

**CITY OF NORWALK  
BIKE/WALK COMMISSION  
FEBRUARY 1, 2021**

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

OTHERS: Greg Pacelli, Transportation Planner; Mike Yeosock, Assistant Director of Transportation, Mobility and Parking; Audrey Cozzarin; Barbara Meyer-Mitchell; Theresa Argondezzi

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**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 JANUARY 4<sup>TH</sup> MINUTES**

- \*\* MR. THOMPSON MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS SUBMITTED.**
- \*\* MR. EBERT SECONDED THE MOTION.**
- \*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**3. CHAIR'S REPORT**

Ms. Rosett said that she meets with the Mayor and a few other selected people on a semi-annual basis however is overdue this year due to Covid-19, but is on the Mayor's calendar for Friday, February 19, 2021, at 9:30AM to meet. She said she usually uses the Strategic Plan and the most current evaluation of it as a basis for a conversation with the Mayor. She said that Ms. King will also be attending the meeting as well as the new Director for TMP. She asked if anyone on the commission is able to attend the meeting. Mr. Tanner, Ms. Cozzarin, Ms. Meyer-Mitchell and Mr. Aley said that they would be available to attend and Mr. Ebert said he may be available.

Ms. Rosett said that last month there was a presentation on the POCD and that she sent out a summary that she had created with the agenda for tonight's meeting. She said that she had gone through the POCD and searched for anything that pertained to the Bike Walk Commission but found that the commission is not the lead on any of the things, but the commission will have some input on some areas and she will keep the commission posted as the other groups begin their work on those particular projects.

Ms. Rosett said that she has delivered some more safety cards and the library took another 200 in Spanish and 200 in English. She asked the commission if anyone knows of any organizations that would like any of the cards to let her know.

Ms. Rosett said in November the President of the PTA for Tracey School had attended the meeting and made a presentation to the commission and Ms. Mc Cabe, Mr. Grotheer and herself did meet with her at Tracey School on Friday, January 28, 2021, to observe dismissal. She said that the PTA President did say there was an unusually small number of cars but the problem is that there is not much stacking room so the cars end up on Camp Street and there is basically one lane for traffic so it is definitely not a good situation. She said the one suggestion that they had made to them was to reverse the two lanes for dismissal and have the traffic come in what is normally the exit which would allow for a lot more stacking room for the cars. She said that only about half of the children are attending school in person so based on what we saw when we were there this should eliminate the stacking on Camp Street while they have a relatively small number of children and while it is not permanent solution it should take the pressure off for now, but unfortunately they were ready to try it and had 20 staff members that had to quarantine and this will require some staff so hopefully they will soon have a chance to try it and let the commission know how it works. She said The Transportation Coordinator, Johanna Zannvettor, for the Board of Education and Mr. Yeosock are planning on getting involved but won't be able to look at it until the end of March but she is looking forward to their input. She said as she reported last month, she is trying to get the police involved and she and Deputy Chief Walsh have had some email conversations and he has been very helpful.

Ms. Rosett said that Mr. Sotnik had contacted her and said that DPW is finalizing the plan for East Wall Street and are planning on bumping out the area and making it a little bigger, and they would also like to install a bike rack and she is hoping that it will be done by this summer.

Ms. Cozzarin discussed the presentation that the Pedestrian Committee had made and said it focuses on the safe routes to school and also the state roads that run through Norwalk that have problems. She said besides winter walking safety tips we do plan to roll out some articles that speak to the public and thank them for filling out the survey and to also let the public know what we are doing moving forward. She said we also provided a statement to the State of Connecticut and there is a bill called HB5429 which is an act concerning pedestrian safety, speed limits in municipalities, fines etc. and we through the Pedestrian Committee had put together a statement to submit to our state representatives in favor of this safety bill. Ms. Meyer-Mitchell said we would like to take the presentation that we have created and meet with the stakeholders that can help us moving forward.

#### **4. STANDING REPORTS**

a. Transportation Planner

Mr. Pacelli reported and said that he is still working with the state of RT. 136 and the connectivity grant and will try and get that finalized and all of the field work inspected and move forward.

Mr. Pacelli said that he has no updates regarding the new traffic pattern of Strawberry Hill Avenue and will need to coordinate with the state on that as well and see what their plans are and their will most likely be public outreach on that so he will keep the commission posted going forward.

Mr. Pacelli provided an update on Seaview Avenue and said he has been reaching out to the adjacent property owners and is waiting for their comments. Ms. Rosett asked Mr. Pacelli if he had any sense the property owners will be favorable or not. Mr. Pacelli said he thinks they will be favorable and from his discussions with Mr. Kleppin he said that we should be able to engage them and that they seem open to it and he will keep the commission updated as they continue to engage the property owners for the improvements.

b. Bike Plan

Ms. Rosett said the Bike Plan committee meeting was postponed from last week. Mr. Aley said that they will be meeting on February 11, 2021, at 4:00PM.

c. Events

There was no report given.

d. Pedestrian Plan

Ms. Cozzarin reported and said we have created a winter walking safety tips article with a list of suggested gear for people to where when they are walking at night. The article addressed three audiences which was pedestrians, motorists and homeowners and have submitted it to the press but it has not yet been published. She said she would also like to put it online and have begun discussions with the Health Department and the Communications Department about getting a landing page for the Pedestrian Committee. She said we are also planning for walk audits in the spring to gather further information and will work towards locating five to six areas that coincide with paving and improvements and will involve training of volunteers and working with local leaders in each district. Ms. Meyer-Mitchell said that one of the things we are trying to achieve is a feedback loop between departments that are working on walkability issues and also with the stakeholders so that if we know we have a project coming up we can hold a walk audit and get feedback from the public regarding what might be needed to be included so the engineers can take that in account when they are planning. She said she wants to be sure we are interfacing with DPW because they are doing the paving program and have such an opportunity and impact to improve walkability.

Ms. Meyer-Mitchell said that we had a meeting with Mr. Tsirinides and were able to make a presentation regarding the results of the surveys on the crash data and how that might help to prioritize the work. She said he kindly requested that DPW and NPD join the committee so that we can discuss walkability in the DPW work, and also an officer that can be part of the conversation when discussing driver behavior and enforcement of traffic rules because a lot of the feedback in both of the surveys involved around distracted driving, speeding and right of way issues.

e. Safety and Education

Ms. Bisceglie said she is alone on this committee and asked for support and that Mr. Thompson is working on social media and suggested there is an outreach to the community so they know they can join and participate and play an active role. Ms. Meyer-Mitchell said that she would join the committee and that there is a parent who really wanted to join the Bike Committee and said that he would be a great person to work with and asked if the commission had received his information. Ms. Rosett said prior to Covid-19 Ms. Biceglie was working with Recreation and Parks with their summer program to get some bicycle and pedestrian safety and she thinks Ms. Bisceglie is doing what she should be doing and like so many things Covid has made life more challenging. Mr. Ebert said he hopes he can help and he will send her an email and that he has some ideas on how to access students and engage them to inspire more with transportation via using bicycles. Ms. Argondezzi said there is a significant overlap between several of the subcommittees and suggested maybe looking at moved bicycle and education under one of those committees. Ms. Meyer-Mitchell suggested that there is a quarterly joint meeting to discuss where work has overlapped. Mr. Aley asked if a Safety Committee is needed since the Pedestrian Committee by default is thinking about safety and have Ms. Bisceglie work with the Bike and Pedestrian Committee. Ms. Meyer-Mitchell said the more expertise we can have on our committee would be very helpful to her. Ms. Rosett said if Ms. Biceglie is comfortable with Mr. Aley's suggestion and instead of having a formal committee for safety and education and use her expertise on the other two committees. Ms. Bisceglie agreed.

f. Social Media

Mr. Thompson said that committee is still working on a larger scale social media strategy but in the meantime thanks to Ms. Greene and Ms. Lewis we are continuing to post along with himself and since that last meeting have had approximately a dozen posts. He said last week he posted how CTDOT released a comprehensive pedestrian safety strategy and it is quite assessable and has a lot of eye-opening data on how safety has gotten worse on the streets, but also some encouraging things with strategies that CTDOT is going to employ on a statewide basis and things he thinks the public should know.

Mr. Thompson discussed communications within the commission and said he had contacted the statewide Freedom of Information office and they had said it is not necessary to avoid all email communications except when it comes to deliberation about a topic which should be reserved for the meeting. He said the work of the commission in particular the discussion of the commission should happen in person synchronicity in a meeting like this so that the public can observe and comment in real time but it does not mean that we cannot communicate at all through email.

Ms. Rosett suggested that the Website be looked at because it needs some refreshing.

g. Strategic Plan

Ms. Rosett presented the updates to the Strategic Plan and said that as Mr. Pacelli had pointed out earlier, we are still working on the 136 east west routes as well as the north south route.

Ms. Rosett said as part the city's Master Plan the committee purchased five bike racks and Mr. Aley's committee will be identifying some locations to place them.

Ms. Rosett said the Pedestrian Committee has gathered the information and did a survey early this fall and are beginning to try an implement some of the issues that had come up.

Ms. Rosett said that Mr. Kleppin had attended the last meeting and provided an update on the POCD but are now waiting for the other groups that are in charge of the tasks.

Ms. Rosett said the community outreach events is other area that has been challenging this year but Ms. McCabe has all of the printed materials and the back packs that are given out at events. She said that that the two-sided pedestrian and bicycle safety two sided cards were distributed to try and get the information out to the public that would normally be handed out at the events.

Ms. Rosett said that Mr. Tanner has been doing a fantastic job on the website content and social media and keeping that all refreshed.

Ms. Rosett said that Ms. Cozzarin did apply for a grant that we unfortunately did not get but the Strategic Plan says that we will apply for a minimum of two and that she is sure that Ms. Cozzarin will find one more to apply for some time this fiscal year.

Ms. Rosett said she thinks that it is valuable to review the Strategic Plan at least once a quarter and will continue to that and when we get to the fourth quarter will begin to put together a Strategic Plan the next fiscal year which begins July 1, 2021.

h. Walking Update

Ms. Argondezzi had no update to report but said that said they still have translations of maps in progress and she and Ms. Greene are trying to plan for the spring when the weather gets nicer.

Mr. Grotheer joined the meeting at 6:45PM.

## **5. OLD BUSINESS**

a. Placing of Equipment

Mr. Ebert presented and said that the DERO FIXIT Statin is fixed bicycle repair stand that contains all of the essential tools that are needed to repair a bicycle and will include an air pump. He said he chose the placement of the first stations in the East and South Norwalk area because there is a high number of commuter/recreational cyclists in those areas as well as a strong mix of residential and commercial and is also accessible to low-income neighborhoods.

Mr. Ebert said one of the locations he is recommending is in Constitution Park because it is a commuter and beach route that is located against the Washington Street Bridge but he does not know if that location will be affected by the Walk Bridge Project. He said the second location he is recommending is Calf Pasture Beach Road because it is visible to a diverse population, and is most accessible to our recreational riders and is a great location for demonstrable use. He said the third location he is suggesting is Oyster Shell Park which is widely used and is along the NRVt and it is accessible to various neighborhoods. He said the

fourth location that Mr. Tanner had suggested in at the South Norwalk Railroad Station which has commuter traffic and is accessible to various neighborhoods but he noticed that the bicycles that are there are not in a state of disarray and it does not seem like people are coming very far so he does not think it is an excellent place for the stations. He said the final location he is suggesting is Freese Park because there is also a residential/ commuter blend.

Mr. Ebert said he thinks that Calf Pasture Beach is probably the best location to start with.

