

**CITY OF NORWALK
BIKE/WALK COMMISSION
NOVEMBER 2, 2020**

ATTENDANCE: Nancy Rosett, Chair; Barbara McCabe; Jud Aley; Christine Bisceglie;
Colin Grotheer; Tanner Thompson; Sam Ebert

OTHERS: Greg Pacelli, Transportation Planner; Mike Yeosock, Assistant Director of
Transportation, Mobility and Parking; Theresa Argondezzi Health Educator;
Jim Carter, NRV; Gary Washinsky; Audrey Cozzarin; Matthew Weglian

To allow public access, anyone may access a meeting by telephone, Zoon, and/or the City of
Norwalk YouTube channel. Specific instructions and links can be found at
<http://www.norwalkct.org/meetings>.

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Rosett called the meeting to order at 6:04PM.

1. PUBLIC INPUT

Mr. Thompson said over the last couple of weeks he has been working on getting a shed as his condo complex so that he can store his bicycles and has run into zoning issues. In particular he lives in a condo complex of 13 units and there is a small parking lot and each unit is assigned one or two parking spots and his unit has two but they only have one car so he had proposed to put a shed in the other parking spot and the HOA was okay with it, but when he took it to zoning to apply for the permit they had said because of parking minimums a shed could not be put in a parking spot. He said he would like to formally complain that zoning should be more flexible especially for people to live and get around in a way they choose to and in some cases that is the only way that is financially feasible.

Ms. Rosett asked Mr. Pacelli if this is something he would be able to look into. Mr. Pacelli said that is not his area of expertise but suggested that an email be sent to Mr. Kleppin and copy him on it and he will make Mr. Kleppin aware of the issue. Ms. Rosett said that she will send the email and copy Mr. Thompson and Mr. Pacelli. She asked Mr. Thompson if he is permitted to install the shed if that when he moves out he would disassemble it and have it removed. Mr. Thompson said ‘yes’ unless the new occupant would to purchase it.

Mr. Weglian said is interested in learning more about the Bike/Walk Commission and perhaps help out as needed. Mr. Weglian introduced himself and said he and his family have been in Norwalk for a long time and he usually rides his bike 15-20 miles a day when the weather is nice.

2. APPROVAL OF OCTOBER 5, 2020 MINUTES

On page 2, Item 4d, change “8 feet” to “10 feet”

**** MR ALEY MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS AMENDED.**

**** MR. EBERT SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

3. CHAIR’S REPORT

Ms. Rosett reported and said there are two links for job postings and that one is for the Director of Transportation, Mobility and Parking and the other for the Assistant Director of Transportation, Mobility and Parking. She said Ms. Hebert has retired so that position is vacant and Mr. Yeosock is planning to move back to DPW because they have lost a number of senior engineers so his position will also be vacant.

Ms. Rosett encouraged the members of the committee who have not read the ordinance that created the committee to read it and that it is similar to the Strategic Plan because the seven goals in the Strategic Plan are taken directly from the ordinance. She said one of the things we are supposed to be doing is to report to the Common Council annually, and in the past she has reported to the Health and Public Safety because for the basis of her report uses the review the committee does at the end of the fiscal year of the Strategic Plan but due to Covid-19 was delayed, but she did report to them two weeks ago and presented what the committee had accomplished in the previous fiscal year and also provided them with a copy of the Strategic Plan for this fiscal year.

Ms. Rosett said they have finally gotten the safety card that the committee has been working on for several months and she has delivered 300 of them to the library and they will include the card in the bag of books for the curbside pickups. She also delivered 40 to Ms. Oster to use in her pre-school programs.

Ms. Rosett said thanks to Ms. Bisceglie’s contact with Ms. Oster she took 40 copies for her pre-school program. She had said that in August she puts together a bag for the kids who will be starting kindergarten and offered to include the cards in the bags next year and would also have the cards printed.

Ms. Rosett said thanks to Ms. Bisceglie one of her students has translated the safety cards into Spanish and Ms. Oster requested 30 of cards. She asked the committee how many cards should be ordered and if there are any other avenues that they think the cards should be distributed. Ms. Bisceglie suggested the Norwalk Housing Authority and the Carver Center. Ms. Cozzerin suggested Norwalk ACTS because they hold a lot of events where the cards can be distributed.

Ms. Rosett introduced Ms. Cozzerin and said she is the new co-chair of the Pedestrian Committee and she has been working hard on a grant that is due next week and we are very happy to have her on board.

Ms. Rosett said the Commission has purchased some crosswalk, bike rack and bicycle repair station signs and will now need to determine where they should be installed and asked if anyone on the committee would be interested in help out with that. Mr. Washinsky, Mr. Ebert and Mr. Grotheer volunteered to help.

