



# Town of Merrimack, New Hampshire

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Planning - Zoning - Economic Development - Conservation

## **MERRIMACK BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN MASTER PLAN WORK GROUP APPROVED MINUTES**

**Tuesday, August 12, 2014**

**Planning Board Members Present:** Robert Best, Desirea Falt, and Alternate Nelson Disco.

**Others Present:** Zoning Board Chair Fran L'Heureux (arrived at 7:52pm), Public Works Director Rick Seymour, Planning and Zoning Administrator Jillian Harris, and Assistant Planner Donna Pohli.

### **1. Call to Order.**

Chair Desirea Falt called the Merrimack Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan Work Group (Group) meeting to order at 7:34pm in the Matthew Thornton Room.

### **2. Discuss the New Hampshire Livable Walkable Communities Toolkit.**

Jillian gave a brief introduction to the document she worked on at SNHPC which was originally completed in 2004 and updated in 2012. The Group agreed with the approach of having a timeline and workshop options for outreach. The Group is interested in using aspects of the toolkit to fit Merrimack's needs. They felt that their previous idea of including zoning aspects/changes to make Merrimack a more walkable community, in addition to the map related well with the toolkit's philosophy.

**Item 4 was taken up before Item 3.**

### **4. Discuss Bedford Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan.**

The Group discussed how they wish to take certain aspects from the Bedford Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan to use in Merrimack. The Group decided they would like a similar end result to Bedford's but would still make it unique to Merrimack and that key roads would need to be identified. The need for implementation after creating the plan, similar to the Town's master plan was emphasized. Nelson Disco pointed out that he would like to see additional input from the community and to involve the community more. Chair Falt would like the Group to get a color coded map together similar to Bedford's.

The Group recognized that Bedford had approximately \$37,000 to use to create their plan so that Merrimack's may not be able to be as intensive.

### **3. Discuss Information Gathering Process/Data Collection.**

Creating a survey, handing out to residents, and analyzing the results was discussed by the Group. Ideas such as handing out the survey at a polling site at the November local election, the Transfer Station, Farmer's Market, posting a link on the Town's website, sending out a copy with the tax bill were all ideas mentioned. Social media, newspaper articles, MerrimackTV, etc. may also be utilized. The Group emphasized needing multiple avenues to create a randomized sample. Nelson Disco reminded the Group, that the questions on a survey have to be drafted carefully. Bob Best added that there should not be too many questions/the survey could not take too much time to fill out. Chair Falt recommended looking at the Bedford Plan's outreach section for question suggestions. The Group would like demographic information but realizes they must be careful in what they ask and how they ask for such information.

Initial ideas of questions could include: "Do you support bike/ped initiatives", "Do you presently walk/bike?" "Why or why not?" "What locations do you bike/walk?" (include Grater Woods, Horsehill, etc. as well) "Are you willing to pay for bike/ped opportunities in Town?" "What street do you live on or what is the nearest intersection to where you live?" and so forth. The survey drafting and implementation will have continued discussions at following meetings.

Nelson Disco stated that the Safe Routes to School Group did a survey/questionnaire a few years ago. Donna and Jillian said that staff would try to find it for this Group's reference.

Bob Best felt that free thought community input sessions should be scheduled similar to those that were part of the Master Plan process. Possibly before the survey is drafted and handed out. The Group wants data/information that can be analyzed without limiting the community's responses.

The Group, again, stressed the need to have representatives from Town Council, NRPC, Granite State Wheelman, etc. attend meetings and be involved with the Group. Donna mentioned that she spoke with Matt Waitkins from NRPC who has offered to assist the group. Donna will invite Matt to one of the upcoming meetings.

Staff suggested creating a project scope, meaning a timeline with goals, deadlines, and listing the responsible parties. The Group decided to stick with its original goal of having the issue of payment in lieu of sidewalks worked out and a sidewalk plan for D.W. Highway by the end of the year.

Bob Best mentioned adding design standards to Merrimack's Bike/Ped plan and that he likes the green space (tree belt) between sidewalks and streets wherever it is possible to have that done so that water can infiltrate properly.

The Group continued to discuss the education section of the Bedford Plan (p.13) and how to bring those ideas to Merrimack. Chair Falt stressed the importance of education and informing the community of the rules of the road between bikers, walkers, runners and drivers. She would like to see a program implemented.

#### **4. Future Work Group Meeting Scheduling.**

The Group decided to schedule the following meetings at 7:30pm with exact location in Town Hall to be determined:

September 16

October 14

November 18

December 9.

#### **5. Other Items of Concern / Open Discussion.**

The Group would like Staff to continue to reach out and work with the Town Council to get a representative to join the Group.

The Group discussed how to communicate with Town Council and it was decided that Bob Best will draft a letter to Town Council informing them of the Group and inviting them to participate.

Nelson Disco and Jillian will follow up with NH DOT District 5 and try to schedule a meeting with them to better understand their expectations of the sidewalk plan.

Nelson Disco again wants to encourage others to join the Group including members of the School Board, Town Council, Granite State Wheelman, and NRPC.

Rick Seymour then summarized Nashua's Code of Land Use section that describes sidewalk installation, locations and the quadrant policy. The Group discussed splitting Merrimack into quadrants and creating a similar policy but admitted that there would have to be further discussion as to how to specifically break Merrimack up into areas. Nelson Disco wanted to know how the Group or Planning Board could use funds from one site at a different site. It was mentioned that individual case by case approval would most likely be needed from the Town Council to collect funds and use elsewhere. Bob Best suggested that once Merrimack is split into sections, if an applicant chose not to build a sidewalk in front of their site, that the applicant could choose a quadrant or area in Merrimack for the sidewalk to be installed, but that the applicant would have the choice to build the sidewalk along their lot.

Chair Falt wondered about the HNH Foundation grant program. Jillian described that the Foundation may grant funding to any project that deals with childhood obesity and that in-kind time may be able to be used as a match rather than actual Town dollars. Jillian believed that the next RFP would be in December and that NRPC could possibly help the Group in writing a proposal.

**6. Minutes- July 15, 2014.**

The minutes of the July 15, 2014 meeting were approved, as submitted, on a motion made by Bob Best and seconded by Nelson Disco on a vote of 3-0-1. Fran L'Heureux abstained.

**7. Adjourn.**

The August 12, 2014 meeting was adjourned at 9:02 pm, by a vote of 4-0-0, on a motion made by Fran L'Heureux and seconded by Bob Best.