

Meeting Minutes

Salem Bicycling Advisory Committee

Wednesday, June 1, 2022 | 6:30 p.m.

Remote Meeting

Members Present: John Wathne (Chair), Michael Williamson, Michael Jaros, Alex Maranto, Josh Gillis, Connor Ryan, Matt Caruso

Members Absent: Eric Papetti, Colleen Downie

Also Present: Tom Devine, Senior Planner

Call Meeting to Order

Wathne called the meeting to order.

Public Comment

Wathne opens the meeting to public comment and there are none.

Staff Update

Devine provides the following updates:

- Green Building Ordinance: Devine recognizes that the Bike Committee was not satisfied with proposed language in the draft ordinance. That was removed from the draft and Councilor Jeff Cohen intends to lead the development of a separate ordinance that includes this and Devine expects to need volunteers from the Bike Committee to assist.
- Development projects under review: The El Centro project (Lafayette and Derby Streets) and Crescent Lot project are still under Planning Board review. The Crescent Lot will be at the SRA on June 8 and potentially at the Planning Board June 16. El Centro is scheduled for the June 16 Planning Board agenda. The Committee had given their blessing for Wathne to review and comment on their behalf, when Devine thought the Planning Board might wrap up their review sooner. Devine reports that neither project is likely to be approved this month, but comments are always more effective the sooner in the review they are submitted.

Bluebikes Bikeshare Program Data & Promotion

Document referenced: Salem Bluebikes Data, Through 5/30/2022

Devine presents May ridership data. Ridership is ticking up. Caruso will be interested in seeing year over year data. Wathne sees that May 2022 ridership is similar to

September 2021. Devine has begun reporting on rides per capita as requested by the group.

Caruso is interested in passing out Bluebikes fliers at the train station. Devine has a stack of brochures available to members.

Devine mentions that he thinks the City has found a couple locations that might work for a station in Vinnin Square, in response demand for it from Salem State University and this Committee. This wouldn't be one of the seven stations deployed this summer, but additional funding is coming through that could support this station.

August MassBike Kids Bike Safety Series

Caroline Robitaille in the Park & Recreation Department is organizing a Kids Bike Safety Series with MassBike on Sat August 6 and Sunday August 7 for an hour each morning, time to be determined. Anyone who is interested in learning more or volunteering should let Devine know and he will connect people with Caroline. Maranto and Ryan are both interested.

Update on E-Bikes

Devine reports that the legislation that would formalize the legal status of e-bikes was reported positively out of the state legislature's Joint Transportation Committee. It is now in the senate's Ways & Means Committee. It appears to have some momentum but may take time.

Wathne asks if Bluebikes will incorporate e-bikes. Devine says there is some interest from the company operating Bluebikes and the member communities. Ryan and Wathne have both tried e-bikes and think they are great. Wathne see e-bikes as for both transportation and fun, more than just exercise. It might attract additional types of riders. Devine says Bluebikes ridership is skewed toward the young, and e-bikes have the potential to expand ridership beyond just the young and most fit people.

Devine asks if anyone has any reservations about adding e-bikes to the public bike share. Caruso asks if someone wants to ride a pedal bike, but only pedal-assist e-bikes are available, would he still be able to ride without assist? Wathne says it is heavier and tempting to use the assist. Ryan says it is still effort, but the reward for the effort is greater. Ryan says someone he knows had a hip replacement and didn't think he could ride, but he was able to with an e-bike.

Devine says there are some other examples of ways communities can support e-bikes before having them incorporated into Bluebikes. A community can offer rebates for the purchase of e-bikes. There is also the possibility of having a small e-bike share program that is separate from Bluebikes, provided it is not prohibited by the Bluebikes exclusivity clause in its contract. Caruso, Wathne, and Williamson state that they prefer waiting for Bluebikes to add e-bikes, rather than having the City do its own program before that.

Wathne asks about whether we will have a scooter share again. Devine said there was a lot of push back during the 2019 pilot, including from City Councilors. And people opposed to the scooters generally expressed support for e-bikes. Caruso says he thinks scooters attract a different kind of rider than an e-bike.

Public Meeting Remote Participation Policy

Devine reports that the legislation allowing remote public meetings expires July 15 and meetings will be required to occur in person following that. That Open Meeting Law that will be back in full effect includes a provision for remote participation. It requires a quorum of people to be present in person and for the City to have a policy. If a member wishes to participate remotely, they need approval from the Chair 48 hours before. The City's remote meeting policy goes into effect for all meetings on July 15, but it includes a provision that it is immediately in effect for in-person and hybrid meetings. In May, the Committee had a hybrid meeting, but to do that again under the new City policy, we would need an in-person quorum. Since a quorum was available for tonight's meeting, but split between in-person and remote, we had to meet remotely tonight.

Wathne asks what this means going forward. Devine says he can poll the group at the next meeting to see if there is an in-person quorum available. But after July 15, we have to meet in person and we are encouraged to allow remote public participation, and can only have members participate remotely with the Chair's permission.

Discussion of Committee Name

Document referenced: Draft Bike Committee webpage text, shared 6/1/2022

Wathne describes riding the bike paths and observing that cyclists are just one group of users. Most of the people are walking. Some are jogging, some pushing strollers. In Marblehead many of the trail users are kids walking to school. He believes the Committee needs to be clear that benefits of the so-called bike paths extend beyond just cyclists to a large cross section of the public, especially with a potential change in local leadership. He and Downie have been looking at revisions for the Committee webpage.

Wathne screen shares draft webpage text and suggested Committee name change: Bicycling and Multi-Use Pathway Advisory Committee. Caruso supports the direction and suggests not limiting the Committee to just pathways. Williamson says he is one among many runners who use shared paths. He thinks that is a key group using it.

Jaros asks if there is anybody besides this Committee advocating for paths. Devine says in the last five years or so, there has been substantially more advocacy from City staff, beginning with the Mayor's creation of a new Director of Traffic & Parking position. The position is really the City's transportation director with a multimodal approach to transportation projects and programs. And the Traffic & Parking Commission also

advocates for multimodal transportation projects that incorporate bikes. Devine wonders if there should be a combined single group for transportation with a bike subcommittee, or should there still be a separate committee for bikes. Caruso says he supports having members with diverse interests.

Wathne discusses proposed webpage text to highlight benefits beyond to biking. Jaros says he thinks walkers and runners are using the off-street paths, but not the on-street lanes. Wathne say he sees runners in the bike lanes and thinks the to groups can be brought together. Williamson says the text should note reduced parking demand as a benefit of the Committee's work. Williamson wonders if environmental benefits should be noted too. Devine asks if the economic benefits should be noted to, with improved access to downtown businesses. Ryan commends Wathne for this effort. He sees recreational walkers as a large group to bring into the fold. Jaros, as a parent of young kids, see a lot of strollers on the paths.

Wathne asks the group if they support pursuing these changes and all do. The group discusses the wording of the name. Devine will share the document with the group.

Selection of Committee Representative for OSRP Advisory Group

Devine reports that the City is forming an Advisory Group to support the upcoming update to the Open Space & Recreation Plan to set goals and priorities for parks, open spaces, and recreation programs. The current plan doesn't say much about bikes or shared-use paths and there is a seat on the Advisory Group for a representative from this committee. The commitment would be meetings probably every other month from this summer into mid next year to provide guidance and direction on public outreach, help promoting the outreach events, and vetting the goals and action plan. Wathne volunteers and the group supports him.

Meeting Minutes

Caruso motions and Ryan seconds to approve the 3/2/2022 minutes and all vote in favor.

Miscellaneous

Caruso would like to discuss at the next meeting street sweeping for bike facilities and the idea of an "adopt a highway" program for bike paths.

Devine announces that Jane O'Leary is leaving the Committee after several years of service and he is grateful for her contribution. As a result there are two vacancies on the Committee.

Adjourn

Williamson motions and Caruso seconds to adjourn at 7:40 p.m. and all vote in favor.

Approved by the Bicycling Advisory Committee on September 7, 2022