

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

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

OTHERS: Greg Pacelli, Transportation Planner; Mike Yeosock, Assistant Director of Transportation, Jessica Vonashek; Chief of Economic and Community Development; James Travers, Director of Transportation, Mobility and Parking; Gerritt Bolella, Asst. Director of Transportation, Mobility and Parking; Michael Yeosock, Principal Engineer, Transportation, Mobility and Parking; Barbara Meyer-Mitchell; Theresa Argondezzi; Heath Educator; Paul Sotnik, DPW Senior Engineer, Gary Washinsky, Jim Carter

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**CALL TO ORDER**

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

**1. INTRODUCTION OF JIM TRAVERS AND GERRITT BOLELLA**

Ms. Vonashek said a few years ago Mayor Rilling had restructured the way the city functions and had brought TMP under Community Development as well as Planning & Zoning, Code Enforcement and Business Development & Tourism and really lends itself well to the work we are doing at the city and how the work is focused.

Ms. Vonashek introduced Mr. Travers and Mr. Bolella and provided an overview of their background and said that Mr. Travers is the Director of TMP and Mr. Bolella is the Asst. Director and we are very excited to have them on the team.

Mr. Travers said while he was with the City of New Haven, we were the first city at the time to adopt a complete streets legislation and it was done largely through a community effort. He said he then took a position with the City of Stamford and he had hired Mr. Bolella shortly after and we had adopted a complete street design guide and worked heavily with the DPW on the repaving of roads and left designs in place to continue the road network, and will have had nearly 10% of the roads with a dedicated bike lane in Stamford. He said we also retimed all of the city's 211 traffic signals and the last time that had been done was 1991 so all of the work we had done had really started to produce incredible results and those results are about safer roadways and in 2019 they had the lowest number of accidents and the lowest

bike accidents since we began tracking them, and the pedestrian fatalities and serious injuries were far below the state and national average.

Mr. Travers introduced Mr. Bolella and said to spite off of his other credentials which are a ton he is also a certified PTOE (professional traffic operations engineer) and the only PTOE in a municipality in the State of Connecticut and in the spring he will also have his certification as an RSP (road safety professional) and he will be the only RSP in a municipality.

Mr. Bolella said he is overly committed and passionate to safety so he is pursuing the roadway safety certification, and his goal is to be one of seven engineers in the state that has that and it lends itself well to Norwalk and the Vision Zero policies that the city is looking to implement and will help him bring a lot to that effort. He said he has an extensive background in transportation and planning and that he worked in consulting for several years and more recently he has worked as Mr. Traver's assist at the City of Stamford, and under his mentorship had produced the first bicycle safety and pedestrian plan for the City of Stamford, and had adopted and implemented many of the recommendations of that plan during our time there. He said we had started with two miles of bike lane and when we left had 15, and by the end of the summer there will be 30 miles of bike lanes. He said he also helped to adopt the complete streets policy which was just recently accepted by the city, and he was fortunate to work on many award winning and industry standard recognized projects as well as to also work on transportation challenges and he was excited when he toured Norwalk that there are similar challenges and many great opportunities to build upon the work in Stamford and he looks for forward to working with everyone.

Ms. Rosett welcomed them both to Norwalk and look forward to a very productive and hopefully long relationship with them both.

## **2. PUBLIC INPUT**

There was no input from the public this evening.

## **3. APPROVAL OF FEBRAURY 1ST MINUTES**

**\*\*MR. EBERT MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 1, 2021 AS SUBMITTED.**

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

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

## **4. CHAIR'S REPORT**

Ms. Rosett said at last month's meeting we had discussed possibly disbanding the Safety and Education Committee because it seemed to overlap with a lot of the other committees and that she has spoken with Ms. Bisceglie and she had agreed and she is looking forward to working on projects related to safety education with the other existing committees.

Ms. Rosett said the Tracey School PTA had done a survey about what the preferences were from dropping off and picking up the students from school but she has not had any contact with them since then, but she did drive by one day last week at dismissal time to see if they were trying out the new recommended traffic pattern that we had suggested but they had not so if she does not hear back from them in the next week or two she will contact them to see what they plan to do with the data that the survey had provided, and if they are at a point where they can try the recommended traffic pattern to see if it makes a difference.

Ms. Rosett said she and Mr. Ebert's term on the commission will end on June 30, 2021, and she does not plan to ask Mayor Rilling to appoint her so there will be at least one opening on the commission. She said she would like the committee to start thinking of some people of color and or people with disabilities that may be interested in joining the commission because she thinks it will be important for them to attend the April and May meetings if at all possible so that they can get a flavor of what the commission is doing and perhaps join some of the committees. Mr. Thompson pointed out that is a great initiative and added that we should consider people of any background who live without a car and get around primarily or exclusively via bike and walking in Norwalk. Mr. Thompson asked if there are age requirements. Ms. Rosett said "no" but they must be registered to vote in Norwalk.

