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TOWN ADMINISTRATOR
KELLIE A. HEBERT, Interim

MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Selectmen

FROM: Kellie A. Hebert, Interim Town Administrator

DATE: March 5, 2012

RE: **Recommendations for Bike Path Study Committee**

In response to the Board's request to draft a charge for a "Bike Path Committee" as established at the August 15, 2011 Board of Selectmen meeting, I have outlined the following recommendations for your consideration.

Title of Committee: The Board voted to establish a committee with the title of the "Bike Path Study Committee." An alternate title may be more appropriate and inclusive of all of the final users of the space upon its completion, including pedestrians, bicyclists, conservation and recreation advocates. The Board might consider establishing a different title for the committee, perhaps, the "**Community Path Advisory Committee**".

Purpose and Charge of Committee: The Committee was initially established to identify potential locations for a proposed Community Path that can be utilized for recreation, exercise and non-motorized transport by bicyclists and pedestrians. The Committee was intended to identify, assess and rank criteria to guide the identification, prioritization and selection of possible land parcels and/or routes for consideration of a bike path.

After careful consideration and discussions with other Town staff, I would recommend that the Board consider realigning the purpose at this early point in the process. I'd recommend a slightly broader approach as we determine the feasibility of the project, the stakeholder concerns, and the full scope of this project.

Proposed Revised Purpose and Charge: The Community Path Advisory Committee should be charged with the purpose of gathering information, identifying issues and concerns, and reporting recommendations and next steps to the Board of Selectmen.

The Committee would be charged with 3 primary objectives:

- Gather & review all existing studies (ie. MAPC Report)
- Outline all concerns and issues (ie. Channing Road issues)
- Draft written report of recommendations and next steps

The first task of the committee shall include the collection and review of all existing reports and any related information. The second task will outline all the concerns and issues from all of the various stakeholders, including abutters, residents, abutting communities. The concerns should include a comprehensive listing for all the benefits, advantages and disadvantages of such an undertaking. The final step involves drafting a written report with a list of recommendations and next steps.

At the conclusion of the committee's work, a written report shall be transmitted and presented to the Board of Selectmen for their consideration of future action.

Number of Members: The Committee should include sufficient members to allow for representation of the community and stakeholders, but not too excessive so as to preclude a timely and efficient process. I'd recommend a committee size of 7 to 9 members.

Make-up of Membership/Participants: Possible membership might include:

- Biking enthusiasts (1-2)
- Pedestrian advocates (1-2)
- Recreation advocate (1)
- Conservation advocate (1)
- A resident of Channing Road (1)
- A resident from any other abutting residential properties (1)
- Business owner(s) from abutting commercial corridors (1)

Criteria for Selection of Members: Voting members should be residents or business owners in the Town of Belmont, unless other qualifications are prioritized based on professional expertise. Town staff will serve in a support capacity without a formal vote on the committee.

Selection of Interested Volunteers: All potential volunteers should be contacted to assess their interest in the committee, their background and to determine their general availability and time constraints to serve on the committee.

If process is successful and results in general support, the charge can be expanded to include next phases for planning and implementation. At that time, a more advanced governance model can be developed for further action and decision-making.

As always, I am available to discuss this in more detail. Thank you.

Proposed Motion: Move to establish a Community Path Advisory Committee for the charge and purpose of gathering information, identifying issues and concerns, and reporting its recommendations and next steps to the Board of Selectmen.

Examples of Possible Tasks for the Committee

- 1) List all criteria, positive and negative, to help determine where path may be feasible
- 2) Prioritize list of criteria for determining the best location(s) for the path
- 3) Review information and reports
- 4) Identify potential locations for path
- 3) Coordinate outreach with all stakeholders to identify issues, opportunities and challenges
- 4) Prioritize potential locations based on criteria established by the committee
- 5) Recommend 1 to 3 preferred locations for Public Input & Comment
- 6) Hold Community Information Session(s) to present findings & potential locations
- 7) Compose written report including a primary and alternative recommendations
- 8) Transmit written report to the Board of Selectmen with findings & recommendations
- 9) Make presentation to Board of Selectmen of recommendations

Sample Questions/Comments for Final Report

Questions to be answered:

- How will town benefit from a bike path?
- What are the reasons for pursuing a bike path?
- What are the issues, challenges or problems related to the construction of a bike path?

What desired criteria is necessary to help determine where the path **SHOULD** be constructed?

- Land should be predominately level
- Path should separate users from the flow of vehicles
- Path should be visible or open
- Path should afford the greatest distance from residential properties
- Path should not invite an environment to encourage criminal behavior
- Path should be located in a place that minimizes potential for crime or unsafe activity

Why should Belmont consider a Bike Path?

- Belmont should have a pathway for commuting, walking and exercise.
- The Minuteman bike path is an amazing experience. A bike path will be extremely beneficial for Belmont's citizens.

Cost Considerations:

- What costs and issues are involved with having the path cross over the train tracks?
- How much will it cost?
- Is this the best time to consider a pathway considering the fiscal constraints that Belmont is facing?
- Is state or federal funding available to construct the project?

Safety Considerations:

- Will robbery incidents increase with a bike path?
- Will having a bike path impact property values?
- Will crime increase?

Location of Bike Path:

- Should the path be located along the train tracks when trains will be screaming by?
- Would the southern side of Channing Road provide a better location since it is a tie-in to the Alewife connection?

Opposition:

- Should the Channing Road issues be resolved before moving forward?
- Will the path have more success if Channing Road is taken out of the equation?
- Should resident opposition on Channing Road be significant reason to eliminate the road from the available options?

Miscellaneous Issues:

- Won't commuter parking be a problem by the commuter rail?
- Where will people park?
- How should a committee be established?
- How will committee allow for broad representation so all points of view can be explored?
- What process will be set up to approve the bike path?
- Will abutters need to go through zoning?