



DRAFT

**SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**Monday July 9, 2007 at 7:30 a.m.**  
**City Hall Conference Room A**

The Safe Routes to School Committee met on Wednesday, July 9, 2007 at 7:30 a.m. at City Hall Conference Room A.

- I. Call to Order:** Christina Westfall brought the meeting to order at approximately 7:30 a.m.
- II. Roll Call:** Present were City Council Representatives Ken Smith, Chairman of the Traffic & Safety Committee, City Councilor Ned Reynolds, Debbie Finnigan, Traffic Engineer, Detective Chris Cummings, Police Commissioner Gerry Howe, Police Department representative, and Clay Hayward, School Board representative, Christina Westfall and Jonathan Bailey, Traffic & Safety Representatives.  
Also present was John Corrigan, State Department of Transportation, State Wide Safe Routes to School Coordinator
- III. Acceptance of the Minutes:**  
It Was Voted on a Motion made by Gerry Howe to accept the minutes of the June 11, 2007 meeting. Seconded by Jonathan Bailey. Motion passed.
- IV. NEW BUSINESS:**
  - a. School Survey – The Chair welcomed John Corrigan back. Mr. Corrigan stressed that the Application form, funding criteria and the application guidelines are still in draft form, but can be used as guidelines. They are going through review next week by the Governor’s Advisory Council on Intermodal Transportation and believes the final approval will be next week. Once the RFP is put out we will have the final draft. Explained there are two forms within the evaluation that are recommended communities use. The information from the survey that has been done will be acceptable when submitting your application. At the National level there are two surveys they recommend, 1. is an in-class survey of students raise of hand to determine where the kids are living and how they get to school; 2. a survey that is sent home to the parents that they fill out. The advantage of the two standardized surveys is that the National Center will have an on-line system for compiling the results of the surveys, so that when you receive them back you’ll be able to go on website and do the data input. The key is to use those two surveys that are standardized

across the country. The questions asked on the standardized form is basic information.

Councilor Smith understands that everything we have done prior to June 1, whatever we have compiled is acceptable, and after June 1 we need to use the standardized form and to be able to begin our work immediately to use the numbers that have been provided to us by the principals is a good starting point and do another one after the school year begins with the standardized form.

The Chair pointed out the date is June 1<sup>st</sup> and our meeting was June 11<sup>th</sup>.

Clay Hayward responded the data required for seeking out how many walkers, bike riders and students dropped off has been a concern of the principals for years and they have been collecting data each year for years. We are all looking for safety of all the students. Hopes the data received back from the parents is accurate and true. Referring to Councilor Reynolds statement that some of the data that we receive from parents is far from what the principals and staff say. One day can be different than the next, rainy days maybe 10 walkers, next day is sunny and 30 walkers but there is an average of 24 walkers per day.

Debbie Finnigan asked where the completed surveys are to be sent?

Clay Hayward responded to the Superintendent's office after receiving them in the classroom from the students.

Detective Cummings asked how many pages are in the survey? If they are long the parents may not take the time to complete it rather than a short to the point survey that goes home with their beginning of year packet that has to be returned to the school.

Mr. Corrigan stated it is fairly short, perhaps 2 or 3 pages, not 6 or 7.

The Chair responded there are 16 questions, fill in boxes, no writing.

**MOTION** made by Councilor Smith that we use the two standardized surveys to go out to the schools in the beginning of the year and run the survey again in the spring. Seconded by Jonathan Bailey. Motion passed.

Ned Reynolds suggested a contest to encourage participation in the survey.

Jonathan Bailey stated to incentivize the kids is a good one, but do we want to incentivize participation in the survey or incentivize participation in the actual program so could we push this off a bit.

Councilor Smith agreed why try to incentivize if we don't know what results we will get back.

Clay Hayward agrees this is a good idea and asked about starting off with safety helmets.

Councilor Raynolds stated he didn't want to give anything away as yet, meant that when the schools give out the surveys, they are going to see which school or classroom can have the most surveys returned.

Gerry Howe stated getting as much valid information as we can, once we have that then we can determine what's next, get our baseline data and then work from there.

Clay Hayward stated there have been in the past where they have donated bicycles as well and a centralized party at Little Harbor for the kids throughout the City that were involved in the program.

- b. Site Walks - Report Back – The Chair stated that she and Debbie Finnigan went out and looked at each school and reported the following:

Dondero – There are 2 bike racks and there is an actual path that is being utilized, an access road between two homes, it is being maintained, but not sure by whom, is narrow with no lighting.

Debbie Finnigan reported there are no sidewalk s anywhere but on school property, the only crosswalks in the neighborhood are right near the school at the entrance. The Chair reported there are no crosswalks at the next block up. Elwyn Park has no sidewalk, no striping, no anything that makes it conducive to walking, biking, or anything. This school was designed as a walking school and anything we can do to make it more user friendly and safe.

New Franklin – The Chair reported all the crosswalks need to be repainted. There was a flashing sign on Woodbury, there's a small bike rack that is located in back of the school at Myrtle Ave. entrance where it is gated off.

Debbie Finnigan wondered why if there is such a concern with people exiting onto Woodbury why is it gated off in the back of the school? Understands that gating it off during the day is where the kids play. But why it is gated during drop off and pick up?

Councilor Smith responded that the reason is the kids play in the back area, the gate opens up to allow teacher parking back there and along Myrtle Ave. but they don't want drop off, kids driving their cars all the way through because there is a playground in the front of it. The gates do open up for teachers to be able to park back there, but don't want drop-off, parents driving through the playground area to drop the kids off and out that way.

A lot of the kids walk from Dennett St. over the bridge. There are very few that walk Woodbury Ave. and is a concern that comes to City Council is that the neighborhoods want Woodbury Ave. not only traffic calming

but safe way or kids to walk, bike or scoter, there are a lot of parents that are driving their kids less than a quarter mile.

Debbie Finnigan stated that Woodbury Ave. is a huge concern of parents.

Little Harbor – The chair reported there is one large bike rack in front of the school, the crosswalks need to be repainted, there is the path there in great shape coming off Brackett which the City plows.

Portsmouth Middle School – There is a lack of school signs there, no flashing signs, no crosswalk to the ballfield, curb cuts but no crosswalks.

St. Patrick's – the crosswalks should be repainted, there are very few walkers.

Councilor Smith stated there are walkers in the neighborhood and a lot of walkers that get dropped off and walk out in the afternoon and there is one bicycle rack in bad shape.

Debbie Finnigan stated it also needs school zone signs, there are none there.

Councilor Smith stated he has a meeting with the principal regarding roping of the front of the school for drop off and will bring back information at the next meeting.

Debbie Finnigan stated the reason for looking at the schools was to come up with ideas for the grants and to understand what is going on with the schools.

Councilor Reynolds asked what the biggest needs are and referred to Dondero and the fact that it is in the middle of a neighborhood, great for walking, yet there are no sidewalks. Suggested curb striping may be a fairly low cost potentially large return investment to increase the safety of walking to Dondero.

Councilor Smith stated that we were going to focus on Little Harbour and New Franklin as a start, and would like to amend that to do Dondero at least for traffic calming and try to do some crosswalks and focus on grant monies for New Franklin and to Dondero for crosswalks and safety improvements. Does not want to necessarily change the motion made at our last meeting because there is a group at Little Harbor getting things together and hopefully do programs with SRO's etc and continue on with Little Harbour as well.

**MOTION** made by Councilor Smith to amend our previous vote of funding for New Franklin and focus on Dondero at least for traffic calming and try to do some crosswalks and focus on grant monies for New Franklin and Dondero for crosswalks and safety improvements and to leave in Little Harbor as well. Seconded by Clay Hayward. Motion passed.

Councilor Raynolds asked if we think about putting together the grant or doing something specific to striping Dondero neighborhood and Elwyn Park neighborhood we need to ask Public Works.

Debbie Finnigan referred to the neighborhood coming before Traffic & Safety last fall talking about traffic calming concerns and feels the neighborhood would be pleased to see us do something, also changing intersection as they are wide and while it's a good idea to include the neighborhood, feels they made their voice clear, many people came out and want something done, they want their kids to walk but don't want them to walk because of the fast speed of traffic. It is in the CIP to start doing traffic calming in the neighborhood.

Councilor Smith stated a lot of work has been done and if we can put some of these funds toward helping these projects, feels it will get done faster and shows the state that these are priorities and are willing to put in our own money as well as other funds may add some leverage.

Clay Hayward referred to Dennett St. intersection and the people going through stop signs.

Detective Cummings stated the Police get more complaints about this intersection than any other intersection in the entire City.

Debbie Finnigan asked if "Children Crossing" or "Stop Ahead" signs may help at that intersection? Specific pavement markings as it is near the school.

Councilor Smith suggested bringing this issue up at Traffic & Safety and asked Elaine to place Stark St. between Thornton and Dennett, the intersection at Dennett and Stark on the Agenda.

c. Grant Suggestions

1. Nomination for Grant Chair – Debbie Finnigan would like some help with this and the Chair agreed to help her. Councilor Smith will also help.

**MOTION** made by Jonathan Bailey nominating Councilor Smith as Grant Chair. Seconded by Councilor Raynolds. Motion passed.

Clay Hayward stated that he would help and Dr. Lister would help as well.

Councilor Smith stated he did not see a date when it had to be turned in.

Mr. Corrigan responded that the RFP has not been issued, everything is still in draft form and will be going before the Commission next week. Once final approval is received we will put out the RFP which will be about an 8 week period.

Councilor Smith suggested in the fall to bring in the heads of the PTA and PTO for each school to be able to start our sub-committees to be the contact to work with the School Board and School Administration.

Debbie Finnigan thought Councilor Reynolds' idea of having someone come in to do some sort of kick off was good to get enthusiasm, excitement, and feels it is important to get this out there. October 3<sup>rd</sup> is National Walk to School and look at something to do for this day as well.

Mr. Corrigan stated that once the grant process gets started and the application is in, you will receive notice if you are awarded the reimbursement funding. There will be an approval date and expenses incurred after that will be reimbursable. Expenses incurred now will not be reimbursable. Only after the project is approved and give us authority to start spending.

The Chair asked the Committee if they feel that we know enough about the grant.

Councilor Smith responded that his understanding is to move forward with looking into how much for the Woodbury Ave. project New Franklin and do some for the Dondero School and look into some the striping around the area and look at non-infrastructure funding to be monies to support what the SRO's are doing within the school for bicycle safety and education. Start with crosswalks at Dondero and New Franklin and to be able to do crosswalks at the other schools is a major safety concern at this time should be something to come to Traffic & Safety and try to get on the City's schedule for painting.

Gerry Howe suggested looking at crosswalks by the Middle School, this is a concern of his.

Detective Cummings stated the crosswalks at the Middle School with the crossing guards has been going on for a year and a half, that they requested they be repainted. They are so faded they are not there, there were signs "No Parking Here to Corner" and now cars are pulling right up to the corner where people are trying to cross. We have been after City Yard to paint them.

Councilor Smith made the adjustment to his statement to let's look at crosswalks at all of the schools and not focus on just these two and try to utilize funds for those, but still do the SRO funding for the non-infrastructure.

Ned Reynolds stated crosswalks that are visibly, tactfully different, color or materials, functionally and safety wise are superior, probably

cost more than painted crosswalks, which eventually fade, feels the tactful ones are superior and wondered if Deb could get that information for us. Wants to be on record that when we do crosswalks we make the investment to make the tactful crosswalks.

Debbie Finnigan responded this needs to come through the chair and Committee and needs to be a Motion.

**MOTION** made by Ned Raynolds that we request Public Works to obtain the cost and to look at portable crosswalk signs, as well as the cost and type for textured crosswalks. Seconded by Councilor Smith. Motion passed.

Gerry Howe suggested when repaving.

Detective Cummings referred to sidewalk signs that slide into a cylinder in the middle of the road, called a weeble (a portable crosswalk sign) feels this may slow people down.

Councilor Smith stated we have an opportunity now where we are about to do a lot of work with the Middle School, and to go ahead and try to paint the middle School now just to get it done and as that project progress it would be a good idea to do something along the lines of what Councilor Raynolds has brought up. The other schools could be put into a long term capital plan as they are always doing reconfigurations of parking lots, etc. All crosswalks at some point are going to lead to a school.

Debbie Finnigan stated she is responsible to make sure that work orders are put out to do crosswalks and signage, and asked Detective Cummings to e-mail her.

Detective Cummings responded Richards and Parrott Ave.

Mr. Corrigan suggested keeping a record of those changes and refer as part of our application.

#### **IV. OLD BUSINESS:**

- a. CIP Projects (Maps Attached) – Debbie Finnigan referred to the maps that she prepared showing pedestrian, bike route, sidewalk projects that currently are under construction. There are several projects that could be done and might be helpful. The North Mill Pond pedestrian and bike pathway was included, feels it is unlikely to happen for a long time due to the fact we can't get easements from the railroad, but added it so that people are aware that we could do it. As soon as the contract is signed the bike route from downtown to the bridge to Pease will be done with appropriate bike route signs, direction signs and pavement markings on the ground.

**MOTION** made by Councilor Smith to place report on file. Seconded by Jonathan Bailey. Motion passed.

Ned Reynolds hoped this Community gets to the point where we are putting striped bike lanes on streets.

Debbie Finnigan responded there will be striped bike lane on Maplewood from Hanover up to Dennett on both sides and on Woodbury Ave. as well.

- b. Grant Criteria (attached) – The Chair stated they are in draft only and have not been approved. **MOTION** made by Councilor Smith to accept the Grant criteria. Seconded by Gerry Howe. Motion passed.

## **VI. ADJOURNMENT**

Respectfully submitted

Elaine Boucas  
Recording Secretary