

Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC)

Meeting Minutes for November 4th, 2013

Submitted by Cynthia Snow and Don McNamara

The meeting took place in the Town Hall Room 310 at 7:00 P.M.

Present: Cynthia Snow, Bryan Decker, John Dempsey, Chris Dippel, Don McNamara, Tommy Vitolo

Also Attending: Mark Trahon, Police Liaison

Public: John Bowman, Neil Gordon, Andrew Moulton, Nicolette Overton, Nick Schmidt, Kate Toomey

Handouts: Agenda

Introductions

Review and Approval of Minutes of Previous Meetings

- The committee reviewed and voted to approve the minutes from the October 2013 meeting.

Discussion of Contraflow Lanes in Cottage Farm with Andrew Moulton

- Mr. Moulton described the historic nature of the Cottage Farm neighborhood. He stated that the Cottage Farm neighborhood association had discussed the new contraflow lanes at a meeting and had some concerns. Mr. Moulton proceeded to discuss the individual intersections.
 - Essex Street and Dummer Street intersection:
 - Mr. Moulton stated there was a marked increase in cars going the wrong way after the installation of the contraflow lanes. After talking with the town, a stanchion was installed that helped clarify the traffic pattern.
 - Mr. Dippel requested numbers regarding the automobile traffic: before contraflow lane, with contraflow lane, and with stanchion.
 - Mr. Moulton raised concern about the crossing automobile and bicycle traffic at the intersection.
 - Mr. Moulton stated the added signs do not fit the nature of the historic district and that the maps he had seen of the contraflow lane plan did not indicate new signs.
 - Mr. Vitolo noted that signs were on the original plans for this project and that they were installed a couple of weeks after the lanes were painted on the road. This could explain why some people think the signs were added as an afterthought.
 - Mr. Decker asked if the police had been involved to enforce the traffic rules at the intersection.
 - Mr. Vitolo stated that he and Ms. Snow had counted signs on Carlton Street Essex Street, Ivy Street and Prescott Street within the Cottage Farm neighborhood and found a total of 95 signs (46 related to automobile parking, 31 to motor vehicle operation, 6 pedestrian signs, 9 bike signs, and 3 related to other matters).
 - Mr. Vitolo stated that if signs were the concern, the neighborhood could remove many signs by eliminating parking restrictions and one way streets, but that would have an obvious detrimental impact with regard to parking availability for residents and cut through traffic, and he did not recommend it.
 - Mr. Vitolo suggested that the Town could improve on the signage by making the sign poles straight and consolidating signs where possible.

- Mr. Vitolo stated that the contraflow lanes provide a clear safety benefit, since the alternative bicycle routes are on high traffic volume roads, but that we should look at the route and signage to see if improvements can be made.
 - Mr. Vitolo stated that the stanchion is a tradeoff between more signage and less cut through traffic. More stanchions can be added at different intersections.
 - Mr. Moulton described the traffic and bicycle traffic conflict at Essex Street and Dummer Street. He had no suggestions to improve it, but wanted to state that it is a confusing intersection with regard to the rules regarding yielding and right of way.
- Essex and Ivy Street intersection
 - Mr. Moulton described the new bicycle stop sign that was added.
 - Mr. Dempsey suggested the new bicycle stop sign could be combined with the no parking sign that is a few feet away, thereby eliminating a sign post. He stated that he was not sure if there were any rules regarding sign placement that applied to this situation.
- Carlton and Ivy Street intersection
 - Mr. Moulton expressed concern about traffic going the wrong way on Ivy.
 - Mr. Vitolo stated we could add a stanchion, since the stanchion seems to have worked at the intersection of Essex and Dummer. The committee would support a stanchion if the neighborhood so desired, but it was noted that the two “Do Not Enter” signs are clear and visible to motorists.
- General discussion
 - Mr. Vitolo suggested that because most of the automobile traffic in this neighborhood is local residents, the local residents will become accustomed to the new bicycle traffic patterns.
 - Mr. Vitolo noted that the contraflow lane on Ivy Street is covered by leaves and that either the homeowner’s landscaper could stop blowing leaves onto the street or someone could ask the Department of Public Works to vacuum up the leaves.
 - Mr. Vitolo stated that while expensive and probably unnecessary, one possibility to reduce road painting and signs would be to use cycle tracks for the contraflow lanes. Mr. Bowman suggested there were more important things to spend money on.
 - Mr. McNamara suggested that the length of the one way streets could be limited to only along the perimeter of the neighborhood. That way the contraflow lanes would be shorter, possibly reducing signage and still keeping cut through traffic down.

Discussion of Proposed Business District Designations

- The committee discussed the current proposal and suggested the following improvements:
 - Washington Street district should not include route 9.
 - St. Mary’s area district should only include the outbound side of Beacon Street.
 - Washington Square district should extend only to Winthrop Road.
- Ms. Snow will capture the feedback, update the proposal and circulate it to committee members.
- Mr. Bowman suggested that “no biking” symbols at curb cuts should be painted before enforcement begins.

Discussion of Bicycle Safety

- Ms. Toomey introduced herself to the committee and described her interest in helping start a bicycle safety education program.

- Mr. Decker stated that there is federal funding for the Safe Routes to School program and we would need to make the connections to make this work; he is working on getting information on the Bike to School and other school bike safety programs
- Mr. Vitolo stated that by state law, the fines for bicycle tickets are earmarked for educational purposes. He suggested that we could also use the fines from automobiles parking in bicycle lanes.
- Mr. Vitolo suggested that Brookline Adult Education could be a good venue for adult learners, and Ms. Toomey indicated an interest in pursuing this avenue. The BAC offered to provide support for her efforts.
- Mr. Dempsey stated that a police officer does speak to 3rd graders every year about safety issues, but noted that the officer already has a lot to speak about, so it may not be possible to add or expand the coverage of bicycle safety.
- Mr. Dempsey stated that in the past a bike rodeo was a well received method of getting children more comfortable on bicycles.
- Mr. Dippel suggested that we could use the parade mailing list to survey the potential market for bicycle education programs.

Other Business

Mr. Bowman noted that meeting minutes are not up to date on the web site and asked if he could receive materials in advance of the meetings. Mr. McNamara and Mr. Vitolo will address web site issues, and Ms. Snow suggested having two email lists: One for committee members only and one for “friends” who regularly attend meetings and/or wish to receive minutes and handouts.

Next Meeting

- The next meeting will be Monday, December 2nd.

Adjournment

- The meeting adjourned at 8:46 PM.

Assignments

- Ms. Snow will capture the feedback on the proposed business district plan and circulate the updated version to the committee members.
- Mr. McNamara and Mr. Vitolo will re-examine the issues with the website and the mailing lists.