

**CITY OF NORWALK
BIKE/WALK COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
July 1, 2024**

ATTENDANCE: Tanner Thompson, Chair; Christine Bisceglie; Nicholas Pappas; Manual Salgado; Jud Aley

OTHERS: Greg Pacelli; Transportation Planner; TMP; Carly Kramer, Redevelopment Agency; Paul Fox; Jayden Whitmore; Ben Hanpeter; Diane Lauricella

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CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Thompson called the meeting to order at 6:00PM.

At roll call there were five (5) committee members in attendance.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Whitmore said he bikes on Richards Avenue all of the time and the issue he is having is that there are no bike lanes on that street, and there are a ton of potholes, and there are drivers that are not used to bikers on that street and get very close to him and has happened on more than one occasion and would like to see some improvement.

Mr. Pacelli said last year TMP in coordination with DPW paved Richards Avenue through a Community Connectivity Grant through the State of Connecticut south of West Cedar Street and will install bike lanes and a new sidewalk this summer. He said they will be paving Richards Avenue from West Cedar Street to Fillow Street and will be installing the remainder of the bike lanes and will continue to Fox Run Road and Ponus Avenue as well.

Mr. Whitmore asked if there are any plans for an extension of the NRV. Mr. Pacelli said that staff is looking at grant prospects for additional funding to plan and design going north of Broad Street and continue north adjacent to route 123 and the goal is to connect to the city line with Wilton. He said they had received the funding for design so that will be forthcoming.

Mr. Pacelli said for any issues to either use the customer service app. Or email customerservice@norwalkct.gov to enter a service request so that the department is aware of the issue and can respond.

Ms. Lauricella said she was recently involved in a public hearing based upon the Tree Warden for trees that were scheduled to be removed at the SONO train station on the northbound side. She said she submitted a letter to Mr. Pacelli and Mr. Thompson that she would like to make as part of the record that had to do with if the design changes that appear to be in force now were discussed and changed because they appear to reduce the intention of the original design because she did see it when the Planning & Zoning Commission voted to approve, and she spoke with some of the commissioners and they recall a different design then what is seen today. She requested this be taken up tonight as an official additional business item as to what the status is of the design, why it was changed, and whether or not there is a need for more discussion about it before it moves forward any further. She said she believes in proper but reasonable government process, and she has been noticing on other projects that at times following the initial public period at various boards and commissions that sometimes plans change at an important big way and this plan is quite a difference. She requested that there be a discussion held this evening focusing on this and seeing whether additional discussions need to take place.

Mr. Aley asked Ms. Lauricella if there was anything in particular that concerned her with the design. Ms. Lauricella said in the original design there was a circle, and trees were not going to be removed that provide shade and now what appears to be a street going right through that section of the train station and she wants to be sure the right groups are weighing in on these design changes.

Mr. Pacelli said this item is not on the agenda and has not been publicly noticed so should not be discussed in full detail and suggested it be added to the next agenda if the commission would like it to be further discussed.

Mr. Thompson said he spoke with Ms. Lauricella earlier today and he did check the plans that are on the Planning & Zoning website and the elements that Ms. Lauricella is discussing are reflected on the civil site plan that can be found on the Planning & Zoning website.

Ms. Lauricella submitted the following statement:

Good morning.

I ask that the Bike/Walk Commission formally add an agenda item under either Old Business or New Business, with the requisite majority vote, about the topic mentioned in the subject line of this email tonight.

I am asking for a discussion on the record as a formal Agenda item at the beginning of the meeting so that the public and your Commission can initiate discussion of the topic this month.

To begin with, I am in favor of this TOD project as laid out over the last several years. It just appears that major design changes have taken place that dilute the mission of TOD without a proper and public process.

I recently requested to save important trees at the SoNo Train Station on the New Haven-bound side. After reviewing the recording of the Tree Warden Public Hearing conducted last week and having several conversations with members of the Planning and Zoning Commission (PZ) and Sustainable Streets, it appears that the plans approved by the PZ Commission over a year ago have been drastically changed without proper discussion or approval.

I am a stickler for reasonable government process, and it appears that the design changes made since the PZ Commission approved them are major, not minor, and that the PZ Commissioners and others like your Commission may not have been properly included for their input and approval.

I ask that your Commission immediately look into and discuss the drastic design changes that include removing traffic-calming measures such as a small traffic circle and fewer bus lanes.

These design changes also precipitated the destruction of several healthy trees located in a part of the City that already suffers from a lack of tree canopy. The tree issue is not the only issue that I am concerned about.

It is the change in the design of the New Haven-bound traffic flow and calming measures that concerns me. If they insist that these changes have to be made, what will be done to enhance safety and aesthetics?

Please explore why the original plans, that you reviewed and the Planning and Zoning Commission (PZ) approved quite a while ago, have not been followed.

The Redevelopment Authority and the developers BLT are an important part of the public-private partnership TOD efforts at this train station, but they cannot make changes without transparency and proper process.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Know that your Commission has every right to discuss this project at all stages of the project.

Diane Lauricella

Mr. Fox said he also has the same concerns as Ms. Lauricella regarding the plans and the lack of traffic calming. He also said that he has encountered a few crosswalk signals that have had minor to major issues, and he has reported them on the click and request app but they have still not been fixed and asked what the procedure is to get them fixed. Mr. Pacelli requested that he send him an email and he will create a customer service ticket based on the concerns. Mr. Thompson said a lot of people that have used the click and request app have complained that they have received very little feedback and is worth improving.

COMPLETE STREETS DEMONSTRATION PROJECT RECAP

Mr. Thompson said on Sunday TMP together with FHI Studio and many members of the public gathered on North Main Street at the intersection of Ann Street to do a demonstration project for the city's complete streets initiative and he had attended and thought it was a great success. He said that several areas on both sides of North Main Street to narrow the roadway which induces drivers to slow down and as well as a shortened crossing distance which improves safety. He thanked TMP for all the work they put into making this happen as well as the public for participating.

Mr. Pacelli provided an overview of the demonstration project and said it was aimed at improving pedestrian safety and traffic flow and making the intersection safer and more efficient for all roadway users. He said in total approximately 2500 square feet of asphalt to pedestrian space and took a lot of different aspects of complete streets and was able to incorporate it into this.

Mr. Pacelli provided an overview of what a demonstration project is and said it was not an easy project to undertake but are very proud of the results and the turnout of volunteers.

Mr. Aley asked how long it will stay in place. Mr. Pacelli said for approximately one to two months and will see how well it does but will be gone prior to the winter. Mr. Aley asked if there are any plans for other locations. Mr. Pacelli said it will depend on the effectiveness of this one and the results of public opinion as well as the business owners in the area.

Mr. Thompson said there was a discussion regarding some sort of informational panel and asked if that got installed and if so, what it looks like. Mr. Pacelli said it does not believe it has been installed but may look to still have it installed, but there is an email where people can submit their comments and will also be put out again on social media so people can provide feedback. Mr. Thompson encouraged anyone that has feedback to send an email.

Mr. Salgado asked how else staff will be monitoring the changes. Mr. Pacelli said that staff will be looking at the speeds to see if they are lower than they were before as well as any crash data and look at the previous crash data to compare what it was in its original layout to see if there were any changes.

Mr. Thompson said shortly after the paint was applied, he noticed that people did not understand the pedestrian island and suggested a physical delineation be applied to indicate that people are not supposed to drive there. Mr. Pacelli said they do not have any intention of installing any delineators at this time, but TMP staff is monitoring how people are going around it but when a more hard infrastructure is installed it would be a raised protected island.

Mr. Fox said with the location of the demonstration project it is awkward to board the bus because you need to board from the street level rather than from the curb. Mr. Pacelli said that will be addressed when a permanent structure is installed.

Mr. Pacelli encouraged anyone with comments to submit through the email as part of the feedback.

Mr. Salgado said the demonstration project was awesome and he hopes in the future there will be more opportunities to have projects like this.

COMPLETE STREETS DESIGN GUIDE STATUS

Mr. Pacelli provided an update on design guide and said they are still in the process of development of the complete street design guide and on top of the design guide is the accompanying of the roadway design guide, the bike guide, as well as the traffic calming matrix selection guide. He said they are also continuing the development of the complete streets' ordinance along with the ordinance committee which will establish the procedure for evaluating street projects to be sure they meet the need for all roadway users and there will be a public involvement process with the ordinance committee, and he will keep the commission updated on that.

Ms. Kramer said they Redevelopment Agency received a grant for \$14 million dollars which includes improvements to MLK Blvd. from the intersection of West Avenue to Wilson Ave. which includes street calming improvements and thanked the commission for the letter of support that they had provided.

Ms. Kramer said there are a lot of investments coming into the urban core especially in South Norwalk and want to look at ways to use technology and data to improve efficiency within the management of transportation and ease of use for people to forgo the use of cars and choose other modes of transportation. She said they are applying for a \$2 million-dollar smart grant that would fund a pilot program to install sensors and integrated them into a mobility management hub and a community outreach program to determine the highest needs of the community and transit users. She said they are requesting a letter of support for that grant and the grant is due on July 12, 2024.

Ms. Bisceglie congratulated the Redevelopment team and said it is an extraordinary accomplishment and will be wonderful for the area. She asked if there will be future opportunities for this commission to consult with the Redevelopment Agency. Ms. Kramer said “yes”, and the commission will be an integral part of the stakeholder piece of the outreach.

Mr. Thompson said he works professionally in transportation data, and he understands on an intuitive level the need for good data, and he thinks this is a great initiative and he personally supports it.

**** MR. PAPPAS MOVED TO APPROVE TO WRITE A LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR THE REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY FOR THE SMART GRANT FROM THE US DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION.**

****MR. ALEY SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

UPCOMING EVENTS

- o NICE Festival
- o Oyster Festival

Mr. Pappas said there are two events coming up which are the Nice Festival and the Oyster Festival, and he has been communicating with the planning committee for the Nice Festival but has had some challenges in getting the payment to register as a vendor for the event as well as providing a certificate of insurance for the event. Mr. Thompson asked Mr. Pappas if he has a suggested course of action. Mr. Pappas said he can bring the idea to them about just doing the tabling and not the bike valet. Mr. Pacelli said he is still waiting to hear back from the Risk Manager regarding the certificate of insurance for the new fiscal year. Mr. Thompson suggested the next course of action be to vote to allocate the \$250 to register for the Nice Festival and providing they receive the certificate of insurance proceed with doing the bike valet and get two volunteers to run it, and if that does not work out then just do the tabling for the event. Mr. Pappas said the certificate of insurance is required before registering for the event.

Ms. Bisceglie said the commission has a good relationship with the organizers of the event so she does not think it will be a problem, however, she is unavailable to volunteer for the event.

Mr. Salgado asked if the commission was just to do the tabling if there were enough volunteers. Mr. Thompson said he would take on the role of coordinating the volunteers.

Mr. Pappas suggested obtaining the certificate of insurance now for the Oyster Festival and future events. Mr. Pacelli suggested that he send him an email with the information and he will work with the Risk Manager.

Mr. Thompson said with this much lead time we can work to try and convince the representatives of the Oyster Festival that having a bike valet at this event would be valuable to them and let them do it for free as they would be providing a service. He asked Mr. Pappas if he had had any conversations with the representatives of the Oyster Festival. Mr. Pappas said he had conversations with them last year but does not think he has the rapport to have that ask to provide the service without paying the registration fee. Ms. Bisceglie said the bike valet was a wonderful service that was provided at the Earth Day event and the commission could become know for this and suggested having something formalized on the website advertising the service and she would support Mr. Pappas to set that up. Mr. Thompson said he will also meet with Ms. Burnaman this week and will see if this is something she would be interested in working on as well.

Mr. Pappas asked if the commissioners had any reservations approving the allocation for the Oyster Festival. Mr. Thompson said that \$800 is a fair amount, more than \$250 and is 10% of the budget so he has some reservations but would be open to it if we give our best effort to try to get the fee reduced for providing the bike valet service.

Ms. Bisceglie said she thinks the fee is high. Mr. Aley said he thinks it will be a great event to prove the value of the bike valet. She said she is hesitant to vote in favor of allocating the funds without submitting a proposal to them for offering the bike valet service.

Mr. Salgado suggested working with Recreation and Parks on having a space outside of the festival to avoid the fee. Mr. Thompson said his preference would still be to work with the Oyster Festival first.

****MR. ALEY MOVED TO APPROVE ALLOCATING \$800 FOR THE OYSTER FESTIVAL REGISTRATION FEE.**

**** MR. PAPPAS SECONDED THE MOTION**

**** THE MOTION PASSED WITH (4) FOUR IN FAVOR AND (1) ONE ABSTENTION (MS. BISCEGLIE) .**

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE JUNE 3, 2024, MEETING

**** MR. PAPPAS MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF JUNE 3, 2024, AS SUBMITTED.**

**** MR. SALGADO SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

ADJOURNMENT

**** MR. ALEY MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** MR. SALGADO SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd