

**PaTHs 4 Bethlehem
Meeting Summary
March 22, 2011**

Present: Anne Benware, Scott Lewendon, Dan Lewis, Henry Peyrebrune, Alan Via, Ann Mullaly, ,
Caleb Wistar, Oliver holmes, Kathy McCarthy
Town of Bethlehem Staff: Rob Leslie, Jason Gallo, Erik Deyoe

Comments on February Meeting Summary

Jason announced that the Town was awarded the CDTA/CDTC 2011 Capital Region Bike Rack Grant. Installation is expected by mid June. Jason also handed out a list of all committee member terms.

Review / Discuss Tentative Committee Work Plan

Rob handed out a tentative work plan for the Committee to follow as a guide, for the months of March – December, 2011. The work plan establishes a timeline of the work to be addressed regarding the Committee's long term recommendations. The work plan also outlines the specific components (education, enforcement, and engineering) to be addressed as well as the tasks needed to complete a given item. This work plan would help set the agenda for future meetings, recognizing that items may be added/ revised as needed.

Henry – Any specific place on the work plan that would address what capital programs/projects are ongoing and for us to see what progress is being made? Also, regarding current issues, is this a forum to address any issues or problems that a community member may have about an existing facility or lack thereof?

Rob – No current capital projects. In July we have scheduled on our work plan a review of the network to identify specific projects, which would then receive an evaluation.

Rob – Any specific issues that a community member would have about facilities would ultimately have to be run through the evaluation process. During the New Business portion of the agenda these types of issues could be shared and discussed by any committee member. We should maintain a list of all the areas/projects discussed.

Anne - John Smolinski mentioned bringing planning board projects to the committee for project review.

Rob – Not sure this is the role of the committee to review site plans or sub-division projects.

Dan – I agree but we should have an eye on the impact of a project on the priority network and it's connectivity. The Planning Board may not always be thinking about that specific impact.

Henry – Along these lines, if the State or County does provides funding for future highway projects this Committee could provide feedback about the potential projects going on in town in regards to our network and connectivity.

Eric – Regarding Town Planning Board projects and new additions to the Priority Network, perhaps we could look at these initiatives quarterly in the new business agenda item.

Update on Meeting with Bethlehem Police Department

A meeting was held on Friday, March 11 with representatives from the Police Department, Deputy Police Chief, Tim Beebe and Lt. Tom Heffernan, and members of the Paths committee, Jason Gallo, Anne Benware, Oliver Holmes, Mark Jordan and Scott Lewendon. The agenda of this meeting centered around the Town Code Chapter 46 regarding the use of Bicycles, and the PaTHs Committee's education and enforcement campaign for bicyclist and pedestrian safety.

Prior to our meeting Scott reviewed the current Town Code Chapter 46, and marked up what appeared to be outdated or inconsistent rules relating to the use of bicycles in Town and the NYS Vehicle and Traffic Law. The Police Department did not have any objections to what was discussed regarding changes/edits to the Town Code Chapter 46. It was agreed on by all that:

- The registration of bikes with the Town should be permissive and not mandatory
- All changes made to the Code should be consistent with NYS Vehicle and Traffic laws and avoid duplicating V&T law language.
- The definition of exactly what a side path law is should be further examined.

Next was a discussion about strategies to implement an education and enforcement program. It was agreed on that the PaTHs Committee would compile a list of crosswalks to be targeted for compliance with the yield to pedestrian law. The Committee would also develop an educational safety palm card that officers would disseminate when an enforcement opportunity presented itself. The palm card would include bicycle and pedestrian safety tips for bicyclists, pedestrians, and motor vehicle drivers to follow.

Deputy Police Chief Beebe also announced that the Police Department will send two school resource officers to Police Bicycle training this summer. Subsequently, the Town will soon have two bicycle cops available during summer/school vacation months.

Jason asked the Committee to send him a list of crosswalk areas that should be targeted by the Police Department regarding compliance with yielding to pedestrians in the crosswalk law. Jason would then compile all information and send a memo to Deputy Police Chief Beebe listing the target areas and our approach to the combined education and enforcement efforts.

Scott – Our best opportunity to get full participation by the Police department would be to create a comprehensive safety program that has a defined role and opportunity for the Police Department.

Oliver – Tap into the driver education program that is currently done at the High School. Bring a heightened awareness of bike/ped issues to this group of teens taking the course.

Kathy – Scout groups are another group which the message could be delivered.

Dan – Perhaps in some cases it is the pedestrian or bicyclist that is not obeying the law, so with our educational messaging we should be conscientious of all users of the road.

Henry – Cooperation of these efforts has to come from the top (Town Supervisor). When the Bethlehem Citizens for Pedestrian (BCPS) started this same type of campaign a few years back, enforcement conducted by the Police Department resulted in complaints to the Supervisor's Office, and soon the efforts were subsequently ceased.

Jason – Deputy Police Chief Beebe, Rob and I all met with Supervisor Sam Messina to discuss our potential efforts and he indicated that he backs this initiative and would support the Committee's and Police Department's efforts.

Henry - All of these types of education activities take a lot of man time and volunteer hours, which is part of the reason Bethlehem Citizens for Pedestrian Safety members "burned-out" and the group dissolved.

Anne – So if we could somehow institutionalize this information in a school curriculum it would become more permanent.

Develop Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Messages

Rob – May is bike month with a few activities associated like ride your bike to work day. In April the pedestrian bollards will be put out by the Highway Department and perhaps we could time this with a letter to the Spotlight Newspaper regarding pedestrian and bicycle safety. Also, Capital Coexist has already developed some messages focused on bicyclist safety and we could use these messages to post as a PSA on TV 18.

Kathy – Perhaps we could disseminate this information around our neighborhoods and that might be something that the Spotlight could include in their article.

Anne – The variable message boards could help with the messaging at crosswalks.

Henry – Asked about declaring April as pedestrian safety month through a proclamation at a Town Board meeting. And all Town vehicles could be instructed to follow and obey these laws to help set an example.

Rob – Logistically if the Town were to make this proclamation it would not occur until the April 13 meeting.

John S. – Perhaps Sam could make a general announcement at the end of tomorrow's (March 23) Board meeting about these efforts.

Kathy – April 6 is national start walking day. If we have time maybe we could tie into this day as a kickoff to our efforts. Also, a great photo op would be with the Highway Department putting out the bollards with the PaTHs Committee holding up some of our educational messages.

Jason – Other outlets for information dissemination could include the Our Towne Publication, Town E Newsletter and a YMCA event coming up called Healthy Kids Day. Ann M. said she would help out with the YMCA event.

Dan – When the Town gets the awarded bike racks, we could do some publicity about them being installed and tie in these educational messages.

Oliver – Let me speak with the folks at the New York Bike Coalition about any events lined up for May that we could tap into.

Rob – The main product that we want to come out of our efforts is to get the palm card created and ready for distribution.

Oliver – Let's also try to get the Bethlehem Chamber of Commerce to get on board with these efforts.

FORT Presentation on 1.8 Mile Portion of Rail Trail by Scott Lewendon

FORT (Friends of The Rail Trail) is a sub-committee of the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy (MHLC). Currently, FORT is working with the County to open up a portion of the trail, a 1.8 mile stretch between Fire Fighter's Memorial Park and Veteran's Memorial Park. This is in lieu of the County being able to fund the construction expense that is required for completion of the entire trail. The County is approximately 4 million dollars short of the needed funds for the estimated 7 million dollar project.

FORT introduced an interim use of a portion of the trail. Some of the county's concerns included liability issues with the bridges and some steep slopes. The reason why FORT identified the section it did was because of the minimum need for improvements. This simple stretch is a 40 minute walk which has 1 road crossing, no bridges over roads (one bridge over the trail, Cherry Ave.), only 1 area of steep slope (between Curtis Lumber and Hudson Ave.) and 1 area of high embankment east of Cherry Ave. There are 5 access points along this stretch (Fireman's Park, Veteran's Park, Gardner Terrace, Cherry Ave. and Adams St.) which will in one way or another accommodate pedestrian, bicycle or vehicle access. They are also all equally spaced.

It is clear that some maintenance is already being done on portions of the trail, with other areas needing some work on shrubs and other vegetation. For the most part it is not over grown, yet. Some areas do have drainage conditions that would need to be addressed.

The implementation strategy was to develop a partnership between Albany County, the Town of Bethlehem and MHLC to develop a three way licensing agreement for interim use of this section of the trail. A 2 phase development proposal would include: phase 1, open up for pedestrian use and phase 2, further improvements to the trail to accommodate fat tire bicycles. There are no standard design guidelines for this type of development pertaining to multi use trails. So for phase 1 ADA guidelines for outdoor developed areas will be used and the AASHTO guidelines for the planning and development of bicycle facilities for phase 2.

Phase 1 Improvements would include the removing of brush, widen trail to about 10 feet, removal of trees, some drainage issues and crossing improvements at Adams St., it would need to be a 4 way stop (currently a 3 way stop).

For phase 2 railings would need to be installed (approximately \$7,000 worth of materials) along the areas of steep slope.

The roles and responsibilities of all parties involved would be:

The Land Conservancy would provide labor and hand tools. Insurance liability will be taken on by MHLC. The Town would provide some materials such as gravel and heavier equipment like mowers as well as the cleaning of ditches.

Albany County would provide signs and barriers to keep people off bridges.

A conceptual agreement has been reached at this time. As of this afternoon (March 22) a draft license agreement has been developed. The Town Board would have to approve this partnership with the County and MHLC by a resolution. A resolution by the County Legislature to authorize the County Executive to enter into this agreement is also needed, which could take place at their April or May meeting. The County public works committee also needs to approve of this agreement as well. This is all slated to be completed in time for the 2011 Trails Day, June 4.

Alan – How much of the 3 million dollar County grant is going to be spent on phase 1 or phase 2? It would be nice if the grant monies for the trail were spent on the trail and not on the work of the other bridges.

Scott - None. The funding is capped and must be used for the work outlined in their grant for the construction of a shared use path from Albany to Voorheesville.

Henry – When does the federal Money run out?

Scott – 10 years.

Rob – Asked if a letter of support should come from this committee to the Town Board to pass the resolution of opening of the 1.8 mile portion of trail. Scott said yes and Kathy volunteered to write this letter.

Dan – Has progress been made with the traffic study of adding a stop sign at Adams?

Eric – The County has a traffic engineer on staff was going to look into that.

John S. – Perhaps this Committee could look at the various pedestrian and bicycle access points. If we are encouraging people to access the trail the attention to the lack of facilities like sidewalks or crosswalks should be analyzed.

Dan – Another target area for the Police Department to consider is informing businesses that they should inform patrons that they cannot park on the sidewalk, at Adams St. near the crossing.

Henry – Have you looked at the results of the Delaware Ave. linkage study, with the schematic of the rail trail and access points? It has not been officially approved.

Rob – The Delaware Study identified access locations to the trail but only in regards to its final/full completion, not just the 1.8 portion that we are considering.

Alan – Has the county thought about grading the parking lot in Slingerlands for parking.

Scott – Not yet but once the agreement is finalized then those kind of details would be worked out with the County.

New Business

No New business

Public Comment

No Public Comment

Adjourn

8:32