

**CITY OF NORWALK
BIKE/WALK COMMISSION
JANUARY 4, 2021**

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

OTHERS: Greg Pacelli, Transportation Planner; Mike Yeosock, Assistant Director of
Transportation, Mobility and Parking; Gary Washinsky; Audrey Cozzarin;
Diane Lauricella; Steve Kleppin, Director of Planning and Zoning

To allow public access, anyone may access a meeting by telephone, Zoom, and/or the City of
NorwalkYouTube 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 6:03PM.

1. PUBLIC INPUT

There was no input from the public this evening.

2. APPROVAL OF DECEMBER 7TH MINUTES

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

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

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

3. CHAIR'S REPORT

Ms. Rosett reported and said that she and Ms. McCabe had arranged to go to Tracey School to observe the morning drop off on Friday, December 11, 2020, however of Thursday, December 10, 2020, the school had announced they would be closed due to a Covid-19 exposure. She said over the weekend she and Ms. McCabe did a self-guided tour to get a sense of what the traffic would look like and she will be contacting the school to reschedule the tour now that school is back in session.

Ms. Rosett said that she has contacted Chief Kulhawik of the Norwalk Police Department to see if he would assign an officer to help us with the issue and he agreed that he would but she has not yet heard back from him so she will be following up with him this week.

Ms. Rosett said she is hoping to have something to report back to the commission next month and more importantly help the Tracey School community resolve their issue or at least improve the situation.

4. STANDING REPORTS

a. Transportation Planner Update

Mr. Pacelli reported and said he is still communicating with the State for the connectivity grant and finalizing the design plans for east/west bike route

Mr. Pacelli said that the state has received numerous comments regarding the lane restructuring on Strawberry Hill Avenue approaching Route 1 so they may revert it back to the original design. He said that staff is working with the state to see what their plans are and the city fully endorses going back to the original design. He said he will keep the commission updated.

Mr. Pacelli said that he had forwarded the Highland Avenue presentation to the commission. He provided an overview of the plan and said the area is from Knollwood to Meredith Court and includes sidewalks as well as two additional crosswalks and is approximately .6 miles of improvements. He said we are planning on moving to the next step which is to put together the bid forms as soon as possible.

Mr. Pacelli said the project team is in the process of making some minor adjustments to the Seaview Avenue project and will be working with Mr. Kleppin on the outreach portion. He said he will keep the commission updated as they move forward.

Mr. Grotheer said overall the project for Highland Avenue is moving in a good direction but asked if there is any possibility of going down to a 10 ½' lane. Mr. Pacelli said when the project team but the design together we were all in agreement that the 11" lane would be to the benefit not only because of the amount of school buses on the street but also for the awkward turns on the road and thought the 11" lane would be better for the larger vehicles.

Mr. Grotheer said the street width is not changing and since it is not a hard curve the vehicle can use the additional shoulder but the benefits to safe routes to schools, and children and pedestrians in the area getting an additional 6" in the shoulder width is far more substantially beneficial than the width of the striping. Mr. Pacelli said that a lot of investment of the project is going to updating the sidewalks and crosswalks as part of the safe routes to school so the lane be 10 ½' or 11' is inconsequential.

Mr. Grotheer said that there is an existing pedestrian connection from Deepwood Lane to Highland Avenue that shortens the walk out of that neighborhood by about 1700' and it looks like that crosswalk that is close to the entrance is proposed to be removed. He asked why that they chose not to maintain the pedestrian crossing. Mr. Pacelli said that crosswalk will be removed but added one 50' up the street which is closer to the entrance to the school and away from some of the driveways.

Mr. Grotheer said a few of the neighborhood crosswalks are either dead end streets or have a low volume of traffic and asked if the curb cut can be reduced. Mr. Pacelli said if we start to do more curbing than the cost is going to be significantly higher and we are almost at the budget now. Mr. Grotheer asked if some funds can be used on painting and delineators without blowing the budget to provide some protection at the crosswalks. Mr. Pacelli said he will discuss it with the project team.

Mr. Grotheer asked if the Devils Garden interchange was looked at as part of the study and design that the project team was discussing. Mr. Pacelli said “yes” and that they originally did look at that intersection but based on the feedback from the surveys and internal discussions felt more of the investments should go towards the sidewalks and crosswalks on Highland Avenue instead due to the deterioration and for the students who are walking to school.

1. PUBLIC INPUT

Ms. Rosett recognized Ms. Lauricella, a member of the public, who had difficulty logging in and was not present for public input earlier in the agenda. She stated that she is so glad this task force was turned into a full commission and that she is impressed with all of their talent and thanked the commission for all of their time and efforts. She said people are walking and biking more now than ever and she likes the structure of this commission which is divided between the pedestrian committee and the biking committee amongst other things. She said she is very hopeful for action steps and she is so happy that the dots are being connected on health and often times there is a staff person from the Health Department that weighs in and advises the commission which is great, but suggested going forward to connect the dots with the environmental component because we know that getting people out gives them access to nature, health and clean air. She said in the future she will send the commission some ideas around Earth Day as well as other things.

Ms. Lauricella said she read on the agenda that the commission will be having a discussion on whether or not you should comment on the regarding Norden Park. She said a commission of the city should not necessarily say they are against or for a project but that the commissioners would be very helpful because they do not have the data regarding walking or biking especially on Strawberry Hill Avenue. She said this commission can offer them some fact-based data that can help them in their deliberation because it is up to them whether this application goes through. She thanked the commission for their time and said she looks forward to working with them in the future.

b. **Bike Plan**

Mr. Aley said he has nothing new to report but requested that Mr. Pacelli send out some possible dates starting at the end of January for the monthly sub-committee meetings.

c. **Events**

Ms. McCabe said she has nothing new to report but thanked Ms. Lauricella for speaking with the commission because she likes when nature is brought into the picture.

d. **NRVT**

Ms. Rosett said that Mr. Carter had nothing new to report this month.

e. Pedestrian Committee

Ms. Cozzarin reported and said we did not receive the grant for the application that was submitted to America Walks, but that there were 560 applicants and will submit again next year. She said they will move forward with some of the initiative at Oak Hills Park and bring visibility to walking and the NorWALKer program.

Ms. Cozzarin said the Pedestrian Committee is working on gathering with some local and state representatives to discuss the budgets going forward and to also be sure we are not redundant. She said we are activity seeking projects for grants and she had sent the commission some descriptions for some the grants and the funds that are available.

Ms. Cozzarin said we are starting to write some articles and press releases for winter pedestrian safety tips and working with the different constituents that came together for some of the walking surveys that were done in 2019 for the schools and 2020 for the general public. She said we would like to publish what the results were from the surveys and to let the public know we are listening to them and putting thought and actions into their quality-of-life issues.

Ms. Cozzarin said that we would like to do some monthly articles in the paper regarding pedestrian safety issues and that she had sent the committee a poster for a seminar that was held last year at Norwalk Library called “Driving Mindfully” and a lot of folks feel unsafe walking and biking because of driver behavior and that is one area that does not get as much attention as it could especially in the winter. She said we are trying to seize some opportunities to reach out to the public and to remind homeowners, motorists and pedestrians about their responsibilities

f. Safety and Education

Ms. Bisceglie said she had nothing new to report this month. She said she did try to follow up with the contact she had for NCC regarding the application for the League of American Bicyclists but she has not received a response.

Ms. Bisceglie said that she will refresh the email regarding getting the police involved in giving coupons for ice cream to the kids.

Ms. Rosett asked Ms. Bisceglie if she had contacted Ms. Oster regarding the safety cards. Ms. Bisceglie said she did speak with her and she provided some feedback and said she thought the cards were too “wordy” and suggested in the future to remember the audience and that simple is better.

Ms. Bisceglie asked if the commission is maximizing the information regarding the UCONN crash data and questioned if it is updated because the numbers for December appear to be low. Mr. Pacelli said that he looks at the information a lot and the information is updated to the middle of December and the numbers are much lower due to Covid. Ms. Bisceglie suggested in the future that the commission use that information to gauge what impact the commission has made regarding pedestrian and bicycle safety.

g. Social Media

There was no report given.

h. Strategic Plan

Ms. Rosett said that we will be meeting in January to do a third quarter update on the Strategic Plan and she will be sending meeting invites out to the committee so there will be a report provided at next month's meeting.

i. Walking Update

Ms. Rosett said that she received an email from Ms. Argondezzi stating that she would not be able to attend tonight's meeting but that she did not have any updates on walking except that they are still working on getting more maps translated, and Jahliah continues to work with Ms. Cozzarin and Mr. Thompson to support their ideas for communication.

5. OLD BUSINESS

a. Placing

Mr. Ebert said that he is creating a power point for the fix it stations and he is planning on meeting with Mr. Thompson and Mr. Grotheer again to discuss the crosswalks as well as the Pedestrian Committee. He said he plans on presenting at the next meeting.

6. NEW BUSINESS

a. POCD and the Commission

Mr. Kleppin provided an overview of development in Norwalk and said in the city itself we focus on four development areas which are Merritt 7, South Norwalk, West Avenue and Wall Street and the Route 1 corridor. He said that a lot of focus and effort over the last few years has been the West Avenue and Wall Street corridor. There was a redevelopment plan that was approved in 2019/20 and the zoning was redone in that area and are starting to see some projects that are coming including the Pinnacle which is the last stages of approval and is also the last link in the Waypoint development, as well as the Wall Street project (POKO) and he anticipates both of those projects getting approved by the Zoning Commission on Thursday evening. He said that obviously there is a lot of other

issues around POKO so when that actually gets built and underway is difficult to answer, but assuming the economy continues on its current path he expects that the Pinnacle project will probably break ground this year at some point. He said there are also other projects that are on the drawing board. He said further south there has been a lot of interest in South Norwalk where there are projects that are finishing construction, currently under construction and a lot that are being contemplated. He said that the area is healthy and even though we are in a different world the focus is still around the train station. He said another area that continues to grow and will see development in the future is the Route 1 corridor and the one thing he would like to implement is a form-based code to create a better development pattern. He said the TOD plan for East Norwalk was approved a few months ago and we have a consultant that will be working on zoning regulations and their first task will be to look at the amenity schedule and parking plan that was approved as part of that, and a FIT test will be done to be sure what has been proposed works and if not, they will make some changes and staff will work with zoning commission.

Mr. Kleppin said that the POCD is a state mandated plan that is supposed to be updated every 10 years and is a guide document for overall growth and development in the city and is tied to the city's capital plan. He said it is not meant to be a static document and should be looked at and reviewed and, in some cases, modified based on how things change. He said that the plan also includes major themes such as economic development, mobility and connectivity and coastal importance and one of the things we will be looking at is coastal resiliency and coming up with a plan for the city. He said it also includes education, placemaking and the one thing that we can control is making Norwalk a great place to live with things to do which goes along with some of the things this commission is discussing like the NRVT. He said once that is fully online it will be such an amenity for people to get out into the fresh air which is even more important now based on Covid. He said in the future he hopes to focus more energy on is looking at greenways and where more focus can be placed on preservation efforts, and working more closely with the Conservation Commission and the Parks and Recreation Commission. He said the last component which is constantly being evolved is public outreach.

Mr. Kleppin said throughout the plan there may not be a direct response required from the Bike/Walk commission but there are a lot that will require the commissions input or where the commission has been identified as a group that should have input on particular recommendations that come forward. He said one of the things he hopes to spend time on developing this year and the coming years is developing a complete streets policy for the city and would look to the Bike/Walk commission for input. He said they would also look to incorporate Vision Zero into that as well.

Ms. Rosett urged anyone on the commission who has not looked at the POCD to do so.

Mr. Grotheer asked Mr. Kleppin if he can expand on the Route 1 nodes that are being considered. Mr. Kleppin said the plan talks about key intersections to include a neighborhood hub or node at key intersections to try to bring a pedestrian feel/use to Route 1 and get more activity in those areas. He said that it

will probably be done in a separate study to get more clarification and guidance but if there are funds available from the zoning regulations rewrite, they will come up with standards in terms of design, signage etc.

b. Norden Place Development

Ms. Bisceglie asked if the committee should be weighing in or be providing information regarding the Norden Place Development project. Mr. Grotheer said he does not think the project is good for the city, but he has some familiarity about the parcel and there are a lot of detrimental aspects that people are concerned about, but the commission probably does not want to get politically involved but disseminating information that may be helpful is probably in our purview. He suggested without statement that is either positive or against the project to provide data to the commissioners that shows shorter crossing distances are better for pedestrians, smaller curb radii, etc. are safer from most users, and though it may be more convenient to larger vehicles it is better for the overall health of the neighborhood and the wider the streets and intersections get the lower property values become.

Ms. Rosett suggested that the commission as overall citizens attend the hearing and present our opinions.

Ms. Bisceglie said she does not want to make a public statement but that she would be willing to put a proposal together because she thinks the commission does need to speak up with non-bias factual information to influence the discussion.

Ms. Rosett requested that Ms. Bisceglie and Mr. Grotheer put something together to present to the commission at the next meeting. Mr. Aley also suggested contacting Nancy on Norwalk and The Norwalk Hour for comments. Ms. Bisceglie said that she would begin to craft an email with some thoughts and share it with Mr. Grotheer and Mr. Aley.

Mr. Ebert noticed that numerous trees were removed on First Street due to the sidewalk project and asked if there is a plan to replant some trees. Mr. Yeosock suggested contacting Mr. Sotnik of DPW.

7. ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:30PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd