



**SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**Monday September 10, 2007 at 7:30 a.m.**  
**City Hall Conference Room A**

The Safe Routes to School Committee met on Wednesday, September 10, 2007 at 7:30 a.m. at City Hall Conference Room A.

- I. Call to Order:** Christina Westfall Chair brought the meeting to order at approximately 7:35 a.m.
- II. Roll Call:** Present were City Council Representatives Ken Smith, Chairman of the Traffic & Safety Committee and Councilor Ned Reynolds, Debbie Finnigan, Traffic Engineer, Detective Chris Cummings, Robert Lister, Superintendent of Schools and Clay Hayward, School Board representative, Christina Westfall and Jonathan Bailey, Traffic & Safety Representatives. Also present was Cindy Hayden Deputy City Manager.
- III. Acceptance of the Minutes:**  
It Was Voted on a Motion made by Councilor Ken Smith to accept the minutes of the August 13, 2007 meeting. Seconded by Clay Hayward. Motion passed.
- IV. NEW BUSINESS:**
  - A. Discussions regarding Proposed Grant (Presentation by Cindy Hayden) – Cindy Hayden presented the Members with a proposed draft of the Grant Application Summary. Cindy Hayden explained that she pulled together projects from the original draft letter to John Corrigan and from discussions at the last several meetings. There are a total of six projects with their proposed budget as follows:
    - Infrastructure (Physical Changes to Encourage Walking/Cycling):
      - 1 – Elwyn Park Neighborhood Pavement Markings - \$38,000
      - 2 – Dondero/Garfield Rd. Pathway Improvements - \$32,000
      - 3 – St. Patrick’s and Little Harbor Bike Racks - \$5,000
    - Non-Infrastructure (Evaluation, Education, Encouragement):
      - 1 – One-Day Educational Workshop - \$6,000
      - 2 – Parent and Teacher Surveys - \$7,000
      - 3 - Student Incentive Program (School Resource Officers) - \$5,000These are currently fluid figures and are apt to change either up or down. Cindy Hayden stated there are letters of support from the City Council, School Board, parents, School Department and teachers, Police

Department, Greater Portsmouth Regional Public Health Network, Step it Up Seacoast and Seacoast Area Bike Routes (SABR) which will be attached to the Grant Application.

Cindy Hayden explained the attachments that will be attached to the project such as a map of the Elwyn Park Neighborhood, photo of the Dondero Elementary School, photos of bike racks, Information on Training Programs, parent survey form, Evaluation of Student In-Class Travel Tally Form and Student Incentive Program.

Clay Hayward contacted some individuals from the elementary schools, New Franklin, Dondero, Little Harbour, St. Patrick's and the Middle School and asked if the individuals that came here to have the chance to introduce themselves, to ask any questions or concerns they may have.

Martha Seaman, Past President of the Little Harbour School PTA as the ex-President of the PTA to observe what is happening.

Leslie Stearns, Past Secretary of the Little Harbor PTA and a parent of children who walk to school when they can and is here to listen and hear the work of the Committee and offer any observations you may want.

Carol Chellman, parent of Little Harbour student and feels the grant is fantastic and shared this with the Principal who stated that by walking to school kids improve their health, improve the environment, reduce air pollution, reduce congestion and the Principal made another observation and benefit of walking or biking is psychological, their little brains after walking in cool air are much better students. Ms. Chellman asked if students are safe walking to school in terms of personal safety as in abduction.

Detective Cummings responded it all comes down to education and the parents and kids that are involved in this program. In classes that he teaches from Kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grade is they have 3 main rules, 1. the buddy system, 2. check first and 3. no go and tell. These rules are taught you never go anywhere without a buddy. The Safe Routes to School is providing an environment where a bunch of kids can go to school together, whether parents or older kids. Also with many kids around, somebody that may try to victimize a child will not, they have a tendency to go after a lone child. Practicing these rules on a yearly basis and drilling them every time I see them, go into their classroom, they tend not to forget. Last week a child was approached by a stranger and did exactly what he was suppose to do, ran away and told his mother immediately. We see the results of our going over and over the rules which we are teaching to the kids.

The Chair stated another piece we are doing here is proposing a walking school bus where parents get out there to walk together, parents can take turns so there is an adult there with a group of kids.

Kirsten Barton stated she came from a community which had an educational program called "Safety Town", is not familiar with our program. This is based in Ohio and is the only City in Rhode Island where she came from that has this program.

The Chair was aware of this program and comments it is an awesome program and asked Ms. Barton to provide the information to us, which she will do.

Clay Hayward also has information which is also on the website for National Safety Town. Felt that it was similar to Exchange City which is what we endorsed years ago and is a great program and something we should take a look at.

The Chair agreed.

