

Pedestrian Committee Meeting January 28, 2010

Members in Attendance: Amanda Trombley, Brian Culver, Sean Peirce, Debby Galef, Eran Segev, Joe Rose, Thayer Donham, Alan Greene, Robin Finnegan, Helen Rose, Kobena Bonney

City Staff in attendance: Cara Seiderman, Rosalie Anders, Lt. DeMarco, Officer Matt Price

Agenda:

Introductions, Review of Minutes
Street Crime and Pedestrian Safety discussion with Police
Snow & Ice Clearance
BREAK
Climate Congress Report
Brief Updates
Future Agenda Items
Subcommittees

Pedestrian Safety: Amanda talked about the perception of Central Square as "unsafe". Opportunity to discuss with police about pedestrian issues when encountering other pedestrians. Officer Price is one of two officers focusing on homelessness, which is new in the past year.

The officers gave a breakdown of the reported crime in the Central Square area between December and January. Crime in 2009 was down from 2008.

When a crime takes place, police officers take initial report, then pass the case to the investigations unit for legwork and eventual prosecution.

Difficulties with homeless people, sometimes the police can't take them to the shelter and the homeless prefer not to go to the police station. If they are intoxicated they don't have a choice. CASPAR shelter has van and can take people to shelters in Boston if they can't take the homeless person.

Rosalie says that as a resident of Central Square, Magazine Street feels safer than Pearl Street. The Lieutenant said that burglars look for the vulnerable and people carrying valuable devices e.g. iPhones. He suggests pedestrians vary their route when walking, travel in pairs/groups, look people in the eye, make it obvious that you know your environment.

Every single person who has been robbed has been on their own.

Eran said that he knows there are criminal predators in Central Square, and he asks if

the police can approach and confront them. The police can engage people in discussions, but unless they are suspected of a crime, the police can't do anything more.

It does appear that Central Square has higher levels of crime than other areas of the city, but much of that is due to a higher concentration of businesses plus easy access via transit.

Pedestrians should program the non-emergency police number into their cellphones, and feel free to call the police and say they feel like they are in an uncomfortable situation. If the police is able, they will send someone over to take a look.

The city has a great relationship with the YMCA. Both the police and the YMCA feel strongly that some people require a "second chance".

The committee would like to work with the police on safety tips for pedestrians that do not frighten people. The police offered to put something together about safety for our use and pass it along to Sgt. Murphy.

The police talks to neighborhood and community groups to improve safety perceptions. When pedestrians feel safer they will walk more.

Snow & Ice Clearance: Joanne Haas on Commission for Disabilities. Idea of "Adopt a Sidewalk": positive ways to get residents to clear sidewalks so they are clearing them for themselves and their neighbors.

Disability Commission especially concerned about snow clearing of curb cuts and along handicapped spaces.

Rosalie will forward along information about Adopt-a-Sidewalk via email.

Climate Congress Update: Congress has met twice, might meet one more time (March). First meeting generated many ideas. The idea was to prioritize & vote for which concepts to push forward (perhaps to city council) and which shouldn't. The second meeting was, instead, filled with a frank exchange of views.

The attendees broke up into the same groups that they were in during the December meeting. The strong feeling was the big report was difficult to defend. Concerns about other groups, developers use it to justify their behavior. The report erred on the side of inclusivity without good analysis or consideration of political climate.

Each group was supposed to come up with 3-5 top ideas. Eran's group couldn't meet this goal, but they did want results to be data driven and some other vague notions. There is no information on cost of initiatives.

During reassembly of the big group, most of the smaller groups had the same dilemma.

Some attendees had their own pet project that they were pushing. Most groups did not follow the instruction of the facilitator.

At the end of the meeting, the group could not produce a document of next steps. The next steps fell into three categories: proposal A (call for creation of new climate action board in the city) and proposal B (list of specifics), proposal C (agreeing on certain concepts: e.g. accountability, but can't get any further without meeting again). Most people agreed to meet again. There was a great deal of energy.

Rosalie: the main point of the congress is that there are many people who want to see changes around climate-related issues. The recommendations were not things the city staff have not thought of. It's a matter of creating the political impetus & will to make the change happen. The city staff care that the population cares about the climate issue.

Bridges: Western & River Street reconstruction meeting on February 3. Brian will attend the meeting.

State government has said that it's more important to deliver the project on time & under budget rather than well designed.

CitySmart: North Cambridge is next neighborhood. Stephanie will come & talk about it (and GoGreen month). Launch in late April, early May. North Mass Ave city meeting is the same date as the next pedcomm meeting.

Future Agenda Items: we should set them at the end of every monthly meeting.
Educating people on density & green space.

Parking ratio per housing unit/parking policy in general.

Rosalie met with public planting committee to have a joint walk before all the details are nailed down for a future (unnamed) specific city project. Include arborist.

Kathy Watkins wants to do walks to visit development sites, interested in Kendall Square area. Probably in the spring.

List of future upcoming traffic calming projects

No time for subcommittees this month.

New members: hopefully by February meeting.

Next meeting: February 25 2010, 6pm, City Hall Annex (later amended to March 4)