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Town of Belmont
Community Path Advisory Committee (CPAC)
Wednesday, February 12, 2014
Art Gallery, Homer Municipal Building, Belmont, MA
Meeting Notes

The Community Path Advisory Committee meeting was called to order at 7:10p by Jeffrey Roth. The minutes were respectfully submitted by Tomi Olson. The CPAC Members present at the meeting were as follows: Jeffrey Roth (chair), John Dieckmann (vice chair), Tomi Olson, Kevin Sullivan, Price Armstrong, Brian Burke, Cosmo Caterino, Charlie Conroy, Amy DeDeo,, and Vincent Stanton, constituting a quorum, with 10 of 11 members present. Absent was Joseph Noone. Also present was Jeffrey Wheeler, Community Development Planning Coordinator.

Also present were the following community members:
Cindy Taylor (Channing Road), Bruce MacKinnon (Channing Road), Philip Lawrence (Agassiz Avenue), Kim Slack (Taylor Road), Hank Thidemann (Warwick Road), Scott Smith (Avon Place, Arlington), and Yvette Tenney (Bow Road).

The minutes from the January 15th CPAC meeting were approved unanimously with minor corrections.

Crime Data: Resident Bruce McKinnon submitted to CPAC crime data in the vicinity of the Minuteman Bikeway. He obtained this data from the Arlington Police Department. Vince Stanton, Committee Member, delivered a response from CPAC to this crime data. The 2013 crime data submitted was along the a 1000-foot corridor through Arlington centered along the Minuteman Bikeway. The reason the data was organized in this manner is because the Arlington Police Department does not explicitly log crime locations as occurring on the Minuteman Bikeway, so instead the crime data summarized incidents occurring on nearby street addresses.

Using 500 feet on either side, Vince suggested that more data is needed to conclude anything meaningful about this crime data submitted to CPAC, since the data is not compared to crime data in the rest of Arlington. Also, a lot of the crimes cannot be attributed to the Bikeway. Finally, all the public police staff quotations and the yearly reports by the Arlington Police Department show that crime along the Minuteman Bikeway is below the radar screen and not a significant concern. Furthermore, the positive draw for home resales close to the Bikeway further supports the hypothesis that crime is not a significant concern in Arlington.

Scott Smith, an Arlington resident who lives next to the Minuteman Bikeway near Spy Pond and near the Arlington Boys and Girls Club, advised those present that there are no shrubs or other barriers separating his home from the trail. His property line is approximately 15 feet from the trail, and his home is approximately 50 feet from the trail. He purchased his home in 2006, and the Minuteman has been in existence since 1992. During the time he has owned his home, no one

using the Trail has ever trespassed onto his property or inflicted crime on his family or property, in spite of the fact that he has no fence or wall. He also has no concerns about his two young daughters, aged 10 and 12, who play in the back yard near the Minuteman Bikeway and use the path to walk to school. He also has a swimming pool in his backyard. Scott also advised that littering is very minimal, perhaps one grocery bag of trash over the course of a year.

Price commented that relative to the crime data presented, it would have been interesting to have been able to do before and after data to show if the Minuteman Bikeway caused any increase in crime in the community. Unfortunately that data is not currently available.

A Belmont resident, Tricia Crowley, who lived near the Somerville Community Path, both before and after it was implemented, pointed out that neighbors are typically unwilling to say that they don't like to live next to the Path because they chose to move there. She also speculated that the Somerville Path might wider than the 12-foot potential path in Belmont. She said that path is not next to an active rail. She cited other concerns of noise and some break-ins.

Price said that we are unable to conclude anything about this crime data. He suggested it be included in the final report that we analyzed it, but that further research would be needed to definitively answer the question that the Minuteman Bikeway caused crime. It should also be mentioned in the report that all other trends of real estate listings, popularity, and general safety of the Minuteman Bikeway seem to indicate that crime is a negligible concern.

Bruce McKinnon spoke that his goal in presenting crime data he wished to suggest that options be considered other than next to the Fitchburg Line. He reported that there are at least 16 trains per day that travel at speeds of approximately 60 miles/hour. Jeff Roth responded that we are looking at a variety of potential route options.

One Belmont resident commented that Scott Smith is fortunate to live on a path where his children can walk to school.

Cosmo raised the concern of the cost of policing the trail, and that there were assaults early on the Minuteman. Cosmo submitted an Arlington article about a sex offender in the area dated Thursday 9/3/2009. Cosmo also submitted general Arlington crime data for the period of 2005 -- 2009.

Police chiefs in other towns reported that crime is not a significant concern and that crime is very rare there, too. Paul Healy, a Belmont resident, was concerned that Police Chiefs might not say anything negative about crime on a rail-trail. He suggested that the police department staff who handle crime data could also be consulted, to see if they provide a different perspective than that reported by the police chiefs.

MBTA Canvas: Jeff Roth went over potential routes and maps for MBTA Feedback. Vince Stanton has provided some annotations. The maps with comments were voted on unanimously and will be submitted to the MBTA has amended.

A Belmont Resident requested that it be noted who owns the property behind the High School, as well who owns the property leading to Brighton Street. The School Committee has authority over the property behind the High School, although the land is officially deeded to the Town. The parcel at Brighton Street is owned by French & Mahoney, and that property includes an easement arranged with the DCR for a future path on the former Mass Central Rail-Road right-of-way.

A Belmont Resident (Tricia Crowley) requested the MBTA's position on Rail-with-Trails. John Dieckmann met with MBTA in 2007. He indicated that the MBTA supports the concept of Rail-With-Trail and assesses each on a case-by-case basis. There are several Rail-With-Trail projects in the works, including the Somerville Community Path, the East Boston Greenway, and the Neponset River Greenway.

Belmont Resident Cindy Taylor requested whether Community Path funding has been secured. She presented a document indicating that funding had been previously committed to the Belmont Path. Jeff Roth responded that the Town currently had no funding allocated for this project.

Several other residents asked to be recognized, and it was felt that the Committee needed to address the remainder of its agenda.

Parking: It was raised by a resident that parking needs to be addressed or otherwise it could negatively affect abutters. The CPAC is looking at how to address this potential issue, and has discussed this topic at previous CPAC public meetings.

Public Forum Wrap-Up: Written comments plus notes that Tomi took at Selectmen's meeting need to be responded to. Tomi offered to group the comments into categories.

Pros and Cons Spreadsheet for Potential Routes: Cosmo offered a list of pros and cons which he distributed via email. Jeff Roth summarized those concerns. By the next meeting Cosmo will look at whether his list is already included in the larger document.

Abutters Questionnaires: The analysis of these questionnaire responses was performed by Yvette Tenney. Analysis and summary of the survey was presented by Yvette. Jeff and Yvette will work on it to provide an overview at a future meeting.

CPAC Draft Final Report: Comments should be sent to Price and Jeff by February 20th on this current draft of the report. It was hoped that the Committee could

vote on an amended versions on 2/26. Formats and assignments will be forwarded to all committee members by Jeff Roth. Vince stated that one mission of the CPAC is to come up with a general consensus for siting the Path.

Updated Calendar: Last meeting is tentatively scheduled for April 8, 2014, pending completion of the final report and other outstanding tasks. One meeting was added in March.

It was pointed out that on-road Channing Road should not to be pursued due to elimination of parking and non-access to Brighton Street through the Baptist Church facility, as well as the issue of how to cross Leonard Street in Belmont Center.

Jeff will include all letters received by the CPAC in the final report. Jeff encouraged all letters to go to the Committee as the Selectmen's Office receives an abundance of mail.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15pm.