Ms. Rosett suggested tabling the item until next month in the interest of time and requested that Mr. Ebert send her the slide deck and she will forward it to the commission along with agenda for next month.

b. Highland Avenue Project

Mr. Aley said that he received a call from Mr. Mushak a few weeks ago requesting he look at page 36 of the of the 2012 pedestrian and bicycle plan for Norwalk which recommended 4' bike lanes and 11' travel lanes. Mr. Pacelli said that is where the project originated from originally. Mr. Aley asked if 4' shoulders will at least be there. Mr. Pacelli said "no" and that 5' bike lanes are now the minimum recommendation against the curb but will have a striped shoulder but will be anywhere from 2' to 4' because the width of Highland Avenue varies, and will also be adding sidewalks which was one of the major things that was brought up on the surveys that people had wanted, and the sidewalk width is going to take away from some of the width of the street when the sidewalks are installed because curbing and walkways will be added. He said the project will cover from Knollwood to Flax Hill are at the limit of the budget that has been allocated. Mr. Grotheer asked why the sidewalks will be moved into the street when we could accommodate wider shoulders as opposed to using available right of way on the non-street side. Mr. Pacelli said the right of way lines vary on Highland Avenue so in one are that may work but in other areas it won't. Mr. Grotheer asked who will be certifying where the right of way is and how much space is actually available at the construction phase of the project. Mr. Pacelli said we will be engaging with DPW to finalize the design, and the drafter at DPW had drawn up the project and has the most accurate lines there is as far as the right of way but will probably do a field review study. Mr. Aley asked when the proposed construction will start. Mr. Pacelli said the plan is to put it out to bid over the next couple of months and are hoping to have it completed this year but will need to verify if there will be any planned utility projects in the area. Mr. Yeosock said they would like to hold off on the sharrows for now because the road is in ruff shape and will be paved in the near future and the main objective of the project is to have ADA sidewalks without encroaching on private property but will hold the 10 1'2" lanes in the shoulder of the area.

c. Norden Place Statement

Ms. Rosett thanked Mr. Grotheer and Ms. Bisceglie for putting together the statement and asked if anyone on the commission had further suggestions or changes and if not if they felt comfortable with issuing it as a statement signed by the commission.

**\*\* MR. GROTHEER MOVED TO SEND THE LETTER TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION.**

**\*\* MS. BISCEGLIE SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**6. NEW BUSINESS**

a. Cliffview Avenue Crosswalk

Ms. Rosett said that Cliffview Avenue was repaved this fall and there was a crosswalk added where it intersects Silvermine Avenue but the ADA compliant ramps were not installed on either end of the crosswalk. She said that is the problem in multiple locations so the only option there is to correct the problem is to request the city find the funds to install the ADA compliant ramps on either end of the crosswalk or remove the crosswalk. She said this is not a very heavily traveled area and the sidewalk is also not ADA compliant so she is thinking if the city does have the funds to install ADA compliant ramps there are a lot of much busier intersections where it would make more sense to put them. Mr. Yeosock said since the crosswalk has already been installed, we may be obligated to install the ramp and suggested looking at installing the crosswalk across Silvermine Avenue as well.

Mr. Grotheer said that crosswalks and walking are vitally important to neighborhoods but in particular are vitally important to much denser neighborhoods and there are a lot of deficient connections in areas that are in much greater need and would get much higher use than this area so he does not think it is a good use of public funds.

Mr. Thompson said he agrees with Mr. Grotheer but he also thinks the city should have enough money to install a crosswalk wherever one is needed and asked if there is a property list of where crosswalks are needed. Ms. Cozzarin said “yes” and in the presentation that she and Ms. Meyer-Mitchell had put together they had identified many intersections on both city and state roads.

Ms. Rosett said if the city was able to add another crosswalk going across Silvermine Avenue where there is a sidewalk would make a more sense and asked Mr. Yeosock to speak with DPW staff and report back with a recommendation at next month’s meeting.

Ms. Bisceglie said that the League of American Bicyclists is having their annual bike summit virtually from February 28- March 3, 2021 and it is a national event and the fee is \$50.

Mr. Grotheer said that he has a concern of what the proposed bike racks look like. Ms. Rosett suggested that he contact Mr. Sotnik to discuss the design and that she will also invite him to attend next month’s meeting,

b. Bike and Ped Data

The item was tabled until next month.

## **7. ADJOURNMENT**

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

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

**\*\*THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:35PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd