



Bicycle & Pedestrian Committee

City of Watertown
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COMMITTEE MEMBERS

JAMIE BURKE, CHAIR
EILEEN BOTTI
ADRIAN HAUCK
SHANTA KELLER
BECKY LIN
HANNAH RAKOFF
MARIA SAIZ
CHELSEA THOMSON
JENNY WANG

MEETING MINUTES

The **Bicycle & Pedestrian Committee met in person with Zoom (remote) participation on Monday March 3, 2026, at 7:30 pm.** Present: Jamie, Shanta, Eileen, Maria, Adrian, Hannah, Jenny, Becky, Chelsea; Zeke Mermell (staff); visitors: Deborah Peterson

A. Acceptance of minutes of February 2, 2026, meeting, deferred to April meeting.

B. Snow clearance operations/ordinance discussion and next steps

- i. **Discussion: Snow ordinance suspension:** The City suspended fine enforcement mid-winter after the blizzard, despite ongoing snow issues. They are still issuing warnings, but no penalties, for residential properties. Commercial properties are still subject to fines. Code enforcement officers spending significant time on door-to-door warnings and have observed responsiveness to these efforts. Members asked how this was brought to Council for review, Committee was not made aware it was under consideration. **Major safety concerns identified:** Pedestrians forced to walk in streets due to uncleared sidewalks frequently and consistently throughout the City. Many schools do not have safe accessible walking routes with the snow and ice. Many noted interruptions every few blocks and challenges with traveling beyond a few blocks. Inaccessible pedestrian signal push buttons buried in snow forced pedestrians to cross moving traffic (most pedestrian signals require using the push button to activate). Fire hydrant access delayed emergency response (Flint Street fire incident noted). **Budget and staffing constraints cited:** The City has 70+ miles of roadways in 4 square miles to maintain. Zeke shared updates that the City is competing with other municipalities for limited contractor supply, and several nearby cities exhausted winter budgets early. Members inquired whether there are either budget and/or staffing issues, noting that it would be surprising if the budget were already exhausted, as this budget item is supposed to roll over year to year. Other cities are expanding civilian shoveling programs, some with compensation. **Infrastructure accountability questions:** request for clarity on responsibility chain for public infrastructure snow removal, and a comprehensive policy on who clears what: pedestrian signal push buttons, fire hydrants, city-owned sidewalks. State DCR property on Pleasant Street never cleared. Enforcement inconsistencies discussed: only 50 warnings and ~50 tickets issued before the ordinance

suspension. Residential buildings 6+ units may qualify as commercial, but Zeke will seek clarity. Confirm if any mechanism for city to clear repeatedly non-compliant properties.

- ii. **Next Steps: Meeting:** Zeke to request meeting with City Manager George Proakis, the Committee wishes to focus on brainstorming solutions for next winter. A daytime meeting preferred for scheduling flexibility with the City Manager. It was noted this must follow open meeting law requirements (48hr notice, public access). **Letter to Council:** Draft letter to City Council expressing disappointment and emphasizing the need for solutions for next winter. Jamie to write initial draft, circulate through Zeke for feedback, targeting completion by end of week. A key message is that City actions must reflect stated values about pedestrian safety.

C. **Yard Art bicycle ride in April 2026:** Jamie inquired if any committee members are interested in leading the ride this year, for Yard Art. Sheila led the group ride in the past, work involves coordinating the route, in tandem with Yard Art, and also coordinating WPD traffic management to lead the rear of the ride. Next step: Committee to decide on Yard Art bike ride leadership.

D. Subcommittee updates:

- i. Live Well Watertown and WTMA collaboration: Jenny, Zeke, Jamie attended recent meeting. First webinar workshop, led by Nemo, also occurred last month and was well attended. Zeke to distribute flyers to committee via email on the upcoming workshops on 3/17 and 4/14.
- ii. Pedestrian signals: Zeke to coordinate with Sgt. Sampson of WPD Traffic Division on attending a future Committee Meeting when scheduling is more feasible, availability was delayed by the winter storm response. Adrian noted it is also of interest to meet with City Engineer or designee to discuss concurrent pedestrian signal phasing and any limitations or opportunities. Zeke to coordinate with City Engineer on attending a future meeting, such as April or May, to speak to that topic.

E. **Social media request from Kathryn Madden (Residents Advisory Committee):** Open call one member to provide a 30-second video testimonial on why they like working on a City committee, for use on City website and in City social media. Deadline is April 15.

F. **Share rules and regulations document for feedback:** Jamie to share document to committee, which is required by the City for all committees.

G. Member items/New business

- i. **Mount Auburn Street Project Input Opportunity:** Deboard Peterson, a founding member of the WBPC, soliciting feedback on behalf of Watertown Faces Climate Change's transportation committee, which focuses on reducing vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in Watertown. Soliciting feedback on any minor design changes that may be feasible for MassDOT to consider for the final construction of the Mount Auburn Street reconstruction project. Noted that since it has been several years, they are looking to revisit if any more bike-friendly changes can be made, noting that the project is already in active construction. Suggests that scope of comments be for

simple changes such as paint, signal timing, that wouldn't require revisiting all of the prior community engagement and approvals process.

- i. Next steps: Zeke share links to the final plans, and clarify parameters for what scope of feedback members should share. Members will then compile their own comments throughout the next month, and share to Zeke or in next meeting.
- ii. Becky inquired about WMTA and north-south routes. Jamie and Zeke noted the [Mobility Study](#) provided recommendations on this topic. Zeke will share the link to the link to the Mobility Study and will soon be ramping up discussions on the study, such as presenting it in a future meeting.
- iii. Becky inquired if 350 is affiliated with this committee, Deb noted that Watertown Faces Climate Change is an affiliate for their transportation efforts.

H. UPCOMING EVENTS:

- i. 3/17/26, 12-1pm: Webinar- "All about e-bikes, e-cargo bikes & e-scooters" (virtual)
- ii. 4/6/26: Next Watertown Bike-Ped Committee Meeting
- iii. 4/14/26, 6-7:30pm: Getting Started Biking (in-person)
- iv. 5/9/26: Eco-Fest
- v. 5/16/26: Get Out Your Bike

- i. **Adjournment:** Motion to adjourn, moved & passed.