4. STANDING REPORTS

a. Transportation Planner Update

Mr. Pacelli reported and said the connectivity grant is still in the process of being reviewed by the state, but as previously discussed the funds for the grant have already been allocated.

Ms. Pacelli reported and said the Highland Avenue Safe Routes to School project is still in the final design phase and is progressing and the funds are still allocated for the project.

Mr. Pacelli said the Bike Plan Committee met last month regarding Seaview Avenue and it was very informative and there were good discussions and they updated the design for traffic calming to include pedestrian and bike facilities. He said they are progressing the project as fast as they can and the improvements will cover to First Street including the two intersections and will accommodate sidewalks at both of the intersections. He said they are also putting together an outreach plan for the adjacent property owners for their feedback, and have also met with Mr. Kleppin regarding the East Norwalk TOD Plan and the promenade plan for Seaview Avenue which will run from Fort Point Street to Osborne Avenue but then comes to a halt so the plan is to connect the two projects so the entire length of Seaview Avenue has updated facilities for pedestrians and traffic calming measures.

Mr. Grotheer asked if there is any progress in terms of the final design for Highland Avenue. Mr. Pacelli said it is currently with the drafter at DPW but he can put together an outline of the project to present to the committee.

b. Bike Plan

Mr. Aley said this was discussed under Mr. Pacelli's report but that the last few meetings have been to discuss Seaview Avenue and over the winter he hopes to meet with Mr. Grotheer, Mr. Ebert, Mr. Thompson and Mr. Washinsky to map out some bike routes in relation to the paving schedule.

Ms. Rosett reminded the committee that the Strategic Plan looks at where more bicycle parking is needed around the city.

c. Events

There was no report given.

Ms. Rosett said that she has ordered 700 of the safety cards and once she has distributed to the organizations, she will leave the rest at the Health Department so that they can be distributed once events can be held again.

d. NRVT

Mr. Carter reported and said the bid is out for the Missing Link is out and the bids are due back later this month.

Mr. Carter said that WilWalk is coordinated through the town of Wilton and all of the formal and administrative check points have been met and are now working on the bid document preparation.

Mr. Carter said as part of the ribbon cutting for the Missing Link there will be a lot of attention drawn to the opening of the trail so it is important that the trail is updated so they are working on a number of projects so that the trail is in the best possible shape when the Missing Link opens. He said there are three particular locations that are a concern and that the first one is on the road section of the trail from Calf Pasture Beach to the Maritime Aquarium and that the Gardella project at Calf Pasture Beach has been holding up activity so capital projects are still on hold but since bikers will be directed to the park an interim, near term and midterm solution for the bike traffic needs to be established for entering the park. He said he has some thoughts on how that can be managed and should be applied that he has discussed with Ms. Rosett and have been presented to Recreation and Parks.

Mr. Carter said the crosswalk going northbound at the rotary on Gregory Blvd at Ludlow Park is problematic so a safer solution needs to be worked on so he has had preliminary discussions with Mr. Yeosock and to see what the options are.

Mr. Carter said the NRVt is interested in joining with the Bike Plan Committee to contribute what they can regarding Seaview Avenue from Cove Avenue to Fort Point Street and what the best interim solution for the summer to help ensure a safe passage of the congested area.

e. Pedestrian Committee

Ms. Cozzarin reported and said she is currently working on a grant application from America Walks of \$1500 and she thanked Ms. Bisceglie for her input. She said this grant seeks to bring together the underserved community to increase physical activity and active transportation to cross engage people and organizations that are newer to the efforts of walking, moving and walkability to demonstrate culture of anti-racism and inclusive health and design to support and cultivate active and engaged communities. She said they had come up with an idea at Oak Hills Park as a project site which has a level walking path which is included in the NorWALKer program and according to the master plan for Oak Hills Park will include a pollinator friendly meadow. She said the funds from the grant will be used to establish a meadow and to keep invasive plants from seeding, and this spring is the time to start establishing a pollinator friendly meadow. She said some of the funds will also be used for transportation for those who do not have access to transportation to go walking in nature. She said the grant is due on November 9, 2020 and there is also another exciting grant possibility through AARP which is called livable communities initiative and in 2020 have given on \$2.45 million dollars in grants to communities and there is a range of different ideas for projects and that one of them for us is to deliver a range of transportation and mobility options by increasing connectivity, walkability, bikeability, wayfinding and access to a wider range of transportation choices. She suggested the NRVt as a good possibility and she would like to meet with them to see what needs are needed.

Ms. Cozzarin said in addition to the grants the pedestrian committee also received the results from the walking survey and have received over 400 responses and the two big areas of concern

for people in our community were sidewalks and traffic calming. Ms. Rosett said that she will attach the results of the survey to the December agenda.

