

**CITY OF NORWALK  
BIKE/WALK COMMISSION  
JUNE 1, 2020**

ATTENDANCE: Nancy Rosett, Chair; Barbara McCabe; Jud Aley; Christine Bisceglie; Brian Brown; Deborah Lewis, Colin Gotheer

OTHERS: Greg Pacelli, Transportation Planner; Theresa Argondezzi, Health Educator, Heath Department; Kathryn Hebert, Director of Transportation, Mobility and Parking; Michael Yeosock, Asst. Director of Transportation, Mobility and Parking; Steve Kleppin, Director of Planning and Zoning; Tanner Thompson; Jim Carter

**CALL TO ORDER**

Ms. Rosett called the meeting to order at 6:02PM.

**1. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There was no public comment this evening.

**2. APPROVAL OF MARCH 2, 2020 MINUTES**

**\*\* MR. ALEY MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES.  
\*\* MS. LEWIS SECONDED THE MOTION.  
\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY .**

**3. NEW BUSINESS**

## a. East Avenue TOD

Mr. Kleppin provided an update on a study that they city has been working on for East Norwalk. He said the city had received a grant over two years ago from the State of Connecticut to look at development in or around the East Norwalk Railroad Station. He said an oversight committee was established with several stakeholders and they had engaged a consultant to help with that effort. There will be a creation of a new zone along the East Avenue corridor which will be called a village district and will allow the creation of design guidelines. He said they are proposing to increase the height by one additional story to increase the density and in order to do that will need to meet several additional amenity standards. He said they are also recommending that Liberty Square is preserved and are not proposing any enhancements to it in terms of adding height or density. There will be a creation of a promenade that abuts Vets Park that will connect East Norwalk to South Norwalk. They are also recommending another area to be protected which is the cove area and will not be proposing any additional height or density in that area. He also said he thinks the city should take a hard look at relocating the DPW garage somewhere else and think there is a better use of that property. Another component of the plan was to look at transportation recommendations and after the plan is completed will be a separate undertaking by DPW. He said he is hoping that the draft plan will be completed within two weeks from this Friday and that he will be happy to share it with the Bike Walk Commission. Ms. Rosett requested that Mr. Kleppin email the plan to her and she will distribute it to the commissioners and she encouraged them to review the draft and submit their comments and also attend the public hearing if possible.

Mr. Brown said the Bike Walk Commission has a vested interest to be sure the plan gets done right and asked Mr. Kleppin what his recommendations are for the Bike Walk Commission to participate in the plan because he wants to be sure they are involved going forward. Mr. Kleppin said the next step for the draft plan will be to go out for public comment and then a public information session will be scheduled at the end of June where he and the consultant will present the plan. Ultimately the Planning Commission will have to amend the POCD to include this plan as the governing document for the East Norwalk area. He said specifically when they get into the implementation stage on the bike and pedestrian issues as well as sidewalk and bike lane improvements that they will be involving the Bike Walk Commission.

Mr. Thompson said because the elements of the plan are so interrelated and recommended that the Bike/Walk Commission speak to other elements of the plan such traffic calming and asked when a good time would be for the commission to provide feedback prior to the public hearing. Mr. Kleppin said the draft plan will be out in approximately two weeks and he will forward the link to the Bike/Walk Commission. Mr. Thompson asked if they should submit their feedback by email. Mr. Kleppin said "yes".

Ms. Bisceglie asked how the plan will impact the Ludlow communities housing. Mr. Kleppin said he will have to look to see if that is included in the zone but even if there is a business or a use in the new zone that is currently there they can continue to operate.

Mr. Grotheer asked Mr. Kleppin if there is anything that is incentivizing development to increase the sidewalk space. Mr. Kleppin said "yes" and any new development is going to be required to install a 7' wide sidewalk and there are also public realm requirements. Mr. Grotheer said he wonders if 7' is an adequate sidewalk for a downtown business district and Darien has a 12'

minimum along the Post Road that they are looking to maintain and he thinks something in that neighborhood is much more appropriate than a 7' sidewalk.

Mr. Grotheer asked Mr. Kleppin asked what is being done to improve the streets so it is more hospitable and more like a boulevard and a slower speed street. Mr. Kleppin said the tricky thing with this corridor is that the lots are not very big. Mr. Grotheer asked if the proposed lot sizes are small enough so that some of the existing single family parcels can be redeveloped into commercial property. Mr. Kleppin said in a lot of cases there will need to be a combination of properties and will call for some creativity in terms of design.

Mr. Grotheer asked if there is any thought to parking relief. Mr. Kleppin said "yes" that had included some ideas into the plan but there was some pushback and is one area he wishes there was a stronger recommendation for relief. Mr. Grotheer asked if there is any thought in trying to force a shared parking resource behind the strip of retail. Mr. Kleppin said all of the required parking will be in the rear and one thing that is included as an amenity was that if they provide public parking at no fee they would be eligible for some amenity points. Mr. Grotheer asked if there is any thought to getting people to collaborate on the public parking because that is what is key on make the instance in Darien work. Mr. Kleppin said he will look at that to see if there is anything that they have done that can be applied.

Mr. Thompson said given that this is going in a direction of more transient oriented development in East Norwalk and asked if any thought has been given to anticipate a shift in the mode of people coming to and from the train station, and if there have been any discussions with the Norwalk Transit District. Mr. Kleppin said "yes" and that they are aware that there is a bus line and one of the design guidelines was that there is appropriate bus shelter. Mr. Aley said that information is also included in a report that the Parking Authority had done. Mr. Kleppin said they had used that information.

Mr. Kleppin left the meeting at 7:40PM

### **CHAIR'S REPORT**

Ms. Rosett reported and said that she noticed that behind the SONO Collection there is a roadway for delivery trucks and it has a two way bike lane on it. She encouraged the commissioners to look at it and think about in the future look at connecting that bike lane with Crescent Street which would then connect it to the Norwalk River Valley Trail.

### **STANDING REPORTS**

#### **a. Bike Plan**

Mr. Aley said he has no updates to report but asked if they should be speaking with Mr. Yeosock and Mr. Pacelli regarding short term goals that the subcommittee has established last year that includes striping and sharrows. Mr. Pacelli said "yes". Mr. Aley asked if anything is yet happening with that. Mr. Pacelli said they are currently working on it and

looking at the DPW paving schedule as well as the major projects that are happening because some of the affected areas will go beyond that roadway and are coordinating with DPW. Mr. Aley asked if the current paving schedule is online. Ms. Hebert said she will look into see if it is available online and if the plan is complete and approved she will share it with the commission. Ms. Hebert said that TMP meets with DPW on a regular basis to be sure all the projects are being coordinated at the same time and efficiencies that make sense to install the sharrows at the same time the paving projects are getting done. Mr. Aley said he will email Mr. Yeosock, Mr. Pacelli and Ms. Hebert the list from last year.

## **b. Events**

Ms. Mc Cabe said the cleanup day that was scheduled for April at City Hall has been cancelled and the outdoor movie is on hold. National Night out was scheduled for August 4, 2020, but they are encouraging cities to move it to October 6, 2020 and she has spoken with the police department and they are discussing that.

## **c. Norwalk River Valley Trail (NRVT)**

Mr. Carter provided an update and said they are close and getting closer but still a ways to go. He said that they continue to run into issues which is slowing the process, and that Ms. Rosett and Mr. Yeosock have been very involved. The two major initiatives are the Missing Link and Wilwalk.

Mr. Carter and he believes all the major items have been accomplished for the Missing Link relative to the trail itself, however questions have come up regarding the parking lot which serves as the trail head and needed to go through the process again, and will go back to the Common Council for approval next week and if approved the RFP will go out later this summer or in the fall but does he not see construction beginning until the spring of 2021.

Mr. Carter provided an update on Wilwalk and said it is a joint project with Wilton and the issues centered around the lease on the ground under the trail with the State of Connecticut and the DOT, and have essentially now been resolved, and all of the public hearings are in the final rounds and they anticipate no issues but construction will probably not begin until early 2021.

Mr. Carter said at 40 Cross Street there is a joint project between the Redevelopment Agency and DPW, TMP and will connect the harbor loop trail into the main branch of the Missing Link.

Mr. Carter said they have envisioned a substantial enhancement to the way finding of the trail from Calf Pasture Beach to Union Park and have been working with Mr. Yeosock. He said the ultimate goal is the tie into the Missing Link and have an easy to follow route.

Mr. Carter said due to the substantially higher cost associated with the requirements of the State to develop Wilwalk combined with the loss of some corporate pledges there is a need to raise funds to complete the matching grant with the state and are launching a fundraising campaign to try and raise \$75,000. He asked if the committee can help in identifying contacts and corporations they would welcome the help. Mr. Aley asked if the funding shortage is just for Wilwalk or is it also for the Missing Link. Mr. Carter said it is exclusively for Wilwalk.

Mr. Carter left the meeting at 7:00PM.

## **d. Pedestrian Committee**

Mr. Brown reported and said he will be scheduling a meeting for June 16, 2020, for the Pedestrian Committee and the focus will be the Highland Avenue area by Brookside and Brien McMahon schools.

Mr. Brown asked what the possibly is of closing off Calf Pasture Beach Road sometime in September and would like to open one half of the road on a Sunday morning for pedestrian and bicyclists. He said it will be discussed at more detail at the next Pedestrian Committee meeting. Ms. Rosett suggested that getting the approval from the appropriate people at the city level before it is brought the Bike/Walk Commission. Ms. Hebert said that this would be a special event and there are protocols that the city follows and now that we are in the recovery stage of Covid-19 we are following the Governor and Mayor Rilling's four phased approach that would also need to be considered and there is criteria that we all need to follow. Mr. Brown said that he understands that but that this should be a priority because Norwalk has lacking infrastructure for outdoor recreation. Mr. Grotheer requested staff to do further research because it seems the special event permit is something that is filed when an event is going to be held but rerouting how traffic is moving is not a special event and the city is taking action to use the street for a different type of traffic. Mr. Aley suggested that the next couple of weeks Ms. Hebert could help with the approval process. Ms. Hebert requested that the details are provided to staff and will collaborate.

**e. Safety and Education**

Ms. Bisceglie reported and said that she had sent an email to Mr. Roberts and Ms. Korkatzis a few weeks ago regarding the Play and Learn Summer Camp but she has not yet received a response and she will follow up with a telephone call.

Ms. Bisceglie suggested prior to the event on Calf Pasture Beach Road to do a pre-bike Sunday and provide lessons for families. Ms. Rosett suggested also doing something for proper helmet fitting.

**f. Strategic Plan**

Ms. Rosett reported and said she will be convening a meeting on the Strategic Plan Committee to evaluate the current Strategic Plan and coming up with a Strategic Plan for the upcoming fiscal year because Ms. D'Amore is swamped with Covid issues at the moment. She said if anyone on the committee would like to join the Strategic Plan Committee to contact her. Ms. Hebert requested to join as staff.

**g. Website**

Ms. Lewis said the Facebook account for the Bike/Walk Commission has been fairly active and she has been posting a few articles per week. She said there have been two themes and one is how to stay active during the Covid-19 period, and the other is silver linings and said the cities that have been claiming more public space for bikers and walkers during this period. She said if anyone has any content that would like added to contact her or post it themselves.

Ms. Argondezzi said if anyone has any updates for the website to send them to her and she will make the updates.

#### **h. Walking Update**

Ms. Argondezzi said the NorWalker Program is currently on hold and are looking into models for virtual walks. She said they are also working on materials for staying safe for parks and trails.

**i. Transportation planner**

Mr. Pacelli said due to Covid-19 staff is limited on what they can work on in terms of software prospective. He said the safe routes to school project on Highland Avenue is still in the design phase and are finalizing the specifications on the raised crosswalks and where the sidewalks will be placed.

Mr. Pacelli said the connectivity grant for route 136 they made a preliminary submission to the DOT and are working on getting the sign off because it is a state road. He said that staff is working on where the signage will be placed and will then get the final designs to the State DOT.

Ms. Hebert said that TMP has been collaborating with DPW on the short term goals and have discussed the bus shelters but due to Covid-19 the main focus has been on response and now recovery with the Transit District. She said they will be meeting regarding the micro-transit this week and they are looking to roll it back out in July. She said the rainbow crosswalk project was delayed and was originally slated for May but now will be installed in the beginning of September.

Mr. Brown said the bus shelters or lack of bus shelters across from the DMV really needs to be addressed as soon as possible. Mr. Pacelli said the Transit District has received the data that was collected and have already proposed that are for a bus shelter. Ms. Hebert said that staff will follow up on the status.

**6. OLD BUSINESS**

**a. Signage for Clay Street Bike Trough**

Mr. Aley said the signs appear to be placed too high and difficult to find and asked if the sign can be lowered. Mr. Yeosock said that there is a minimum height that sign need to be from the sidewalk but staff will look into.

Mr. Thompson asked why the changes to Washington Street were done. Ms. Hebert said it was in response to the Governors phase I opening to allow restaurants to offer outside dining and the city wanted to help the business community from an economic development point of view. She said originally they wanted to close the road but it is not wide enough for the fire trucks so could not do that so this is what the team came up with to provide those benefits to the restaurant and retail and also provide a buffer for pedestrians. Mr. Thompson said he understands the rationale but asked how it happened so quickly. Ms. Hebert said once they received the Governors order there was not a lot of time to react. Mr. Thompson said he would love to so other projects happen that quickly. Ms. Hebert said that because we are in a response recovery mode there are certain processes that have been waived just for now to balance the health risks and the economy in a short period of time and that is typically not the case. Ms. Argondezzi said it is her understanding that there were certain Planning and Zoning regulations or processes that were waived specific to outdoor dining.

**7. ADJOURNMENT**

**\*\* MR. ALEY MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**\*\* MS. LEWIS SECONDED THE MOTION.  
\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd