

Minutes of Weston Bicycle & Pedestrian Commission Meeting- January 5th 2010

Weston Town Hall Commission Room

Members Present: Ruth Glazer, Louise Hastings, Jon Howell, Julie Sidhu (recording), Ray Rauth (Chairman) Allison Robbins

Absent: Eric Tyson.

Meeting was called to order by Chairman Ray Rauth at 12:30p.m

Opening Remarks:

Chairman Ray Rauth asked for a motion to adopt the strategic plan prepared by Ruth Glazer. Mr. Rauth proposed that the commission assign 2 project leaders for each task. The project leaders are to be completely responsible for working with town officials, experts, community etc. and report back to commission. Ray is available as a third person as needed. Project must be well documented. Any presentations should be e-mailed ahead of time to all commission members to review before presentation. It is important that all members are familiar with each project/presentation and give the same information to the community at large. Motion to adopt by Allison Robbins, seconded by Julie Sidhu. Approved by all.

Immediate Project Needs:

1. Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is a project that needs our immediate attention. SRTS brings in professionals to identify problems within a town and offer solutions. SRTS is funded by the federal government although additional funding may be needed. SRTS was brought to CT by Francisco Gomes.
2. A member is needed to read and become familiar with the laws pertaining to bicycle and pedestrians and act as the "go to" person for other committee members.

Ruth Glazer suggested that we add these projects to the already outlined strategic plan by adding them where appropriate within the design framework.

Chairperson of Sustainability Committee: Deirdre Doran stopped by to introduce herself- It is expected that members will work alongside the Sustainability Committee at times.

Reports From Town Officials: Ray Rauth Introduced Police Chief John Troxell:

Chief Troxell gave an update on police activity related to the commission:

1. In 1990 officers were trained in bike patrol but the initiative was axed when funding for bikes was cut. Chief Troxell emphasized his support for bike patrols in the future, particular around the school campus and during school/town events.

2. A survey regarding the feasibility of a sidewalk from Weston Intermediate School (WIS) to the Board of Education building (B.O.E) continuing to the town center via the School Road/Weston Road intersection was done by town engineer John Conte. A request for a federal grant was prepared by Officer Mike Ferullo, but was subsequently denied.
3. Another grant request for a sidewalk along Weston Road from the pedestrian crossing light outside Dr. Noonan's office to the town center was also subsequently denied. Chief Troxell suggested that the committee review the maps and findings which have been submitted to First Selectman Gayle Weinstein.
4. Chief Troxell noted that two traffic light intersections that would affect SRTS are scheduled for improvement in the future. These intersections include the School Road/Weston Road intersection and the Weston Road /Norfield Road intersection. The latter intersection could result in major restructuring including the addition of turning only lanes together with updated lights and illuminated signals. Julie Sidhu questioned whether this would improve pedestrian safety as the natural instinct is to cross somewhere between the 2 lights given the nature of teenagers pressed for time at lunch, and town employees who can cut through behind the Onion Barn. Chief Troxell expressed his believe that, "If you build it, they will come". Chief Troxell also noted that although Weston Police Department is giving input regarding the improvements, it is the state who will determine where the crosswalks will go.
5. Ruth Glazer asked about the non working 20mph sign along school road. Chief Troxell explained that the light is part of the old infrastructure before School Road was reconfigured with 4 way stop signs and crosswalks. To update these lights is seen as expensive and redundant given that the new configuration has resulted in slowing the traffic along the "mile of safety".
6. Previous community opposition to lights and crossings were centered around the belief that the town was in danger of becoming too "citized" However, the increased population and number of cars on town roads requires citizens and government to keep an open mind.
7. South Western Regional Planning Agency (SWRPA) Chief Troxell has spoken with the Department of Transportation (DOT) about sidewalks along Weston Road linking the two previously mentioned intersections and the need for left and right turn lanes. Chief Troxell noted that there is sufficient town owned land to accommodate this on the school side of Weston Road. He noted that Sue Prosi would be our contact person at SWRPA.

Louise Hastings and Ruth Glazer volunteered to work on New Pedestrian and Bike Pathways (Large Scale Infrastructure Change B3) and include SRTS as it pertains to the aforementioned plans for improving pedestrian safety from WIS, to the town Center and Weston Road/Norfield Road Intersections. Subsequent discussion considered the scope of the SRTS project and whether it should be included as a separate project. It was noted that at some points several of the projects-point person/s may intercept.

Questions to Chief Troxell:

Where can we obtain current laws pertaining to cyclists and pedestrians? Chief Troxell offered to send a copy of bicycle and pedestrian laws to Chairman Ray Rauth. Julie Sidhu volunteered to be the point person for the reviewing of the current laws.

Allison asked about the cost of a sidewalk along School Road. Chief Troxell said that earlier estimates were more than \$300,000 for concrete and approximately half of that amount for gravel. Allison asked if it was possible to raise funds privately, but the Chief noted that the DOT has certain policy issues regarding federal and state funding before considering private sources.

Chief Troxell was asked about a specific time period for the school/town center/intersections upgrades. The Chief noted that since Weston Middle School has been designated an emergency shelter, he has requested that the DOT push up the date of improvements because of the need to accommodate people with disabilities and the potential for multiple shuttles transferring people to and from the school in a town wide emergency. Our contact in the police department for A.D.A is Sergeant Ferullo.

Chief John Troxell Jtroxwll@westonpolice.com 203 222 2667

Ray Rauth introduced Stephan Grozinger of the Planning and Zoning Commission and noted that our group was formed largely because of the vision Mr. Grozinger has for a safe bicycling loop reaching from Westport to Lyons Plains through to Valley Forge Road. Stephan has been a member of P& Z since 2004 and is serving as chairman for a 3rd year.

Mr. Grozinger encouraged the B&P commission to read the Town Planning and Zoning Commission's Report 2010 available online. The commission worked on the plan for over 2 ½ years and despite many obstacles did not steer away from controversy. Instead, they welcomed the conversations that ensued. This ongoing conversation is on the agenda every 2 weeks.

Mr. Grozinger suggested that the Bicycle and Pedestrian commission send a letter to the selectman requesting that the commission be notified when a road is repaired or repaved. Chief Troxell noted that this could also aid in saving money by reapportioning already designated funds. i.e. some towns now paint a single line down the center of the road. Ray wondered if the updated traffic lane law regarding widths from 12ft to 11ft pertaining to state roads could be applied to town roads too. The savings from the cost of additional paint might be allocated towards signage or other painted road symbols,

Julie Sidhu noted that another important person to connect with is Joe Lametta of Department of Public Works as he contracts the work done on town roads. Julie offered to be the liaison with Joe and invite him to a future meeting. Town Road maps can be obtained from town Engineer Tom Conte who could also serve as a valuable source of information and expertise to the B & PC.

Stephan reiterated that the P & Z commission was committed to implementing their vision for the town of Weston and noted that integration of many groups, projects and people was important to the future and quality of life for the Weston Community and that the B&PC was an important part of that vision.

His advice to the commission was to not give up in the face of opposition, but to work to move the vision forward.

A brief discussion regarding eminent domain followed with the conclusion that no one wants to view that option. Educating the community is important, but Mr. Grozinger warned against getting bogged down by the education factor and overlooking small actions that can make a difference. In conclusion, Mr. Grozinger encouraged members to move beyond their comfort level and know that P&Z wants to see the B&P commission to succeed in its vision for a safer, better quality of life for all Weston residents.

Ray Rauth asked if the pathway between the library/town hall complex and the B.O.E. building was a legitimate right of way. Stephan noted that there has been some conversation regarding this right of way and that Kate Gregory of the P&Z has approached the B.O.E regarding this. Chief Troxell said the issue is not clear cut because of the changing climate regarding school safety/school lockdowns and concerns for student safety. Ruth and Ray suggested that Ms. Gregory should perhaps approach first selectman Gayle Weinstein for a definitive answer.

Jon Howell shared the “Sharrow” symbol that he had spotted on roads in Virginia. The sign indicates to motorists that the road is a shared roadway in the absence of a designated bike lane. Once more the question of funding was raised. Stephan Grozinger suggested that the formation of a 501 C3 non profit to accept donations as “ Friends of Weston’s Bicycle Pedestrian Initiative” would be relatively easy to set up at low cost.

Pro Forma Matters

Agenda and Approval of December Minutes: A motion to approve the agenda and approve the December minutes was initiated by Ruth Glazer and seconded by Louise Hastings. Approved by all.

Strategic Plan: Designed by Ruth Glazer

Ruth presented the strategic plan and a discussion regarding assigning project leaders followed.

Ray clarified the commission’s objective of identifying roads by safety and suitability for walking and cycling and that of 86 miles of town many may be considered as safe. Ray noted the need for an independent consultant who can provide the objective criteria necessary to identify roads and levels of safety and suitability.

Ruth, noting that the scope was large, asked what are the specific issues and what are our individual responsibilities? Alison warned against becoming overwhelmed by the influx of multiple pieces of information, projects and e-mails. It was decided that e-mails would go to all members, but the subject line would note which area of the strategic plan it pertained to. Ruth also suggested that new projects be piggy backed into the strategic plan as presented, however the plan should be viewed as an evolving and changing document and action plan.

Project Leaders

- A1 Review existing federal, state and local laws rules and regulations - Julie Sidhu
- A2 Education Marketing and Distribution- Allison Robbins (Louise Hastings)
 - High School Newspaper Liaison - Eric Tyson
- B1 Improve Signage - Jon Howell
- B2 Conduct audit/safety reviews of roadways/intersections – Ray Rauth
- B3 Large Infrastructure Change (Includes SRTS as it pertains to Campus/Town Center/Norfield Road loop) Ruth Glazer & Louise Hastings
- C3 Community Days (? Eric Tyson- absent)

Special Meeting Report: Bisceglie- Schribner Park Trail Tour (Julie Sidhu)

Members acknowledged receiving the e-mailed report (minutes) and photos from the trail tour- No questions. Minutes approved.

Meeting Adjourned