



**Town of Bethlehem
Bicycle & Pedestrian Committee**

MINUTES

April 28, 2020

6:30 PM

VIRTUAL MEETING - ONLINE

Present

Town representatives: Nate Owens, Commander Adam Hornick, Det. Sgt. Gina Cocchiara, Town Highway Superintendent Marc Dorsey

Committee members: Kristin Ackerman, Steven LeBoyer, Henry Peyrebrune, Anne Benware, Erin Svare, Mark Wahl, Mindy Scott, Oliver Holmes, Erin Rightmeyer, Constantine Kontogiannis

Public comment

The Town is looking at how to enable the public to provide comment during virtual meetings but at this time the public is not able to join. No public comments were received.

Mark noted an email from Gerry Wright about the condition of the sidewalk and speeding at Hudson Avenue. Staff will discuss this at the internal traffic and safety group, and Nate passed it on to Skip and Anne to consider as part of the priority network.

Review/Approval of February Meeting Minutes (March Meeting Cancelled due to Pandemic)

Mark moved to accept the February minutes. Henry seconded. All approved.

Walk n Roll Fest

The May 16th event was cancelled. The committee discussed rescheduling. There were concerns that there will be an overload of events at the same time, as well as the uncertainty about schools and a possible second wave. Gina did not think it would be a problem to wait a while before making a decision on the event in terms of the grant or other logistics. There was also discussion of how to modify the event to reduce contact and make it safer.

An alternative discussed was moving to a virtual campaign. If it's well coordinated, the schools might be willing to share with students. We'd have to go back to CDTC to see if we could use the grant funding to

help with a virtual campaign. A suggestion is to determine the amount of time we need for an event (i.e., 60 days to plan), then reschedule it at that time based on the laws and sentiment at the time.

There was discussion of the growing number of people out walking and biking, many new to biking. Education, especially for the newer cyclists, is important for safety. An idea raised was to engage the PE teachers in skills videos. Erin S. can connect with Fred Powers, the athletic director. Some ideas were to encourage kids to share a selfie of them wearing a helmet properly and a video on signaling. Mark suggested this would be a great opportunity for a partnership with the school district. It could be turned into a project. Some of these videos may already be on YouTube and could be shared now with PE teachers as a package.

Erin S., Steven, Mark, Skip(?), and Erin R. agreed to work on advancing this idea of connecting with teachers and a virtual campaign.

Department Updates

Police (Adam)

- The Department also received a complaint from Gerry Wright on Hudson Avenue regarding speeding. There is a tracker out now, but traffic is greatly reduced at this time.
- Upcoming state and federal campaigns have been cancelled, including the Click it or Ticket campaign. The Department has grants for these campaigns.
- 144 River Road and Route 32 Elm Ave/New Scotland Ave are the two highest crash locations. The Department is working on a grant now for these.
- State grants are going to be cut.
- Since the pandemic and reduction in traffic, crashes are way down, less than one a day and something the Town has never seen since it started collecting data. None of the crashes involved bicycles or pedestrians and a very low number involved personal injury.

There was a discussion on what the executive order says regarding face coverings. Adam reported that it is not something that is criminally or civilly enforceable. The same is true for people cycling together. Education is the focus in these cases. It was noted that we might want to help get the word out about the requirements for cycling, such as having a bell or other warning system.

Adam let the committee know that the state is starting construction on Cherry Avenue between Kenwood and McCormick Road. This will result in periodic closure of the rail trail. Information will be on the Town website.

There was a question and a discussion about enforcement of cars and trucks showing smoke/smoking out cyclists and pedestrians. Connie will collect information on this and encouraged others to send him information when they see this happening.

Highway Department Updates (Marc)

Things are going slowly and the Department is short-staffed right now because of COVID. They are focused right now on brush cleanup. They are still trying to advance plans for sidewalks but it is difficult right now because of the shortage of staff.

Planning Department

The Planning Department has been fairly busy. The Planning Board continues to review development applications. The Department is also reviewing proposals for contractors for the comprehensive plan update. The comprehensive plan update committee continues to meet virtually.

Another project they are working on is the street tree inventory management plan. There is a draft plan from the consultant but it needs work.

Committee Identified Concerns

- Roadway Maintenance (sweeping, yard debris placement/pickup, signal maintenance, etc.)
 - Connie said this is more the state roads and about being able to stay out of the way of cars and trucks. It's difficult to report problems to DOT. Marc said to call the Highway Department. You can also submit traffic complaints through the Town's website. It was suggested that the website resource/tool be shared on the committee's social media channels.

Subcommittee Updates

- Education and Communication
 - Erin put out a call for question on anything bike/ped related. She also encouraged people to share photos of themselves engaging in safe behavior.
- Priority Network and Gap Analysis discussion
 - Nate, Anne and Skip met and are working on a matrix/spreadsheet. The focus is on the worst condition sidewalks and evaluating those for what priority would make the most sense in terms of what the connections are, nearby destination, etc. It would be good to coordinate this with the work Marc is doing with the Highway Department. The budget is unclear at this time given the COVID-19 crisis.

Steven reported that bike sales are booming right now. A lot of these people are novices. Whatever we do, education needs to be an important component. Skip suggested the committee could share some literature with the local bike shops. Nate noted that the Town has some good channels to get out information as well.

The meeting adjourned at 8:02 p.m.

Next Meeting: May 26, 2020

Chair: Laura

Recorder: Oliver