



Town of Bethlehem
Bicycle & Pedestrian Committee
Meeting Minutes
December 7, 2020 - 6:30 PM

In Attendance

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

Public Comment

None

Review/Approval of Meeting Minutes & 2021 Committee Meeting Chair/Recorder Assignments

Both items were reviewed and approved.

Police Department Update

Sgt. Whiteley said the PD conducted a social media campaign on crosswalk safety using Facebook and Twitter for several weeks with cross-traction on the Bike/Ped Committee page. Discussions about employing additional Crossing Guards continue but as of this meeting there have been zero applications and funding is still being sought; interested applicants should contact the Police Department. Connie suggested volunteers from Fire Departments could help as crossing guards and he could assist 2 or 3 mornings a week. Sgt. Whiteley said Traffic Safety Investigators train crossing guards and he'll propose Connie's idea. Oliver asked if there are required qualifications, the answer is no, just people willing to make the time commitment and receive training.

Steiner's Bike Shop donated an E-bike bringing the total to three bikes available for Police use; they would like to add one more.

There have been no bicycle or pedestrian related crashes in Town within the last few months. Regarding issues with leaves being placed in the road by adjacent property owners causing safety problems for bicycles and pedestrians, the Police Department has spoken to some home owners about the issue. There is no law specifically on this, however after November 1st when vehicles cannot be parked on Town roadways after 1 am, debris should not be in the roadway.

Planning Department Update

Nate Owens provided the update for the Planning Department.

The Town's Street Tree Management Plan was accepted by the Town Board.

The Town Comprehensive Plan Update website, Bethlehem Forward is up and there have been over 1,000 survey responses. The first public meeting (virtual) is December 8th. There was discussion regarding how the Comp Plan Update (CPU) can address bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure and a town-wide traffic calming approach to slow traffic speeds using both physical street changes and enforcement; the CPU should acknowledge bike/ped infrastructure maintenance needs. One mechanism could potentially be a sidewalk set aside fund.

The Town Board is considering a residential building moratorium which would pause residential subdivision of 4 units or greater for 12 months to allow the Town to consider changes that come through the comprehensive plan update.

The proposed Stewart's expansion at Elm and Cherry Avenues will be reviewed at the December 15th Planning Board meeting.

The group discussed lingering questions about recent sidewalk projects, how they were chosen and the concern that condition data and usage was not used to target improvements.

Erin R. asked about the clear cutting of trees at the Normanside Country Club. Nate responded the only known project near that area is on Wright Lane/North Street but not the Country Club itself, an area near the future park near Wright Lane, but he will check.

Town Board Update

Henry gave a summary of the presentation the Committee provided at the November 24, 2020 Town Board meeting; it was well received but there hasn't been any Board follow up on guidance the Committee was asking for. Nate noted there were no specific actions identified by the Board but members should continue to talk to the Town Supervisor and monitor the Town budget.

There was lengthy discussion on the need for Town direction on recommendations listed in the Committee's presentation to the Board and whether members should be spending time on these items including: a joint School District/Police/Town Committee to coordinate pedestrian and bicycle safety with the B/P Committee providing technical support; a Cross Walk Safety Campaign for Spring 2021, and researching model municipal funding options for sidewalk maintenance and expansion.

Erin S. has discussed the safety campaign recently with the Town Supervisor and said he's on board but needs to know costs. Specifics of a crosswalk safety campaign were discussed including the need for an engaging communications effort and community outreach, enforcement, etc. Steve emphasized the need to identify a budget for the overall campaign and to seek out grants. The group agreed to research that item as well as the status of the Town's annual paving program/conditions ratings/budget/schedule and decided to send a follow up memo on the Committee 11/24/20 presentation to the Town Supervisor and Board which Henry will lead. Nate noted Planning Department resources cannot be used to apply for/undertake a grant due as to its budget and the need for staff to complete work on the Comp Plan Update within the pending residential moratorium time frame.

Committee Vacancy

Five applications for the open Bike/Ped Committee member slot have been received. Nate encouraged people to get the word out to solicit more interest. Applications are due in early February.

Sidewalk Subcommittee

No updates.

Outreach and Education

Kristin suggested the 2021 Walk n Roll Fest be discussed at the January meeting and Erin S. noted we have to use the grant funds as previously planned according to the grant guidelines. Nate suggested we might hold the Fest in September if May 2021 doesn't work due to the pandemic.

Bike/Ped Network

The updated network map Nate sent out was discussed; Connie's suggestions for several additions were noted including in the area of Murray/Feura Bush and Elm and on Route 32 (bike only?), some of which need review by other Town staff before being included. Connie noted that the Town Board seemed amenable to the pathway from the Delmar Bypass extension to the Town Park.

There was discussion regarding the need and potential for snow clearing of the rail trail with a focus on its use by children and adults traveling to/from school. Laura noted that a google search shows about 50 percent of communities plow their bike/ped trails in winter. Mindy remarked it's a tough year to be requesting additional maintenance/plowing due to pandemic stressed budgets. Oliver suggested maybe a subsection of the trail (1 mile) could be plowed near where the Town is already plowing sidewalks. Nate offered to bring this up at the Town inter-departmental meeting.

Adjourn

With wishes for happy and healthy holidays the meeting was closed.

Next Meeting: January 26th 2021

Chair: Anne Benware

Recorder: Laura DiBetta