

**CITY OF NORWALK
BIKE/WALK COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
May 6, 2024**

ATTENDANCE: Tanner Thompson, Chair; Emily Burnaman, Vice Chair; Christine Bisceglie; Nicholas Pappas

OTHERS: Kyle Benjamin; Traffic Analyst, TMP; Ben Hanpeter

To allow public access, anyone may access a meeting by telephone, Zoom, and/or the City of Norwalk YouTube channel. Specific instructions and links can be found at <http://www.norwalkct.org/meetings>.

CALL TO ORDER

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

At roll call there were four (4) committee members in attendance.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Cooper said he is a Norwalk River Rowing founding member and founded a safety consortium for the four clubs that are on the river, and he is involved with safety on the river and does a lot of cycling, especially around Norwalk. He went on to say the things that are happening in Norwalk are always positive, but there are always some concerns and would like to be able to contribute. He noted that there is a walkway called the esplanade which starts at Wall Street and there is a stretch that has not been finished and is dangerous and the athletes travel there often and asked if that could ever be paved to that it will extend forward.

Mr. Benjamin said that esplanade is part of the Harbor Loop Trail and is the city's responsibility and he will look into it and report back, but he will be explaining the click and request system where issues like these can be highlighted, and a ticket would be created through the city's customer service center which helps them to prioritize and show the city council when an item needs to move forward to help the residents and citizens. He also said the goal of his department is to finish the Harbor Loop Trail and is one of the many projects they are focused on.

Mr. Thompson said he believes the Redevelopment Agency put forth a concept design specifically for this section but believes that it is difficult because it needs a retaining wall. Mr. Benjamin said he believes it is still in a high-level concept phase rather than a detailed design phase which would then become a TMP discussion item.

Mr. Vitaglione said he walks that trail on a frequent basis, and it has a bunch of roots and is not bike friendly.

Mr. Pappas presented the 2024 event calendar and said it is based off the events that were don't last year asked the commission's thoughts if any of the events should be removed or if any should be added and noted that the list does not hit all the goals that were set in the strategic plan. He said one of the goals was to provide bike valet services at three events and there are five events that he had identified, but there are only three events for tabling, and there is nothing for co-hosting an event with a community group that represents an underrepresented population and suggested removing two of the bike valet events and add a co-hosting event and two more tabling events. Ms. Burnaman said by providing bike valet services at these events, they are participating in the event and her initial reaction was there are a lot of events listed on the event calendar and getting volunteers and people to participate and coordinating all of this is a big commitment. Mr. Bisceglie said the list is wonderful but that she does agree with Ms. Burnaman that it is a commitment.

Mr. Thompson thanked Ms. Burnaman for her involvement in the Earth Day festival but he thinks she was a lot more involved than would be in the events listed on the calendar.

Mr. Pappas suggested including dates on the calendar as a placeholder for the events with a community group that represents an underrepresented population. Ms. Bisceglie said one of the goals was to also to look at the League of American Bicyclists application and be cognizant of this and suggested embedding it in these events and that National Night Out is specially for the underrepresented population.

Ms. Burnaman said that although she was a little more involved in Earth Day she tabled and volunteered for valet and still struggled filling all the seats and while Mr. Pappas did a great job managing it and took the lead, she feels strongly about removing one or two of the events from the list but differs to Mr. Pappas for his opinion. Mr. Pappas said he has no issue with removing some events from the list as they only allotted for three bike valet service events and there are five listed. Mr. Thompson said there were a lot of people at the Earth Day Festival that were "hanging out at the table" thus had plenty of manpower at the bike valet table. Ms. Burnaman suggested scheduling a proper Earth Day Festival debriefing.

Mr. Pappas suggested removing two of the bike valet events from the list and adding two tabling events and one more unrepresented community group event and having a discussion offline regarding the co-hosting of events.

Mr. Pappas said he has spoken with a representative from the Nice Festival, and he said if just the bike valet is being done, we would be considered volunteers but if we were also tabling or handing out giveaways or documentation, we would be considered a vendor which would require another set of agreements that need to be made. Ms. Bisceglie said there is also a fee to participate in the Nice Festival.

Ms. Burnaman pointed out that some of the events listed will be immensely different than the Earth Day Festival, which means a lot more people and can also mean a lot more bikes and may need more volunteers.

Mr. Pappas said he will revise the calendar to reflect the changes that were discussed and send it out to the commissioners.