## **5. STANDING REPORTS**

### a. Transportation Planner

Mr. Pacelli reported and said that staff had met with the Bike Plan Committee twice over the past month and Mr. Aley will provide a detail of those discussions under his report.

Mr. Pacelli said that staff is still reviewing and finalizing the design plans for Highland Avenue.

Mr. Pacelli said he has been working with the State DOT on the pedestrian facility improvements at the intersections of Dry Hill Road @ Westport Avenue and George Avenue @ Westport Avenue and they have looked at our request to improve those two intersections and will be including that as part of a future signal upgrade at a time that has not yet been determined but he will keep the committee updated.

Mr. Pacelli said that staff is putting together various design options for Seaview Avenue and are continuing to analyze the entire corridor and are working with TMP staff as well as the adjoining property owners and will keep the committee updated going forward on that as well.

Ms. Rosett asked about the status of the intersection of Strawberry Hill Avenue and Fitch Street. Mr. Yeosock said that staff had presented a plan to the Traffic Authority for a possible roundabout but there is not yet any identified funding but are looking for sources. Ms. Rosett suggested at a minimum installing a stop sign at the location as that may help. Mr. Travers said that he and his team will look at the area for any interim alternatives that can be put in place. Ms. Bisceglie said one of the concerns at that intersection is the high rate of speed the cars are traveling on Strawberry Hill Avenue.

Mr. Thompson said he also finds the painted bike lane on Strawberry Hill Avenue dangerous because it is in the door lane so as a cyclist he finds himself riding outside the bike lane so he is not in the path of someone opening a car door.

### b. Bike Plan

Mr. Aley said the committee has met twice over the past month and the only bicycle infrastructure that was implemented in 2020 was on Van Zant Street and as part of the signal upgrade and thanked DPW for installing the sharrows. He said at the last two meeting we have been reviewing the list of bike routes for future bike lanes and sharrows and said that if anyone would like a copy of the list for what we are working on this year to contact him. He said that Mr. Pacelli will now be reviewing the list with TMP staff to see what can be done.

Mr. Aley said at the intersection of Woodward Avenue and Burritt Street where there are ADA ramps is a heavily traveled pedestrian route and suggested that the crosswalk is striped and requested that the Pedestrian Committee look into that.

c. Events

There was no report.

d. Pedestrian Plan

Ms. Meyer-Mitchell reported and said Ms. Cozzarin had done some excellent work in creating a flyer with the Library regarding continuing education on walking safety practices and was pushed out through the library as well as some neighborhood associations.

Ms. Meyer-Mitchell said that Mr. Yeosock had presented on the Highland Avenue and Flax Hill intersection which is in development, and Sergeant Orr who is a new addition to the committee attended and there was a good discussion not only regarding safety issues in regards to the schools but also traffic education and monitoring and enforcement project and that is in process.

Ms. Meyer-Mitchell said we had a discussion regarding illegal parking on sidewalks which led to some discussions regarding capacity of parking at schools and what can be done to change behaviors to elevate the large number of cars that are dropping off.

Ms. Meyer-Mitchell said we briefly touched on the walk audits but that was tabled until we know what areas that we are targeting to do that work in partnership with TMP and the Health Department and she will keep the commission updated.

Ms. Meyer-Mitchell said we also had a discussion regarding the snow clearing issues and how we can help to shift the culture through education and support.

e. Social Media

Mr. Thompson reported and said he and others continue to post on social media and are hoping for future growth but the growth to date has been instrumental. He said there has been some legislative progress and there is a Bill in the Connecticut House that has to do with a lot of aspects of safe streets, and would give legal rights to pedestrians who are at the end of a crosswalk waiting to cross because currently a pedestrian only has the right of way when they are in a crosswalk. He also said that one of the changes that has gotten the most discussion and political controversy is the pilot of automated speed enforcement. He said that he has posted about the Bill and he hopes it passes and becomes law in Connecticut. Ms. Bisceglie asked what the number of the Bill is. Mr. Thompson said House Bill 5429.

Mr. Thompson said there has been an update to the website and he had added municipal bike racks to the bike rack map, and the map is now interactive and the pins on the maps also now have images of the bike racks.

Mr. Thompson encouraged everyone on the commission to like our Facebook Page and to share the group on other pages they may be in and to invite their friends to like the page

Ms. Bisceglie said that May is National Bike Month and she will send Mr. Thompson some material to post.

Mr. Aley asked who updates the GIS map on the city's website for the bike routes. Ms. Vonashek said there is staff at City Hall that have GIS capabilities and would just need to update the file and will work with the IT department to load the information onto the website.

f. Strategic Plan

There was no update this evening.

g. Walking Update

Ms. Argondezzi reported and said that she has asked Ms. Green to reach out to Ms. Cozzarin and Ms. Meyer-Mitchell to discuss different walking activities to encourage people to walk. She said she will also be putting together a plan for Health Department related activities as well as NorWALKer related items. She also asked Ms. Green to post the winter walking tips that Ms. Cozzarin had developed and Ms. Cozzarin and Ms. Meyer-Mitchell were also working on providing some content on a Pedestrian Committee for the Health Departments page.

Ms. Argondezzi said the goal is to get six more Spanish maps on the website by the end of this fiscal year.

Ms. Mc Cabe asked Ms. Argondezzi if they are considering doing any additional NorWALKer routes. Ms. Argondezzi said not at this time due to capacity issues but have posted a link to the map that is on the Oak Hills website and may be more open to adding more after the pandemic. Ms. Mc Cabe said that even the Oak Hills Park walk is a little difficult for seniors and she has found some locations where she thinks seniors can walk so she is hoping going forward we can look into that further once the pandemic is behind us.

## **6. OLD BUSINESS**

a. Bike Rack on East Wall Street

Mr. Sotnik presented the Plaza area design bike racks and locations that are part of the East Wall Street Landmark Square Safety Access Ability and Street Scape Improvement Project. He said we have recommended a five wave loop bike racks to be installed and were selected as a result of the underground utilities in the area and he has presented the plan to Eversource and they have approved it since there is nothing over the vaults.

Mr. Thompson said he loves to see the addition of pedestrian space especially in a part of town like Wall Street where it is desperately needed, but asked if he was able to consider a raised

crosswalk. Mr. Sotnik said “yes” and that he did not present the entire project but there are raised crosswalks with RGB’s in both directions.

Mr. Thompson said as a member of the bike subcommittee and as an avid cyclist he appreciates the consideration of fitting a lot of bikes into the rack, but asked given the rest of the streetscape in the area if allocating that much space to storage is the right move especially with the risk that a bike parked on the south side of the rack would get in the way of pedestrians flowing through the area and suggested pushing the rack up against the property line of the restaurant. Mr. Sotnik said when he laid out the plan he did so very conservatively to be sure there was a five-foot sidewalk but he can move it a little and pick up some space. He also said prior to the final installation he would ask that a member of the commission bring a bike to test the rack. Mr. Aley said he agrees with Mr. Thompson’s recommendation.

Ms. Bisceglie asked if there is an awning in the area where the bike racks would be covered and if not is there a potential to install one. Mr. Sotnik said “no” because they are on private property.

Mr. Aley said last year the signal were upgraded at the intersection of Main and Wall Streets and asked if the historic clock could be moved into a central location. Mr. Sotnik said he would have to inquire but the plans have already been submitted to WestCOG and the DOT so they probably will not allow us to add to the budget if it will increase the budget of the project. Ms. Rosett said that Recreation and Parks has a plan to upgrade the park there so where the clock is located will make more sense once the upgrade has been completed.

b. Cliffview Crosswalk

Ms. Rosett asked Mr. Yeosock if he had an update on the crosswalk at Cliffview Avenue @ Silvermine Avenue. Mr. Yeosock said it will not be an issue to install the crosswalk with the ADA ramps.

c. Placing of Equipment

Ms. Rosett asked Mr. Ebert if he had a suggested location for the placement of the bike repair station. Mr. Ebert said that he recommends installing it at Calf Pasture Beach based on exposure and thoroughfare and is the best place for a first location.

Ms. Rosett said she is hoping there will be enough funds at the end of this year to purchase one more repair station. Mr. Ebert said the next ones should be placed in proximity of the residential area of East Norwalk and in South Norwalk. Ms. Rosett suggested looking for some grant funding. Mr. Ebert said he has been speaking with the North American department at Cannondale and the general manager is interested in purchasing a few on behalf of the commission but he needs to get him some more details.

**\*\* MR. THOMSON MOVED TO APPROVE INSTALLING THE BIKE REPAIR STATION AT CALF PASTURE BEACH.**

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

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

## **7. NEW BUSINESS**

### a. Bike and Ped Data

Mr. Thompson said he will be meeting with Mr. Travers to discuss bicycle and pedestrian data a greater length.

Mr. Travers said the Ms. Cozzarin had forwarded him a grant possibility for AARP and he did look into it and the most that has been awarded was \$13,000 but most are less than that but there was a volunteer component to it and we thought it may be a better opportunity for the commission to apply and use the funding for bike racks.

Mr. Thompson asked if there has been a meeting scheduled for the bike subcommittee to present the Bike Plan to Mr. Travers that was developed over the last couple of years. Mr. Aley said he will be scheduling a meeting Mr. Travers.

## **8. ADJOURNMENT**

**\*\* MR. THOMPSON MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

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

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:30PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd