

Pedestrian Committee Meeting April 22, 2010

Members in attendance: Rona Gregory, Amanda Trombley (chair), Robin Finnegan, Thomson Kao, Alan Greene, Debby Galef, Pete Kane, Andrea Yoder, Joe Rose, Eran Segev, Helen Rose (scribe)

Agenda:

Minutes & Agenda review

Updates & Project Announcements

- * Reports from the 'hood
- * Construction Updates
- * Police updates
- * GoGreen Month & Golden Shoes
- * CitySmart
- * Other outreach: using modified version of police pamphlet on safety
- * Pedestrians & Crosswalks (subcommittee?)
- * Other

Setting Priorities for Upcoming year - review of successes/achievements from past year and projects still in process. Part two will involve setting priorities and establishing projects for subcommittees at the May meeting.

Break

Subcommittees meet & report back

Upcoming meetings & announcements

May: City Arborist

June: Charles River Access Plan

July & August: neighborhood walks

No changes to minutes.

Introductions, including our three new members.

Updates/projects announcements

Reports from the 'hood

Amanda: North Cambridge public meeting 4/29 about north Massachusetts Ave corridor.

Robin: Jane Jacobs walk along bike path, Russell field, Saturday May 1, 10:30 AM. Charles Sullivan will lead. Jacobs was a hugely influential thinker and activist around city planning. She pushed back on Robert Moses in NYC and on other large-scale urban renewal projects that led to the razing of neighborhoods like Boston's West End and that threatened the North End. She argued that such neighborhoods were truly livable communities and that vibrant street life, walkability, and a mixture of uses mattered. She and her husband moved to Canada during Vietnam war. Jacobs coined/popularized the phrase "eyes on the street". Wrote seminal book on planning, *Death and Life of American Cities*. Further details:
<http://janeswalk.net/cities/category/cambridge/>

Alan: East Cambridge raised issue of crossing at Fifth and Gore. Very divisive for people in neighborhood. Some claim that raised intersections have a lot of noise. Trucks and speeding vehicles can be noisy. The City can adjust the design to reduce the noise. The raised crosswalk will go in.

Debby: light has changed at intersection of Wendell and Shepard. Now concurrent not exclusive, countdown timer added.

Bill Dwyer construction updates: Brookline Street paving next month. Central Square from Prospect to Brookline resurfacing. Concord Ave from rotary to St Maria. Brattle St resurfacing. Prospect St resurfacing. Construction season will begin in earnest in May. Sidewalks: Bigelow/Harvard St, Mercer circle.

Alan had asked Bill in email how DPW responds to vertical displacements. Bill brought policy in response. Some problems can be fixed quickly; some, if the fix is complicated, might take over a year to fix. DPW applies priority system.

More information at DPW website:
<http://www.cambridgema.gov/TheWorks//> - see "5 Year Sidewalk & Street plan"

Cara explains to new members what vertical displacement is and offers to have Bill come back at a future time, perhaps at subcommittee level.

Cara also reminds people that this month's agenda has a document with useful contact information.

Amanda asked about sidewalk cafes: What happens when a sidewalk cafe overflows its area? Bill Dwyer said the best solution is to call the police. At Bartley's Burger Cottage, the restaurant puts a chair out in the middle of the

sidewalk. Bill says DPW works with licensing board and he will talk to them about monitoring the cottage. He said over the past few months DPW has had many discussions with Christopher's in Porter Square and would like feedback. Alan explained that Grendel's Den in Harvard Square has been roping off public areas.

In future years we should send feedback to DPW before outdoor seating permitting process begins in February or March.

Police updates: Rosalie brought a "Personal Safety Tips" brochure to show around. She would like to get from the Police an electronic version so we could adapt it for our use.

At January's meeting we had representatives from the police attend our meeting. One of the results was that the police would get us some tips for safer walking. We've waited several months. We had hoped to do some educational programming for pedestrians. We can use the brochure as a starting point.

Rosalie encourages anyone who has suggestions for the city map to her directly.

Community Outreach subcommittee can hold on to brochure and look for improvements.

GoGreen Month & Golden Shoes Updates: City staff have no reports on shoes. Amanda has talked to the Brattle Theatre and they will probably give us tickets. There are small donations that could come in. Amanda will talk to Larry Parnell (former member) about contact information for past donors.

Eran attended a program last month where some local businesses were recognized for participating in environmental training (including 1369, Greenward). Someone has to talk to businesses to solicit donations for Golden Shoes. He promised to talk to 1369.

Amanda said there are some regular donors such as Harvest Coop. In the past she has found emailing better than stopping by. She has a letter with explanation of the program that she will forward to the committee list. Email the committee list before you contact a business.

Rosalie circulated paper asking members to volunteer to hide shoes, asking them to say when they aren't available and where in Cambridge they can hide. Stephanie wasn't at the meeting so we will have to coordinate and get shoes.

CitySmart: Cara. City is trying to not be as ambitious in scheduling special events in North Cambridge as they were in Cambridgeport, and will focus on attending existing events instead. The City will have a table at North Cambridge open studios to encourage people to sign up. There will be a family day, June 12, behind the Peabody School (rain location: inside Peabody School). Cara would like ideas for a walk specifically for CitySmart.

We did a North Cambridge walk a few years ago. Dig up that content, perhaps we could get someone from historical commission to lead it. Ben Rasmussen (former member), Sean Peirce (vice chair) and Amanda Trombley (chair) put the walk together. Amanda will see what she can find. City staff need date and general theme soon (outreach starts in beginning of May). Tentatively Wednesday June 23. Debby volunteered to help.

Pedestrians & Crosswalks (for subcommittee?): Debby noticed that people often don't use crosswalks when they are available, but often cross just a few yards away. Sounds like an educational issue. Where Amanda crosses Mass Ave at Rindge, few people seem to push buttons. Send to community outreach subcommittee.

Other:

Post Office, Western Ave, Accelerated Bridge Program

Post Office: Rosalie said that after last pedestrian committee meeting, the Cambridge Post Office held a celebration around their best shoveled block/sidewalk award, which was given to everyone who entered (only about four recipients, but each block was represented by several people). Mayor attended. They had collaborated with Green Streets, The contest was announced when the winter was almost over, which probably accounts for the small number of entries.

Rosalie chatted with postmaster, Kathy Lydon, and she is an ardent pedestrian, lives in Cambridge, and is very interested in being involved in community. Active in climate congress as resident. Mail carriers walk a great deal. Really want to ramp this award up for next year. Opportunity for pedestrian committee to talk with them about enforcement issues but also promotional ideas. We should consider inviting her to a future meeting, see what their interests and concerns are, and how we could walk together. CDD has worked with post office on other projects. They are looking to redefine themselves as fewer people are using postal mail. Perhaps invite her to meet with us in the fall?

Future agenda item: brainstorm what we want to talk to postmaster about.

See what she would like to talk to us about. Rosalie happy to approach her and see.

Western Ave: Eran said nothing is written in stone. There are project meetings every three weeks. Last meeting, a week ago, included "street design 101". Got into small groups with maps, came up with ideas & documented them; ideas summarized at end. Everything on table. Potentially reduce number of lanes at least in parts of Western Ave (similar to what happened in 1996 in Central Square). Consider making Western Ave two-way again. If you lower number or width of lanes, or make the street two-way, there might be less speeding. Project has a website.

Eran also said something about TROMP. He was asked at work (the Volpe Center) to organize a lunch talk about the community so he suggested TROMP. Someone from TROMP is coming to talk to Volpe staff members. If there is anyone interested in attending, Eran could bring a guest or two in. May 25 at noon.

TROMP member Rozann asked Cara to solicit for volunteers to help their group.

Accelerated Bridge Program: Debby attended a difficult meeting about ABP. MassDOT has mantra "finish bridges on time and on budget", but refuses to take on pedestrian issues. One official dismissed pedestrian concerns by saying that 89% of journeys are made by driving. MassDOT has policies that say great things, but on a project by project basis, the first thing they drop is pedestrian improvements. We will probably have to do some political action. While there are public meetings, it seems that attending those meetings is not sufficient. Cara encourages people to contact their state legislators.

There will be another meeting in the future for Charles River bridges. Cara will send details when she gets them.

Setting priorities for upcoming year:

What we did in 2009:

neighborhood walks: Vassar Street, East Cambridge/Northpoint
golden shoes

CitySmart Cambridgeport

Projects: city, state/bridges, climate congress, development review

Intersection of the Month

Snow Clearance Task force

met with DCR rep

advocates for bridge design
North Mass Ave
met with police

Next time: setting projects and determining priorities for the next year

Subcommittees met

PVIS: Issue of the month is U-turns on north Mass Ave

Streetscape: more general principles. How much we're looking forward to having the arborist visit in May.

Community Outreach: ongoing ideas for billboards, hoping to wrap up in the next meeting or two.

Future meetings: annual summer walks in July & August. Think about for next meeting.

Perhaps consider walking up & down North Mass Ave and/or Western Ave