



# Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Commission

BPAC Regular Meeting Summary

January 22, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.

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NAME	REPRESENTATION
James Allen (JA)	Orange County
Rebecca Brouwer (RB)	City
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

## **APPROVAL OF DECEMBER 18, 2023 MEETING SUMMARY**

KJ asked if there were any edits to the meeting summary and none responded. MC moved to approve the meeting summary from the December 18 meeting. JA seconded the motion.

A unanimous vote (6-0) supported approval of the meeting summaries. RB abstained since she was not present at the last meeting.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

KJ asked if there had been any public comments and RG said there had not. RB asked if she could make a public comment. She said that she has seen several people nearly get hit at the intersection of S Third Street and W Washington Street. The pedestrian signal never comes on and the traffic patterns are difficult to predict. RB said that they need to see what they can do to make sure the lights are functioning correctly or see what can be done to improve the signals. KJ asked what she thinks is the most dangerous direction that traffic is coming from and RB said that the biggest issue is cars turning from Center Street onto Third Street. They are coming to the Washington Street intersection from the railroad crossing. RB added that she has noticed that cars are also often ignoring the traffic signals at this intersection. RG asked if the cars are running red lights. RB confirmed that she has seen several cars stop for the red light, get frustrated at how long it takes to change, and then run through it. JA agreed that this has been an issue since the double lights at Center Street and Washington Street were installed.

JA asked if he could also make a public comment. He said that the crosswalk at S Fifth Street and Foust Road needs a Ped-Head or something. It is such a busy road. He had to wait more than five minutes for a break in traffic to dart across. AO noted that intersection is adjacent to the Villas on Fifth neighborhood. She said that there was a public comment from a resident there a year or two



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ago, but that was before the crosswalk had been installed. The crosswalk was constructed as part of the Villas on Fifth development. AO added that the work that is being done on Fifth Street now is going to lead to a traffic light being installed at London Lane and Mebane Airport Road. She explained that everyone is going to want to wait to see how that traffic light affects traffic patterns before they explore adding further improvements to the crosswalk at Foust Road. RG noted that drivers are going fast in that area as the speed limit increases from 35 to 45 and JA agreed. KJ said that the BPAC had previously discussed recommending a speed reduction for this area. AO said that hopefully the traffic light will be installed soon and they will just need to see if that changes traffic patterns. KJ agreed that it will create a break in traffic flow and maybe stop some speeders.

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

RG explained that the Plan Update had just gone before Planning Board for their recommendation. She said that she was not going to go through the full presentation that was made but that she would summarize the highlights. She explained that a description of accomplishments since the adoption of the original plan had been added to the introduction. She also noted that the vision and goals of the plan have remained largely the same. She noted that the Planning Board did recommend approval of the plan at their January meeting. The plan will be presented to the City Council at their February meeting and then they are anticipated to make a decision at their March meeting. A decision on the adoption of the Recreation and Parks Plan is also expected to be made at the March meeting. RG noted that the plan now has separate maps for recommended pedestrian projects and recommended bicycle projects. There is also a separate map for the top ten priority projects. She added that in addition to the project recommendations there are policy, programming, and strategy recommendations. RG explained that the new draft is available for the BPAC's review and that staff just has a few minor comments on additional changes. AO added that if the BPAC members have any comments that would not require significant changes to the plan then they are welcome to send them. JN said that she did find a typo and RG said it would be great if she wants to email those types of comments. KJ said that she is really happy with the improvements from the first draft. The cover and pictures are better and the maps are clearer.

AO added that staff hopes to be better at tracking progress made on the recommendations of this plan. The consultant is supposed to provide GIS data that will help with creating an online map. RG added that it would be great to have an online map like the development map that staff currently uses to track bicycle and pedestrian projects. KJ asked if there was a contract with a consultant to help the City track projects continuously. AO said no the contract does not include continuous support, just the GIS data to help the City create maps. However, she said that the City does contract with a GIS group called Interdev that helps with most of their public facing maps. She explained that they use them for any GIS projects that would take too much time for planning staff to complete. She said that if Interdev were to set up a project tracking map then planning staff would be able to update it and add projects fairly easily.



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KJ asked if the BPAC needs to officially approve the bicycle and pedestrian transportation plan update. AO clarified that they need make a recommendation to City Council for approval. KJ made a motion to present the plan, the version presented to the BPAC, to City Council for approval. RB seconded the motion. A unanimous vote (7-0) supported approval of the motion.

KJ thanked everyone for their work and said that it was very exciting to have the plan nearly complete. She asked if staff anticipates any questions or feedback or if there is anything the BPAC can do to support the plan at this stage. AO said that she would let the BPAC know if anything comes up. She received a few questions from Planning Board members that she is planning to research further. She said that she does feel like the bicycle and pedestrian plan has a little bit of an advantage over the Recreation and Parks plan as that is much larger and requires more public investment. The bicycle and pedestrian plan would require public investment as well but it is paired with private development to accomplish many of the larger goals. She explained that she is not sure how much public interest it will draw. She said that one thing they want to watch out for is someone seeing the plan showing a project or a sidewalk in their neighborhood and not wanting it or, conversely, being upset that there isn't a new sidewalk or project being planned for their neighborhood. She asked the BPAC members to let staff know if they hear anything like that.

## **NEW AND ONGOING BUSINESS**

### **GREAT TRAILS STATE PROGRAM**

RG explained that there are a few different grant opportunities coming up that she wanted to discuss. When Jesse Day of PTRC spoke to the BPAC he mentioned that the Great Trails State Coalition is still doing work and that their next Cities, Towns, and Counties meeting would be happening soon. RG said that she attended the meeting in January and one thing that was discussed is the Great Trails State Program. It will be a grant program for projects related to the designated State Trails. The main goal is linking communities to the State trails. There is not a lot of information available yet, but it is expected to become available in early spring, maybe March. The plan is for a 6-month application window. The project maximum is expected to be \$500,000 and there will probably be a project minimum, but it has not been stated yet. There will likely be a flexible funding match, probably a minimum of 25% but there could be in-kind contributions. RG added that it is just something that she wants the BPAC to think about at this point and she will let them know when there is more information available. JA asked if that was the one where they are eligible because the Mountains-to-Sea Trail goes through town. RG said that when they were talking about it at this meeting it seemed like it might be opened up more generally, but she thought that when Jesse presented on it, it was limited to communities that were near designated state trails. RG noted that it is funded for \$12.5 million each year, for two years so far, and it is intended for the development of new trails and the extension of existing trails. It can be used for paved trails, greenways, or natural trails. On looking at the information available online, RG indicated that there is a Complete the Trail Fund that is separate from the Great Trails State Program and which is more focused on connecting to State trails. RG said that she will keep



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looking for more information and discuss it further with BPAC when there is a schedule set for the grant opening.

## **GRANT OPPORTUNITIES – AARP & BICYCLE HELMET INITIATIVE**

RG explained that there is a grant available through AARP that may be relevant to the BPAC and she also wanted to discuss the Bicycle Helmet Initiative that the BPAC has applied for in the past. RB asked if she start the discussion with the Bicycle Helmet Initiative. She said that she is still writing the final report for the grant. She noted that there are still a few helmets left at the MACC but she thinks it is less than a box. She said that since she is moving out of state and leaving both BPAC and Mebane on the Move, she is not sure if Mebane on the Move is going to want to apply again this year. The others at Mebane on the Move have said that the grant is more competitive this year than it has been previously. RB wanted to check if the BPAC wanted her to encourage Mebane on the Move to still pursue the grant and if any of the BPAC members could volunteer as a contact and support person. She explained that she is worried that if they don't apply then they will fall off the radar for these types of grants. At the same time though it has been difficult giving the helmets away and the BPAC has been a better avenue for that than Mebane on the Move. She wanted to check whether the BPAC thinks it is worth applying again for it this year or not. AO said that she had told City administration that there have been so many leftover helmets that they may want to take a break from applying for a year. RB asked if that is what she should tell Mebane on the Move and then the BPAC can reach back out to them next year. RB added that with the last grant application they had asked for 75 helmets so they could also consider applying again but asking for more like 25 helmets. KJ asked if Mebane on the Move had to be the applicant for the grant. RG checked the grant requirements and said that it looks like the applicant can be a government entity or a nonprofit. RB suggested that maybe the Mebane PD could apply on their own and the BPAC could provide support. KJ said that the application deadline is in a couple of weeks. RB suggested that she thinks they have enough helmets for this year and they can just plan to apply next year. There was general agreement among the BPAC members for that plan.

RG explained that there are a variety of grants available this year through AARP. The flagship grant can be used for projects such as creating public spaces and improving transportation and mobility options. There are also capacity building microgrants which can be used to fund bike audits and walk audits. For either grant, the project must especially benefit older adults (50+). JS asked if there is a community on S Fifth Street for older adults. AO said that she thinks he means Villas on Fifth. JS said maybe they could look at doing a crosswalk project or something similar there. RG added that they are not technically age-restricted, but they do have a lot of older residents. RB suggested that the Ashbury neighborhood does have an age restricted component. JN asked about the proposed greenway and wondered if there is going to be anything special constructed to help cross S Fifth Street. AO said that has been a topic of previous discussions. The project is still in the design phase so she is not sure what the specifics are going to be. Ideally a design will be completed and presented to the BPAC for comments later in 2024. It is possible that a project like that could be eligible for the AARP grant but they would have to find a way to link it to older



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adults. AO added that it will likely be a costly crosswalk improvement. JN asked for clarity on whether there is going to be a crossing included in the project or not. AO explained that the City engineer has said that issue will come up once the greenway is fully designed. It is clear that something will need to be done to connect the greenway across S Fifth Street but the details have not been determined yet. KJ asked for clarification on what stage the project is currently at. AO said that the current stage is more focused on outreach and easement acquisition, as well as working with Duke Energy on their requirements.

RB asked if construction had started on the Holt Street Greenway. AO said that she had recently talked to the City engineer about that. There is not a detailed timeline yet, but it is expected to be completed by December 2024. They are expecting to break ground by the end of the month. The City would also be supportive of the BPAC visiting the site in either spring or summer and maybe holding some sort of promotional event.

RG notes that the deadline for the AARP grant is the beginning of March. There is a little time to think about but not too much. JS suggested picking a project from the new Bike and Pedestrian Transportation plan. There is not a lot of time to develop a completely new plan but maybe they could find a project that the City is already working towards that fits the requirements of the grant. JA asked if a sidewalk project would be eligible. RG said that it should fall under the “range of transportation and mobility options” category. JA suggested a sidewalk project to connect the Ashbury neighborhood to the existing sidewalk on US 70. It was agreed by several BPAC members that was a good idea. KJ asked what the grant writing process would look like and what would be expected of the BPAC. AO said that it would depend on the program, but in this case, City staff would be applying for the grant and they are mostly asking for the BPAC’s ideas on possible projects and feedback. If it moves forward, then the BPAC members may also be asked to help with some aspects of the implementation of the project. KJ said that she likes the Ashbury project, there is a good story surrounding the need that would work well for the grant. AO agreed that it is something that the City really wants to pursue. KJ suggested that they should try to decide on some project ideas at this meeting as their February meeting will be too close to the application deadline. RB asked if the grant requires matching funds. RG looked at the application materials but could not find detailed information. She suggested that the information may be included in the application itself or it is possible that a match is not required given that it is being managed by a nonprofit rather than a governmental entity.

KJ asked if they should vote on this recommendation. AO suggested that they pick a back up project as well, in case the Ashbury sidewalk is too big of a project. KJ suggested that they consider a freestanding bike rack / bike maintenance stand, although she isn’t sure how it can be tied to older individuals. RB said that the Community Park is seeing a lot of older walkers. She wondered if there is any sort of missing amenity or anything they could do to improve the park experience for older adults. KJ suggested that since there is so much going on at the MACC (Mebane Arts and Community Center), they should look at installing a high visibility crosswalk crossing S Third Street towards Corregidor Street. AO said that the City engineers are already working on that project and



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RG added that it is a cutsheet project in the new bicycle and pedestrian transportation plan. There was some discussion of whether crosswalk improvements were needed across Corregidor Street. KJ asked RB if she had any ideas for the Community Park. RB suggested that maybe instead of a physical project they could look at programming, maybe start a walking program to capitalize on existing interest. The program could be directed towards seniors or include incentives for them. RB said that the problem with programming is that someone has to keep it going, so it is less of a “one and done” project than something physical. KJ asked about tying this idea to the Mebane Activity Challenge. A lot of the participants this year were older adults, maybe 75%. Maybe they could use a grant to add more incentives and promotion of the challenge. RG suggested that maybe they could look at the lighting at the community park. There is a section where, if the stadium lighting is on, then it is lit, but if the stadium lighting is off, it can get pretty dark. AO asked if it was near Forest Lake and RB said that she thought it was. RB suggested that if the lights are low they shouldn't really bother adjacent properties. There was some discussion about the existing lights. RG said that she thought the existing little LED lights near the stormwater pond were okay, although they could be a little brighter, but the area on the other side of the soccer field can get really dark if the stadium lights aren't on. RG brought up a map and showed where she thought some more lighting should be. JA added that the storage company had a light that shines on the park during the winter, but once the trees start growing back in the spring and summer it gets blocked. KJ said that she is mostly there when soccer is happening so she hasn't seen it not lit up. RG explained that she has been going there a lot because it is one of the only parks that is lit. Most of the time the stadium lights are on, but there have been a few times where they were not. RB said that she likes the idea and it could potentially help everyone. She added that it could also end up being an expensive project though.

JA asked if there was a planned project to connect the Community Park to Woodlawn Road and AO confirmed that there is. She added that if it is not already out to bid then it will be soon. JA asked if that project would include any lights and AO said that it would just be the parking area. KJ asked if that means that people would be walking on Woodlawn Road to get to the Community Park and suggested that it is not a very safe walking area. AO agreed but said that is going to need to be addressed with a separate project in the future. RB said that she has seen that the City is currently asking for ideas of activities for older people. She wondered if they could ask the Recreation and Parks Department or whoever is doing that survey if they have gotten any ideas that would be more in the BPAC's area.

## **SAFETY CONCERNS AT SOUTH FIFTH STREET AND MEBANE OAKS ROAD**

RG explained that JA had brought up some safety concerns related to the crosswalk at South Fifth Street and Mebane Oaks Road at the last BPAC meeting. They had talked about whether there are any yield to pedestrian signs in the intersection. RG said that she had wanted to let the BPAC members know that there is not a yield sign for the left turn from Fifth Street onto Mebane Oaks Road. There is just a “u-turn must yield to right turn” sign. She wanted to check in with the BPAC and see if they wanted to try to bring it to NCDOT's attention. JA said that he has also had issues



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with drivers coming off of Mebane Oaks Road turning right onto Fifth Street. A truck pulled right across the crosswalk while JA was using it to cross. AT said that there is a yield to pedestrian sign going in that direction, but she doesn't think drivers notice it. Based on that she is not sure if another sign will help the issue, but it can't hurt. KJ suggesting putting one of those "Stop Here" signs up to try to keep vehicles from driving across the crosswalk without looking first. RG brought up imagery for the intersection and confirmed that there is a yield to pedestrians sign, but it is very small. She added that it is also not in the direction that drivers will be looking when they're planning to turn right. Having something in their line of sight when they are looking at oncoming traffic from the left would be helpful. RB said that she likes the "stop here" idea. JN asked if it is possible to get lights put in the pavement that flash when people are in the crosswalk. AO said that she is not sure how expensive that would be. RB added that the cost of even a simple Ped-head is crazy. AO noted that there would also need to be electric lines located in that area. JA said that when he is riding on trails in Durham there are two crossings that have flashing Ped-Heads and drivers do notice them. However, he said that you have to hit them at the right moment otherwise drivers will blow right through them. RB said that she feels like Mebane is not good at pedestrian visibility. She clarified that there are a lot of signs and lights, but it seems like drivers just aren't used to yielding to pedestrians. It's a very car-centric community. RG suggested that you have to create the expectation that there will actually be a pedestrian using the crosswalk, to make drivers actually check and look for them. She thinks that when people are driving in an area where they know that there are likely to be a lot of pedestrians they tend to look differently, more actively, than when they are not thinking about pedestrians. RB said that its tough because there are a large number of walkers but it doesn't seem to have changed much. JA added that with all the new developments especially behind Lowe's Foods, there are going to be a lot more walkers in coming years.

RB asked if Mebane Oaks Road is maintained by NCDOT and staff confirmed it is. She asked if there is more or less red tape for signs, versus lights, versus striping, versus other interventions. AO said that she isn't sure. The first step is bringing the issue to NCDOT's attention. They have already made improvements to the intersection previously, but it is important to let them know that there are ongoing issues. AO added that it is not a particularly safe intersection for vehicles either. KJ asked when the last intervention related to this intersection was made and wondered what the change in traffic volume has been since then. JA added that it might be worth reaching out to the police department to see if there could be more enforcement efforts in that area as well. AO said that based on streetview imagery, the crosswalk was probably put in just after 2015. RG said that she thought it was probably done somewhere around 2017-2018. It was identified as a priority project in the 2015 bicycle and pedestrian plan. KJ asked what the next step would be and RG said they will need to reach out to NCDOT and see what their response is.

KJ said that she wanted to add that she had been thinking about the downtown bike rack and recently when she was downtown, she saw several bikes lined up next to Muffins. It was a teacher workday and it looked like a few kids had ridden their bikes there. She said that it was great that



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kids were biking downtown, but she wondered if they put a bike rack in the pocket park if they would use that or if they would still just lean their bikes next to Muffins. RB added that there are not big safety problems in Mebane with bikes being stolen or anything like that. KJ agreed and said that they weren't blocking the sidewalk or anything like that.

## **CELEBRATING OUTGOING BPAC MEMBERS**

KJ thanked RB and JS for their work on the BPAC and their service to the Mebane community.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:59 p.m.

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