

Pedestrian Committee 2011-02-24 Minutes

Agenda:

Minutes & Agenda Review
Introductions
Snow, Snow, Snow
Updates, Projects, ANnouncements
- Reports from the 'hood
- Construction updates
- Police report
- GoGreen month & Golden shoes
- street & bridge projects
- other
Break
Subcommittees

Attendees: Pete Kane, Helen Rose, Rosalie Anders, Thayer Donham, Amanda Trombley, Robin Finnegan, Sean Peirce, Debby Galef, Andrea Yoder, Joe Rose, Thomson Kao, Cara Seiderman, Bill Dwyer,
Also in attendance: Mark Robinson and three other visitors, two of whom are very concerned about the Grand Junction rail proposals.

No minutes changes for January

Staff Seiderman said she's asked the state to come and present to the pedestrian and bike committees about the Grand Junction, not sure whether joint presentation or one for each committee

Snow, Snow, Snow: Discussion with Bill Dwyer, DPW

78 inches in 52 days!

Finneran asks about snow shoveling onto the street when it's warm, i.e. to spread out snow so it will melt faster.

This and other common sense solutions, such as parking spots that get "highly piled up" by people keep piling on top of that one spot, are not the focus of the principle of not shoveling snow onto the streets. The core idea is to keep the streets open for emergency traffic, as safe as possible. Everything else follows that premise (convenience, sight lines, etc).

Dwyer says we've had a very challenging winter. Salting, plowing, moving snow. Clear intersections with heavy equipment, then clearing with smaller equipment. 60 pieces of equipment (some are in maintenance or broken down), could hire 75 additional pieces. Hire pieces appropriate for snow storms, e.g. front end loaders at some times. Not every contractor was waiting for work. Not every available contractor had the necessary

equipment.

Expanded bus stop operations. Crews on Mass Ave (Harvard to river), Cambridge St, Concord Ave to Mt. Auburn, Western Ave, River Street. All bus stops and every intersection on main drag & side streets.

Fire Department & Police Department got together and said what streets they couldn't get down, DPW put those streets as priority-- Pearl Street, Brookline St, Oxford St, parts of Huron Ave.

DPW does their best to pre-treat with salt before it snows, in an attempt for the snow & ice not to bond to the street. If cars are stuck in traffic, DPW trucks are as well, which makes for worse street conditions.

Seiderman asks about snow melting machines; this has been mentioned in various venues. High maintenance requirement. Bill says it's not out of the question for the future. The machine has to filter out the dirt & gunk from the snow which is difficult.

Trombley asked about push button intersections. For several days after the storms, push buttons at intersection were inaccessible. If that's not possible, could DPW coordinate with traffic and have the pedestrian cycle come up automatically.

DPW web site: does not list streets with no addresses, e.g. Galileo Galileo Way – although there are buildings abutting them, the legal address are not on GG Way. Or there is open space and who owns it, such as the CRA land at the corner of Binney and GG Way.

Thayer says potholes are fixed very quickly. Bill says the DPW commissioner authorized extra hours to fill potholes.

Phone line pulls voicemail, data goes into Access database, the department then plans best way to attack the (potential) violations.

Seiderman asked what can be done about full time scofflaws and people who clear parking lots by plowing onto sidewalks and crosswalks. As plow operations go on, the supervisors go around the city and call in violations when they see it, Illegal plowers sometimes need to be "caught in the act". The gas station at Broadway & Market is a particular problem spot.

DPW prioritizes snow clearing operations sometimes based on available personnel.

DPW encourages people to clear catch basins, but residents often don't know where they are. Car might have parked on top of it. 6,000 catch basins in the city. Plows sometimes end up pushing snow back on top of those basins.

Pierce asked about organizing on the local level to band together & clear neighborhood

sidewalks. Won't necessarily be cheaper than if you contract individually.

Sidewalk clearing equipment is expensive and single-purpose (\$80K plus, used perhaps ~2 weeks per year). In city snow contract, item in there for snow shovelers (\$35/hour).

Anders asks how long it would take to get to all the sidewalks if the city did them all. There's a major issue of finding enough people to do the work, and also the issue of ice, which needs to be dealt with right away. Could we encourage people to come up with more collaborative, creative solutions for their block?

3,000 calls since last week of December until now. Average winter below 2,000.

Updates/Project Announcements:

Reports from the 'Hood: Finneran went to city council meeting about retail along North Mass Ave. , which included discussion about requiring retail. Council members unsure.

Process to look at Mass Ave between Porter & Harvard will start soon. Consultant hired. No money identified (yet) for construction, but hopefully that would follow. Galef said she would be willing to sign on for the process.

Kendall Square committee: city staff waiting for city manager to sign off on final nominations.

Grand Junction Commuter Rail service: This is contrary to the city's priority for the urban ring.

Construction Updates: still working on Dunster Street, Harvard Square areas. Wheeler Street, Concord Ave. They will all start up in April. Seiderman will send the list.

Sidewalk cafes: Trombley asked if it was a good time to report back on businesses who have applied for permission. DPW is reviewing sites and areas they want to use. Send any comments to Dwyer on issues related to last year's café sites. Licensing Board looks at it, state alcohol commission looks at it too.

It's not just the seating area, but also where the people waiting queue to get in, e.g., . Bartley's, Border Cafe. Police have final say.

Police Report: Sgt. Murphy said she wasn't sure she could attend our meetings, but she or another person would start coming again, if not every month, every couple of months. Any questions for police should be sent in advance.

Questions about recent pedestrian crashes: Central Square, Oxford Street.

GoGreen month/golden shoes: Trombley said some things were time consuming (collecting sponsors), others were easier (hiding the actual shoes). If we plan to do something different, we need to decide it soon. Trombley is going to hand over her

contacts to Stephanie, make the sponsorships as easy as possible. We may have to lower our expectations. Brattle Theater has been good, can we find another sponsor of the same caliber (bang for the buck). We could order an item, Seiderman said there is budget for that. Perhaps rain ponchos again. Pedometers? Community Outreach subcommittee will take the lead.

Street & Bridge Projects: Seiderman hopes that people have been reading their electronic pedestrian reports; this is where notices of meetings and other important updates are being provided. Helen Rose will go to Broadway project meeting (and draft a letter), Debby will go to North Cambridge and Anderson bridge project,. Huron Village area: huge project. Looking at one process (starting now) for side streets, a separate process for Huron Ave (between Fresh Pond Parkway & Concord Ave) itself. Committee leadership (Trombley or Pierce) may be called on to help recruit members to go to meetings.

Projects on Route 2 (Faces): because it's so far away, there's no neighborhood to watch over it. MassDOT has insisted sidewalk be adjacent to route 2, but the committee wants the sidewalk behind a buffer. Put sidewalk on private property with easement. When they plow route 2 the snow will be plowed onto sidewalk. Very few people care about that project given how it's out in the middle of nowhere. Planning Board cares more about comments when given in person at meeting, which is Tuesday March 1, 2011. Other option is individuals to write letters.

Planning board can't require MassDOT to make changes, but they can require the developer to have wider sidewalk. What about writing to MassDOT?

Action Item: individuals can write a quick email to the planning board.

Anders wants to discuss subcommittees overall when we get our new members signed up.

Subcommittee wrap-up:

Community Outreach: contacting Museum of Science, MIT Museum to get tickets for Go Green/Golden Shoes bags.
Firming up slogans for billboards

PVIS: in holding pattern, waiting for police. Wants to move toward discussions with police about enforcement. If Sgt. Murphy can't make it, we need a more permanent representative. Have collaborative dialogue about philosophy, locations. How we can work with them.

Streetscape: Talked about River & Western bridges. Seiderman will have meetings next week to talk about those designs.

The meeting concluded at 8:10 p.m.