Ms. Cozzarin said that there is currently a petition through the ENNA regarding the TOD in particular a warehouse distribution center where they are projecting 198 trucks per day and people are concerned about walkability and bikeability in that area. She said to date over 700 people have signed the petition.

Mr. Carter asked if the warehouse project is part of the TOD because he supports the TOD but finds the warehouse as a conflict of the principles that the TOD speaks towards. Ms. Rosett said she does not think the proposed warehouse is part of the TOD due to the distance from the East Norwalk Railroad Station. Mr. Grotheer said unfortunately the property has a bad zoning remnant so regardless of the TOD it is an approved use for the site and he agrees with the people that are upset because it is not a good use for the property, but it is what is permitted and no one has changed that but he also does not think it is part of the TOD. Ms. Rosett said she will contact Mr. Kleppin to confirm.

Ms. Cozzarin said that for the grant two contact people are needed and one is needed for digital media documentation and the other for social media promotion. Ms. Rosett said in the past we have partnered with the city and leveraged its existing social media as well as The Health Department and Recreation and Parks in addition to the committees own social media.

f. Safety and Education

Ms. Bisceglie asked for an update on the American League of Bicyclists becoming a member and also the status of applying for the Bike Friendly American City. Mr. Pacelli said after going through the application they have decided to wait until the complete street policy and vision zero has been implemented because without those it would put us in a lower ranking. He said they are in the process of putting together the completed streets policy and bringing it to the Common Council for approval.

Ms. Bisceglie pointed out that the paving has been completed on Westport Avenue but at the intersection of Strawberry Hill and Westport Avenue has become dangerous for a cyclist because the traffic pattern has been changed. Ms. Rosett said prior to the paving there were sharrows on Strawberry Hill Avenue. Ms. Bisceglie said they are not right in the intersection and are back before the intersection and it is a very busy intersection. Mr. Rosett asked Mr. Pacelli if this is something he can look into. Mr. Pacelli said "yes" and he will report back. Mr. Weglian said there is the same problem on Route 1 in Darien.

g. Social Media

Mr. Thompson reported and said that he is pleased to report that engagement is up and said if anyone on the committee has content that they would like to share to send it to him. He thanked the Norwalk Health Department for sharing the post regarding the walking survey. He said the number of people reached this month was 200% more than last month and the engagement is 125% more than last month.

Mr. Thompson provided an update on the website and said the link to the American League of Bicyclists has been done as well as a link to the commissions zoom meetings.

Mr. Thompson said due to the Freedom of Information Act we are not able email a quorum of the commission because it consists a meeting unless certain formalities are met. He said he has been engaging with the city's legal department and there is no way around that without changing the Connecticut State Law and he has left a message at Senator Duff's office.

Mr. Thompson said that he and Mr. Ebert will meet to discuss the budget for Facebook ads and if anyone on the committee has not already liked the Facebook page to do so and share it.

Mr. Thompson suggested that a larger conversion be held regarding zoning and a way to make it easier for people to bike and walk and around parking minimums. Mr. Aley said that has come up in the past at the Parking Authority meeting and he has had conversations with Mr. Kleppin about it. Mr. Thompson said the he will have a discussion with Mr. Aley and Mr. Grotheer and will report back to the commission on what they have shared.

h. Strategic Plan

Ms. Rosett said that a report was given last month and another report will be provided in February for the third quarter.

i. Walking Update

Ms. Argondezzi reported and provided an update on the NorWALKer and walking and said there have been some good conversations and that she and Ms. Green are in the process of mapping out how the Health Department sees the NorWALKer program, and in addition to working on getting the maps translated in Spanish they have been taking a comprehensive look on how to get more people walking and are looking into potential virtual walks.

Mr. Thompson said the Social Media subcommittee would like to have Ms. Green join and that Ms. Argondezzi is welcome to join is she is interested. He also invited Ms. Cozzarin to join next months to discuss the possibility of adding Oak Hills.

Mr. Grotheer asked about the details of the grant and the transportation for people. Ms. Cozzarin said the grant is for \$1500 and do not actually know if there will be a cost yet for the transportation because some of that may be free. She said they are looking at \$500 to establish the pollinator meadow, \$250 for outreach and the remaining \$750 for transportation but we don't know yet who will provide transportation who will need it. Ms. Rosett said that the Senior Center has three buses that they use to bus people to various events for a small fee and suggested that at least for the elder population have the commission underwrite the cost of the bus to get folks there. She said it was also discussed at Pedestrian Committee to contact the Transit District to see if the micro transit can be used and if there would be a cost.

5. OLD BUSINESS

There was no discussion.

6. NEW BUSINESS

There was no discussion.

7. ADJOURNMENT

**** MR. THOMPSON MOVED TO ADJOURN.
** MS. MCCABE SECONDED THE MOTION.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:20PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd