

TOWN OF ROCKINGHAM WALK-BIKE COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes and Notes

April 3, 2024, 10:00 a.m.

ON ZOOM ONLY, DUE TO WEATHER

Members present: Bonnie Anderson, Peter Bergstrom, Rick Cowan, Marsha Stern, Stanley Talstra
Nonmembers present: Jamey Berrick, Andrew Smith, Elijah Zimmer

I. Changes to the agenda

Rick asked to add a discussion about reducing the speed limit in The Square

II. Approval of minutes of March 21 meeting

Motion to approve by Rick, seconded by Stan. Motion passed.

III. Public comments

Andrew Smith introduced himself as a long-time resident of Rockingham with an interest in seeing the speed limit in the Square reduced.

IV. Updates and announcements

Marsha reported that she has emailed Dan Currier at VTrans requesting more information about the bike lockers they have. She has not had a response, and will send a follow-up this week.

Peter reported that Stantech will be hired as consultants for the scoping study of the Riverfront Trail. He has a design in mind for trailmarkers which he will present to the BF Historic Society for their approval.

Marsha reported that she shared a document from VTrans that gives the results of the survey about a possible Rte 5 bike corridor. She suggested that we send a letter of support. Rick advised that a stronger support might come from the Tri-Board. He will try to get the item on the agenda for a future Tri-Board meeting.

V. REPORTS AND DISCUSSION

,Safety in The Square

Rick opened the discussion by suggesting that lowering the speed limit to 15 mph is a cost-effective way of improving safety, and is a measure that can be taken by the Selectboard without permission from state agencies.

Andrew described some of the history of traffic control in the Square. Between 2004 and 2007, the speed limit was 15 mph, but was raised to 25 through a petition with 1100 signatures in 2007. He noted that 17 stops to enforce the 15 mph rule were recorded, and that he has seen enforcement since then, as well. He added his opinion that driving is a privilege, and estimated that the time lost by lowering the speed limit from 25 to 15 between TD Bank and Penguin Mart would be about 1 minute.

Stan suggested that 20 mph, rather than 15, might be adequate. Rick noted that penalties for speeding were linked to the difference between the actual speed and the posted limit; thus a lower limit could punish violators more severely. Elijah thought that at least some of the merchants on The Square would be supportive of a lowered limit.

Peter said he favors a flashing blinker at the Town Hall-to-J&H crosswalk. Elijah described a blinker that he saw in Amherst, MA, that is about 2-1/2 feet tall, is activated by a button, and directs the beacon near the road. He noted, however, that the beacon would only improve safety at that particular spot, and that, in Amherst, the beacon was used in conjunction with a slightly raised crosswalk. Jamey warned that before purchasing beacons, we need to determine their electrical requirements. Rick offered to contact associates in Amherst for their opinions or experience with the beacons.

Given the diversity of means available for traffic control, Rick suggested that the committee sponsor a public hearing on the subject. Raised crosswalks, beacons, ped-crossing bollards (currently in use), and speed limits

would all be put forward as possible solutions. In addition, a public meeting could air the issue of enforcement, hopefully informed by the presence of the chief of police.

Rick will speak with the town manager about scheduling a public meeting.

Survey of Public Opinions on Walking and Biking in Rockingham

Marsha suggested that we launch a survey and asked for suggestions. Rick warned that survey data is often skewed, and that a survey that reaches everyone in town is extremely difficult to mount., and Bonnie added that she has some survey results from a Bike Project form. Marsha responded that what she has in mind is not data collection (e.g., how often do you ride or walk?) but rather identification of specific perceptions (e.g., where do you feel unsafe riding or walking?). She asked committee members to compose potential questions for a survey to discuss at our next meeting.

VI. Next meeting scheduled for April 25, 10 a.m.

VII. Meeting adjourned, 11:05 a.m.

Submitted April 5, 2024, by Marsha Stern