

**City of Norwalk
Bike/Walk Commission
Meeting Agenda
January 4th, at 6:00 pm
Room 101 at Norwalk City Hall
125 East Avenue, Norwalk CT 06851**

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

1. 6:00 Public Input
2. 6:10 Approval of December 7th minutes (See attached)
3. 6:15 Chair's Report
4. 6:25 Standing Reports
 - a. Transportation Planner Update – Greg Pacelli
 - b. Bike Plan – Jud Aley
 - c. Events – Barbara McCabe
 - d. Norwalk River Valley Trail (NRVT) – Jim Carter
 - e. Pedestrian Plan – Audrey Cozzarin
 - f. Safety and Education – Christine Bisceglie
 - g. Social Media – Tanner Thompson
 - h. Strategic Plan – Deanna D'Amore
 - i. Walking Update – Deanna D'Amore
5. 6:50 Old Business
 - a. Placing Equipment – Sam Ebert
6. 7:00 New Business
 - a. POCD and the Commission – Steve Kleppin
 - b. Norden Place Development – Christine Bisceglie
7. 7:30 Adjournment

Next meeting: February 1st
6:00 – 7:30 pm
Room 101 at Norwalk City Hall or Zoom

**CITY OF NORWALK
BIKE/WALK COMMISSION
DECEMBER 7, 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; Gary Washinsky; Audrey Cozzarin; Harrison Leavens; Nickey Ayres

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CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Rosett called the meeting to order at 6:03PM.

1. PUBLIC INPUT

Mr. Leavens stated that he works with Mr. Ebert and he is interested in getting involved with the Bike/Walk Commission.

Ms. Ayres stated that she is the PTA President for Tracey Magnet School and that she would like to bring some issues to the committee that she does not know if they are aware of. She said Tracey School is a neighborhood school but there are severe traffic, walking and biking situations. There are many elementary school children that ride their bikes and walk to school but because of the level of traffic on Camp Street it is causing much concern, and they are just waiting for an accident to happen. The traffic pattern is not conducive to walkers and bikers and prior to the Covid-19 pandemic they had requested a traffic analysis be conducted. She requested that the commission partner with their community to establish a resolution because the congestion is overwhelming and we do not have an SRO officer there at all times. She said we have looked at other schools in town that have time limits on traffic to help eliminate some of the traffic on Camp Street but are at a standstill and are seeking guidance and help to make a safe morning drop off and afternoon pickup for the students.

Mr. Thompson suggested that at the times the students are coming to and leaving from school turning the street into a “no thru traffic” street so that the crosswalk will be safe.

Mr. Grotheer said the traffic does choke Camp and Eclipse Streets in particular but once students are received the cueing lessons substantially and is worth a fair amount of study and the school does encourage multi motile arrivals and departures from the school. He also said that it is on a NorWALKer route so if sources of funding are needed there may be some health grants available as well as other walkability and livability grants.

Mr. Yeosock said that TMP staff had started to look at the area a few days prior to Covid-19 pandemic.

Mr. Grotheer said a section of North Avenue is very congested and asked if it is known if the congestion is school related versus just town traffic. Mr. Yeosock said that he may be able to get that information from the development that was going to be built in the area but staff has not yet done the traffic counts.

Ms. Rosett asked if the walkers and the bikers get dismissed before the children that are getting picked up by car. Ms. Ayres said they do but the issue is that people start lining up way before school is dismissed.

Ms. Bisceglie thanked Ms. Ayres for bringing this issue to the commission's attention and said she hopes Ms. Ayres will consider joining the commission at some point. She said that Adams Avenue is also dangerous and is used as a cut through and she has brought this up to the commission a few years ago and suggested that something is done immediately, and that a dedicated police officer should be assigned at that time.

Ms. Rosett suggested talking to the police department in the short term to close the road to traffic around the school by using volunteers to give Mr. Yeosock and his team some time to look at long term solutions. Ms. Ayres said that she will present that at the next PTO meeting.

