

Meeting Minutes

Salem Bicycling Advisory Committee

Wednesday, September 2, 2020 6:30 p.m.

Remote Meeting

Members Present: Eric Papetti (Chair), Jayne O’Leary, Alexandra Maranto, John Wathne, Colleen Downie, Michael Williamson, Matt Caruso

Members Absent: Kylie Sullivan, Joe O’Neil, Michael Jaros, Josh Gillis

Also Present: Tom Devine, Senior Planner

Call Meeting to Order

Papetti calls the meeting to order. Devine describes the remote meeting format and procedure for providing public comment.

Public Comment

Papetti opens to the meeting to public comment.

Steve Kapantais of 23A Wisteria Street asks about the dormant Zagster bike docks throughout the city.

Robert Kennedy of 17 Carlton Street is concerned about the prospect of a new bike and scooter share because of his experience with the previous systems.

Staff Update

Devine provides a series of updates:

- The City was awarded a Shared Streets grant to quick-build improvements to Wilson Street. It is required to be built very quickly and will be monitored and adjusted as needed.
- Lafayette Street (West Ave. to Marblehead line) is now a priority for the City for bike lanes. Toole Design Group is designing buffered bike lanes which will eventually be brought to the Committee. These will build upon the striping and posts added at the rail trail crossing.
- Bridge Street (Boston St. to Flint St.) MassWorks project is proceeding with the original design. A preconstruction meeting is scheduled this week with construction starting in the coming weeks and an 18-month construction period.
- The City submitted a new MassWorks application for improvements to the Washington and Bridge Streets intersection. It is based on the City’s vision for the Washington Street Corridor, MassDOT’s Bridge Street preliminary plans, and

the intersection improvements envisioned to relate to the redevelopment of the Federal Street courthouses and the City's crescent parking lot.

- Fort Ave.'s striping has been tweaked. The City has installed the rumble strip and received the vertical posts for the buffer. The zebra armadillo barriers are in transit from Spain.
- North Street outreach will continue beyond the July listening session, including a review by this and other Committees.
- Progress continues on the Canal Street path. The team has confidence that they may finish the drainage and binder course on the path this construction season with final paving, lighting, and landscaping being done next construction season.
- Toole Design Group is developing the design to connect the Canal Street path into the downtown bike lane network. This will come to the Bike Committee.
- City staff met with MassDOT to discuss the 25% plan for Boston Street and is awaiting comment as a result of that discussion.
- The City began its shared streets pilot. Ward, Peabody, Farfield, Buffum, and Chestnut Streets are part of the pilot. Members should provide any feedback on the pilot.
- Joe O'Neil is reluctantly leaving the Committee after many years of participation because he has not been available to regularly attend meetings and may be leaving Salem.

Williamson says he thinks the Chestnut Street traffic calming is working. He notes fast progress on Canal Street path construction. He observes that the Harbor Connector Path appears 99% done.

Downie has seen signage with explanations of shared streets and he thinks Salem's pilot could use the same.

Papetti states that a Harbor Planning meeting has happened. Devine notes that this was the first of several public events in addition to the regular Harbor Planning Committee meetings. Papetti advocates for increasing the diversity of the Committee. Downie states that she also would like to see increased diversity on the Committee.

Discussion of Upcoming Procurement for Bike & Scooter Share

Devine states that most of the Zagster bikes have been removed from the streets. Zagster had leased the bikes from a company that hasn't been responded to the City's request to collect the bikes. Salem/Marblehead Cycle intends to purchase the majority of the bikes to refurbish and resell them. This leaves the Zagster docks. The docks don't work great for non-Zagster bikes. These will be removed, but in the meantime are essentially serving as placeholders for future infrastructure.

Caruso has found that the Zagster docks work fine for his own bike. Downie wonders if people avoid them because they are associated with Zagster and people might think they are not available for use.

Papetti reiterates that the handful of standard racks that were used for Zagster should be relocated to where they are more needed.

Catherine Seiferth says she appreciates the Buffum Street shared street pilot. It makes her feel safer on the street. This and other initiatives are making it easier to get around without a car. But there are not enough bike racks around. She would like to do anything she can to help and advocate for this.

Devine says there will be a reset of the procurement process, resuming discussion with neighboring communities and MAPC to try to procure a regional bike and/or scooter share. Devine seeks input from the Bike Committee and public on what that procurement should look like and what should be expected of companies submitting proposals to provide the service.

O'Leary says the feedback she heard was positive for the bikeshare and negative for the scooter share. If both are done again, bikes should be rolled out first and it should be done with sensitivity.

Maranto says e-bikes might be appealing even to people who already have conventional bikes. Williamson and Wathne agree that an e-bike component of the program would be beneficial.

Papetti remarks that BlueBikes continues to expand and thinks that joining that program could be considered. We know how to make a successful bike share, but there is not the same formula for a successful scooter share. He is also supportive of electric-assist bikes being included.

Downie asks if bikes and scooters would be bundled in the RFP. She thinks unbundling them may be preferred so that issues with one mode doesn't bring the whole system down. Devine says the previous RFP, that fizzled in the pandemic, didn't specify, but allowed companies to propose how they would do it. However, the RFP suggested the City would prefer all modes being managed through one company.

Steve Kapantais of 23A Wisteria Street says there is a state law requiring a drivers license for scooter riders. The previous program had no way to validate a license. Any new system should be able to do this.

Robert Kennedy describes his concerns regarding a new scooter program based on his observations of the previous program.

Update on Highland Park / Salem Woods Trails

O'Leary states that she and Williamson recently walked the trail network at Salem Woods and photographed what she considers the main problems to bikers and hikers. She shared these with the New England Mountain Biking Association. She shares her screen to show these images. Wooden footbridges are narrow and in poor condition.

The geomesh installed several years ago is progressively eroding away and coming up. Rising water caused a footbridge in good shape to move.

O'Leary notes some trail areas with fallen tree limbs. There are volunteers to do some clearing. Although these areas are not impassible, they widen as people walk around the obstructions and become wet and encroach into wetlands.

Williamson says that volunteer cleanup is needed and funds should be pursued for the more major work on the bridges. The bridges should be widened.

O'Leary thinks this needs to be assigned to someone to spearhead this. Manpower is needed, and that can be volunteers. And funding needs to be identified. Caruso remembers that Councilor Dibble coordinated boy scout work on the Forest River trails. Caruso thinks having volunteers committed could also lead to receiving donations. O'Leary is looking for grant money. Wathne wonders about having companies donating materials.

Devine says Salem Woods is overseen by the Park & Recreation Commission. He believes the City did a trail improvement project in Salem Woods over 10 years ago. It included a small grant and volunteer work. He suggests connecting with the Park & Recreation staff. O'Leary would like to get official permission to do the work before seeking funding and volunteers.

Wathne asks whether a design process is needed. O'Leary says there is usually someone involved who can suss out how to put things together. These trails will not be ADA compliant the way a sidewalk is.

Devine offers to help connect O'Leary with the Director of Parks & Recreation.

Discussion of Proposed Project Review Checklist

Document reviewed: DRAFT – FOR DISCUSSION ONLY, Project Checklist. Undated.

Devine shares the document on the screen and Papetti presents. The document has been discussed at the last Traffic & Parking Commission. This can help give context for major projects beyond just a set of plans. His sense from the previous meeting is that City staff are amenable to this.

O'Leary says she thinks the items on the list are helpful to define how you want to do a project. Williamson says he is not sure how a designer will be able to make design drawings readable to a layperson. Papetti says this was pondered also at the Traffic & Parking Commission. He suggests finding an example of good design documents that people can understand. The Planning Board has specific requirements for plans that are submitted to it. Caruso wonders if all prior comments should be included. Papetti says that when the City gives the Committee something for comment, we should know the City's whole thought process, but not necessarily detailed written correspondence.

Wathne thinks not all the project documents have to be readable to a layperson, but as long as there are some representative documents that are accessible, that should be sufficient. Downie says that adding a layer of specificity of what is required could help. Project history should be added, including what has been successful about it or now, to give the full context.

Williamson suggests that the project manager for projects should present the project. Papetti says he has seen presentations like that prerecorded that could be shared on demand.

Adjourn

Wathne motions and Caruso seconds to adjourn at 8:04 p.m. and all vote in favor.

Approved by the Salem Bicycling Advisory Committee on November 4, 2020.