



DRAFT

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Monday August 13, 2007 at 7:30 a.m.
City Hall Conference Room A

The Safe Routes to School Committee met on Wednesday, August 13, 2007 at 7:30 a.m. at City Hall Conference Room A.

- I. Call to Order:** Jonathan Bailey 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 Councilors Ned Reynolds and Christine Dwyer, Debbie Finnigan, Traffic Engineer, Police Department Linda Demo, Police Commissioner Gerry Howe, Police Department representative, and Clay Hayward, School Board representative, 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 July 9, 2007 meeting. Seconded by Clay Hayward. Motion passed.
- IV. NEW BUSINESS:**
 - a. Funding Criteria and Project Discussion (information attached) – Debbie Finnigan referred to the information that was included in the packet and the appropriate pavement markings and signage for safe walking/biking to school which was discussed at the last meeting.
Councilor Dwyer referred to the infrastructure under the grant.
John Corrigan stated that the ratio is 70-90% infrastructure and 10-30% non-infrastructure.
Councilor Dwyer referred to the concept of study circles for discussion with parents to generate ideas to improve the number of kids walking and biking to school. Feels we need to do more than tell people, they need to tell us and the need to get people, parents and teachers more engaged with ways to identify SRTS. The line between what we as a City should be doing and what we should be asking for Grant funds, and feels we shouldn't be asking for grant funds for crosswalks. We should be getting this done.

Councilor Smith stated that all projects have to go onto the Capital Improvement Plan and the source of funding needs to be assigned for it. To be able to use some of these funds to make sure that crosswalks are being done in front of schools, bike paths are being delineated on the side of the road and signage are important.

John Corrigan stated that in the first round of infrastructure it would be a maximum of \$100,000 for a project which doesn't buy much sidewalk. Councilor Smith stated it might buy the path that we would like to clean up at Dondero.

Councilor Smith stated that one of the things we need to do under the non-infrastructure is the survey. The first survey is done and was allowed as it was done prior to the actual dates that you had to go to the standardized survey (June 1st). We can use the survey information that was before the standardized survey. Now we need to do the survey that is the standardized survey and would like to see some monies spent to create the survey instead of putting it on the School Dept., get them out and make sure we get them back.

Councilor Raynolds would like to see a grant application put together that has a 30-70 or 20-80 split in money we're asking for between non-infrastructure process and infrastructure. Likes Councilor Dwyer's suggestion of a study circle type of approach that invites parents into discussion. Referred to the two projects of New Franklin and Dondero as priority and would like to see the Committee put money into the grant to stripe the roads on the side, the main roads in Elwyn Park so there could be bike lanes there and secondly, would like to see bike lanes included in the upcoming CIP project on Woodbury Avenue, feels this is a very important corridor in the City from Frank Jones Neighborhood, Osprey Landing.

Jonathan Bailey stated to keep this focused, there seems to be two areas that are we're looking at and feels the more difficult is trying to change the culture of the parents, students and schools and will require more of our efforts and suggested generating a short list of the improvements that we would like to put forward, discuss and prioritize those. On the other side the non-infrastructure, come up with a short list of what we want to try to do.

Councilor Smith stated that on our previous votes was to focus on the crosswalks, restriping and do some signage as well as a bicycle rack at St. Patrick's School and would like to begin at least with these three.

The following is a list of Infrastructure: (written on board by Jonathan Bailey)

Pathway at Dondero
St. Patrick's
Crosswalks and signage
Councilor Dwyer suggested getting costs of crosswalks
Elwyn Park - stripping
CIP Woodbury Avenue (Debbie Finnigan stated the design meeting will take place sometime in September)

Non-Infrastructure:

Study Circles
Next Survey
SRO's (School Resource Officers)

Councilor Smith felt this is a good start for the Infrastructure and would like to focus on making sure that we have the funding to do the next survey, however minimal, for the Non-Infrastructure and also would like to focus on what the SRO's do. They are now working hard on bicycle education programs within the schools. If we could fund for the SRO's, whatever they need to make sure they are doing a proper bicycle and walking education program within the schools, so they have equipment to do PowerPoint presentations.

Linda Demo stated "yes" for the bike and walk safety.

Councilor Dwyer reminded the Committee of Detective Cummings' comment that money is not the issue here, it is culture. Councilor Dwyer would like to focus on a school and likes the idea of doing the Elwyn Park piece because the Principal indicated the great desire to move this forward.