Mr. Thompson asked if there are other things the commission may be able to help with that would allow students to be dropped off without using a car. Ms. Ayres said that Tracy is a neighborhood school and there is a large percentage of students that do walk, but there is also a large percentage of students that get dropped off and some of the reason is due to Covid-19 and parents not wanting their children to take the bus. She also said that all students and staff are not in the building at the same time and that a large percentage of the students are doing remote learning and traffic is still an issue. Ms. Ayres said that she will have a questioner sent out to parents asking how they make the decision to walk or drive their children.

Ms. Rosett said that she will follow up with Ms. Ayres and suggested scheduling a meeting with the PTO and the interested commissioners to discuss the topic further, and that she will also contact the police department to see if a meeting can be scheduled to explore short term solutions. Ms. Ayres said they have also created a task force that is represented by teachers, administration, parents and the student governance and they will be very open to meeting with the commission.

2. APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER 2, 2020 MINUTES

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

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

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

3. CHAIR'S REPORT

Ms. Rosett said there was a question last month regarding Norden Place as to whether it was part of the East Norwalk TOD or not and it has been confirmed that it is not part of the East Norwalk TOD.

Ms. Rosett said that Ms. Bisceglie has been requesting that the commission join the American League of Bicyclists and thanks to Mr. Yeosock we are now members of the league.

Ms. Rosett said that she has ordered 500 of the safety cards in Spanish and she has distributed 50 of the cards in English and 25 in Spanish to the Norwalk Housing Authority and they have also included the information in their newsletter. She said she also spoke to Norwalk ACTS and they will also be including the information in their newsletter. She said she also delivered 60 cards in English and 30 in Spanish to the Carver Center, and 30 Spanish cards to Ms. Oster for the Early Childhood Program. She said that Oster is in the process of putting together welcome bags for the kindergarteners who will be starting in January and she would like to put one of the English and one of the Spanish cards in each of the bags and she will need 500 of the cards and the cost to the commission would be \$498. She said if that is agreeable to the commission, she will order them and have them delivered to Ms. Oster. The commission agreed to have the cards ordered and delivered to Ms. Oster to distribute.

Ms. Rosett said that she did include some questions as an attachment to the agenda that she, Mr. Aley and Mr. Grotheer had established for the interviews for Director of TMP, but by making them publicly available may be an advantage to some of the interviewees. She apologized but said she hopes the questions will at least provide some background to the panel that will be interviewing the candidates.

Ms. Rosett said in June a fix-it bike station was ordered and that she, Mr. Ebert and Mr. Grotheer had met a few weeks ago to determine where they should be placed and the recommendations were either at the South Norwalk Railroad Station, Calf Pasture Beach or at the intersection of Washington and Water Streets and asked if anyone on commission had any input.

Mr. Thompson agreed with the recommendation of Calf Pasture Beach and also suggested Oyster Shell Park.

Ms. Bisceglie said she does not recommend Calf Pasture Beach because she is thinking about the people that use their bikes to get to work, and agreed with the recommendation of the intersection of Washington and Water streets near the bridge because it is an access point between East and South Norwalk.

Mr. Aley agreed with the recommendation of intersection of Washington and Water streets near the bridge at least for the first station because there is a lot of bicycle commuter traffic at that location.

Ms. Cozzarin suggested installing it at the main branch of Library because it is a crossroads for the people that are riding their bikes to work and it is a safe place.

Ms. Rosett said that with the Walk Bridge Project the whole area near the bridge is going to be under construction for a while so that location would not be her first choice for that reason.

Mr. Ebert said that Mr. Leavens suggested the North Water Street lot. Mr. Grotheer agreed and said that it is open and very visible. Mr. Yeosock said that will need to be looked at because a lot of the area will be disturbed by the Walk Bridge project.

Ms. Rosett said that she and Mr. Yeosock will determine some locations around the North Water Street Lot.

Mr. Thompson also suggested the Wheels Bus hub on Burnell Blvd. as a potential location.

Mr. Ebert said that in Philadelphia said there used to be a massive graffiti problem at a condemned housing problem and one way to uplift the community was the founding of the mural arts program and found by beautifying neighborhoods with extravagant lovely murals they reduced graffiti because people respected the replacement of the mural to not tamper with it. He said he thinks the bike repair stations will be likely targets for mischief use and suggested collaborating with other communities or businesses to make the stations more unique.

Ms. Rosett said the committee will meet again to review the suggestions that were presented tonight and report back to the commission at the next meeting. She said they will also discuss that five bike racks that were also purchased to accommodate six bicycles each and are looking at perhaps to donate them to some of the schools, as well as potential locations for the yield to pedestrian signs.

Mr. Washingsky said he received an answer regarding the maintenance of the pedestrian signs and he was told that DPW will respond to requests repair or replace them.

4. STANDING REPORTS

a. Transportation Planner Update

Transportation

Mr. Pacelli reported and said the State is still in the process of reviewing the Connectivity Grant. He said there are no major updates for Seaview Avenue and they are in the process of making some minor adjustments to the overall plan. He said they are providing an overview to Planning & Zoning staff for the outreach with the adjacent property owners for their comments.

Mr. Pacelli said that they did not have a Bike Plan meeting this month because there were no updates to discuss, but will meet again soon when there are updates to present and he will keep the commission posted.

Mr. Pacelli said at the last meeting the intersection on Strawberry Hill Avenue @ Route 1 was a concern as the state readjusted the lane structure and installed an inclusive right turn lane and kept the sharrows in the right lane. He said he reviewed the plans and met with Mr. Yeosock to discuss it and are exploring options for improvements. Mr. Grotheer asked why the state swapped the orientation of the lanes. Mr. Pacelli said more than likely they had looked at the turning movement counts and found that there were more vehicles that were turning right on Route 1 as opposed to left and found that an exclusive right turn lane is better than a left turn lane. Mr. Aley asked if there is room for a dedicated bike lane. Mr. Pacelli said “no”.

Ms. Bisceglie said she was not aware of the change to the intersection until after it was completed and she had saw on the Nextdoor Neighbor site that someone was upset about the sudden change in East Norwalk at the rotary. She suggested in the future that there is some type of notification system for citizens regarding major changes. Mr. Aley said there were public hearings held on the change and Mr. Mushak had attended and brought up cycling but that the CT DOT engineers at that time were not receptive to anything cycling related.

Mr. Grotheer asked what the change was in East Norwalk. Mr. Yeosock said at the rotary on Gregory Blvd. was changed to act more as a roundabout so people yield at the entrance. Mr. Grotheer asked what was done to make the change. Mr. Yeosock said that yield signage was installed.

Mr. Grotheer suggested that when a project is getting close to completion the city should put out a diagram of the completed project on social media. Ms. Rosett requested that Mr. Yeosock handle that since most of the projects come through TMP. Mr. Yeosock said they also use the variable message signs to make people aware.

Mr. Pacelli said the Highland Avenue project will be discussed at the next meeting. Mr. Grotheer requested that the graphics be send out to the commission so that they can be reviewed prior to the meeting.

b. Bike Plan

There was no discussion.

c. Events

Ms. McCabe asked Ms. Rosett if she can contact Ms. Ayres to get more information as to what her group is doing and what the issues are. Ms. Rosett said “yes” and that she will contact Ms. McCabe prior to that to discuss some options and she would also like to involve community policing. Mr. Grotheer requested that he also be kept updated.

d. Norwalk River Valley Trail (NRVT)

Ms. Rosett read the report from the NRVT as follows:

The Missing Link has gone out to bid and the Public Works Committee has approved Deering Construction as the contractor and it is on target for a summer opening.

The RFP is being finalized for WilWalk and it includes portions in Norwalk and in Wilton and that the RFP will be sent out by Wilton, and is also on target for a summer opening.

e. Pedestrian Plan

Ms. Cozzarin reported and said the Pedestrian Committee has been discussing meeting with city personnel to discuss budget opportunities to make sure the goals are not redundant or missed in the budget process. She said they are also interested in meeting with state representatives regarding their safety concerns on state roadways. She said they are also researching the best ways moving forward to conduct walk audits and that a few people from the committee had attended a webinar that was hosted by Sustainable Connecticut and Bike/Walk Connecticut on conducting walk audits.

Ms. Cozzarin said the committee has also been discussing quick action or pop-up projects and some of the grants they are looking at are looking for that type of quick action projects. She said they are also in contact with the “Walking dude” who is Matt Green and he is walking the five boroughs and has a wonderful website with historical information. She said that she has contacted him and he said after the pandemic is over would love to lead a walking tour in Norwalk.

Ms. Cozzarin said the committee is also looking for greater visibility through social media and she has content for Mr. Thompson and Ms. Green regarding some of the things the Pedestrian Committee is doing.

f. Safety and Education

Ms. Bisceglie had no report but offered to help Ms. Oster to fill the bags with the cards and she will reach out to her. She will also write a short blurb about the project for social media.

g. Social Media

Mr. Thompson said the Facebook page is getting more action and when he started working on the page, they had 135 followers and now are up to 160. He said they have formed a sub-committee to

discuss ways to increase reaching people and to more effective content but he has nothing yet to report.

Mr. Thompson invited anyone who is active on Facebook to post the commission to their friends and if you are a member of other groups in Norwalk to request that they also follow the commission on Facebook.

h. Strategic Plan

There was no discussion.

I. Walking Update

Ms. Argondezzi reported on the walking update and said they have been fortunate that Ms. Green has been able to participate in the meetings and discussions on how to engage more people in the community in walking especially while there is a pause on group activities, and her goal in now to pull the pieces together for short term or long-term activities and support the different activities that Ms. Cozzarin and Mr. Thompson discussed on social media and otherwise.

Ms. Rosett thanked Ms. Argondezzi for taking the time for attending the meetings.

5. OLD BUSINESS

a. FOIA and Commission Communications

Ms. Rosett said that Mr. Thompson had an idea of a way to communicate more effectively between meetings but still in a forum that was available to the public to comply with FOI requirements. Mr. Thompson said that he has no update to report but provided an overview from last month and said that he has gone through the FOIA code but it sounds like to move forward the law would need to be changed to include emailing. He said he will be contacting the state FOIA office to get their feedback and he will provide a report at the next meeting.

b. Zoning Requirements for Parking Spaces

Mr. Thompson provided an update on his situation and said that he had contacted Mr. Kleppin regarding installing a shed in the parking space and it was determined that when his condo complex was built the parking minimum requirement per the zoning code were higher than it is today so Mr. Kleppin is in agreement with using a parking space for a structure, but he still has not gotten the permit because Mr. Kleppin still needs to look at the exact set back requirements and that it is a tentative small victory.

Ms. Rosett said that the zoning department is in the process of starting to revamp the zoning regulations and the commission can have some input to the larger question. She said that Mr. Kleppin told her that he would keep her apprised of when the commission should send in our thoughts.

6. NEW BUSINESS

a. AARP Community Challenge Grant

Ms. Cozzarin said grant applications are a great way to get visibility to let people know that we are at least applying for these grants and what they entail because they are very exciting. She said the AARP livable communities initiative is not just for older people and it is creating multigenerational, equitable, climate justice etc. and their 2021 community challenge grant celebrates the creativity and dedication of local leaders by awarding small grants for “quick action” projects that improve local housing, transportation, public spaces, technology etc. and is for a four-month duration project that would need to be completed by late summer or early fall. She said that she wrote to the community challenge grant team and the application will need to be submitted between February and March of 2021, and the average grant is \$13,000.

Ms. Cozzarin said Sustainable Connecticut has a community match fund for efforts that will bring more equitable, sustainable and more vibrant communities for walking and she will be inquiring about their expectations etc.

Ms. Cozzarin said there also is an America Walks grant that is \$1,500 and she will be giving Mr. Thompson and the Oak Hills Park Authority a blurb, and this is an example that these grants are bringing together unlikely groups both on the municipal and non-profit sector that would not normally come together over issues of transportation, equity, multi-generational development etc. The current grant brings together the NorWALKer program, Oak Hills Park and the planting of a sustainable and restorative meadow and will be getting help for CT DEEP.

Ms. Rosett requested that when Ms. Cozzarin gets the blurb together to also send it to Mr. Morgan so that he can put it on the city’s social media.

7. ADJOURNMENT

**** MS. BISCEGLIE MOVED TO ADJOURN**

**** MR. THOMPSON SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:30PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd