

Cambridge Pedestrian Committee

Meeting Minutes – Thursday, March 27, 2014

Meeting Attendees: Elizabeth Bierer, Victoria Farr, Debby Galef, Nora Marantz, Magda McCormack, Sean Pierce, Benjamin Williams

City Staff in Attendance: Cara Seiderman, Kathy Watkins

1. Minutes & Agenda Review
 - a. October's Minutes approved by unanimous consent
 - b. February's Minutes approved by unanimous consent
 - c. Introductions
2. DPW Five-Year Streets and Sidewalk Plan
 - a. Cambridge revisits its Five-Year Plan every year around this time by getting input from relevant committees, particularly the Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Persons with Disabilities Committees.
 - b. The Five-Year Plan has a focus on accessibility.
 - c. Goals
 - i. Keep the public informed
 - ii. Keep other contractors informed (NStar, the water department, etc.), in order to improve coordination.
 - d. Have there been any changes in utilities evaluations after the recent explosion in NYC?
 - i. NStar is doing more work in Cambridge than elsewhere within its service area, with eight crews in Cambridge. We're seeing decreases in gas leaks over the years. If you smell something, call!
 - e. Constraints & Uncertainties
 - i. Budgets change, and streets change priority, so an annual evaluation of the five-year plan is helpful.
 - f. Prioritization
 - i. High priority areas are: Within 150' of public use areas and within 40' of bus routes and major thoroughfares. This covers about 50% of the city.
 - ii. DPW looks at degraded road surfaces, dangerous or inadequate sidewalks, bike facilities, and missing ramps.
 - iii. This plan helps us choose our most urgent needs while staying abreast of medium priorities.
 - iv. Around \$3 million per year for street/sidewalk, includes funds from the gas tax and from the City. (state funding varies regularly)
 1. Massachusetts Avenue at Central Square, Mt Auburn Street at Harvard, Kendall Square at Main Street, and the Waverly Street Path are all city-funded and specified appropriations.
 - v. Alewife, Agassiz, Harvard Square, Area 4, the Common Manhole Elimination, Western Avenue are all sewer-separation projects we've utilized to improve the streetscape.
 - vi. The Alewife sewer separation project is all part of a court-ordered cleanup of the Harbor, which must be completed by 2015

- g. Scope-Of-Work for streets on Five-year plan
 - i. Most are streets and sidewalks, and there are street trees projects
 - ii. On the Two-Year map: FY14 is Huron A, FY15 is Huron B
 - 1. A fiscal year (FY) is from July 1st – June 30th
 - iii. Massachusetts Avenue Lower (FY14): Paving & ramps will be happening mid-April. This project includes a 2-block demonstration block mid-May. The demonstration looks similar to the new Broadway sidewalks east of Prospect Street.
 - iv. Have we looked into packed soil crates around trees or in replacement for certain sidewalks?
 - 1. Yes, but it didn't look like it worked well with out utilities. The arborist is doing research on how trees are growing in demonstration areas. These are usually 3"-3.5" caliber trees to ensure that transplant is smooth and safe. Excavation causes a high price difference, doing structural soil, and that causes big difference in cost.
- h. DPW's website has Interactive Construction Map (<http://www.cambridgema.gov/theworks/ourservices/engineering/weeklyconstructionhighlights/constructioninteractivemap.aspx>)
- i. Miscellaneous sidewalk program repairs about a block of sidewalk usually, but it also does smaller repairs occasionally
- j. Street trees: We're aiming to increase the number and health
 - i. We're improving health by curb bump outs, typically as part of a larger process. If the sidewalk is less than 6', we can't put in a new street tree. But we do encourage back-of-sidewalk trees through our program, which is planted at the city's cost
- k. Construction pedestrian and bicycle access
 - i. Bike access has new language from the Bicycle Committee used by the City, as pedestrian access is legally mandated nationally but bike access is not.
 - ii. Bicycles May Use Full Lane has been preferred language, though still produces some confusion
- l. Sidewalk materials: Most of Cambridge is concrete, and about 25% is brick. City policy is to replace like with like. We can change brick to concrete easily, but residents must pay the price differential to change concrete sidewalks to brick.
 - i. We can sometimes be flexible, *a la* Broadway. This requires a large enough sidewalk, and we have to choose case by case.
 - ii. Asphalt: Parts of Lower Brookline Street have asphalt sidewalks in places, for example. Not much political support.
 - iii. We're also looking at Flexi-Pav in places. This requires a larger installation than we usually desire.
- m. Design of pedestrian ramps
 - i. Raised crosswalks instead of ramps at small corners avoid ponding at the ramp bottoms.

1. At Fallan Street, they continued rebuilding the ramps to prevent ponding instead of raising the crosswalk. This is because it was designed before this treatment came into use in Cambridge, unfortunately.
 2. This works really well on Church Street and along Broadway.
- n. Crosswalk locations
 - i. Our default is a very site-specific review of where crosswalks should be located.
 - ii. In general, we try to put all four crosswalks on four-way intersections, and always include at minimum one for three-way intersections.
 - o. New Construction
 - i. Cambridge has strict requirements for developers
 - ii. 15' tie-in rule: at the edge of a project area, if there is a compliant sidewalk within 15', the project is extended to match in order to repair noncompliant sidewalks inbetween.
 - p. Traffic Signals: We're getting vibro-textured buttons in some places for pedestrians, per new ADA guidelines.
 - q. Next Steps
 - i. Review Five-Year plan with committees
 - r. Q&A
 - i. Driveways: Sometimes we drop the sidewalk to street level rather than attempt to maintain a 2% or less grade across driveways where that is difficult.
 - ii. We don't really have sidewalk conditions maps for the city as a whole.
 - iii. There are a few occasional missing sidewalks in places, but we're doing our best to build them. There are a lot near parks owned by DCR, and these are outside of our jurisdiction.
 - iv. It would be great if the default crosswalk policy included all possible crosswalks by default, and removed crosswalks from the design where appropriate, rather than only adding when crosswalks are called for. DPW has changed the language in the Five-Year plan, but Pearl Street, Brookline Street, and other parts of Cambridgeport pose a particular problem on this policy area.
 - v. We're trying to coordinate more with Somerville, especially on larger projects.
 - vi. Fern Street will be staying a one way, with a bidirectional bicycle lane. The 1% for Art Project looks exciting!
3. Projects & Planning
 - a. Kendall Square Open Space Planning Committee – Victoria Farr
 - i. We had our first meeting since November recently.
 - ii. We're looking at five acres of space in need of development:
 1. Rogers Street Park (3rd and Rogers)
 2. Point Park (the Globe at Main and Broadway)
 3. Triangle Parcel (1st and Land St)
 4. Pork chop parcel (by the Grand Junction railway, from Google)
 - iii. We'd like to align with other public spaces and make connections between them
 - iv. Recently hired architect from Portland/Chicago to run a design competition on re-envisioning the open space network in the neighborhood

- v. We're having an as-yet unscheduled public meeting in late April. This meeting may include a design charette.
 - vi. There are no rules for the competition yet, but we're leaning towards requiring competitors to design for the full network of parks, instead of individual parks.
 1. Stage 1: Portfolio: Competitors must submit portfolios
 2. Stage 2: Further info to narrow to four competitors
 3. Stage 3: We may or may not have a winner. Cambridge will own all submissions.
- b. Upcoming Projects
- i. Cara will not be here for the April Meeting.
 1. We can do a walking meeting of Pearl Street in advance of planning and design for reconstruction. We will see if Juan Avendano (traffic calming for CDD) can come along.
 - a. We will make a list of problem issues, and address the following questions:
 - i. Which crossings and sidewalk treatments should be used?
 - ii. The street is currently very narrow for all users, so there is a proposal to remove one side of on-street parking and put in bicycle and/or pedestrian facilities.
 - b. We may include Kinnaird Street or walk back up Brookline Street if there is time.
4. Committee Activities & Events
- a. Kendall Square Walk
 - i. We're getting more info next week. Alan Breed and Pardiss have reached out to businesses.
 - ii. The current walking route starts at CBC, goes down past Grand Junction, down Main Street, past Koch building, through the roof garden, down Broadway, and finish at the kayak rentals.
 - iii. We'll try to provide coupons for businesses along the route.
 - iv. Upcoming Action Items:
 1. We'll try to provide coupons for businesses along the route.
 2. We should practice the walk to keep timing right
 3. We should create a pamphlet for walkers.
 4. Send out any particular ideas to Nora Marantz or Jen Lawrence.
 - v. An email containing talking locations will go out soon.
5. Updates & Announcements
- a. Next Pedestrian Committee meeting will be April 24th, 2014, and will consist of a walking tour of Pearl Street. Meet at Pearl Street at Massachusetts Avenue, at 6pm.