

Special Meeting

Weston Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee

Wednesday January 20, 2016, 12:30 p.m.

Commission Room, Weston Town Hall

In Attendance: Carole Berg, Carolyne Hynes, Ray Rauth, Julie Sidhu, Walter Shanley

Guest: First Selectman Nina Daniel

1.0 Chairs opening Remarks 12:35p.m.

1.1 Ray noted that both he and Walter independently scheduled a meeting with our First Selectman, Nina Daniel. Fortuitously, Randi Derene noted this and suggested a joint meeting.

The consensus is that our members are optimistic that our goals of safe pedestrian and bicycle initiatives are in line with those of our town, including finding a way to connect W.I.S. to the Library/Town Hall Complex, a walkable town center and finding/offering safe and pleasant routes to walk and ride. It is our aim to continue with our successful initiatives and close working relationships already established (Senior Center, Parks and Rec, Nature Conservancy, and Aspetuck Land Trust) whilst keeping the momentum going towards our long term goals.

Ray asked Julie how her "Walking Weston" was coming along. Julie noted, slowly. Woody Bliss is interested in getting folks together to also participate in this initiative.

November minutes: Vote to approve by Walter Shanley, Seconded by Carol Berg. All in favor.

2. Special Topic

2.1 Ray issued a warm welcome to our now formally recognized and sworn in members Carol and Walter.

3.0 Events and Related.

3.1 Hike/Bike Program 2016

3.11 Ray will consult last year's schedule and suggest dates accordingly. Julie suggested we offer again all of last year's hikes and add new ones as needed.

3.12 Promotion: We will make better use of Social Media to promote ideas and events. Our web Page does not get a lot of traffic and is harder to maintain and update, however Facebook seems to be the preferred medium for many folk as it is easier to use on a smartphone. Julie opened a Facebook Page a while ago and has posted hike schedule in the past. We will now use it to cross post articles and other information and send invite to other town FB page members to "Like" and visit. Nina suggested utilizing Channel 79.

Discussion ensued about previous promotion initiatives, i.e. our Big Bike Ped event and elementary school education program. We will revisit the closure of school road for another BBP event in the future. Bike/Ped safety in the schools is ongoing as far as we know via Health Education and other initiatives instituted in the past by Kim Kus.

Nina suggested a way to reach people regarding our safety initiatives was to hold a town panel and invite local experts i.e. Safety whilst hiking, Lyme disease, Bike Safety. Julie noted that we already have connections to some folks who might serve on such a panel and it would cover several topics in one event. However, the best time to do this would most likely be spring. Ray will consider calling a special meeting to discuss or make it our focus at our next meeting. Date to be determined.

3.13 Bike Ride(s)

3.14 Trail: Carlyne and Julie will introduce our first guided bike ride this spring on the Housatonic Valley Trail from Taft Road in Trumbull . Date TBD. This trail is suitable for all levels and safe from traffic. Slow and safe will be our goal in introducing families to this ride.

Road: Walter noted that seasoned riders will ride our roads anyway, but there may be others who want to, but are nervous on going out alone.

Walter will work out a route for beginning road riders. It was determined that a large group of inexperienced riders on a guided ride would be a liability and possibly unsafe, so the suggestion was made that we offer a "Ride by appointment- Introduction to Riding in Weston" whereby folks could schedule a ride led by Walter and Julie, Ray or Carlyne could act as sweep. Number of riders will be determined by ability and route.

3.2 Trail Related Issues

3.21 Ray continues with his partnerships in forging a path to connect an Upper Weston Link Trail with existing trails. This week he trail blazed the last link of the proposed Great Upper Weston Link Trail that will reach from Saugatuck Trail at the reservoir to the Norwalk River Valley Trail with David Brant (Aspetuck Land Trust) Stuart Green and Katherine McConneughey. This is a great opportunity for the town of Weston as NRVT is moving towards our borders rapidly. Although NRVT will not connect directly to Weston, there are opportunities to connect to this trail via, Belknap Preserve in Wilton that connects to Honey Hill Preserve (Wilton and border of Weston) and the beautiful Weston town owned property of Fromson Strassler.

3.22 Bisceglie Trail: Bisceglie Fitness Trail walks are on Weston Walks program. Last year a walk with then selectman Gail Weinstein, David Ungar, Joe Lametta and Julie Sidhu noted that a bridge across the pond/river would gain access to a further piece of town owned property and preserve that would be lovely for quiet walks and or bird watching. At the moment there is no way to access this area. Gail told Ray that she is still interested in seeing this plan develop. The big question is who will pay for and construct a bridge? Volunteer groups? Discussion to continue.

4.0 Roads

4.1 Bike/Pedestrian Safety Initiatives.

Olde Hyde Road and Lyons Plains both feature in our goal of a safe pedestrian/cycling route. Whilst we have many ideas for these two roads, we need to continue to consult with our users, town experts and plan a strategy for initiatives accordingly. Ray and Julie studied and measured lane width and shoulder widths on Lyons plains last year. Joe Lametta was open to repainting lines in accordance with new state guidelines that would give a wider shoulder for bikes and pedestrians if approved by the town. Unfortunately, last year painting was already scheduled to commence on current lines. It is also noted that in many areas of Lyons Plains, where shoulder width is narrow, it is because abutting grass/embankment has become overgrown and infringed on paved area. Ray and Julie believe that it is possible that with some attention by road maintenance crews some of this paved area might be reclaimed thus widening the shoulder.

4.2 Weston Walks: We will continue this series as per last year. See 3.11

Meeting adjourned 2:05p.m.