



Town of Bethlehem
Bicycle & Pedestrian Committee
Meeting Minutes
October 27, 2020 - 6:30 PM

In Attendance

Committee Members: Henry Peyrebrune, Nate Owens, Erin Svare, Sgt. Whiteley, Commander Rexford, Stephen LaBoyer, Oliver Holmes, Laura DiBetta, Anne Benaware, Constantine Kontogiannis, Mindy Scott, Kristin Ackerman, Erin Rightmeyer.

Members of the Public: Michelle DePace, Stephen Piorkowski, Resa Ostrander

Public Comment

Michelle DePace is a Slingerlands area resident and wondered if the Slingerlands area was directly represented by a particular committee member. Committee members went over the process of how members are selected.

Michelle expressed concerns with the safety of Slingerlands area sidewalks. She believes these should be a priority as there are a number of destinations in the area. When she has attempted to contact representative at the Town she has been pushed to various contacts. Committee members explained that the roadway itself may dictate whether the Town, County, or State can make related decisions. Michelle also indicated that crossing in the Slingerlands round-a-bouts is a serious safety issue for walkers in town, and that there is a need for a sidewalk from the Price Chopper plaza to the ShopRite area.

Committee members noted that crosswalks and lack of driver compliance is a known issue and something the committee has been working to promote. Michelle was also informed of the ongoing Comprehensive Plan update, and that making comments on that update would be important to advocating for bike and pedestrian issues.

Stephen Piorkowski is a walker in town and has had many close calls with cars while walking. Stephen noted the lack of driver compliance with crosswalks and inquired on the level of police patrolling for compliance.

Sgt. Whiteley indicated that the Police Department does patrol for crosswalk compliance, but Drivers do tend to comply when there is a marked car near the crosswalk. The PD also does occasional undercover patrol of crosswalks.

The issue of using cameras for enforcement was raised and Sgt. Whiteley indicated that this was expensive since the camera needs to identify the person driving, rather than the vehicle, but he would follow-up on the specifics.

Resa Ostrander is a concerned parent, that has noticed safety issues while walking with her children to school and observing other kids at busy intersections, particularly at the corner of Kenwood and Union on the way to Slingerlands Elementary. The Schools asked for less kids to take the bus, so she is asking if there is anything the School or Town can do to ensure their safety.

Committee members suggested that waiting to cross until there is a group of several children may help, as drivers are more likely to stop for a larger group. It was also suggested that area PTAs might consider raising money for the flag/cone crossing tools that were previously discussed by the committee. This

might be a low-cost solution that could be coordinated with the Schools to improve safety for kids traveling to/from school.

Review/Approval of Meeting Minutes

Updated version distributed by Erin R. was approved

Police Department Update

Sgt. Whiteley introduced Commander James Rexford, who will be serving as the new Police Department representative to the Bicycle/Pedestrian Committee, as Commander Adam Hornick has taken on a new role. Sgt. Whiteley indicated that Commander Rexford has extensive experience in the patrol division, particularly in the afternoons and so he is very familiar with the pedestrian/crosswalk issues that were raised during the meeting.

Sgt. Whiteley indicated that some of the compliance issues come from people that are traveling through town on roadways that serve as through streets and may not always be residents of the town.

The Police Department was present at a meeting with local schools and Town representatives on October 27th to discuss the increased level of children walking/biking to school and parent drop-off/pick-up from the school.

Planning Department Update

Nate Owens provided the update for the Planning Department.

The Town's Street Tree Inventory with Davey Resources is nearing completion.

The comprehensive plan committee is considering a development moratorium for the town, until the comprehensive plan update has been completed.

There were several questions from committee members on whether projects observed around town were new sidewalks, and if they were coordinated with the planning department. Projects raised included; new sidewalks at Delaware/Cherry, on 9W near Feura Bush, and sidewalk repairs on Hasgate. Nate indicated that he would look into these projects.

This led to a conversation about coordination between the Planning Department, Highway Department, and the Bike/Ped Committee and how it might be improved to better serve town residents.

Town Board Update

The Committee will move forward with developing a memo to the Town Board to advocate for consistent sidewalk funding and coordination with the bike/ped committee. This has become essential since the committee was unable to schedule a meeting with Town representatives to discuss these issues.

Committee members discussed the possibility of making the Highway Superintendent an appointed position to improve continuity, as well as earmarking budget funding for sidewalks so that it becomes a planned capital improvement.

Henry will be taking the lead on presenting a first draft of the memo to the committee and will provide a deadline for committee members to provide feedback.

Committee Vacancy

Nate Owens will draft the committee vacancy announcement for the committee to provide comments on. Committee members will assist with outreach to assure that there is a strong applicant pool for the vacancy.

Sidewalk Subcommittee

No updates

Outreach and Education

Erin S. provided an update and indicated that the social media efforts she has been leading for the committee have been a large time commitment and she has not seen a correlated benefit. She will be taking a step back from those accounts, but the committee will still use those platforms to announce committee events, or other important information for the community.

Erin S. also indicated that she recently attended a workshop where CDTC discussed micro-grant opportunities for outreach and education, that she feels the committee/Town could benefit from.

Bike/Ped Network

No update

The sub-committee will meet to finalize the updated bike/ped network so that it can be presented at the next committee meeting.

Adjourn

Anne Benware ended the meeting by reminding the group that change takes time and that the committee has been making great progress over the years. Several committee members agreed with this sentiment.

Next Meeting: November 24th

Chair: Kristin Ackerman

Recorder: Anne Benware