



**Town of Bethlehem**  
**Bicycle & Pedestrian Committee**  
**Meeting Minutes**

January 25, 2022 - 6:30 PM

**In Attendance**

Committee Members: Henry Peyrebrune, Erin Svare, Oliver Holmes, Laura DiBetta, Anne Benaware, Constantine Kontogiannis, Mindy Scott, Kristin Ackerman, Erin Rightmeyer, Dana Scalere, Jennifer Livingston

Town Representatives: Nate Owens, Marc Dorsey, Sgt. Whiteley

Members of the Public: Patty Starch

**Public Comment**

Patty Starch attended the meeting on behalf of her daughter who is interested in bike lanes and may attend the Committees next meeting. Patty had no direct comments for the committee to address.

**Review/Approval of Meeting Minutes**

December minutes approved by committee.

**Highway Department Update**

Marc (Highway Superintendent) informed the committee that the Highway Dept. is undertaking an inventory of Town sidewalks which will be tied to GIS Software. The Committee agrees this analysis will help to direct resources to areas of most need.

The Highway Department was able to complete 3,500 Feet of new/repared sidewalks during 2021. Majority of the \$150K in sidewalk finding was expended, although it was awarded late in the year and the Highway Dept. experienced staffing issues in 2021. Marc anticipates the Highway Dept. being able to spend the \$150K allotment without issue in 2022.

Marc and other Town representatives will be meeting with representatives from the State Highway Department to discuss road maintenance including plowing. This is an effort by the Town to alleviate some of the burden they have taken on by plowing state roads, which is not their responsibility.

Committee members expressed concern related to the clearing of sidewalks near schools, particularly on Delaware Ave. Marc expressed that the Highway Dept. prioritizes sidewalks near school for clearing and that there are challenges such as private plowing companies/property owners moving snow back onto previously plowed sidewalks. The Highway Dept. does go back and clean up the sidewalks as staffing allows.

**Police Department Update**

Sgt. Whiteley shared an email with the committee from a resident that complained of jay walking at the four corners. This led to a discussion on signal timing, which Sgt. Whiteley indicated has been reviewed by the state and is at the most optimal timing. Committee members suggested that the signal at the corner of Delaware and Elsmere seems to have better timing.

Committee also discussed available road signs and vests to make walkers and bikers more visible to drivers. It was suggested that these items be made available at the library, in addition to the police

department. Committee members volunteered to develop materials or staff a pickup day at the library for these items. Sgt. Whiteley will be following up with his contact at the library and will let the group know.

Suggestions also made to highlight walking/biking safety in the Supervisors letter to the Town or Library's newsletter.

CDTC grant that has been used to assist with Walk and Roll funding was changed for this year, so the Town may not score as well on the application. Sgt. Whiteley suggested that the Walk and Roll Fest be discussed at the next Bike/Ped Meeting.

### **Planning Department Update**

Nate Owens provided the update for the Planning Department.

The Town has contracted with CHA to study Kenwood Ave. between the Bypass and Four Corners. The study will include recommendations for traffic calming, sidewalks and increased cross walks.

The planning board is currently reviewing an application for a new Tollgate restaurant that would have a connection to the Rail Trail. Current plans to include bicycle parking at the restaurant.

There are current site plans under review for development in the Normanskill/Delaware Ave. area. An infrastructure contribution may be considered for this project to allow for the repair/maintenance to existing sidewalks in the area.

Sidewalks are currently included in the site plan for an apartment complex in Selkirk near Jericho Drive. This project is 100% affordable housing.

Three Bike/Ped Committee members will not be seeking re-appointment (Mindy Scott, Anne Benaware, and Laura DiBetta). Vacancies will be advertised.

The Town's moratorium on new projects will expire on June 8<sup>th</sup>, which will only leave a small window to test land use recommendations made within the Comp Plan update.

### **Safety Campaign**

Oliver (Skip) Holmes provided an update to the committee on conversations with the Town Supervisor around the suggestion of a Safety Campaign. The Committee has seen a need for this type of a campaign for some time but expressed that it was not feasible to run such a campaign on a volunteer basis.

Many committee members emphasized their support for hiring a full-time position at the Town to run such a campaign and improve communication overall. Henry suggested that the committee look at RFPs written by other communities undertaking a similar campaign so that Bethlehem could build on that and draft our own RFP for services. Skip had previously provided research on the campaign undertaken by Kington.

### **Schools**

Erin R. brought up concerns related to the increased walking distance for schools. This is of particular concern on busy roadways where children are walking to Elsmere Elementary and the Middle School. Suggestion was made to be sure that CHA is aware of this change for the Kenwood Ave. study, which is in proximity to both schools.

Committee members suggested a sub-committee or additional meeting focused on schools and attended by school representatives to better understand the issue and discuss possible solutions.

The need for clear sidewalks on busy roadways where school aged children are walking was re-emphasized.

### **Rail Trail Letter to Albany County**

Jennifer Livingston asked for clarification on if the draft letter she prepared should be sent and who from the Town could serve as the point of contact. Committee members agreed that the letter should be sent, with a request that the County clear the rail trail in areas where children use the trail to walk to schools. Marc Dorsey agreed to serve as the point of contact for the Town.

Lengthy discussion on who the letter should be addressed to, Committee agreed it should be sent to the County Executive with the Director of Parks and Rec cc'd.

Discussion on whether the committee should collect data on the need/public opinion on clearing the trail. It was agreed that data could be collected via survey and that the information could be used as part of a response letter if needed. Patty Starch, a member of the public attending the meeting, offered to assist with designing survey questions, since she is a political scientist and interested.

### **Adjourn**

#### **Next Meeting: March 22<sup>nd</sup>**

Chair and Recorder role assignments need to be adjusted for new/departing members.