CITY CLICK AND REQUEST SERVICE

Mr. Benjamin shared the URL and reviewed the Click and Request process and said it is the city's online customer service system and has been fully updated for most departments in the city but specifically TMP and is live. Mr. Thompson asked for confirmation that the update includes a new set of categories. Mr. Benjamin said "yes" and now includes many categories and was designed in a sense from the consumers. Mr. Thompson said he does not see a category for crosswalks which is the biggest category that he receives. Mr. Benjamin said he will look into it and report back. Mr. Thompson said the past service requests that he has submitted do not appear and asked that Mr. Benjamin also look into that. Mr. Thompson said in his experience with using click and request that he doesn't receive a response other than an automated response when it is initially submitted. Mr. Benjamin said the tickets at least for the traffic department perspective is there is a detailed automated response but there are only three people reviewing the requests so it may take some time and are working getting additional resources to get them done and apologizes for any concerns in the past that have not gotten moved forward and are working as hard as they can to move as many forward as they can.

TMP UPDATES

○ Complete Street

• Update on Demonstration Project Timeline

Mr. Benjamin provided an update on complete streets and said they will be meeting with the police this week regarding the demonstration project and the hope is to have it in early June and are working on the flyer which should be done later this week and want the commission to be a strong volunteer group at the event and there will be a kiosk for additional feedback on complete streets. Mr. Thompson said he appreciates the desire to have the commission involved in the implementation but feels the commission would have been more effective if we were involved in the design. Ms. Bisceglie said she appreciates Mr. Thompson's comments and wonders if that can still be leverage some participation before the event and suggested one of the commissioner's follow up with TMP staff this week.

Mr. Benjamin said that Mr. Bolella presented at the Economic and Community Development meeting last Thursday to present the complete streets ordinance and will now go to the Ordinance Committee in May as a draft, and which will be adopted at some point over the summer. He said the design guide drafting is in progress and is approximately 60% completed and hopes to have it approved with the complete street's ordinance at the same time. Mr. Thompson asked when the commission or the public will see the design guide. Mr. Benjamin said he is not sure but that it will be presented at the next SAC meeting in its current form for feedback, but he will find out and report back.

○ Wall Street Corridor Public Meeting

Mr. Benjamin provided an update on Wall Street and said that the groundbreaking will be on August 5, 2024, for phase I and plan to have the overall corridor meeting at or around the same time to keep the momentum together, and the project updates will be on the website shortly.

Mr. Benjamin provided an update on the Yankee Doodle Garage and said that work will begin in the next two weeks and once the maintenance work is complete, they will have a better idea of when the aesthetics works will begin.

- Bike Racks

Mr. Benjamin provided an update of the bike racks and said that a number have been installed across the city as part of their initiative and they also been working with the schools to replace and install new bike racks at the schools and have already replaced the bike rack at Tracey School which can now fit 12 bikes. He said they also have installed a hoop style bike rack at Wolfpit School and are working on installing bike racks at Fox Run School, and four hoop style bike racks will be installed tomorrow at the Main Street lot. He said there are also 12 hoop style bike racks that will be installed around the city, and the plan is to install 8 of the 12 bike racks and keep 4 in reserve and will continue to order sets of 8 to always have 4 in reserve. Mr. Thompson asked what areas will be prioritized for the first eight bike racks. Mr. Benjamin said he does not have the list, but Mr. Pacelli and Mr. Deering are managing the installations. Mr. Thompson said he hopes Washington Street makes the list. Mr. Benjamin said that Washington Street is at the top of the priority list.

- Hospital Hill Safety Enhancement Project Design Status

Mr. Benjamin provided an update on the hospital hill enhancement project and said they are continuing to develop the plans and are currently at 30% complete working towards being 60% complete and have coordinated with Eversource to advance their underground utility done and was scheduled to begin today but he has not yet confirmed that, and the hope is to have construction begin in the fall of 2024. Mr. Thompson asked how much the design has changed to incorporate feedback from the public input session. Mr. Benjamin said that Mr. Pacelli is managing that project, and he will provide an update at the next meeting. Mr. Thompson said in particular there were a lot of people on this commission as well as other advocates for biking and walking that were hoping to see more progress made with the project but obviously all recognize the design as proposed was a big improvement than what is currently there but thought there was more potential that was not realized by the plan and were hoping the feedback was heard and incorporated. Mr. Benjamin said that they are cognizant of that, but the issue remains that Norwalk is still a city that is developed for cars but as more projects are developed across the city are slowly making it a more walkable and cyclable city so that future projects and complete streets can be more focused on walking and cycling infrastructure.

- Transportation Master Plan

- Official Adoption

Mr. Benjamin provided an update on the Transportation Master Plan and said they are hoping to get the official adoption over the summer.

Mr. Thompson said he had requested that there be an update on tonight's agenda on the bicycle and pedestrian master plan which was developed in 2012 and have not had a comprehensive update since then but two of the official responsibilities of the commission are to keep the plans updated so he is trying to get serious about that.

- NRVN North of Broad Street

Mr. Benjamin provided an update on the NRVN north of Broad Street and Mr. Yeung is actively working on this and the funding has been secured but the previous feasibility study had the preferred route going adjacent to US 7 between Broad Street and Perry Avenue as well as a shared lane on Perry Avenue under the Merritt Parkway, but TMP is not looking at that as an alternative routing so the consultant is working on a feasibility study which may or may not cross US 7 and the Merritt Parkway between US 7 and Main Avenue. Mr. Thompson asked if there is any chance that the connection with Perry Avenue would be made as a separate project before the connection with the Merritt Parkway. Mr. Benjamin said he is not sure of the timeline, but it will still need to deal with the state no matter which direction they decide to go. He said the funding is in place and will be used to find out the feasibility of the correct routing.

Mr. Benjamin said the other portion of the NRVN between New Canaan Avenue and Broad Street section is technically complete they would like to improve the alignment and the aesthetics of the section and Mr. Yeung is considering a separate trail crossing of the NRVN from the corner of New Canaan Avenue/Riverside Avenue over the east side of the river and are also initiating conversations with Eversource on a preliminary easement agreement for the trail.

Mr. Benjamin provided an update on the East Avenue corridor study and said unfortunately the funding was not approved as the budget was cut by 40% this year so quite a few projects had to be cut but will be including in the next budget cycle as a high priority. He requested that the commission support the projects they want by asking their common council members. In the meantime, they will be doing traffic signal improvements at Eversley at East Avenue which will include crosswalks and ADA compliant ramps at that intersection.

BWC EDUCATIONAL SUB-COMMITTEE UPDATES

Ms. Burnaman provided an update and said that she and Mr. Salgado have been working on two videos and the one that is has been working on that is nearly completed is for the green bike lanes and the other video is started was for the bike valet program and had sent out a teaser in preparation for Earth Day and are working on that for the second quarter video for the bike valet program and how it works to post online in both English and Spanish. She said she has also been working on the newsletter that has not yet gone out but is contingent on some of the upcoming events. She said she is working with Ms. Green on the content for social media posts and there is an opportunity to do an education collaboration with CT Rides as part of their “drive less campaign” and encourages people to use their app to travel around Connecticut and provides walking, biking, and bus guides. Mr. Thompson asked Mr. Benjamin if he knew when the green bike lanes will be repainted. Mr. Benjamin said “no” and that is part of a state project, and they should be repainting it as part of that project, but he does not know the timeline. Mr. Benjamin thanked Ms. Burnaman and Mr. Salgado for the work they did on the video and there are just a few minor edits they would like to make.

NATIONAL BIKE MONTH ACTIVITIES

- Partnership with CT Rides

Ms. Burnaman reported and said she spoke with Sarah Roy regarding the opportunity to collaborate with CT Rides to encourage people not to drive their car during bike to work week which begins on May 13, 2024, and bike to workday is Friday, May 17, 2024, and asked the committee’s thoughts on managing the tables. Mr. Thompson said the biggest issue is the short

timeline but because a lot of the commissioners are involved with sustainable streets and can use their volunteer network and suggested having the actual execution done by sustainable streets and have the commission act as a liaison with the city government. Mr. Benjamin suggested that the commission be careful with meetings as if there is quorum it is an official Bike/Walk Commission meeting. Mr. Thompson volunteered spearhead this and take on finding the volunteers and determining the days and communicating with the city. Ms. Burnaman said she is excited to promote this through the Bike/Walk Commission and agreed to committing to one day and suggested Friday, May 17, 2024, and she would like to do this in collaboration with CT Rides and promote it through the Bike/Walk Commission. Mr. Thompson agreed and said that he will organize the volunteers for Friday, May 17, 2024, and see if it is possible to do any additional days.

APPROVE MEETING MINUTES FROM THE APRIL 1ST MEETING

- ** MS. BURNAMAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES.**
- ** MR. ALEY SECONDED THE MOTION.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

ADJOURNMENT

- ** MS. BURNAMAN MOVED TO ADJOURN.**
- ** MR. ALEY SECONDED THE MOTION.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:25PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd