

**City of Norwalk
Bike/Walk Commission
September 14, 2020**

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Attendance: Nancy Rosett, Chair; Barbara Mc Cabe; Jud Aley; Christine Bisceglie; Colin Gotheer; Tanner Thompson

Others: Greg Pacelli, Transportation Planner; Kathryn Hebert, Director, Transportation, Mobility and Parking; Jim Carter, NRVT; Vanessa Valadares, DPW, Principal Engineer; Theresa Argondezzi, Health Education, Health Department; Kim Morton, Chief Executive Officer, Transit District, Dennis O'Connor, Marketing Representative, Transit District; Sam Ebert, Bike/Walk Commission Nominee

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Rosett called the meeting to order at 6:00PM.

1. NEW BUSINESS

a. Bus Stops

Ms. Morton provided an update on the bus shelter program and said the program is under a contract and the contract expires on July 31, 2021, and in August the contract will go out to bid and they will entertain proposals from additional companies. She said currently there is very limited opportunity to do anything with the existing shelters because the existing company does not want to invest the funds because the contract will be going out to bid and they may or may not be awarded the bid. She said they have not been happy with the revenue that they have been receiving from the current shelter advertising contract and are eager to go out to bid. She said the problem with even a new company coming in is will be an expensive endeavor to install shelters within the city and any new shelters that are installed have to meet the ADA accessibility guidelines so there are problems from a financial perspective that would have to be addressed prior to installing new shelters.

Ms. Rosett presented the spreadsheet of the current bus shelter locations that Ms. Morton has sent her afternoon and said she will be sending it to the committee members. Ms. Morton said she knows there has been some interest in installing a bus shelter across for the Department of Motor Vehicle but the current company will not take that on with only nine months left in their contract with no commitment for the future. She said they do not have any funds allocated for shelters but that does not mean that is not a high visibility area for

the possibility of advertising revenue and the future company may look at that as something of interest and want to make that investment. She said they can apply for federal and state funds for shelter rehabilitations, and prior to Covid-19 that would have been a good investment but she is not sure what the state will offer for future capital endeavors for the next few years, and the operating budgets were held flat for this fiscal year and she anticipates the same in the capital projects going forward.

Ms. McCabe said she sees people at the bus shelters sitting on flipped over shopping carts in front of stores and asked if anyone has ever approached the stores to encourage them to install a shelter. Ms. Morton said the issue is that the shelters are a huge liability and that is why they use a shelter company that can get some advertising revenue and so they are responsible.

Ms. Rosett said most of the concerns that the commission had about the bus shelters seem like that will be addressed by the new standards requiring them to be ADA accessible.

Ms. Morton said that they would be happy to partner with the City of Norwalk as a joint partner to install sidewalks, curb cuts etc. around the bus shelters going forward. Ms. Rosett suggested as they go through the bidding process to keep in contact with the Bike Walk Commission, TMP and DPW. Ms. Morton said during the process it would be a good idea to have someone from the city to sit in on the evaluation committee and to review the specification prior to the issuance of the RFP.

Ms. Argondezzi asked what the cost estimate is to either improve or install a new bus shelter. Ms. Morton said they can range from approximately \$10,000- \$25,000.

b. DPW Sidewalk Plan

Ms. Valadares provided an overview of the sidewalk plan and that DPW is responsible for repairing existing sidewalks, but to not install new ones, and TMP is responsible for the designing and/or installing new sidewalks within the city. Ms. Valadares explained how they will choose which sidewalks will be completed in the next few years and said the sidewalk program follows the paving program and there is a five year forecast on which streets will be paved, and is based on two formulas which are based from the pavement condition index and benefit value and they try to pave 20% of the roads from the pavement condition index list and 80% from the benefit value list. She said they divided the city into four quadrants and the consultant evaluates one of them each year so there is a full understanding of the road conditions every four years. She said once the paving list is established, they evaluate the sidewalks on those streets.

Ms. Valadares presented the proposed paving forecast for 2019-2022 and reviewed the sidewalk installations that have been completed for 2019 and the ones that are in process for 2020. She in last year's budget that had received \$700,000 but used \$1.8 million dollars from the paving to complete the sidewalk installations that needed to be done for a total of \$2, 540,000 on concrete sidewalks last year. She said for this fiscal year they were able to get \$2.8 million dollars for concrete sidewalks and have already issued the contract and are hoping to have the contractor on site as early as Wednesday.

Mr. Aley asked if any asphalt sidewalks are installed. Ms. Valadares said “no” and they would only be used as a temporary or requested but the standard is concrete sidewalks.

Ms. Argondezzi asked if someone requests that a footpath gets replace with an adequate sidewalk if that would fall under the budget of TMP or DPW. Ms. Valadares said it would go through TMP and they will evaluate if it is feasible to install. Ms. Hebert discussed that process and said once that is complete the request goes to DPW for the construction because that is part of their responsibility.

2. PUBLIC INPUT

There was no input from the public this evening.

3. APPROVAL OF THE AUGUST 3RD MINUTES

****MR. THOMPSON MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES.**

**** MR. ALEY SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

4. CHAIRS REPORT

Ms. Rosett reported and said that Ms. Lewis has resigned from the commission and she not only did an incredible job as a commissioner, but she was the original chair of the Pedestrian Committee and she gave a very good foundation to that committee. She thanked Ms. Lewis for all of the hard work that she had done and she will stay somewhat involved with the Pedestrian Committee.

Ms. Rosett said that Mayor Rilling has appointed Sam Ebert who will be fulfilling the remainder of Ms. Lewis’s term on the committee which expires on June 30, 2021, and will go to the Common Council for approval on September 22, 2020. Mr. Ebert introduced himself and said he is an 18 month resident of Norwalk and he moved here from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and was a pro-mountain biker and bike mechanic, and has recently taken on a development position at Cannondale Bicycles where is manages the design of their premium road racing bikes. He said he is motivated to make Norwalk a more diverse transportation environment. He said that CSG is a subsect of Dorel sports which is a conglomerate of sporting brands within CSG and he heads the Transportation Committee within CSG where they are trying to get more involved in propitiating bicycling and alternative transportation.

Ms. Rosett said that Mr. Yeosock has reminded her that October is safety Pedestrian Safety Month so the Pedestrian Committee is working on a couple initiatives for October and if anyone of the committee has any ideas to send them to her and she will forward them over to the Pedestrian Committee.

5. STANDING REPORTS

a. Transportation Planner Update

Mr. Pacelli reported and provided an update on the connectivity grant and said the final designs are still be reviewed by the state, and he is hoping to have the installation complete by late spring or early summer on 2021.

Mr. Pacelli said the safe routes to school project on Highland Avenue is still in the design phase and he will keep the committee updated.

Mr. Pacelli said the Bike Plan Subcommittee has met and they mainly discussed Seaview Avenue and the improvements that can be made going forward, and discussed installing bike lane symbols in the current shoulder lane between Fort Point Street and East Avenue on the eastbound side. He said they also discussed exploring options to extend the bike a pedestrian facility east of the East Norwalk Boat Club to go up First Street. He said that are currently working on some short- and long-term improvements to improve both biking and walking in that area and to make a better connection between East Norwalk and South Norwalk, and he will continue to keep the committee updated.

Ms. Rosett asked if the sharrows on Cove Avenue, First Street and Fifth Street are replacing what where existing sharrows. Mr. Pacelli said "yes" and once the road is paved the sharrows will be installed but that will leave a gap onto Seaview Avenue and East Avenue.

Ms. Hebert said there is an East Norwalk TOD but they do not want to wait until the whole plan is done before showing some visible installation so that is what they are working for the short term which will be integrated into the long term solution for the area.

Mr. Aley said he hopes they are still looking at Hanford Place and would like to continue to talk about Fort Point Street because those two streets help to create a corridor for cyclists. Mr. Pacelli said that staff will continue to look at those locations.

b. Bike Plan

This item was discussed under the Transportation Planner's report

c. Events

Ms. McCabe reported and said the National Night Out has been cancelled, but they are looking at the idea of doing something virtual and if anyone on the committee has a vision for that they would be interested in hearing it. Ms. Rosett said the committee could offer the educational pamphlet to the people who email a request on what they are looking for to the commission's e-mail address and could sent a pdf version.

d. Norwalk River Valley Train

Mr. Carter provided an update and said the Missing Link is moving forward and should be in the RFP process by the next time the committee meets, and construction should begin in the spring and completed by the summer.

Mr. Carter said that 40 Cross Street and WilWalk are both active but there are no significant updates to report. He said they have been fundraising and have received two small grants

from two small businesses for a total of \$8,500 and if anyone on the committee knows of any small businesses that are interested in trail, biking etc. to have them contact him because in order to complete the matching grant portion they still need \$16,500.

The committee members thanked Mr. Carter and Mr. Yeosock for all of their work.

e. Pedestrian Plan

Ms. Rosett said the Pedestrian Committee has come up with survey about walking in Norwalk and are hoping to get it out virtually by the end of this week or sometime next week, and she will report back to the committee on the results at the November meeting.

f. Safety and Education

Ms. Bisceglie reported and said she will begin planning for Bike Safety month in May. She said that she has also emailed Sandy from Recreation and Parks and sent her some videos from the League of American Bicyclists. She also said she would like to see the League of American Bicyclists listed as a hyperlink on the committee's website and also suggested adding a suggestion feature to the website so that people from the public can make suggestions to the committee.

g. Social Media

Mr. Thompson presented and said the current outreach channels from the commission are Facebook, e-mail mailing list and the website and said he has some ideas on how he would like to update them and asked if the committee members have any ideas on how to improve them to contact him. He said the one big question he would like answered is what do we want people to do once they get on to the outreach channels and asked if anyone on the committee if they had any ideas and if so send them to him so he can put them into a more cohesive strategy. Ms. Rosett suggested that Mr. Thompson get a small group together to begin to brainstorm on some ideas. Mr. Thompson agreed and said if anyone on the committee is interested in being a part of that group to contact him.

h. Strategic Plan

Ms. Rosett said there will be an update on the Strategic Plan at the October meeting.

i. Walking Update

Ms. Argondezzi said she would like to encourage people to walk in groups but due to Covid-19 have not been doing a lot of that lately, but there is a lot of research in public health that suggests that it is easier to get people to increase their physical activity when there is a social group, and are trying to organize community walking groups. She said that one of the things that she would like to do thorough social media is to gather people virtually before they get together in person. She said they are in the process of writing their proposal to the state for the Block Grant and will reach out to Ms. Rosett to see how they can better support the commission.

Ms. Argondezzi said each year the Yale School of Public Health reaches out to the Health Department and other community's partners around the state. They have community based practice placements for students to come into communities and do community based research, and they have worked with the commission before to do some focus groups or structured interviews around people's perceptions of biking and walking, and they have also done some work from us on the childhood obesity surveillance data. She said they would send a group of four to five students that self-select into our topic area who would be interested in helping us answer very discreet and manageable research questions. She said she had reached out to Ms. Rosett to see if the commission had a research question that they did not have the capacity to answer on their own for them to brainstorm and implement a research project. Ms. Rosett said if anyone on the commission has any ideas to contact either her or Ms. Argondezzi directly. Ms. Bisceglie mentioned the diversity of the city and the commission should reflect the diversity and show an awareness that we are sensitive and aware and some of the minority communities have a big need with public health and suggested reaching out to that group. Mr. Thompson agreed and said if anyone on the commission knows of anyone of color and who likes to bike and who would like to be on the commission, he thinks they can be represented better. Ms. Rosett said there will be at least one opening on the commission next year because she plans to retire as on June 30, 2021, and it would be helpful to invite potential candidates to a meeting so they have some idea on what they are getting involved in.

6. OLD BUSINESS

a. Safety Card

Ms. Rosett said they have implemented all of the suggestions that were made at the last meeting for the safety cards. She presented the card and said that one side is about bicycle safety information that the other side has walking safety tips. She said if everyone on the committee agrees with the verbiage and the pictures on each side there will need to be a discussion on how to distribute them and suggested leveraging social media and to make the cards available as PDF's. She suggested putting them on the agenda for the October meeting and address it as part of old business.

b. Vice Chair

Ms. Rosett said they have talked about having a Vice Chair for the commission to act when the chair is not available and Mr. Aley has graciously agreed to be nominated.

**** MR. THOMPSON MOVED TO NOMINATE MR. ALEY FOR VICE CHAIR.**

**** MR. GROTHEER SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mr. Aley said he is happy to be Vice Chair but he will not be able to be Chair due to personal commitments when Ms. Rosett leaves.

Mr. Grotheer said he was on Facebook not too long ago and he saw that Senator Duff was out for a bike ride and posted about the view from Oyster Shell Park. He said that he has reached out to him and asked if he would like an informal ride with a member of the commission to discuss the bike and pedestrian infrastructure in Norwalk on a bicycle, and he was open to the idea and will just need to plan something and reach out to his assistant. He said if anyone on the commission is interested in that to contact him. Ms.

Rosett suggested that Mr. Grotheer, Mr. Ebert and Mr. Thompson coordinate and let the commission know when a date is scheduled.

Mr. Aley said he had walked the Wilton section of the Norwalk River Valley Trail and suggested if the committee members have not been there to go and check it out.

7. ADJOURNMENT

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

**** MR. GROTHEER SECONDED THE MOTION**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:30PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dilene Byrd