

Community Path Advisory Committee
Minutes
October 23, 2013

Committee attendance included Jeff Roth (chairperson), John Dieckmann (vice chairperson), Price Armstrong, Amy Dedeo, Brian Burke, Cosmo Caterino, Charlie Conroy, Kevin Sullivan, Vincent Stanton, and Tomi Olson. Jeffrey Wheeler from the Office of Community Development was also in attendance. Visitors in attendance included:

Meg Boggess
Merrie Watters
Kathy Keady
Lucia Wille
Danielle Mclean
George Kokorus
Phil Lawrence
Sheila Flewelling
Ann Tierney
Jennifer Melot
Jarrod Goentzel
Michael Cicalese, Rick Macchi
Judith Ananian Sarno
Cindy Taylor
David Chase
Bonnie Friedman
Hong Liu
Matt Moss

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The meeting was called to order at approximately 7:10pm.

Approval of Minutes:

The minutes from the prior meeting were approved with minor amendments.

Use of Large Fences on Trails:

Cosmo asked about the source at the DCR (Department of Conservation and Recreation) who told Jeff R. that there was not a precedence for use of sound barrier walls between homes and a trail along community paths and greenways. The source was Dan Driscoll, Director of Recreational Facilities Planning at the DCR. Mr. Driscoll said that he had not seen anything like that before used on a trail. He said that people requesting this might not be aware that minimal sound comes from a shared-use trail. He also suggested that people might want to talk with the Sunnyside

neighborhood in Arlington, where the Alewife Brook Greenway was recently built. They had similar worries. Now that the Greenway is built, some of the neighbors want access to the trail, and have mowed the grass up to it and installed stairs to get up onto the trail. Also, he again mentioned the statute about night-time use being only for people moving through a park, and how that applies to trails. Therefore, anyone loitering and making noise after dark can be reported to the Police. He also mentioned future access being a problem, and that the Town or homeowners would not benefit as much from a trail that was walled off to people and that they could not access. As an aside, he also suggested that vegetation often times does more to dampen sound than fencing.

Discussion of results to the 2013 Belmont Community Path Questionnaire (1100 responses were received from Belmont alone.)

There was a question of whether the Minuteman Bikeway is open at night, and it currently is. A resident volunteered that if a trail is managed by the DCR it would be open at night, but loitering would be prohibited.

It was stated that the DCR has an interest in the Belmont Trail as it would serve as a connector to other Trails. There was a question about who would bear liability and responsibility if the DCR took the Trail over from the Town. This needs to be explored further.

Vincent suggested that it is important to learn how the DCR has worked with other communities, i.e., what policies are in place. Vincent and Cosmo will explore this question and report back to the Committee.

Additional suggestions were made for inclusion in the summary document on the Questionnaire results. Amy requested that the Word Maps she developed be included. She also recommended that the response density map prepared by Price be included, along with Yvette Tenney's analysis which summarizes the open-ended responses.

The Committee approved the document with the above amendments. It will be posted on the CPAC webpage.

It was noted that the Questionnaire results were heavily in favor of an "off road" path separating automobiles from cyclists. The Committee discussed that off-road paths are generally categorized differently from cycle tracks or cycle paths adjacent to streets. This is defined in the CPAC document "Route Evaluation Definitions", dated 2013-07-23. Tomi suggested that cycle tracks or cycle paths may be separated from traffic with concrete strips and bollards, or be raised paths as Cambridge recently

instituted on Concord Avenue. Examples of separated paths can be seen in pictures from Vancouver, B.C. and also in Eugene Oregon, which Brian has visited.

CPA Application:

The Committee discussed background on why the CPAC has submitted a CPA (Community Preservation Act) funding proposal for an railroad bike/pedestrian underpass between the High School and Winn Brook neighborhood. The Committee determined that safety was an important and ongoing issue. Vincent pointed out that previous bikeway reports and evaluations suggested connecting north and south areas of the Fitchburg line. The Town's Vision Statement from early 2000 also recommended a tunnel. In 2010, the "Belmont Comprehensive Plan 2010 -- 2020" also recommended an underpass be constructed. The CPA grant would provide engineering analysis on an underpass. It could also possibly provide a sense of whether an underpass at the Brighton St. railroad crossing is possible, as this is also currently a dangerous crossing for pedestrians and cyclists.

John D. spoke about the development of the project scope as drafted. Jeff R. asked that there be some pricing information as well as time-lines in the project scope. Price suggested adding to the narrative that this is both a "bicycle and pedestrian " underpass within the Identify and Evaluate Design Alternative section. There was further discussion of items, in terms of who was assigned to what, and what outstanding tasks needed to be completed.

Cosmo noted that the study, if funded, should utilize a licensed engineering firm. Others on the Committee suggested that the engineering firm hired should also help to identify possible sources of public funds to cover underpass construction costs. Cosmo countered that the engineering firm should not be tasked to identify funding options, because it could create a possible conflict of interest.

Regarding the CPA application, the question was also raised if it is possible for the Town to exclude an engineering firm who performs the underpass feasibility study from the firm that performs the actual construction for the underpass. Is this necessary? This question should be referred to the Town Administrator if this CPA application moves forward.

Evaluations of Potential Routes:

It was suggested that route 1-A could be made very smooth to meet ADA compliance for grade. The Committee agreed that routes 1-A and 1-E be the potential routes to focus on in that part of Belmont. We would be contacting those potential abutters for the upcoming survey. Price pointed out that none of these lower-ranking routes should be discarded, and rather should be maintained in the Final Report as potential fall-back options.

The Committee agreed to focus on routes 2-B, 2-C, and 2-D in that area of Belmont. Due to time, the Committee deferred discussions on Segment 3 and Segment 4 to the next meeting.

News and Announcements:

The CPAC Bike Bide occurred on Sunday Oct. 13. Participants were pictured in the Belmont Citizen Herald.

The Selectmen's meeting is Monday Oct. 28 in the morning. Brian, Vince, Jeff R. and Tomi plan to attend to provide a CPAC update to them.

Jeff R. will email the spreadsheets prepared by Yvette Tenney.

The final CPA application is due shortly. All components need to be completed by Nov. 1.