

Community Path Implementation Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes March 4, 2015

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6:00 PM Meeting started.

Present: CPIAC members Michael Cicalese, Heather Ivester, Russell Leino, Vincent Stanton (arrived ~6:10) and Brian Burke (arrived ~6:35); Jeffrey Wheeler, Belmont Office of Community Development

6:00 Mr. Wheeler distributed a set of documents, including (i) a chronology of Belmont community path studies and committees dating from 1995, (ii) a Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) map called Metro Boston Greenway Plan, (iii) a map of existing bicycle infrastructure in Belmont, (iv) selected slides from the final Community Path Advisory Committee (CPAC) presentation to the Belmont Selectmen in June 2014, (v) contact details of all committee members.

6:10 Mr. Stanton volunteered to take notes.

6:11 Election of officers was deferred to the end of the meeting (Mr. Burke had not yet arrived).

6:15 The minutes of the February 26 meeting were approved, subject to minor corrections.

6:20 The CPAC recommendations were discussed. Mr. Burke set up posters of CPAC recommended routes (using materials from the January 2014 CPAC public forum and CPAC meetings). Mr. Stanton noted that CPAC divided Belmont into three main segments (Waltham border to Clark Street bridge, Clark Street Bridge to Belmont Center, Belmont Center to Cambridge border). Several routes spanning each segment were recommended for further study (3, 3 and 2 routes, respectively, for the three segments). In addition, an underpass at Alexander Avenue Extension was recommended, and options for crossing Belmont Center were compared.

Mr. Burke, using a map, explained the route from Belmont Center to Brighton Street via the southern side of the tracks (one of two eastern routes recommended by CPAC). Mr. Stanton pointed out that the new MBTA signaling infrastructure on the south side of the tracks (about 1,250 feet long, with three small buildings) would occupy most, or in some cases all, of the MBTA land south of the tracks, which would require use of the edge of the high school campus for a path. Mr. Stanton also noted that the Belmont School Committee, in informal discussions with CPAC, was generally supportive of a path, but unwilling to commit to any specific route given the anticipated renovation, or possibly reconstruction, of Belmont High School.

The discussion then shifted to how to study so many route options with limited funds for a feasibility study (\$100,000, pending Town Meeting approval). Mr. Leino suggested that focusing the feasibility analysis on the "choke points" – that is, the identifiable challenges of each route, might be a way to get more detailed analysis of the factors that will ultimately determine which route(s) get built, while deferring detailed study of apparently uncomplicated route options. The challenges could include not just

difficult topography, but also potentially high cost, safety issues, neighborhood opposition, etc. Specific challenges discussed included:

- Routing a path through either of Belmont's train stations (Waverley, Belmont Center). Ms. Ivester noted that any path through an MBTA station could trigger an extensive station upgrade to current standards, including access for handicapped individuals.
- The potential high cost of an underpass at Alexander Avenue, and the need to work closely with the MBTA on any such plan.
- Resident opposition to a path behind Channing Road. Mr. Stanton noted that CPAC had not been charged to consider path design, nor did it have a budget for professional design, but that he (as a potential trail abutter himself) believed that design could influence response to a possible trail.
- Uncertainty about future changes to the Belmont High School campus, and the consequent hesitancy of the School Committee to commit to any specific plan is an impediment to developing a firm route along the south side of the tracks.
- The steep grade of Belmont Hill along Pleasant Street, and whether federal funding would require compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) provisions that limit grade. Ms. Ivester noted that the Massachusetts Division of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) does not require that paths be ADA compliant.
- Legal issues involving trail access in Belmont Center and Clark Lane.

Mr. Cicalese noted that the CPAC final report identified many of these challenges in the pros and cons section of the path evaluation chapter (chapter 9). The discussion then turned back to the difficulty of deciding how to prioritize study of all these challenges.

Mr. Wheeler suggested that the Committee's first order of business should be to prepare a plan for the Capital Budget Committee, to ensure appropriation of the \$100,000 by Town Meeting. Mr. Stanton suggested that the plan could be a description of the process CPIAC would use to decide how to spend the money, not the actual studies that would be commissioned.

7:25 Election of officers. Mr. Stanton nominated Mr. Leino to be chair of the committee, seconded by Mr. Burke. Ms. Ivester nominated Mr. Cicalese to be Chair, seconded by Mr. Stanton. Mr. Leino was elected chair by a vote of 3 – 2. Mr. Stanton then nominated Mr. Cicalese as Vice Chair, seconded by Ms. Ivester. Mr. Cicalese was elected unanimously.

The committee decided to meet biweekly on Wednesdays at 6 PM, subject to holidays and other conflicts. However, the next meeting will be in one week (March 11, 2015).

Adjourned at 7:45 PM.

Note taker: V. Stanton.