Lisa Sweet has two middle schoolers and is curious whether or not this is applicable to her 3<sup>rd</sup> grader?

Councilor Smith responded that this program takes in all four elementary schools and the Middle School.

Lisa Sweet lives where she sees the intersection of Miller Ave and Lincoln which is a heavily used crossing between 7:10-7:30a when Middle Schoolers go and again later 8:25-8:50a when the elementary kids go. Also there is a rise of trees at that intersection, site lines are short, asked if better pavement markings would help or crossing guard at that area.

The Chair stated this could be handled through Traffic & Safety and asked Elaine to make a note to put on the next Traffic & Safety Agenda.

Kirsten Barton asked about a community wide meeting?

Councilor Smith responded they are normally brought to Traffic & Safety and we get them on our Agenda quickly and come up with a resolution. Striping is done often, advanced signs when necessary, additional markings in road that you are driving up to a crosswalk has helped and can direct the Police Department to do a stealth stat to find out the speed.

Councilor Reynolds asked Lisa Sweet for some feedback regarding bike racks.

Ms. Sweet responded in two days 70 bikes and between 5 and 10 scooters one day and 55 bikes and probably 5 scooters the next day.

Councilor Reynolds stated if we were to put in bike racks it would be about racks and asked if it was necessary, not wanting to spend money unnecessarily, spend it where it is necessary.

Dr. Lister stated that the Principals would prefer to have bike racks for safety reasons as kids put them all over the place.

Leslie Stevens stated that she and Carol Chellman in talking with parents stated they are incredibly interested and feels it would be nice for people to get involved.

Councilor Smith stated that one of the programs after getting through the grant application the next thing to fall under the Traffic & Safety Committee will be Committees at each School for that purpose so that the parents and teachers can get involved in what they need as these programs develop, the issues will fall under the sub-committees at each school which will filter up to this Committee. When this Committee was started we knew the grant was about to happen and got the survey done and submitted and now it's getting the grant done which has to be submitted by the 17<sup>th</sup> and then we can begin on setting up those phases.

The Chair stated you will be seeing more input and involvement, we want this program to succeed, it will take a huge cooperative effort from parents and schools. There will be a kick off day on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, a National Day of Walking and Biking to School.

Carol Chellman suggested there are things that can be done without costing money, one thing would be to change policies to make them less dependent and to encourage walking and biking.

The Chair agreed and stated it will be a collaborative effort.

The Chair asked for comments.

Councilor Smith stated one thing he didn't see that should be under the fiscal changes is the weebles and asked Debbie Finnigan if she had a cost and asked if she would follow up and add it.

Ms. Finnigan stated she wasn't able to find them anywhere.

Cindy Hayden answered approximately \$180.00.

Councilor Reynolds referred to the Weebles stating he has seen in other cities where there is a crosswalk sign on a pole that is near an intersection

that has flashing yellow LED's, when someone is crossing they can hit that button for it to flash, an additional visual and asked if we had any of the signs posted where it flashes?

Debbie Finnigan responded "no", we have two signs on Borthwick Ave. at Liberty Mutual which flashes all the time (this is a pedestrian crossing sign).

Detective Cummings stated nobody uses the push buttons, only used when there is so much traffic they can't get across, they hit the button. Suggested having lights "crossing ahead" especially at Miller and Lincoln that flashes at school hours that are on timers like school zone signs. They are not on all the time and when they are, draws your eyes to it.

Cindy Hayden suggested trying a few key locations to see how they work.

Councilor Smith suggested trying as many different options as we can and see what works or keep a variety of things and move them around to avoid that staleness.

**MOTION** made by Councilor Ned Raynolds to amend grant by adding \$10,000 as a proposed item to try these electronic LED's and include the weebles. Seconded by Councilor Ken Smith. Motion passed.

Cindy Hayden added that all we are doing is seeking funds, we may or may not get funding and ultimately this will go to Traffic & Safety to decide where they are going to go and if they are going to go.

Debbie Finnigan will research the cost.

The Chair having visited all the schools noticed that there were a couple of crosswalks she felt were key and referred to the Middle School.

Debbie Finnigan responded it should have been painted last week.

The Chair referred to bike racks as being very important referring to the Middle School and would like to revisit this.

Cindy Hayden stated given the state of the Middle School and its potential future you might want to think about is where those bike racks will go as they excavate and pour concrete slab and are fixed to concrete and suggested putting them in a portable manner.

Detective Cummings suggested moving them from another school for example, take Little Harbour's racks which are portable and move them to the Middle School and place the permanent bolted ones at Little Harbour.

Cindy Hayden stated we can put in a lump sum for 5 or 6 bike racks and if funded, the schools can decide which rack they want.

Dr. Lister suggested getting the Principals involved at that time to help make decisions about where and how many.

The Chair referred to Project 1, the only crosswalk on McKinley is right at the school driveway, which is the main intersection and asked if crosswalks are included there, the 4-way stop?

Councilor Ken Smith responded it would have to come to Traffic & Safety for approval of crosswalks and striping. An entire neighborhood study would likely be done of stop signs, crosswalks, etc. looking at the entire neighborhood as a whole and do an overall striping of bicycle lanes and crosswalks with whatever monies the City already has as well as monies we receive from this.

Clay Hayward referred to pages showing different types of racks, one of which is a single helix which also comes in sections, when we get the Principals on board on type of racks we install, they can determine how much space and types of racks we can use.

The Chair referred to Project #6 and referred to donations that we can keep as a part of this through biking organization, Rotary, etc.

Detective Cummings stated that incentives will be a big thing and mentioned to Steve Shulton about handing out water bottles or something similar and Mr. Shulton stated they use them once and they are gone, so you won't get much out of it. Detective Cummings presented the Committee with what is called the "Mileage Club" which has a lot of little trinkets that go on a bracelet or necklace which becomes a status for them, they put them on their sneakers, etc. and feels this is the way to go and is not expensive. Detective Cummings looked on their website and they have a lot of different tags, mileage tags of little feet, sneakers, bicycles, runners, They keep track of how far they go, they turn the slip into their teachers, and the teacher gives them the 5 mile token or whatever to put on their sneakers, etc. Mr. Shulton feels this may be the way to go rather than just a simple water bottle.

Detective Cummings picked up some helmets from Bicycle Bobs and hopes during the October 3<sup>rd</sup> kick off week that once a day there's a raffle kindergarten all the way up at the pilot schools of Little Harbour and Dondero. Also spoke with Mike LaLime, his nephew Henry (didn't have a helmet on) was hit by the car and asked if he would possibly come a do a couple of talks and how that impacts the family when you get hurt and how important it is to wear a helmet. He will check with his brother-in-law and he and his brother-in-law or just he will come and talk to the kids

about bicycle safety and wearing helmets as well as for roller blades, scooters. Henry was hit on a scooter and had just taken his helmet off, was riding his bike didn't think he needed it on the scooter and tragedy struck.

Another suggestion is a map of the United States with a bicycle where you tally all the kids walking and biking to school and the bike goes across the country throughout the year where they can actually see where they're going. Realistically isn't sure if all these things can get done, we can get raffles, bike helmets, talks within the next few weeks and maybe look towards next year for the big maps and other incentives.

Councilor Smith feels the maps are an excellent idea, and maybe you could certainly keep the tally at this point and introduce the map in the spring as they are getting back to their bikes and walking again, perhaps with a competition between the schools.

Also referred to police officers who used to hand out their trading cards and no longer has funding and felt it was an incredible program and the kids would collect as many as they could from the officers, a great interaction between the kids and police and asked if some of these funds could be used for this.

Detective Cummings stated they are expensive and what happened in the past you would go to a business and solicit with the business to get a donation. This has fallen by the wayside. The officers had some reservation about soliciting for their cards.

Councilor Smith asked if we provide the funds.

Detective Cummings responded "sure".

Councilor Smith thought the SRO should have them as the program really brought the police and kids together.

Jonathan Bailey stated three weeks is not enough time to put all this together but three weeks is enough time to ask questions and start the process where now we find out what is going to work with the kids.

Councilor Reynolds stated we are launching an effort here and will need school based committees, input continuously from educators to have this program designed and engineered.

Detective Cummings suggested that the Oct. 3<sup>rd</sup> deadline, because we have so many things left to do, we can do the incentives and may fail if not having all our ducks in a row. We could do the incentives, if we decide this is something we want to do, have a speaker come in to talk to the kids, do the giveaways of bike helmets, keep pushing it throughout the week,

“don’t forget to ride your bike to school, let’s see how many people can ride on Wednesday” keep it low key so we aren’t throwing everything at them when we don’t have it all together yet, then when spring comes in the next school year everything will be set up, new bike racks, lines painted and a year for a solid program.

Dr. Lister stated that before we talk about any of this, there has to be an intensive education about what it is we want to do. The parents here only represent Little Harbour School, our biggest challenge is to get those people involved.

The Chair would like to see it recognized whether it is an education need, our presence here, something that gets them an idea of what we are doing.

Councilor Smith asked Dr. Lister if he would give them a heads up that the surveys are going out.

Dr. Lister stated they are ready to go out this week. They will be returned to the school and Christina Westfall will pick them up.

Leslie Stevens commented that every child doesn’t have the opportunity to earn those incentives as there are children for various reasons will never be able to walk to school and never be able to use the stickers, etc.

Councilor Smith thought of this as well and thinks when we do this type of program they can do the mileage on the weekends and after school, at home, etc, and write it down.

Detective Cummings referred to kids coming from greater distances and getting them involved, parents dropping them off ½ mile from school where they can walk to school or parents dropping their bikes of at a location where they can bike with their friends to the school. It will be figures out and is a great point.

Cindy Hayden stated we are in an early program development phase now, trying to get this grant and is important not to create all these huge expectations before figuring out exactly what you are going to do, educators and parents and kids so that when you are ready everybody will be on board, no one is excluded.

**MOTION** made by Jonathan Bailey to accept the grant application as presented with changes. Seconded by Councilor Smith. Motion passed.



V. INFORMATIONAL:

B. Schedule of 2007 and 2008 Meetings (attached). Need to determine November 2007 and October and November 2008 meeting dates.

The Chair asked the Committee if they wanted to have a meeting in November but does not feel that is the right thing to do at this point, the alternative could be either October 29<sup>th</sup> or November 13<sup>th</sup> because of the Holiday.

Jonathan Bailey asked if considering a meeting in the Council Chambers so that everybody who wants to have input have a chance to come.

Councilor Smith suggested making it an evening meeting in November and have it in Council Chambers and allow the public to come and address us. Set it up to have a presentation and accept comments. The first time the public will hear about this is at the kick off. We will have the surveys back and release the results at that meeting.

Jonathan Bailey stated now that our walking and riding season is coming to an end, prepare for what we are going to do in the spring.

Councilor Smith suggested the Chair work with the City to find out when the Chambers are available and create a time to see if it can be televised on Channel 22 as well.

Cindy Hayden asked if the intention of the meeting is to hear from the public and parents in general?

Council Smith responded a presentation of the program, a release of the survey results and allow the public to address this Committee.

Councilor Raynolds feels we need to have a strategy for October 3<sup>rd</sup> and is not clear on what our plans are for that day. Feels it is important that we have a very definitive plan for what we are going to do and say on that date and clearly we don't have all the details of a program in place and feels we need to have a sub committee of this Committee get together and plan that October 3<sup>rd</sup> event.

Councilor Smith stated what is being done for the schools is the surveys and what the SRO's are doing which is their program that has been in place for years.

Detective Cummings wanted to come here and ask the Committee about having more of a school wide assembly type of thing where he could get someone to come in and talk such as Mr. LaLime. To go from class to class for individual classes would take a long time. Detective Cummings

wanted to get the input from this Committee, Dr. Lister, School Board and approach the subject with Robin Burdick and Jill LeMay and then will facilitate this at the schools. Another suggestion would be to notify the Portsmouth Herald to get the word out, a good size ad a week before on Sunday and a few days that week depending on the cost.

Councilor Smith asked the Chair to get in touch with Adam Leach.

The Chair suggested instead of making Oct. 3<sup>rd</sup> a huge formal day, advertise as a bike/walk to school day, an informal walkathon.

Councilor Reynolds feels what we say, how we say it, where it comes from, perhaps a joint press release, City's Newsletter that we have as a vehicle, just need to plan it and coordinate it.

Clay Hayward agreed with Councilor Reynolds and to show in the paper that the City Council, School Board, Police Dept. and Traffic & Safety are all working together with 100% commitment to push this and would show something to the community that we are serious about having this implemented.

Cindy Hayden asked if the intent for October 3<sup>rd</sup> is to recognize this is walk/bike to school to start the awareness. We don't have a program or plan yet, we are starting to look at grant funds and Traffic & Safety, getting teachers and parents on board, this being the goal for October 3<sup>rd</sup>.

The Chair stated that by the November meeting the kids will have done this, the parents will be aware and if it is something that will work, what worked well, what didn't work well, the survey results and we will then have something to work with.

October 2008 meeting and November 2008 meetings – The October meeting will be held October meeting on the 6<sup>th</sup> and the November meeting to be held in the evening.

Cindy Hayden asked the intent of the November meeting.

Councilor Smith responded to introduce this Board, introduce the program perhaps having John Corrigan from the State to explain the program and announce the results of the survey and allow for public comment.

Jonathan Bailey suggested the parents, PTO's and some of the Neighborhood Associations to know what we are doing.

Cindy Hayden suggested since a plan or program is not in place yet, perhaps have some planning meetings prior to that.

Councilor Smith stated the results of the surveys could be top say these are the biggest concerns and that will be the direction of the Committee to go to address those concerns.

Next meeting is scheduled for October 1<sup>st</sup>.

**V. ADJOURNMENT**

Respectfully submitted

Elaine Boucas  
Recording Secretary