



Bicycle & Pedestrian Committee

City of Watertown
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COMMITTEE MEMBERS

ANDREW COMPAGNA
JAMIE BURKE, CHAIR
SHEILA FAY
TOM FLOROS
JESSE HAMMOND
AMY PLOVNIK
HANNAH RAKOFF
MARIA SAIZ
JENNY WANG

MEETING MINUTES

The **Bicycle & Pedestrian Committee** met in person on **Monday March 11, 2024, at 7:30 p.m.** Present: Jamie Burke (chair), Sheila Fay, Jesse Hammond, Amy Plovnick, Hannah Rakoff, Maria Saiz, Thomas Floros, Jenny Wang, Zeke Mermell (staff), George Proakis (City Manager). 4 public visitors – no names. Absent: Andrew Compagna.

1. **Minutes accepted** from February 2024 WBPC meeting.
2. **Anyone interested in being Chair** while Jamie Burke is out on Maternity Leave: Tom Floros interested, but also interested in Traffic Commission.
3. **Working groups:** Bike Parking WG meeting next week
4. **Informational session with City Manager George Proakis:**
 - a. **Intro from Mgr. Proakis on his past history**, city planning in Somerville. Including lots of attention on pedestrian & bicycle issues. Glad we are focused on both, because addresses the issues combined. Focus on planning for Watertown Sq. Next meeting 4/4/24 and where to go next with 2 streetscape plans. Prioritizes pedestrians in both plans. Trying to cut down on cut through-traffic in Square. History of Lowell changes: slowed traffic speed and helped with parking & retail. Also, lots in Comprehensive Plan: will take time, and adding 3 positions on Planning Staff.
 - b. **Working with City – Zeke Mermell is great help interfacing for us** with new City Engineer and making sure City departments would be in line with Comprehensive Plan. City Council: one priority is Climate Plan – get more people using cars less! Got more funds, extra \$390k from Chapter 90 program – Council has to provide guidance of where to allocate.
 - c. **Getting involved earlier in processes of the City:** Mgr. Proakis still trying to figure out how to include public more in processes. I.e. street repayment: Ch 90: repay where roads are bad, then other programs looking at other roads, including Fifth St – connecting Parker St School building. Adding curbs as a way of stopping parking on sidewalks, Council priority – when go beyond mill & overlay, make sure curbs are part of the process. Tends to narrow street, and with parking on both sides, slows traffic. Street re-doing standards – Zeke look into that with DPW. New curbs not every street reworking because expensive.

d. **Traffic Commission:** proposed changes, make-up of Commission, needs go through Council. The majority of seats to City Staff, change: add 2 public members, one of which chosen by WBPC. Allows Board to choose Chair instead of Police Chief by default. Also separate administrating Commission from Police liaison. Not sure when will happen, probably several months.

e. **How can we express our interests to other City policy/projects:** Mgr. Proakis: letter-writing is good, helpful work with Zeke. If letters not getting through, can talk about it. Change is incremental. Issues, i.e. Mt Auburn St: the length of time in design process. The issue will be bike lanes on street in Coolidge Sq.—double parked cars. Conversations about green paint on streets ongoing.

f. **Did Somerville's bike committee do that we could do?** They were very involved in zoning around bike parking. But overall, thinks we are doing well.

g. **Mt Auburn St design – feedback from WBPC,** we didn't feel our input was taken into account. I.e. separated bike lanes and interface with Cambridge lanes. Trash pickup is a financial issue, regarding the number of people on trucks. Snow plowing: evolution on that issue. Also, buses – MBTA will aim to make it a 15 min route, so issues around making the bus flow good.

h. **How is Mgr. Proakis seeing his ideas percolate down:** lots of compromises and conversation going on. Inherited a financially & well-run city. Zeke ramping up coordination with DPW. Suggestion: invite City Engineer Tyler Glode to one of our meetings.

i. **Snow removal ordinance:** happy it passed. But it is multi-faceted to implement. Haven't had a chance to test education because there was no snow. Exemptions are an issue. Capacity to deal with complaints, but not much interest in someone writing lots of tickets. Will have to draft an education and enforcement plan over the summer. Could the City help around schools with exemptions? Issues with contractors for plowing, need more of them and have financial issue with that. Volunteers for shoveling are too low. But the City has a better communication team now that get word out. Community service awards as incentive. Do we have enough equipment for the City to clear sidewalks? Looking at DPW vehicle purchasing plan. DPW has staffing capacity limits. More enforcement of people winter parking that blocks the sidewalk? 2 parking control officers: mostly in commercial areas. Beyond that can ask Police – mostly on public safety issues. Changed parking issues out of See-Click-Fix – to Police because otherwise not addressed until workday.

j. **Anything Mgr. Proakis sees that we could do on communicating with public:** multi-faceted because of Open Meetings laws. Can encourage more people to come to meetings. Definitely come to public meetings but can't speak for the Committee. If we think more outreach needs to be done, reach out to the Communications department. The Public outreach person (Tyler Cote) is willing to come to an WBPC meeting.

k. **Change size of Committee:** 9 is a lot for boards/committees in Watertown and we could talk about how to do. Potential changes have to go through City Council. Maybe with Admin change. Could possibly have Associative members or informal members.

5. **Watertown Family Bike Ride:** Zeke spoke with Peter Centola (Recreation Director): the organizers have a website. We can spread the word. Date: August 3, 10:30-12:30. Route: start Cambridge – go

down Greenway to Filippello Park, and put in permits requests, including a way to connect to Filippello, where there will be events.

6. Live Well Watertown bike event (“Get Out Your Bike”): Jesse in on conversations – looking at first Saturday in May (rain date: that Sunday), contingent on bike mechanic availability.

7. Bike Porch Fest: May 18, 2024: plan a ride? Walking might be better. Have a possible stamp for walking through Porch Fest.

Future Agenda: how to get more people involved for getting work done. Talk about Watertown Square plans at the next meeting.

Motion to approve Tom Floros as substitute/interim Chair in Jamie Burke’s absence. Motion passed.

Future Meetings:

- a. **Next Watertown Square Area Plan meeting:** April 4, 2024 – Public forum. At 66 Galen St., Watertown. Zeke would like to put plans out for us to see and make comments.
- b. **Next WBPC meeting:** April 1, 2024, 7:30pm via Zoom.