

**MINUTES
TOWN OF BELMONT
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
COMMUNITY PATH ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CPAC)
BEECH STREET CENTER
Monday, January 22, 2014
7:00 PM**

CALL TO ORDER

A joint meeting (public forum) of the Board with the CPAC was called to order in open session at 7:20 pm by Chair Paolillo at the Beech Street Center. Selectmen Jones and Rojas were present. Town Administrator David Kale was also present.

CPAC Chair Roth called the meeting to order at 7:20 pm.

CPAC members present: Chair Roth, Mr. John Dieckmann, Mr. Price Armstrong, Mr. Brian Burke, Mr. Cosmo Caterino, Mr. Charlie Conroy, Ms. Amy DeDeo, Mr. Joseph Noone, Ms. Tommasina Olson, Mr. Vince Stanton, and Mr. Kevin Sullivan

Opening Statements

Dr. Kingston noted that the School Department inadvertently published a position piece supporting the community path. He said he had mistakenly believed the document was simply an announcement for tonight's meeting. He added that the School Department has no position on the path.

Chair Paolillo informed the audience that the Board formed the CPAC because it supports a community path. He said he hopes a resolution and a compromise can be reached for a path. The main issue, he said, concerns where the path would go.

Chair Roth reiterated that the point of the meeting is to review potential routes and to hear from potential abutters about the location of a path. Chair Roth reviewed the highlights of the work CPAC has done since its inception in 2012. He noted that the CPAC is made up of a diverse group of residents, with three members from Channing Road. Chair Roth then reviewed some of the community path routes in nearby communities, noting where Belmont could potentially connect in. He also reviewed major findings from the online survey that was disseminated last spring.

Chair Roth said that the committee is currently focusing on 15 potential route segments. He reviewed that there are three categories of paths: bike lane and sidewalk, cycle track and sidewalk, and off road path. He reviewed potential routes from across town. He noted where the path would be constructed, including safety fences in certain areas. He then reviewed some screening options available to provide privacy for abutters (fencing, barrier, and landscaping). In some cases, more information (water drainage, etc.) is needed for some of these routes.

Open Floor Question / Comment Period

Chair Roth reminded those in attendance to keep comments limited to two minutes. He said

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CPAC would like to hear from abutters first and foremost.

Chair Paolillo reminded the audience that comments were being recorded and would be reviewed by the Board.

Many residents from Channing Road spoke to several of the same concerns from the perspective of direct abutters. Their concerns include fears of potential crime, increased noise, trash, drainage, live train safety, and back yard privacy. Most speakers said that better paths exist and need to be more thoroughly explored.

Ms. Karen Gut, from Channing Road, said she supports the bike path and she listed several reasons why. She said an off road path is the safest and best solution.

Mr. Tom Lockett said that he is a biker and that paths near traffic are dangerous.

Ms. Christy Lawrence, from the Waverley area, said she would like to connect Waverley to Belmont Center safely.

Mr. Charles Becker said that bike paths are beneficial in reducing traffic.

Mr. Austin Bennett, Grant Ave, asked several questions about the maintenance of a bike path. Selectman Rojas responded that currently there is no money for the path and therefore no money for maintenance, as well.

Mr. Matt Hanlon said that he believes strongly in an off road path as it is the safest option.

Ms. Jan Kruse, Grant Ave, asked questions pertaining to Grant Ave. She said she strongly favors an off road path.

Mr. Andrew Schwartz noted that on road improvements are currently needed, especially in and around Belmont Center.

Ms. Sharon Bridburg, Royal Road, said she favors an off road bike path, especially near the Royal Road bridge. She said high school students need a safe way to get to the high school.

Mr. Russell Leino, Sherman Street, said that Brighton Street is dangerous to ride on. He said off road would eliminate the risk and provide much needed safety.

Ms. Laura Vanderhart, Waverley area, said that she was a community path abutter in East Arlington. Noise and crime were not issues. She said the bike and foot traffic near Beaver Brook has also been a positive experience. She then read some comments from Butler parents.

Mr. Art Kreiger also supports the off road option. He said it will be more utilized. He said he hopes a decision can be made and that the project can move forward.

Mr. Ed Maloney, Clark Lane, said that he wants a path, but not running through his front yard. He said he is fine with having it run through his backyard.

Kathy Keohane, Rutledge Road, she said she abutted a path in Arlington and initially had concerns. She noted that none of her concerns were borne out.

Mr. Alex Corbett, Channing Road, said he hopes his Channing Road neighbors' concerns are heard and that their privacy is respected.

Mr. Jarrod Goentzel, Waverley Square, said he supports abutting a community path near Beaver Brook. He said that privacy and safety are a concern.

Mr. Scott Ross, Channing Road, asked about removing trees to build the path. He said he is concerned about backyard privacy. Chair Roth responded to some of his concerns. Selectman Rojas said that, whatever path is picked, it will be thoroughly vetted via the abutters and the entire community.

Ms. Ann Tierney, Channing Road, said she is concerned about privacy and noise levels. She said she was disappointed with the path options because they don't connect her to town services.

Mr. Duane Bronson, Concord Ave., said that the path on Concord Ave. is dangerous for bikers. He said that high school kids and parents have an interest in a better route to the high school.

Mr. Steve Marlin, Pct. 8, said that there are serious safety issues with a path near a live train. Ms. Pam Andrews, Royal Road, said she is in favor of a path there. She then spoke to appropriate shrubs that could be planted.

Mike Cicalese asked why the Channing Road railroad track is the one that is being focused on. It is the only one with a design plan.

Ms. Tricia Crowley, Channing Road, said drainage is a major concern.

Ms. Mary Watters, Channing Road, said that Channing Road residents have given up enough for the community. She said crime is a concern. She said the Concord Ave. option will cost less money. She said this is not a "community" path; it is really a "bike" path.

Mr. Bruce MacKinnon, Channing Road, said that this was supposed to be an abutters' meeting and it feels intimidating. He spoke to several safety concerns. He said he is against the path alongside a live train.

Ms. Erin McNeill, Alexander Ave., said an off road path would be very beneficial so long as it deals safely with the Center underpass. She spoke to the safety issue with kids crossing the track behind the high school.

Mr. Grant Monahan suggested that the Channing Road residents' concerns could be addressed with landscaping and fences. Solutions exist to these challenges, he said, and addressing these concerns will lead to a better dialogue and outcome.

Mr. Paul Roberts, Cross Street, said that, as a runner, he sees a lot of other runners and walkers on the Minuteman path. He said Concord Ave. feels like it has the potential to be safe. He said biking is the future and he hopes the path happens.

Mr. Will Messenger, Lexington Street, expressed concern for the safety of the bridge/underpass area.

Ms. Cindy Taylor, Channing Road, encouraged a compromise. She said most Channing Road residents support a community path, but they have concerns.

A resident who lives near a path in Seattle said that the path has increased her property value. She said it was a wonderful, positive experience.

Mr. Phil Lawrence, Pct. 4, spoke to the western routes. He added that the abutters concerns can be addressed. He said that the Concord Ave. option has serious safety issues.

Ms. Anne Mahon, Pct. 4, said that community paths sell houses and increase property values.

Wrap Up Period / Closing Statements

Chair Roth thanked everyone present and invited people to get involved.

Chair Paolillo thanked everyone as well and said that there is a lot more work to be done.

The Board moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:35 pm.



Mr. David Kale, Town Administrator