

Cambridge Pedestrian Committee

Meeting Minutes – Thursday, February 27th, 2014

Meeting Attendees: Helen Rose, Benjamin Williams, Sean Peirce, Debby Galef, Magda McCormick, Andrea Yoder, Nora Morantz, Joseph Rose, Rose Billeci, Ryan Westrom

City Staff in Attendance: Cara Seiderman, Jennifer Lawrence, Bill Dwyer

1. Minutes / Agenda Review
 - a. January's minutes approved by vocal consent
 - b. Introductions
2. Outreach & Events
 - a. Kendall Square Walk – Jennifer Lawrence
 - i. General Idea – Originally a foodie walk, but has transformed into a highlights tour of Kendall Square, with a focus on interesting walkways and hidden gems
 - ii. Tentative Route to have three main pieces in order to keep the event relatively manageable, while pointing out or walking through interesting locations between each.
 1. Begin with the CBC and a brewery tour or something similar engaging
 2. Check out the Clover Food Lab in the middle
 3. End at Commonwealth to get more outdoorsy setup
 - iii. Remaining to-dos
 1. Double check our full list of venues and highlights (if you have any additions to the list included in the subcommittee minutes, please send them along ASAP!)
 2. Send out emails or call businesses and locations on list to find interest in hosting or offering coupons, and to nail down times. This will be split up among interested parties.
 3. Run a test-walk to double check the thoroughness, timing, and details of final walk
 4. Finalize route and finish up an advertising brochure by mid-April
 - iv. Rain plan? How about rain-or-shine, and offer complimentary ponchos in the event of rain.
 - v. The KSA is excited about the event. They are willing to send out our event information in their emails, and they have walking maps they can donate.
 - b. CAC Open Studios Event
 - i. The Cambridge Arts Council has reached out to the Bicycle and Pedestrian Committees to gauge interest in leading cycling or walking tours for their Open Studios events through April and May. The final plan isn't hammered out, but if there is any interest please alert Cara Seiderman (cseiderman@cambridgema.gov) or Jennifer Lawrence (jlawrence@cambridgema.gov) so the CAC can include our committee name on their preliminary outreach.
3. Projects & Planning
 - a. Snow Updates

- i. 54" of snowfall to date, accounting for 16 snow removal operations of 1-2 days each, and including 5 bus stop / ramp cleaning operations
 - ii. 1300 inspections of reported issues, with 792 tickets issued
 - 1. The sites inspected were predominantly a mix of single- and multi-family residential
 - 2. Doubled the number of tickets issued from last year, but had the same number of inspections.
 - iii. 639 pothole reports, with 448 being taken care of.
 - 1. More potholes than usual, with many suddenly appearing in February due to thaw of old asphalt
 - 2. Trying out a new asphalt hotbox tonight which will be able to quietly repair potholes overnight. Tonight's trial will be 11pm – 7am, and will be on main arteries and not side streets.
 - 3. DPW has the capability to map pothole reports and repairs on the fly, and this information does feed into the 5-year plan, though there isn't a map that is regularly updated.
 - iv. The city has improved its calling of Snow Emergencies, and has looked closely at parking situations in hard-to-plow areas, facilitating much easier street plowing.
 - v. Sidewalk shoveling still can be hit-or-miss, including a few regular trouble areas, but the situation is generally better than in neighboring cities.
 - vi. Cambridge has plenty of salt for sidewalks and streets, despite the suppliers being out of salt. The public barrels will be refilled for the next storm.
- b. Projects from DPW – Dwyer Report
- i. Concord Avenue: Huron Avenue to Fresh Pond Parkway
 - ii. North Massachusetts Avenue
 - 1. Russell to Beech
 - 2. Linnaean to Everett
 - 3. Wendell @ Shepherd?
 - iii. Norris Street had water main issues
- c. Greenough Boulevard Greenway
- i. DCR has partnered with the Solomon Group to create a better park space along Greenough Boulevard between Cambridge and Watertown. The full plan is available online through the weekly Pedestrian Report.
 - ii. Greenough Boulevard will be narrowed throughout its length to two- or three-lanes to make way for more greenspace, trees, plantings, and a multi-use trail to promote recreational walking and cycling.
 - 1. The proposed trail is too narrow at 10'. Compare to Minuteman Trail at 12', which is also generally too narrow for its current usage.
 - 2. Plans show a cyclist in a 5' shoulder on-street, but that width is too narrow for an urban area and somewhat dangerous with 40 mph traffic speeds and no buffer for cyclists.
 - a. Most cyclists will likely bike on the multi-use trail, likely endangering pedestrians walking on the trail and reducing the quality of the experience along the boulevard.

3. The Pedestrian Committee feels that 14' would be the minimum width for a multi-use trail, but would encourage DCR to investigate other innovative options for the corridor.
- iii. Cara will compile our discussion into a letter to DCR with the Pedestrian Committee's comments, and will send the draft letter to the Committee for approval.
 1. If you have images of multi-use trail best practices, send those to Ben at bnwilliams@outlook.com for inclusion with the letter.
 2. Our letter will be likely delivered by Debby Galef or Magda McCormick at the public meeting.
- d. Pearl Street
 - i. Community meeting last night.
 1. Largest issue was that the street was too narrow, making it difficult to walk, cycle, or even drive down. Only option to increase width would be to remove parking lane.
 - ii. Construction on Pearl Street shouldn't overlap with Western Avenue construction, as Western should be done by Spring 2015 and Pearl shouldn't begin until Summer 2015. Currently just beginning the design phase.
 - e. 40 Thorndike Street (Cambridge Courthouse)
 - i. There's been a great deal of neighborhood reaction to this project at all stages. Many neighbors want the building removed or reduced in height. There has also been discussion of the potential uses of the site and/or the building. This discussion is over the site plan before the Planning Board this coming Tuesday from the developer chosen by the State.
 - ii. Site plan discussion
 1. Spring Street façade:
 - a. Where is the Hubway station in the new rendering, and is there enough bike parking?
 - b. How significant is the grade change between Spring Street and the entrance to the building and the retail establishments? Will this be high enough to create a visual disconnect?
 - c. There should be more walkways between the front of the building and the street-level. The proposed stairs are likely to be too cramped, and don't provide direct access to retail front doors facing the street.
 - d. More seating in the form of benches or seat-height space would be preferable.
 - e. What specific work is being done to address the wind tunnel effect? The plan highlights efforts being undertaken, but the concrete proposals are unclear.
 2. Walkthrough:
 - a. Will the walkthrough actually be a public right-of-way, i.e. will pedestrians be able to use the walkthrough most of the time freely? Year-round and all-week?

3. Thorndike Street façade:
 - a. How will pedestrians access the park with the Bulfinch building and the MCC? There is no mid-block crosswalk to accommodate walkthrough entrance, and access to the park from Thorndike Street is only on a steep staircase.
 - iii. Further comments on the site plan should be sent to Cara ASAP, preferably by Monday in order to be included in comments to the Planning Board meeting on Tuesday
4. Upcoming Meetings (see Pedestrian Reports for meeting times and locations)
 - a. Monday, March 3rd: Joint Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee Meeting on Garden Street
 - b. Thursday, March 6th: Public meeting on Greenough Boulevard Greenway project
 - c. Thursday, March 21st: Next Pedestrian Committee meeting; will include Kathy from DPW to discuss the 5-year plan
 - d. Future meetings will involve Jeff Parenti to discuss signaling and Juan Avandano to discuss traffic calming projects
5. Action Items
 - a. Email Cara Seiderman with any comments to the 40 Thorndike Site Plan so she can include them at the Planning Board meeting on Tuesday, March 4th
 - b. Email “best practices” photos of mixed use recreational trails combining pedestrian and cycling facilities to Benjamin Williams at bnwilliams@outlook.com. Feel free to include any additional comments, or to email comments to Cara Seiderman.