacing schedule.

CS clarified funding for improvements associated with resurfacing has not been decided and could come from a change order to the contract or sufficient funds may already exist within the resurfacing budget.

RB recognized James Allen had his hand raised.



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Mr. Allen commented on his recent move to Mebane and the high levels of pedestrian traffic he has noticed on E Ashland Drive, noting many are crossing Lebanon over to the Lake Michael side. He asked about a crossing of Lebanon at the intersection of E Ashland Dr and Lake Michael Way.

RB asked who maintained Lebanon.

AO replied the State.

CS commented on a future crossing of Lebanon at an entrance to the Village at Lake Michael subdivision. The crossing will be provided by the developer of the Tupelo Junction subdivision and will connect to a 10' multi-use path. CS indicated he would need to double check he and Mr. Allen were referencing the same location.

AO returned to reviewing the proposed projects. She described the original proposal and presented information on proposed crossings of W Crawford and N Fifth, noting they correspond with the resurfacing schedule.

RB confirmed the BPAC should consider and prioritize the three crossings AO presented (N Charles, W Crawford, and N Fifth), the Jackson St curb ramps, and the outdoor benches.

CS replied staff needs to know the BPAC's priorities and will report back regarding how the City has determined to fund those priorities.

JS asked about the necessity of a high-visibility crossing of N Charles, remarking the connection to the school will primarily be used during the day.

RB and SS commented on snowplows and thermoplastic.

AO added the Bike/Ped Plan recommended a raised crosswalk, which the BPAC amended to a high-visibility crossing.

CS commented the Safe Routes to School policy recommends high-visibility crossings.

SS asked about pursuing a raised crosswalk.

AO replied previous discussion was of the Fire Department's dislike for anything resembling a speed bump.



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CS added the asphalt poured for a raised crosswalk would also be a substantial cost.

ME commented on the cost difference between high-visibility and painted crosswalks, recalling a 40% increase in costs with high-visibility crossings.

The BPAC agreed to continue with the high-visibility crossing.

RB reviewed the BPAC's original proposal, which included prioritizing curb ramps and outdoor benches. She mentioned discussion of bike racks had occurred. RB asked if the curb ramps should be considered as a package deal.

AO replied the BPAC could ask for the entire \$10,000 to be spent on Jackson Street curb ramps.

CS commented on the BPAC's role to advise and advocate and its ability to say curb ramps to this point but not beyond.

RB expressed her interest in having the crosswalks be the BPAC's first priority, remarking on the visual reminder of pedestrians first and ensuring safety.

Other BPAC members expressed their agreement, with KJ adding the Better Block Trailer can be used to promote other ideas.

RB asked if the BPAC agreed with prioritizing crossings as presented – N Charles, W Crawford, and N Fifth.

SS asked when the improvements would occur.

CS commented the resurfacing of City streets will occur during the summer. He remarked NCDOT will also be resurfacing US 70 (Center St) from the Orange County line to the east.

CM suggested the N Fifth crossing be placed ahead of the W Crawford crossing given the higher traffic volumes and faster speeds of car traffic.

KJ commented on the evaluation criteria included on the slides and asked how that should be used to decide priorities.

RB recalled previous discussions of the Kit and N Fifth intersection and acknowledged how fast people travel in the area.



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CM asked if anyone had knowledge about W Crawford traffic.

CS replied it is a lower volume than N Fifth.

RB added the intersection is closer to E.M. Yoder Elementary.

CS commented on the differences in street design. N Fifth is wider and has curb and gutter. W Crawford is narrower and ribbon-paved.

CM asked if the narrower W Crawford road meant slower traffic but less space for a pedestrian to get out of a travel lane.

CS agreed.

The BPAC agreed to the crossing of N Charles as the first priority, with SS requesting more information regarding traffic volumes and the number of children walking to school.

RB, ME, and JS commented on the ability for a new crossing to encourage and increase pedestrian travel to the school.

RB presented the following priority list and asked for the BPAC's opinion:

1. Crosswalk improvements
 - a. Crossing of N Charles at intersection with W Ruffin
 - b. Crossing of W Crawford at intersection with N Third
 - c. Crossing of N Fifth at intersection with Kit Ct
2. Jackson Street curb ramp improvements
3. Outdoor benches

A roll call vote supported the prioritization list, with a unanimous approval.

JS asked if the BPAC would revisit priorities if the City supported the priorities with other funding.

AO replied the BPAC has likely provided enough priorities to spend the \$10,000. Staff will update the BPAC on which projects are funded. If needed, the BPAC will revisit the priority list in the coming months.



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CS remarked on a crossing of NC 119 at Foust Road originally recommended by the BPAC that will likely be an improvement by a developer and not use City funds. He noted the crossing will be bundled with overall improvement and widening of the intersection. The widening project is scheduled for Spring 2021 and the City should hear from NCDOT soon if the crossing is approved.

BETTER BLOCK TRAILER – CONTINUED DISCUSSION

AD asked for the BPAC's feedback on the Better Block video.

RB asked the BPAC to think about the kind of input they should request from the community. She suggested gathering more general ideas, not necessarily tied to use of the Better Block Trailer.

KJ commented she had a similar reaction when watching the video. She remarked more general comments will be received no matter how specific the BPAC asks for feedback. KJ commented current phrasing of the question implied "where" not "what." She suggested being as clear as possible with what the BPAC wants to hear.

AD clarified the question should be "what" and "where." He reviewed previous discussions of using a survey to gather input.

KJ replied she does not want the BPAC to be overly prescriptive in the "where." She suggested providing case studies or ideas from other communities to give people a vision for what could be done in Mebane.

CM agreed and recommended including photos or illustrations at the end of the video about what different setups could look like, giving viewers a few more ideas than those appearing in the live video.

CS commented a montage of real-life projects. He added Impact Alamance funded the Better Block Trailer and its Wellness Collaborative has done a lot of work in this area to support proof-of-concept opportunities prior to elected officials deciding to make large investments. CS commented the Wellness Collaborative should have many images to use in the video.



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RB suggested the video could run first with the final slides asking for input and then a second time with a slightly different ending, such as “Coming Soon to Mebane...”

KJ recommended tweaking the messaging to read more of “you can help shape this” as opposed to “we need you to...”

She added the revised framing could generate more buy-in.

AD replied the Mayor uses “help shape your future in Mebane.” He added he will begin making edits and asked the BPAC to send any specific narrative or images.

RB commented the BPAC does not currently have a mechanism for community members to tell the BPAC what they think. She asked if this is an opportunity to gather that info, noting ME was involved in that process with the Bike/Ped Plan.

ME asked who would be responding and fielding the questions received from the community.

RB suggested reviewing the input before meetings.

CS commented on the Town of Cary’s interface for new sidewalk projects, recalling he brought it before the BPAC a year or two ago. He suggested a similar landing page for a larger array of projects. CS mentioned the Town of Cary uses a vetting system to evaluate projects more objectively. He advised the BPAC to establish evaluation criteria before they begin considering public input.

ME commented projects have already been prioritized in the Bike/Ped Plan and the BPAC appears to be moving away from utilizing those priorities.

CS replied staff does consider those priorities when making recommendations for capital projects. He noted he has gone off-script to lump projects geographically together and remarked many projects in the Bike/Ped Plan have yet to be realized.

ME expressed support for considering projects together and with respect to the resurfacing schedule.

CS added staff is recommending an update to the Bike/Ped Plan in the coming year’s budget. If funded, this will present an



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opportunity to engage the community in the future. He noted the video presents that opportunity now. CS asked AD how much effort is required to edit the video.

AD replied it is easy to make changes and asked members of the BPAC to provide more step-by-step direction of what they would like to see changed.

CS asked if the video could be updated in the future for outreach by staff if it needs to be tweaked to serve other purposes.

AD confirmed.

RB asked the BPAC to consider the different ways to use the video. She presented three ideas: (1) socialize the community to the Better Block Trailer, (2) broad promotion of the BPAC and an early way to receive general ideas from the community, (3) specific ideas to act upon with the Better Block Trailer.

AD asked the BPAC to consider the differences between a promo video (watch & learn) and a video that would engage the community (watch, learn, & interact).

SS replied all of the above, supporting use of the video to get the word out about the Better Block Trailer and engage the community.

CS mentioned the City's work to develop a Citizen Reporter App. AD agreed the app would be a good option to pursue for gathering input related to the BPAC's work. CS remarked the app is user-friendly and it can be downloaded as an app or accessed online.

ME recommended keeping the video simple.

RB confirmed simple meant specific and suggested adding language that lets people know the BPAC will be using the Better Block Trailer in 2021. She asked if the BPAC could work on the video's language outside of a meeting.

CS confirmed that would be allowed.

KJ agreed with ME to keep the video focused and simple. She added once Better Block projects are on the ground, other videos of those projects in use could be created and used for future messaging.



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CS added discussions related to editing the video can occur offline and the next formal action by the BPAC would likely occur when they are ready to go public with the video.

AD suggested the BPAC consider a work session where they can edit in real time.

RB recommended to begin with editing over email and then move to something like a work session. She asked if AD had a transcript.

AD replied he can put together a Word document.

RB will start the lead on the conversation, and she will work with AD.

SS asked AO when the BPAC would have the Better Block Trailer again.

AO replied she asked the City of Graham. They have not made any decisions because of COVID. She suggested the BPAC pick a date soon to reserve the trailer.

RB recommended considering a Fall 2021 reservation and suggested further discussion at the March meeting.

The BPAC discussed the list of project ideas created at the January meeting. RB asked AO when a decision would be needed.

AO replied a two-month approval timeline has been discussed. If the BPAC wishes to move forward with use of the Better Block Trailer in the fall, a decision by this summer is needed.

CM recommended waiting to decide on a project until after the video is released and the community provides input.

RB agreed and added if the video is released in April, the BPAC would need to decide on projects by May or June. She suggested multiple projects could occur simultaneously. RB indicated she was fine with waiting and asked the BPAC.



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ME recommended the BPAC begin with a project on Ruffin, as opposed to Clay, and expressed his preference for a more tangible and outlined project, like a bike lane on Ruffin.

RB recommended the BPAC make a final decision at a later date. She invited KJ and JS to offer ideas and urged them to consider City-maintained streets, given the need for an extended timeline with State-maintained streets.

JS asked for an inventory list of what materials are included in the trailer.

AO replied she would share the list.

RB added the BPAC also has \$500 in consumables, such as hay bales.

RB asked AO to include continued discussion of the Better Block Trailer on the March and April agendas. She asked if there was anything left to discuss regarding the Better Block Trailer.

CM recommended review of the project list for the benefit of KJ and JS, with KJ expressing her appreciation of a review.

ME and RB described the project ideas, with CM providing a description of a project proposed in the Ashbury subdivision.

CS clarified previous discussion of a recommended crosswalk by James Allen at an entrance of the Village at Lake Michael. Mr. Allen was referring to a different entrance than what CS originally thought.

JS asked if all the ideas listed under a heading had to occur or if the BPAC could choose from the list.

RB replied it was initially envisioned as a package, but it does not have to be.

JS asked if there was a specific area imagined for the Fourth Street Bike Boulevard.



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RB replied the idea was taken from the Bike/Ped Plan, which includes a bike boulevard from Roosevelt to Center.

2020 ANNUAL REPORT & 2021 WORK PLAN

RB reviewed the document is designed to summarize to City Council what the BPAC has accomplished and its plans for the coming year. She asked if it would be published on the website.

CS said the document would not be published until approved and recommended by the BPAC.

ME recalled previous discussions of the trail network at Lake Michael Park and described that hiking, biking, and running trails have been identified as priorities for the community. He asked about the overlap between Recreation & Parks and the BPAC. ME commented on the increase of trail use with COVID.

RB added she has had similar thoughts, with trails being for pedestrians but often located in parks. She asked for AD's thoughts.

AD responded a conceptual plan for the expansion of the trail network at Lake Michael Park does exist. He added residential growth in the area has increased the need for connectivity to the park and its trails. AD commented the BPAC, as a City commission, does have a voice in the process. His budget recommendations for the coming year do not include trail updates, which are included in future years. AD added the Recreation & Parks Advocacy Commission (RPAC) recently met and has a meeting scheduled for March. He noted the trail network at Lake Michael is a project a lot of different groups within the City would like to see completed and is a matter of timing and budgeting.

RB asked ME if he would like for the 2021 Work Plan to be amended to include BPAC's support of this work.

ME commented he would like to see Lake Michael included in the 2021 Work Plan. He expressed a desire to see the BPAC move toward advocating for larger projects.

JS commented on the new proposed crossing at Lake Michael and improving ways for bicyclists and pedestrians to get to the park.



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AD commented on future connectivity to subdivisions in the area and suggested recommendations from both the RPAC and BPAC. Improvements would be a capital project.

JS asked if AD had a rough idea of the budget.

AD replied just for current trail improvements, it is in the \$350,000 range, which does not include connectivity at the entryway.

RB clarified it was not recommended.

AD replied the connectivity portion was included.

RB commented she liked the idea of keeping big projects, like Lake Michael, in the BPAC's sight and would like for the BPAC to align with the RPAC.

AD commented on the potential for Lake Michael Park.

ME described how Mebane residents are traveling elsewhere for hiking opportunities.

CS recommended the BPAC review its mission and responsibilities as outlined in the BPAC Ordinance to clarify its role versus the RPAC's role.

RB asked AO to send the information ahead of the next BPAC meeting.

RB asked for additional comments on the 2020 Annual Report and 2021 Work Plan.

SS stated the image of the bike sign was not one of the final designs.

CS commented on the calendar and using the momentum from a Better Block Trailer project to coordinate and realize capital projects. He reminded the BPAC of the budget calendar. Ideally, engineer estimates arrive around the holidays to allow for a December/January discussion of capital investments for the next fiscal year.

SS asked if BPAC was credited for the bike boulevard on N Fifth.

CS responded that was entirely a BPAC project and included in last year's annual report. He advised a one sentence addition to the current



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document to recap the existing bike boulevards. He asked if the BPAC would like a map included.

The BPAC agreed a simple sentence would suffice.

RB confirmed the 2020 Annual Report and 2021 Work Plan would be included in the Council's packet when the BPAC presents its recommendations during budget season.

CS replied budget workshops are scheduled for March and April, with a public hearing for budget adoption scheduled for May.

RB mentioned she had contacted the City Manager to discuss the BPAC's presentation and is waiting to hear back. She noted it would be great to leave the BPAC meeting with a finalized document and asked for any other requested changes.

JS asked about defining tactical urbanism in the report.

RB suggested including a link to a video to show a tactical urbanism project.

RB moved to approve the 2020 Annual Report and 2021 Work Plan with four revisions:

- Incorporation of commentary on the BPAC's interest in exploring connections to Lake Michael Park and the Lake Michael trail network
- Change of the yard sign image
- Reference to bike boulevards previously installed
- Explanation of tactical urbanism, including a link to a video

A roll call vote was conducted, with unanimous approval from the BPAC.

NEW & ONGOING BUSINESS

RB reported she has not heard anything about the bike helmet initiative.

AO commented on staff's need to distribute umbrellas – a holiday gift from the City – to BPAC members.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Meeting summary by Ashley Ownbey, City of Mebane Planner