

Westwood Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Committee
May 21, 2009
submitted for approval at July 16, 2009 meeting

7:30PM – 9:20PM
50 Carby St - Municipal Offices

Attendees: Dave Atkins, John Crehan, Phyllis Craine, Steve Harte, Michael Kraft, Steve Olanoff, David Belcher, Eric Dubiner, Suzanne Becker, Bill Conley, Nora Loughnane, Betsey Merkel

The meetings may sometimes have a speaker in the program with a discussion of issues, reporting back of what came out of the last meeting

Each person briefly introduced themselves. Dave introduced Betsey Merkel, visiting from Cleveland and a founder of the I-Open Institute for Economic Development. see <http://i-open.org/>

Discussion

- Summary of Open Source Economic Development by guest Betsey Merkel. See <http://i-open.org/>
- Anne Marie McIntyre, a resident of Webster Steet, discussed her efforts to promote the development of “Emotionally intelligent signage” idea from Daniel Pink - starting with the Hanlon School; work with middle school students graphic signage –a safe initiative – hopefully integrate new signage in the fall; test the activity; Q: what are the success measurements; \$4.00 cost; one community moves signs regularly; important to get the kids involved

The meeting involved a discussion of many issues described below but not specifically attributed.

- Recap from last meeting where Christine Morrow spoke about the Safe Routes to Schools program; an effort to combat obesity; be sure to watch the recent presentation now posted to the town web site.
- Dave described hearing about a grant program to apply for walking maps; \$2000 grant to improve pedestrian safety; UNC highway Center ; National Highway Traffic Admin. Is anyone interested in pursuing grants? What about Stimulus money?
- Nora: Lynn Field of the Town GIS Dept created maps to identify local walkways; an updated map will be made available soon. Some residents at one point requested sidewalks be removed hence the incomplete sidewalk pathways which interrupt walkway safety. Where sidewalks are missing there still exists a right of way for side walks. Residents change and there are new opportunities to implement sidewalks; some streets

have little traffic and are relatively safe, other areas have no safe way to walk to school or to their designated bus stop. Q: where do the needs of the town go ahead of the preferences of the residents? What is the role of this committee? One example: committee members educated residents about the need for (sidewalks). There is no policy about sidewalks. Every construction project is done piecemeal and the neighbors come forward to say whether or not at that time they would like sidewalk. \$100,000 ... sidewalk construction costs are generally the first to be cut. Towns have a separate sidewalk budget. Would require a right of way acquisition; the stone wall is the line; the problem becomes what do you do? The solution is to build a sidewalk behind the stone wall;

- cost of busing kids to school who live in walkable distance
- research to indicate the connection between walkable community and home value, economic development value
- in Hanlon: what is the local understanding of the value of walkable communities?
- Most kids at Downey are dropped off;
- what would it take for you to walk to school?
- Strategize gateways to serve most of the residents; communities in the past have had paved pathways – later not used because of safety
- Is it reasonable to ask for additional funding for sidewalks when other projects are being cut?
- Make a list of prioritized sidewalk connection
- Roads were put where the easiest routes are ?
- Can we start a list of problem areas and send to Dave
- What's the priority? Runners who run, seniors with wheelchairs, kids walking to school. Can we look at everything? A sidewalk could walk to Norwood. Can develop a sidewalk that looks like a path but is handicapped accessible?
- What about bike lanes?
- Is there a calendar of projects in the town? The Selectman top coat a certain number of roads every year. The re-painting of streets can affect the painting of streets to include bike lanes where available space has been designated. How can one have a conversation about whether or not a bike lane could be painted in? The group could make a recommendation that bike lanes be painted in. Painted lines can be painted wide to imply cars staying on one side and the bikes on the other – an unofficial bike lane. There are a lot of creative ways to address ways to include
- Raise the issue early enough to influence planning. Can we describe the road projects. They should have already made a list of projects. Know in the cycle of which roads are to be painted and when. Lines over the winter fade and all are repainted in the spring. Some people thought the line painting devaluates home value. Bike

paths behind the houses may not be popular because of safety concerns.

- How can we educate people that sidewalks are good? Have a 5K? A trail run through the woods. Green fair – an event focused around walkability; promote the committee.
- How to reach the people who don't really care about sidewalks? Westwood blog reaches about 5-10% population; abt 100 ppl per day;
- Is there a high percentage of Deerfield residents that drive children to school? High traffic, dangerous spots.
- Safe Routes to School is a federally funded program to request in your town that provides creative solutions. Recent program piloted...voluntary program. Lots of discussion looking at specific areas of problem areas and solutions.
- Simple changes made in the DPW area could make traffic and safety much better.
- Fewer buses and fewer bus stops and few parents driving kids.
- Third Thursday of every month next meeting
- Maps available of all other school district
- The narrowing of car lanes slows traffic

Town Planner Nora Loughnane produced maps created by the town GIS department illustrating where sidewalks currently are. The group examined the maps in great detail discussing problem areas, in particular the section of Nahatan Street between the Norwood Town Line and the First Parish Church.



