

REPORT OF THE BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN STREET SAFETY COMMISSION

November 19, 2020 – 3:00 PM
Zoom Conference Call Meeting

PRESENT: Chair Roark, Alderperson Leek, Commissioner Fehrenbach, Commissioner O'Meara, Commissioner Lane-Browne, Commissioner Finn.

ALSO PRESENT: Director Kernosky, Associate Planner/Zoning Administrator Kuhn, Director Beduhn, Secretary Mohr, Alderperson Jennings, Alderperson Johnson, Karalyn Peterson, and unidentified audience members via Virtual Zoom Meeting.

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1. Roll call.
2. Persons who wish to address the committee for up to three (3) minutes on a non-agenda item.

Discussion and possible action on the following:

3. Report of the September 10, 2020 meeting of the Bicycle & Pedestrian Street Safety Commission
4. Request to include documents relating to the August 20, 2020 walking/rolling audit in the August 20, 2020 Bicycle and Pedestrian Street Safety Commission minutes.
5. Discussion on the City Sidewalk Continuation Plan
6. Discussion on 2021 street reconstruction timeline
7. Discussion on City bicycle parking ordinance
8. Discussion on signage along the Green Circle Trail
9. Discussion on bicycle and driver education

Staff Update:

10. Business 51 update
 11. Tap Grant update
 12. Update on student capstone projects
 13. ADA Transition Plan
 14. Summary of the 2020 Bicycle/Pedestrian Count
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1. Roll call.

Present: Roark, Ald. Leek, O'Meara, Lane-Browne, Finn
Excused: Fehrenbach

Motion by Chairperson Roark to move Item 9 to Item 5 in the Agenda; seconded by Commissioner O'Meara.

Motion carried 5-0.

2. Persons who wish to address the committee for up to three (3) minutes on a non-agenda item.
None.

Discussion and possible action on the following:

3. Report of the September 10, 2020 meeting of the Bicycle & Pedestrian Street Safety Commission

Motion by Commissioner O'Meara to approve the report of the September 10, 2020 Bicycle and Pedestrian Street Safety Commission meeting; seconded by Alderperson Leek.

Motion carried 5-0.

4. Request to include documents relating to the August 20, 2020 walking/rolling audit in the August 20, 2020 Bicycle and Pedestrian Street Safety Commission minutes.

Commissioner Fehrenbach arrived at 3:05 PM

Motion by Chairperson Roark to include documents relating to the August 20, 2020 walking/rolling audit in the August 20, 2020 Bicycle and Pedestrian Street Safety Commission minutes; seconded by Commissioner Fehrenbach.

Motion carried 5-0.

9. Discussion on bicycle and driver education

Chairperson Roark briefly explained that education, while a small part of the Portage County Countywide Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan, was important. He was looking to start a discussion on ideas or strategies to increase bicycle and driver education.

Commissioners had the following comments and suggestions:

1. Hosting bicycle radios.
2. Annual educational mailers with utility tax bills.
3. Offering bicycle education courses for minor road offenses.
4. Offer education specific to schools.
5. The need to educate on the differences between bike lanes and urban shoulder as it related to parking.
6. Education on where taxes go for paying for bicycle facilities, noting recent public misinformation and stress.
7. Reiterated the need to have the Police Department, Mayor's Office, and school liaisons become involved in education.
8. The need to have shorter informational videos for the public.
9. Educational online resource:
<https://wisconsindot.gov/Pages/safety/education/bike/default.aspx>

Director Beduhn briefly stated that all new signage had been updated and installed.

Chairperson Roark asked for comments from the audience:

1. the City wasn't doing much to provide education in a straightforward and simple way, and they perhaps needed to seek a flash card approach. These would consist of very short educational messages.
2. Look into smaller group rides that would allow the public to experience the road way to gain more confidence to utilize the existing facilities.
3. Stressed the need to pursue a comprehensive and detailed plan in terms of an information campaign branded by the City.
4. Noted that the negative online feedback may be stemming from fear, as no one wanted to hit a bicyclist.

5. Inquiry as to whether the City needed to budget for the type of education they were speaking of, and perhaps look into professional educators or fun incentives.

Chairperson Roark asked that additional comments, concerns, or questions be submitted.

No action was taken.

5. Discussion on the City Sidewalk Continuation Plan

Director Beduhn explained that it was staff's intention to keep working on sidewalk continuation, but there were currently no construction planned for 2021. Staff efforts in the coming year would be to put towards more comprehensive planning for a smoother transition upon implementation. This would also provide additional time to resolve issues with residents as it related to the financial burden of assessing sidewalks.

Chairperson Roark agreed with staff's approach and strategy.

Aldersperson Leek asked for clarification if that meant there were no plans for sidewalk continuation in 2021, to which Director Beduhn accurate that there would be no physical project bidding in 2021.

Commissioner O'Meara stressed the need for the Common Council to review how special assessments were done as it related to sidewalks, especially as areas that most needed them tended to be lower income areas.

Director Beduhn confirmed that conversations had already begun with the Comptroller/Treasurer to address sidewalk assessment, and the item would need to go before the Finance Committee.

No action was taken.

6. Discussion on 2021 street reconstruction timeline

Chairperson Roark reminded the commission that they had hosted a walking audit for the areas. The cross sections had been included in the agenda packet and they were looking for any additional comments or concerns.

Director Beduhn made himself available for questioning, and briefly explained that they may have noticed revisions. These were largely due to conflicting with too many existing utilities in the area. The proposed was still expected to alleviate flooding issues in the area.

Commissioners had the following comments:

1. Importance of not leaving north side streets open as they were part of Safe Routes to Schools.
2. All areas seemed to include sidewalks, to which Director Beduhn noted that the only area with a gap was a section near Emy J's as they were still trying to get a handle on that area.
3. Potential benefit of moving from two-way into one-way streets within the corridor, to which Director Beduhn agreed that they would consider it, but they would need to continue to explore options. The goal was to minimize impact while minimize cost.
4. The need to investigate overnight and on-street parking.

There was a brief update by Director Kernosky and Director Beduhn on efforts being taken to create a positive working network of streets for residents while also addressing commercial needs.

Director Beduhn stated that they would be having a public informational meeting, with final designs expected in the Spring.

Alderperson Jennings (District One) stated that parking was not under the commission's purview.

No action was taken.

7. Discussion on City bicycle parking ordinance

Associate Planner/Zoning Administrator Kuhn explained that the goal was to review the parking ordinance and determine what were some current strengths and weaknesses. Staff would then take feedback and revise it for future discussion or implementation.

Commissioners made the following comments:

1. Main concerns centered around the amount of bicycle parking spaces being required for commercial places, specific to:
 - a. Need to make it easy enough for facilities and organizations to comply.
 - b. Need compliant and affordable bike racks, as it needs to be it approachable and affordable for business and organizations to comply.
 - c. Reconstruction of parking lots, and when new requirements must be met.
Director Kernosky provided a summary and example of a grand-fathered status when it came to resurfacing a parking lot.
 - d. Being open to having less bicycle parking spaces if the new spaces were more compliant as 'tire-bender' racks took up less space than compliant racks. Or rather, replacing within the same or similar footprint so long as the facilities are compliant.
 - e. Pushing incentives to upgrade facilities. Don't want to discourage upgrading.
2. Inquiry as to whether the Downtown shop owners, or the City, were responsible for the downtown racks, to which Director Kernosky confirmed that it was the City as the central business districts were exempt from minimum parking requirements and bicycle parking requirements.
3. There was not enough bicycle parking in the Downtown area.

Associate Planner/Zoning Administrator Kuhn explained next steps and noted a revised ordinance would be back for review.

No action was taken.

8. Discussion on signage along the Green Circle Trail

Commissioner O'Meara, summarizing his memo, explained that residents had expressed concerned for fast moving bicyclists on the Green Circle Trail, specifically along the riverfront, especially for the number of pedestrians along that section. Additionally, the section of trail from the Hilltop to Green Avenue posed similar concerns. He was proposing additional signage noting reduced speeds, in addition to yielding to pedestrians.

Alderperson Jennings inquired as to whether the Green Circle Trail Board had been contacted to discuss these concerns.

There was a brief discussion on which entities addressed maintenance of the Green Circle Trail, and which would have the authority to pursue additional signage installations. There was a call to move forward with a future agenda item that would convene the BPSSC and the Green Circle Trail Board to discuss goals and other items.

No action was taken.

Staff Update

10. Business 51 update

Director Beduhn provided an update on the Business 51 stakeholder meetings, along with a timeline on future actions.

11. Tap Grant update

Director Beduhn provided an update on how the City had been using the funds allocated via the Transportation Alternatives Program Grant, and which items had fallen short of initial planning efforts. There were still outstanding issues to work through with Portage County and the Highway Commission.

Chairperson Roark expressed frustrations the County Highway Commission and how the project had fallen short of what had initially been planned.

12. Update on student capstone projects

Director Kernosky provided a summary on the Student Capstone Project, noting that staff had been working with a Madison student to explore different options along Water Street between Centerpoint Drive and Clark Street. The Stevens Point student was expected to undertake the City's south side redevelopment to include a potential commuter rail system in the Spring.

13. ADA Transition Plan

Associate Planner/Zoning Administrator Kuhn explained that staff would be pursuing additional internal discussions on the creation of an ADA Transition Plan as recommended in the Portage County Countywide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. Initial materials had been included within the agenda packet for commission review.

14. Summary of the 2020 Bicycle/Pedestrian Count

Associate Planner/Zoning Administrator Kuhn reviewed the 2020 Bicycle/Pedestrian Count data which had been compiled by Commissioner Finn.

Commissioner efforts on the year's counts were highly commended.

There was a brief discussion on the different variables that may have impacted the data, in addition to any major location increases or decreases.

Meeting adjourned at 4:49 PM.

A recording of this meeting can be viewed/heard at: <https://stevenspoint.com/365/AgendasMinutesVideos>