



# Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Commission

BPAC Regular Meeting Summary

December 18, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.

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NAME	REPRESENTATION
James Allen (JA)	Orange County
Matt Cummings (MC)	Vice-Chair, City
Katy Jones (KJ)	Chair, At Large
Jennifer Nunez (JN)	City
Jason Smith (JS)	Alamance County ETJ
Allison Tate (AT)	City
Ashley Ownbey (AO)	Development Director
Rachel Gaffney (RG)	City Planner

*Rebecca Brouwer (RB) had an excused absence.*

## **APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER 27, 2023 MEETING SUMMARY**

KJ asked if there were any changes to the meeting summary and none responded. JS moved to approve the meeting summary from the November 27 meeting. JA seconded the motion.

A unanimous vote (5-0) supported approval of the meeting summaries. KJ abstained since she was not present at the last meeting.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

KJ mentioned that they had received an email from Colin Cannell about the E-bike and E-scooter regulations and asked if they should discuss that as a public comment. RG agreed and brought up the email for everyone to view. KJ explained that Mr. Cannell had watched the BPAC meeting on YouTube and had emailed the BPAC and planning staff with some comments. KJ added that he had suggested mirroring the speed limit of cars downtown, which is 20 mph. His closing comments say that he suggests using the careful/reasonable/prudent language from the existing ordinance with a speed limit of less than 20mph as a framework for the E-bike/E-scooter regulations. KJ noted that RG had responded to his comments. RG explained that her response had been that the BPAC already made their recommendation and there are no plans to revisit it at this point. There will be more discussions needed with the City Attorney and police so it is possible that they will need to discuss it further at a later date. RG noted that she disagreed with equating bicycles on sidewalks with cars downtown and added that the BPAC members had debated between 20 and 15mph for the speed limit and had preferred 20. She also explained that there is language in the existing ordinance that bicycles must be operated in a careful and prudent manner on the sidewalks, and she doesn't see any reason to remove that. The intent is primarily to add language addressing E-vehicles. JA said that 15mph on a bicycle on a sidewalk would feel very fast. JS asked if Mr. Cannell was suggesting a 20mph speed limit or if he was relying more on the careful and prudent language? He said that he felt 20mph was too fast and agreed with JA that 15mph will feel very



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fast, especially when passing pedestrians. JS explained that he was not 100% clear on what Mr. Cannell was recommending. RG said that she also was not 100% certain. KJ said that she thought that the third paragraph explained it well and that he was suggesting that mirroring the requirements for cars downtown would create a common enforceable speed between cars and bikes. KJ clarified that she was not agreeing but trying to interpret the comments. JA noted Mr. Cannell's point about the liability for cars pulling out of a driveway. RG noted that the BPAC had discussed prohibiting reckless operation of bicycles and E-vehicles and that they were keeping the careful and prudent language from the existing ordinance. She felt that this largely covered the issue of liability. RG added that it is an ongoing conversation so if anyone had further thoughts on it, they are welcome to bring it up at a meeting or email staff. KJ asked what the next step is. AO said that she has shared the research and the BPAC's recommendation with City administration. Because of the upcoming January public hearing, it likely will not be considered until February.

## **AUTUMNFEST FEEDBACK**

KJ asked what they wanted to cover for Autumnfest other than weights for the tent? RG explained that they never got to have a post-Autumnfest discussion, so although it has been a while now, she wanted to check if anyone had any thoughts or suggestions for next time. KJ said that the stickers were a hit. JS and KJ said that all of the bike maps were handed out although there were still some city trail maps leftover. RG explained that there were more of the city trail maps to begin with as some had been leftover from Dogwood. KJ said that there wasn't much engagement with the printed map. She said that most of the people that stopped by were just curious about what the BPAC does or they were picking up their activity challenge prize. JA said that he was really happy with the amount of traffic when he was there. JS said that there were a lot of questions about non-BPAC topics and he thinks that it's a sign that people would like more engagement with City staff. A lot of the questions were about possible developments or ongoing projects. AT agreed that the only questions she received related to the map were about projects or developments that she didn't feel comfortable answering. KJ added that this was an issue at Dogwood too. She said that being in a city branded tent seems to make people think that they are city staff, although she added that it doesn't seem like it would be worth the cost to get a tent specifically for BPAC. JA said that it seems like this is going to be an ongoing thing, and it might be helpful for them to have a QR code or something that directs people to where they can submit their questions or concerns. RG said that they could do that as there is a portal on the website where people can submit questions to planning staff. AO added that there is also a development map online and being directed to that might help answer some people's questions. RG asked if there were any other comments and MC asked how many helmets were given away. KJ and JS said just a couple. KJ said that they are nice to have, but not everyone at a festival wants to carry a helmet around. JS added that they also only have a few sizes left, mostly very large and very small.

## **BPAC WEBPAGE CONTENT**



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RG explained that the BPAC has talked about having more safety information or more resources available on their webpage and she thought it would be good if they discuss that in more detail. AT asked if they need to get rid of the helmets by a certain date or do they expire? KJ and JA said that they believe the expiration date would not be any time soon. AT suggested that maybe there could be a way for community members to request helmets from the BPAC webpage. RG provided an overview of the current layout of the webpage and asked if there are any regional or national organization that they would want to provide links to or if there are other resources. She said that the BPAC could also look into creating their own safety page. JA said that the biggest national advocacy group is the League of American Cyclists. KJ said that the NHTSA site has a lot of great safety tips and that they used a lot of data and recommendations from there for the bike month social media posts. She said that pedbikeinfo.org is a great resource. She used to work there and it is a federally funded clearinghouse for information related to pedestrian and bicycle safety and it is run out of UNC.

JA suggested that since the Mountains-to-Sea Trail runs to the center of town it would be great to have links to information and maps for that. RG clarified if they should link to the Friends of the MST website and there was general agreement. JS suggested including a link to the city ordinance that allows bicycles on sidewalks and that they have been discussing in relation to E-bikes and E-scooters. KJ suggested maybe a related policy section. RG suggested having a statement on the website explaining that bicycles are allowed on sidewalks and then also include a link for those that would like to view the full text of the ordinance. KJ asked if it would be an FAQ and JN suggested maybe more of a summary of important information. KJ suggested "When is the greenway opening?" as the number one question in a FAQ. AO said that it is anticipated to open by the end of 2024. JA asked if there is a "Contact Us" tool. RG said that there is contact information available for the individual BPAC members. AO said that it would probably be best to have a statement directing people to the BPAC email so that it would go to all BPAC members and planning staff. RG said that she could add that under the "About" section and added that might help them draw more public comments. JS asked about the backend of the site and if there are any analytics about what parts of the site people are using most. RG said that she wasn't sure where to get that information.

JN asked about bike maintenance information and said that she would find something like that really useful. JA said that he has led a merit badge class on bike maintenance and that he will typically provide quick lessons and assistance at the BPAC's bike rodeo. JN asked if they could have links to Youtube videos with basic maintenance guides. JN asked if they could also promote any local businesses that provide bike maintenance. JA said that the best Youtube guides he has seen are from Park Tool. They are a company that makes tools for bike maintenance but they also provide maintenance videos. They are thorough, up to date, and well curated. KJ asked about the rules for promoting businesses. RG explained that local governments really can't direct people to specific businesses in that way. However she said that if the BPAC wants to hold some sort of public maintenance workshop then that is something they could work on. KJ suggested maybe



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promoting a maintenance workshop as part of the bike rodeo. KJ suggested creating a Google Doc where they could start drafting new content. Then they could crowdsource data and links and everything before putting it on the website. RG agreed that was a good idea and said that as items are finalized in the Google doc, she could start adding them to the website. She suggested based on the discussion that they should add a section for related links and make the contact information more clear. She added that she thinks adding a FAQ would be great but they need to work on the content. AO added that she had looked at the City website analytics and garbage, utilities, and recreation and parks are the most popular sections. KJ suggested adding improvement of the BPAC website to the 2024 work plan. MC suggested that when they are doing public engagement at Dogwood and Autumnfest and things like that, that would be a good time to have QR codes or urls available to connect people to the webpage. RG agreed and said that the QR codes on the bike maps do take people to the BPAC website but they could also have a separate document or poster with the QR code and link.

## **REFLECTION AND PLANS FOR NEXT YEAR**

### **GREENWAY PROMOTION**

KJ noted that this time next year the first section of the greenway will be done. RG suggested that maybe they could have some kind of winter walk or running event. KJ agreed and said, as a side note, that she had heard from Recreation and Parks that the trail extension around Lake Michael will be almost exactly 3.1 miles. They are hoping to eventually organize some sort of Mebane triathlon event. KJ asked if there are any milestones throughout the year during construction that they could celebrate. She said maybe they could organize an event or at least some sort of media celebrating the progress. It would be great for the BPAC to be able to promote the project leading up to the opening. AO said that she's sure that the City's PIO and the Recreation and Parks Department will be posting construction updates on their social media pages. AO suggested that as construction progresses and the weather gets warmer, the BPAC could consider walking the greenway in the second half of one of their meetings. JS asked if they had broken ground yet. AO said that she wasn't sure. JA said that he had run around both sides of the location that night and it didn't look like construction had started yet. RG said that she had been wondering if they could put something up on the BPAC page or maybe Recreation and Parks saying "Greenway: Coming Soon" or something like that. It would be helpful to have some information on the route and timeline available online. JA asked if it would be possible to have a photo of the construction progress at each monthly BPAC meeting. KJ asked staff to see if it would be possible to get a timeline of major project milestones for the January meeting. KJ said that this part of the project is really going to be the catalyst for future funding and extension of the greenway. JA added community buy in as well. RG added that the BPAC will want to keep on their radar, as the project progresses, planning for some kind of opening event. MC said that maybe they could hold the bike rodeo there at some point.

### **GUEST SPEAKERS**



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RG asked if the BPAC had any thoughts on future guest speakers or topics that they would like to have someone speak about. KJ asked how the last speaker (Jesse Day of PTRC) was. JA said that he was very good, very informative. He liked learning about the ways that other cities have addressed and approached their introduction of greenways and similar projects. KJ suggested that a topic could be how to partner with law enforcement on enforcing vehicle issues with pedestrians and bicyclists. MC said that he had talked to some of the people on the City Council where he lived in Ferndale, Michigan. They had a significant campaign to raise awareness of cyclists among drivers and now they have a city parking lot for bikes. It's all free and they encourage people to bike downtown. MC asked the city councilors how they accomplished it as he said one of the biggest problems in this area is people not seeing cyclists or not caring to see them. The people involved were no longer on city council but the people MC spoke with said that it was a real collaborative effort between multiple departments in the City. MC suggested that maybe they could find someone who had been part of an effort like that to speak with them.

JN asked how the BPAC gets guest speakers to come in. Do they volunteer or are they compensated? RG explained that staff just asked if they would be interested in speaking. There wasn't any compensation. JA said that it also depended on when they were available as it took several months to get two guest speakers to meet with them. RG explained that some of that was just related to staff turnover and the project had been started by a contracted person before she joined the City. It took a little while to establish those connections. JN asked if they wanted a guest speaker that is far away if that would be done over Zoom if they wouldn't be paying for someone to fly. RG said yes, they are set up so that guest speakers can join either in person or virtually. RG added that the BPAC has discretionary funds so if at some point they needed to compensate someone to speak, they could look into that. Many people that are involved in this work with bicycle and pedestrian planning are willing to talk to BPACs and similar groups so it hasn't come up yet.

RG said that she can do some research and see if there are municipalities in other areas of the state that have been doing more of that collaborative work with other departments and agencies. JA said that it is easier for cities like Chapel Hill, Carrboro, Durham, and Raleigh because they are university towns. They have a constant influx of bicyclists throughout most of the year. JA suggested that they look for somewhere that has similar demographics as Mebane, that is not associated with a university, but that has made good inroads into bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and has managed to get good buy in from community members. KJ suggested looking for municipalities that have been certified as bicycle or pedestrian friendly. KJ suggested that they could look outside of North Carolina as well. Other states might be more supportive or innovative in this area. She suggested that she could reach out to her former colleagues at the Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center for thoughts and suggestions on speakers. RG said that she would do what research she can but suggested that the BPAC members are also welcome to find some places that they think are addressing bicycle and pedestrian needs well and suggest some ideas for guest speakers.





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## PROGRAMMING AND EVENTS

RG noted that for programming and events, they had just discussed possible holding a bike maintenance workshop. She said that they do kids events with the bike rodeo, but it might be worth considering a safety workshop or bike maintenance lesson for adults as well. She explained that she would like the BPAC to consider programming and educational events that the BPAC could expand upon. She added that she had found a local group BikeWalk NC that does a number of things related to bicycle and pedestrian safety including a course for motorists that teaches them how to drive safely around bicyclists and pedestrians. There is not a lot of information available on the website but she thought it would be interesting to reach out to them to see if they could hold a public workshop in Mebane. JA said that it is always good to have outreach to non-cyclists. He clarified that everyone has experience being a pedestrian and has a basic understanding of how they are likely to behave, but not everyone has experience being a cyclist so they don't know what to expect from them when interacting. RG agreed that it is good to reach out to both sides, cyclists and motorists, about safety practices and awareness. JA asked if the City has ever sent anyone from commissions to national summits. Sometimes the League does their national summit in DC in the spring. It would be helpful for someone from the City or BPAC to get a sense of what is going on at a national level. RG said that staff typically only go to conferences within the state, unless they are available virtually. AO confirmed that she doesn't think the City has ever sent anyone from the BPAC to a national event. Should would have to ask City administration if they want to pursue something like that. AO said that there is a national event, she thinks its hosted by AAA, that will be in Chapel Hill this year. That might be something where they could get national perspectives without having to travel too far. JA said that anything that gives them more information on how to implement more infrastructure safely and increase education would be really helpful. AO said that it is the Safe Mobility Conference and it will be March 26-27<sup>th</sup> in Chapel Hill. KJ asked if it is free. AO said it is not free but it is a relatively low cost.

KJ asked if they are all wanting to continue to participate in Dogwood and Autumnfest and to organize the bike rodeo. KJ asked JA what he thinks about having a separate event for bike maintenance, maybe in late winter or early spring since he would be the primary teacher for that? JS asked about incorporating bike maintenance more into the bike rodeo since they have been trying to increase participation in that. That would mean that the bike rodeo isn't just for kids, but the safety practices that they discuss in the bike rodeo may be useful for adults as well. Especially if they do not have much experience or haven't biked in a while. KJ said that she does like the idea of making the events they are already organizing bigger instead of adding more events. JS agreed that everything will be set up and people will be volunteering their time, so they should get as much out of it as they can. JS said that he would still help with the bike rodeo and maintenance as long as he's available that day. JA confirmed he would help as well. KJ said that the location that they used this year was really great and worked really well. KJ confirmed that she would still help with the bike month social media campaign. She said they should also keep developing the



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Mebane Activity Challenge and work on increasing participation. RG agreed and said there was a good turnout this year.

KJ asked if RG had anymore plans for next year to discuss. RG said no, but if any of the BPAC members have any goals or ideas they should think about it more. The BPAC has a good line up of programming but it is always good to think if there is anything more or different they could be doing. JA said that they should work on increasing their relationship with Mebane Main Street and the downtown business association. One major goal is to increase the number of pedestrians and bicyclists going into and out of downtown, the more they can collaborate with the downtown organizations on that, the better. He added that having a gift certificate for some of the local businesses as prizes for the activity challenge would be a great collaboration. They should also get more feedback from the downtown businesses and organization about where they would like to see bike racks and where they would like people to traveling into and out of downtown. JS suggested that maybe the BPAC could coordinate with some of the events and concerts downtown to provide a bike concierge service. That could encourage more people to bike downtown and help offset some of the parking issues with downtown events. It would also help more people be aware of the BPAC and what they do. JA suggested that if you took one of the parking spots downtown and turned it into the bike corral for an event it would show people how many bicycles can fit in one parking spot for a vehicle. KJ said that since they shut down Fourth Street for all of those events, they could put that demonstration in a spot that couldn't be used anyway. She agreed that it's a great visual. MC said it would be great if you could incentivize people with something. JS suggested that if they are able to do it multiple times a year, maybe they could make it part of the activity challenge. A "I checked my bike at a downtown event" challenge. MC suggested that maybe for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, since bicyclists would have to ride home in the dark, maybe they could organize a police escort? That would be really cool for kids.

JS suggested one more idea for greenway promotion that he just remembered. Clayton, NC just opened a new greenway section and they turned the fences along the greenway into a community art project. It looked like the design was painted by students. RG said that she wasn't sure if there would be fencing on Mebane's greenway or what type, but organizing some kind of community art project on the greenway sounds like a great idea. KJ said that even kids and chalk could help promote excitement. MC asked if there was a celebrating North Carolina week or anything? When he was a kid there was a celebrate Michigan week and kids would draw things related to Michigan on the sidewalks outside the schools. Maybe they could do something like that with the greenway. KJ said that getting South Mebane Elementary School involved somehow would be great since they are so close to the greenway. JA said that it seems like the Year of the Trail has been a great success and he wondered if they could piggyback on that somehow. RG said that the Great Trails State Coalition that Jesse talked about is still meeting so there may be future events related to that. AO added that they have sent a save the date for a Great Trails State conference in September.

## **NEW AND ONGOING BUSINESS**



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## **BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN TRANSPORTATION PLAN UPDATE**

RG said that they received a new draft last Friday and she started reviewing it today. It looks really good. She has some editorial comments, like language and formatting, but it's a big improvement. MC asked when it would be completed. AO said that they are planning to present to Planning Board at the January meeting. The BPAC will need to make a final recommendation at their January meeting. It will then be presented to City Council after that. She said that Aaron presented the Recreation and Parks plan to City Council in December but she isn't sure when City Council will take action to adopt it. The recreation plan is much bigger, so she is hoping that City Council will not need as much time to consider it. However, if City Council hears it in February they may not take action until later. KJ asked who would present and AO answered that the consultants would. RG and AO discussed the timeline for sending comments and receiving drafts. RG repeated that the BPAC members should be ready to discuss and hopefully recommend the plan at their January meeting.

## **E-BIKE AND E-SCOOTER ORDINANCE REVISIONS**

RG explained that they had already discussed the ordinance and that it is an ongoing discussion with city administration and other staff. She just put that there as a placeholder in case there were updates. JS said that when they discussed last month there was an assumption that they couldn't or wouldn't differentiate between manual bikes and E-bikes and asked if there was any further information on that. AO said that she hasn't received any advice from the City attorney on that. She explained that she had included in her notes that the BPAC had made their recommendation based on that assumption and if it is not correct, she understands that they will want to revisit it.

## **DOWNTOWN BIKE RACK**

RG explained that the BPAC had discussed putting the temporary bike rack in the downtown pocket park and she said that she had created a form that people can scan in order to track use. She wanted to check if the BPAC members wanted to put it out now or if they wanted to wait until the warmer weather. JA said that he'd like to just put it out now. JS said that he didn't think it would hurt to have it out early as long as they are not making any decisions about whether it is a good location until they see the usage in the warmer months. RG said that she would talk to Aaron about installing it after the holidays.

## **BIKE BOULEVARD SIGNS**

RG said that at the last meeting JA had asked about the signs saying bicycles can use full lane. RG said that staff is looking at using a mix of share the road and bicycle can use full lane signs. They are also looking for a good supplier of those signs. AO clarified that should have spoken with the public works director and someone had done a bulk order of share the road signs, so they have a lot of signs in storage right now. She said that he was not as familiar with the bicycle may use full





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lane signs and wasn't sure where the best place to order them is. AO said that they could consider in January or February whether they would like to use discretionary funds to buy a few of those signs. JA indicated that he understands that public works want to use the signs they have, but the share the road sign is open to some ambiguous interpretation. JS said that a lot of drivers don't know what the sign means or feel that the bicyclist is being a jerk for being all the way over in the lane, even though bicyclists are allowed and even encouraged to do so in some contexts. JA said that the general statute says that if bicyclists are going to make a left turn, they are required to move to the left side of the lane.

JN asked if they could put that kind of information on the website, such as rules for bicyclists, pedestrians, and cars. JA said that there is a website that lists laws related to how cars should treat cyclists or how cyclists should ride on the road, etc. JS said that links to that material would be good to have on the BPAC site. They don't need to rewrite all of that information if they can just link to it. JN said that it would be good if they could briefly summarize some of it. Sometimes people just want a quick answer to something. RG asked if they would like to see a separate safety section or if those questions should be embedded into a FAQ. JN suggested a separate safety section and AT suggested including the information in both locations. KJ said to make sure that the information is dated in case any regulations or ordinances change. JN asked who is responsible for making sure the website is up to date. RG said that she is the primary person responsible for the BPAC webpage. KJ suggested that they plan to table the bike boulevard signs until February and at that meeting they will plan to vote on whether to use discretionary funds to purchase some of those signs.

JA said that he had a safety issue he wanted to bring up, remarking it is still terrifying to cross the crosswalk at Fifth Street and Mebane Oaks Road. He was coming down Fifth Street going towards downtown. He waited for the pedestrian cross light, but when he went to cross cars kept turning across the crosswalk. RG said that was probably a law enforcement issue. JS mentioned signs in Chapel Hill that referenced law enforcement monitoring of speed and crosswalks. RG suggested discussing with the NCDOT a "yield to pedestrians" sign for turning vehicles. AO added requesting delay between the signals for pedestrians and turning vehicles. KJ noted the lack of a refuge for pedestrians. JA mentioned he has been adding sidewalks to OpenStreetMap, which asks about the presence of a refuge. RG referenced a proposed project in the updated bicycle and pedestrian plan for South Third Street and Corregidor Street, which may serve as a model for future intersection improvements. JS found a photo of the sign he had mentioned, which read: "Chapel Hill Police Speed and Crosswalk Enforcement Today." RG commented on the expectation of people in the crosswalks in Chapel Hill, with JA and AT commenting on other places with high pedestrian activity. JA suggested the BPAC discuss an enforcement campaign with the new Police Chief. KJ commented she would reach out to the Police Chief.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:28 p.m.

*Meeting summary prepared by Rachel Gaffney, City Planner.*