John Corrigan's professional objective is to work with communities, have each community come up with the best possible plan for the kids in that community, the ultimate goal is to encourage kids to walk/bike to school.

Commissioner Howe stated it makes sense to do the non-infrastructure part first, painting all the lines, but if the culture isn't there to use it, it is a waste of money as well as our time. Supports Councilor Dwyer's suggestion of study circles.

Councilor Raynolds agrees that the culture part is very important and also feels one of the first things you'll hear from parents and teachers is "it doesn't seem safe" there's no place for them to go either walking or biking, wide open roads with no lanes on the side, even in Elwyn Park with the wide roads there, we need to narrow the road creating a space on the side for kids.

Councilor Dwyer referred to two fellow employees living in Portsmouth stated they say “I’m afraid to ride my bike, it’s too dangerous”. These are athletic adult males and the perception people have. Feels we need to inject some fun, interest and some sense of experiment and trying different things, textured crosswalks and would be interesting to experiment with different kinds of crosswalks.

Linda Demo added that speaking with parents is one of the first places to begin and each community has a different concern so that by going to these communities and speaking with the parents, you’ll know what those concerns are for each place and start to increase this walk/bike, and have a very good idea of where to start putting the funding. There may be communities that need less funding than other communities as a good place to start.

Jonathan Bailey suggested engaging the parents for information.

Clay Hayward feels it is important that we don’t emphasis just on one area, but emphasis on all the areas. Just by driving around town you can see where we need improvements and wants to make sure we don’t narrow just on one school as all the Principals care and are concerned with the kids walking and biking to school.

Jonathan Bailey stated the point he would like the committee to perhaps consider is do we talk to the City Council about reexamining our skate boarding in the downtown Ordinance. We are asking kids not only to use bicycles and walk but to use transportation to get out of cars, kids travel on skateboards. Do we look at the skateboard ban downtown?

Commissioner Howe stated he has said all along that skateboards are an alternative form of transportation and to outlaw an alternative form of transportation, Durham has addressed it nicely, they have an Ordinance that says “yes, you can use skateboards but the two wheels have to be on the ground.”

Councilor Dwyer stated that if it comes from the Committee as a unified way of thinking then it’s worth examining. Feels it is worth looking at any statistical information about it, bike/pedestrian fatalities.

Council Smith feels it should be looked at but doesn’t know how it ties into funding at this point.

Jonathan Bailey stated it doesn’t and feels it should be several steps past where we’re at now.

Councilor Smith feels it should be brought to the City Council. And try to get the bicycles off the sidewalks sooner rather than later and will place this under his name on the Council Agenda.

John Corrigan stated that State Law says that bicycles are treated as motor vehicles and except for small children, nobody should be riding a bicycle on sidewalks, it is illegal.

Councilor Smith is talking about the skateboards and feels this should get moving and on the funding side would like to continue focus on that portion of the agenda and then we can move on and get the grant written and get that work done.

Debbie Finnigan asked if there was anything more to add to the list so that we can get the grant going and have a draft for our next meeting so it can be finished? The deadline is September 17th.

Councilor Dwyer suggested producing walking maps related to different schools and biking maps related to different schools with suggested routes, perhaps as a publicity thing, something parents can talk to their children about as an educational tool and do this in an interesting way.

Jonathan Bailey will add this to the list and asked to move onto the next step which is what we need to do to get our grant proposal in on time. Since we are looking at an overall package for our information portion.

Commissioner Howe referred to infrastructure already at Little Harbor School, sidewalks already there, Steve Shulton's focus on wellness as a life style in his gym class, feels we have the opportunity at Little Harbor for a culture change.

Jonathan Bailey stated since we are dealing with School Board, City Council, dealing with everybody, that is an area we can deal with all three, so we split our focus we have a relatively narrow infrastructure target, we have a system wide approach for how we want to do our surveys, how to get that information from the schools, how do we want to engage in that culture and move forward, taking a look at some of the Ordinances, coming up with a unified set of questions to ask everybody and have answered and move on.

Debbie Finnigan suggested getting together to write the grant for the next meeting, so that it can be reviewed, finished and sent in.

Councilor Smith stated that at the last meeting a grant sub-committee was made up and Debbie Finnigan can be part of that sub-committee. Dr. Lister is also part of the sub-committee and will work with this list.

Councilor Smith will pick a date and contact Debbie Finnigan who will contact the other members to get together to work on the grant.

MOTION made by Councilor Smith to accept the formation of the grant sub-committee to work off the list putting the grant together for the next meeting for review and submission. Seconded by Commissioner Howe. Motion passed.

Councilor Dwyer referred to the required support letters being done in a timely fashion and to inform the Council of what is in process for the August 20th Council meeting, also need School Board endorsement as well.

Councilor Smith will have this put on the Council Agenda under his name for an oral report.

Councilor Dwyer suggested the School Board rather than Council as it is a bigger deal for the School Board than the Council.

Clay Hayward will bring this up at the School Board meeting this evening and discuss having another meeting so it can be signed prior to the September 17th deadline.

Linda Demo stated that Capt. Champlin is head of the SRO's and is sure you can count on the SRO's support.

Debbie Finnigan suggested presenting the School Board with the hand outs that explain the program and this is the criteria for us to get grants, etc.

Councilor Reynolds stated he is in contact with SABER as well as Jonathan Bailey and will get them on board with us.

Councilor Smith referred to using resources that we come up with something to make it fun, safety ideas, making sure reflectors are on each bike, lights, make sure everyone's brakes work, check for safety.

Linda Demo suggested bringing the parents in and get them on board with this is for the Police Dept. to take a Saturday putting it out to the community bring your kids and bikes, we'll check them for safety, have decals, get them licensed.

Jonathan Bailey referred to the Rotary program giving away helmets, there is a fair amount of this, but the support part is not up to par.

Jonathan Bailey referred to the bike race in Sept., kind of a bike culture and a kid's race happening before hand.

Councilor Smith asked if it were permissible to shift funds if awarded them, from one education program to another as long as it is staying within the same culture?

John Corrigan stated he would check on this.

Councilor Dwyer referred to a dedicted LED Board that could be related to schools and safe routes to schools as an enforcement.

Jonathan Bailey stated the board is on South St. on a fairly regular basis and along New Castle Ave. for awareness of sharing the road.

Councilor Smith stated that DPW had 3 variable message boards.

Jonathan Bailey stated that bicycles have always sort of been left to this unregulated, unregistered situation. Bikes are a vehicle and should not be on sidewalks and will be treated as a vehicle.

Debbie Finnigan referred to bicyclists running red lights, stop signs, and don't even slow down and is very dangerous.

Councilor Dwyer stated that stepped up enforcement by the Police Department would not necessarily be a cost item.

Linda Demo referred to jaywalking downtown and people come out from parked cars and we need posting that jaywalking is recognized.

Jonathan Bailey stated as adults we're not giving any kind of solid example to our children.

Linda Demo stated that crosswalks are very important and that these are the only places where you are to cross.

Councilor Smith stated this was a good point to bring up at the next Traffic & Safety meeting.

Councilor Dwyer suggested a letter of support from the Police Department putting some of these things together would be helpful.

John Corrigan stated there is a Walk Alliance of New Hampshire.

Councilor Raynolds stated the Bike Rodeo is scheduled for September 16th and will contact Susanne Delaney to see what is planned in terms of bike rodeo, safety.

Councilor Dwyer will contact the Herald for publicity on the ideas of this Committee.

- b. Invite PTA/PTO to fall meeting – MOTION made by Councilors Smith that Clay Hayward get in touch with PTO/PTA and invite them to our next meeting. Seconded by Clay Hayward. Motion passed.

Clay Hayward stated he will also try to have a letter ready from each organization.

V. OLD BUSINESS:

- a. Number of walkers and bikers from St. Patrick's School (Ken Smith) – Councilor Smith spoke to the principal of St. Patrick's and they have nine walkers and four bicyclists out of approximately 200 students. The number is low as all students are not from Portsmouth. There are some that are driven in the morning and more walkers in the afternoon. The bike rack was referred to and would like to see more stripping in the area.
- b. National Survey to School - Debbie Finnigan referred to the packet and how many are needed to get to the School?

MOTION made by Councilor Smith to take Items c. and d. and move them to our next month's Agenda.

- c. Type and Cost of Crosswalk (report back)
- d. Cost of Weeble (report back)

Next meeting is scheduled for September 10th.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Respectfully submitted

Elaine Boucas
Recording Secretary