

Minutes

March 8, 2021

Attendees: Jeffrey Stein, Ronald Degray, Elaine Bartley, Debra Dauphinais, Dan Sharp, Susan Smith, Mark McCall, Rich Kubica and Allen Friedrich (acting as Secretary in the absence of Dennis Desmarais). Special Guests: CT Representatives Jill Barry and Jason Doucette.

I. Town Infrastructure update:

Jeff Stein reported based on discussion with Dan Pennington, Town Engineer.

- A. The missing sidewalk link between Red Hill and the Cider Mill on the west side of Main Street remains under discussion. First suggestions were to cut into the hill and install a large retaining wall or move Main Street to the east enough to fit the sidewalk without the retaining wall. Another suggestion was to move the sidewalk to the east side of the street with crosswalks before and after the hill; that was rejected by the town. Recently the Town Council requested a study of moving the street east a shorter distance and using a smaller retaining wall. A final decision is pending, but construction will not likely occur until 2022.
- B. Two state grants are awaiting final approval, one repaving Main St. from School St. to New London Tpke. with bike/ped enhancements, the other completing the sidewalk matrix and making other shoulder, median and crosswalk changes along Eastern and Western Boulevards connecting the 2 trail sections.
- C. The signalized pedestrian crossing at Main and Buttonball is designed and approved by the DOT. It awaits funding
- D. Additional funding toward work on the Road Safety Audit (House St.-Community Center) corridor has been requested in the budget for next year.
- E. The application for a grant for sidewalks in the Bell Street area near the east end of the Smith School Trail was turned down.

II. Discussion with State Representatives Jill Barry and Jason Doucette

A. Jeff Stein asked about the suspended start of the trail to the Putnam Bridge. It was announced that the construction was to start this Spring and the State and Town were negotiating responsibilities for maintenance of the trail. Then it was announced that the trail would not be built until 2022. Jill stated that the funding would be delayed until 2022. Jason had heard that there are environmental concerns and he has been in contact with the Department of Transportation. Both representatives agreed to follow up with the DOT.

B. Jill and Jason brought up two bills that are being considered in Hartford that may have an impact on biking and walking. Senate Bill 884, aka Transportation and Climate Initiative, addresses the problem of greenhouse emissions coming from gasoline and diesel fuels. It will require wholesale suppliers to purchase allowances at auction to cover the emissions from those fuels. The money will be reinvested into transportation projects that will reduce greenhouse emissions and air pollution. Projects that encourage walking and biking would be able to apply under this legislation.

House Bill 5429, aka Pedestrian Safety Bill, addresses the establishment and enforcement of laws that impact pedestrian and biking safety, such as establishing a fine for drivers who open their vehicle doors in the path of bicyclists.

III. Parks and Recreation Update

A. No progress on a Cycling Club.

B. Jeff and Mark McCall have identified a mountain bike trail behind Smith School and are working with the town and the local mountain bike group to develop a plan to present to the Town Manager.

- C. The Parks and Recreation Department is organizing a Bike Pop-up Park on May 22 at the Smith School trail. We will be assisting with this event. We may also have some presence at the House Street-Western Blvd. Trail.

IV. Biking among Older Adults

- A. Jeff attended a seminar on Biking for Older Adults put on by AARP and League of American Bicyclists. A series of slides, which would not transmit through Zoom, is attached to the minutes and is self-explanatory.

V. Parking Lot (no progress)

- A. Bicycle Friendly Facilities
- B. Town Center Bike Rack

VI. Treasurer's Report

- A. Dan Sharp reviewed the financial report that he had distributed by email prior to the meeting. It is attached.

Motion to Adjourn: Elaine Bartley. Motion seconded by Allen Friedrich