



SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Monday January 28, 2008 at 7:30 a.m.
City Hall Conference Room A

The Safe Routes to School Committee met on Wednesday, January 28, 2008 at 7:30 a.m. at City Hall, Conference Room A

- I. Call to Order: Call to Order:** Christina Westfall Chair brought the meeting to order at approximately 7:35a.m.
- II. Roll Call:** Debbie Finnigan, Traffic Engineer, Rebecca Emerson, School Board representative, Police Commissioner John Golumb, Police Commission representative and Jonathan Bailey, Traffic & Safety Committee representative. Also present was Kirsten Barton, Parent.
Absent: Councilor Ned Reynolds, Detective Chris Cumming and Dr. Lister, Superintendent of Schools.

IV. NEW BUSINESS:

- 1. Welcomed new Committee Members** – The members introduced themselves to the new members.

MOTION made by Christina Westfall nominating Kirsten Barton as a member of SRTS representing Little Harbor. Seconded by Jonathan Bailey. Motion passed.

The Chair stated part of the role of a representative is to be a liaison to pass information back and forth from each school so that we have a contact person from each school, using the PTA as a vehicle to bring information back to this committee as opposed to filing the room the hundreds of parents.

The Chair referred to the travel plan which is a requirement of the grant in which we need to have a contact for each school and to partner with an organization. Debbie Finnigan stated it is a requirement of the Grant process so that you know where you want the kids to walk/bike and what issues prevent them from walking/biking and what project you have to help them do that. For example, sidewalk, signage, etc. or an educational program to teach them how to walk/bike safely to school and education for the parents so they feel comfortable allowing that to happen.

Kirsten Barton stated that a representative from the school is interested in getting someone from SRTS to partner with Step Up Seacoast.

The Chair stated that we are representing 5 schools, New Franklin, Little Harbor, Dondero, St. Patrick and the Middle school.

2. **Implement a Plan Obtaining School Routes** (NH Travel Plan attached) - The Chair stated that she spoke with the PTA Presidents of the three elementary schools. Kirsten Barton will be representing Little Harbor School, who has been very supportive of this program.

The Chair stated that Debbie Finnigan previously prepared maps with a 2 mile radius around each school and we need to come up with ideas of how to get this information. A survey was suggested to be sent to the parents in the packet together with a memo of explanation and the map to be filled out and returned to the schools.

Rebecca Emerson stated that some parents drop off at Elwyn and South rather than going directly to the school, would this count as walking or driving?

Jonathan Bailey stated we will find this information in the Surveys and feels it is better than having the parents drive in and drop off causing congestion at the schools.

The Chair referred to the meeting in concord, that some other cities and towns in their presentation had taken pictures of the outside of the schools showing normal drop off, pick up periods, cross streets directly adjacent to the schools kids were using, sidewalks, etc. The Committee felt this was a good idea and Rebecca Emerson suggested that this was something the representatives of each school could do as they would be more familiar with what goes on in the school, what and where the problem areas are. Rebecca Emerson informed the Committee that SRTS is on the Agenda for the next PTA meeting at Dondero and New Franklin offered SRTS for the March meeting.

The Chair stated she does not have a contact for St. Patrick' School.

After discussion it was decided that certain questions asked in the Survey should be included, specifically question #6.

There are two vacancies for committee members, Kirsten Barton has been nominated leaving 1 vacancy and the Chair suggested a representative from each school as well. There was also a suggestion of a student at the Middle School and Rebecca Emerson knows of a student and will ask his opinion.

Jonathan Bailey suggested not having them sit at every meeting but give the student a special status but we would get feedback from them and limit the amount of time from classes. At the last meeting Dr. Lister stated it may be possible to excuse the student from class for this purpose.

The Chair stated it would be great if they had their own group there and were able to do the same kind of thing we are doing, but on their level with their means, if not this year, next year.

The Chair stated we have a map and a memo, getting representatives from each school to take pictures and asked for a motion.

MOTION made by Jonathan Bailey to have the survey, map and the memo approved by Dr. Lister to go into the Wednesday packet asking parents to draw on their maps showing us the routes their children would be or are using, whether or not they are already walking or riding and what route would be have them use.

The Chair suggested redoing question #6, how does your child arrive at school which would tell us what they are doing and to map which route they take.

John Golumb suggested adding other comments with lines for them to write.

Debbie Finnigan stated we need specific projects so that if the same intersection comes up time and time again, we'll know this may be a project we need to look at for the next grant and trying to figure out how do you make those routes safer for biking and riding. Do we have a separate survey asking why you take that route.

Rebecca Emerson asked if it could be done with three simple questions.

1. How does your child get to school?
2. If they do walk or ride, bike, what route would they typically take?
3. Is this the preferred route? We want to find out if they take that route because it's the one they want or because it's safer or more convenient. Why do you take this route as opposed to any other.

Debbie Finnigan stated this still doesn't tell us where the problems are. If they are taking it already, it means it's safe.

Rebecca Emerson suggested No.4, is there another route you would prefer to take but don't and why don't you.

Jonathan Bailey suggested the 4th question to ask what are the reasons keep preventing your child from walking or riding?

Debbie Finnigan stated are we trying to focus on the people that aren't walking or biking. Debbie Finnigan's thought is what routes are going to get those people to get their kids to walk/bike to school and to think about it and if not, what is the physical reasons we can do something about projects, the fear part is education, what are those reasons.

Kirsten Barton stated that the first survey that went out it had a good response and feels having three questions is great and in the memo state this is our plan, we want to come up with information, we are starting with this and will have another survey later. It was suggested extending an invitation to attend our next meeting, if you would like to attend.

Christina Westfall suggested leaving question #6 from the prior survey as is. Christina Westfall will put the memo together of what we are doing, the survey with 3 questions and the map and send to the committee members for feedback and then needs to go to Dr. Lister for approval to be sent to all the schools.

MOTION made by Jonathan Bailey to complete this document with a strong statement of purpose, survey to go out to all of the Elementary and Middle School parents with a series of three or four questions to ascertain the routes. Seconded by Rebecca Emerson. Motion passed.

Debbie Finnigan stated that the memo should be done by City staff, typically this work is done by City Staff not the Committee. Ms. Finnigan will do the work, e-mail to everybody for review and comment, then get Dr. Lister's approval of memo.

The Chair asked if we need to do a two mile radius around the schools. Rebecca Emerson stated that they bus after two miles or dangerous situations.

Debbie Finnigan thought it was a mile. Rebecca Emerson stated the State recommendation is 2 and the City of Portsmouth said one mile as it is so densely populated. If unwalkable situations they provide busing.

Debbie Finnigan stated the Grant is based on two miles.

Rebecca Emerson that the map will show a two mile radius and a one mile radius.

V. OLD BUSINESS:

1. Update on Application Comments:

(a) Revote of potential committee members – The Chair stated as opposed to revoting on potential committee members, made a blanket statement stating they want to vote for more members, didn't define who the members were, so the Chair would like to change this item to have it define as specific committee members, looking for a motion for Kirsten Barton and the school, something very specific to take to city Council for approval. We either leave it with just Kirsten or create positions and they give a name after so we are looking for Kirsten and four additional committee members that are school representatives.

MOTION made by Jonathan Bailey to request from City Council an expansion of the number of seats on the Committee specific to schools within the City, Kirsten being designated as the Little Harbor representative but then representatives from the other elementary schools including St. Patrick's and Middle School. Seconded by Rebecca Emerson.

John Golumb asked this will get you what you want you to be allowed to appoint and not have the Council appoint?

Rebecca Emerson asked so we are asking for five new committee members to be made up from each school.

The Chair stated we are asking for Kirsten Barton and four additional representatives from Schools. We have two open, one is Kirsten Barton and one other and we are asking to be filled by representatives.

The chair stated we are asking to be filled by a representative from each of the five.

Debbie Finnigan stated you need to specifically state you want 5 total representing the five schools, and even though we already have two positions missing, you still need to define those positions and get them approved by City Council.

Rebecca Emerson stated we are changing one of those positions to be one of them is going to be a Little Harbor rep. one being from each, so we are changing two existing committee members to very specific, so what we're asking for is to change two vacancies to be school specific and the creation of three additional school specific vacancies and we happen to have someone we want.

The Chair stated so we're looking for Kirsten Barton to be approved to fill the existing vacancy with a representative from one of the other schools and three additional vacancies being filled by the three additional schools.

Rebecca Emerson stated we are looking to change two no-name committee members to a Little Harbor Committee representative, a Middle School Committee representative and then three additional which includes St. Patrick's, New Franklin and Dondero.

Right now anybody could fill the place we want to put Kirsten, but we want to make it a specific Little Harbor person.

The Chair stated, well no, we have to approve Kirsten Barton.

Debbie Finnigan disagreed, what you need to do is those positions need to have a specific name, Little Harbor, so say that if she decides to move away, we can put someone else in her place without having to come back and vote on somebody, then what you need to have is a second vote saying "for the Little Harbor position", we recommend Kirsten.

The Chair stated so we'll take Kirsten Barton and make that Little Harbor and will take Ken Smith and make it St. Patrick's and then we need Dondero, Middle School and New Franklin, those are the ones we are creating. So we are reassigning those seats that are currently empty to Little Harbor and St. Patricks and we are creating Dondero, Middle School and New Franklin. And we happen to have Little Harbor's person.

Debbie Finnigan stated we recommend Kirsten Barton be nominated to the Committee.

Jonathan Bailey restated his motion.

AMENDED MOTION made by Jonathan Bailey to assign specific schools to positions on the Committee to designate Little Harbor and St. Patrick's Schools as the two existing vacancies on the Board and to add three more, Dondero, Middle School and New Franklin. Amended Motion seconded by Rebecca Emerson. Motion passed.

MOTION made by Jonathan Bailey recommending Kirsten Barton as Little Harbor representative. Seconded by Rebecca Emerson. Motion passed.

(b) Crossing Guards – Report Back – Debbie Finnigan reported she e-mailed John Corrigan the State's Safe Routes to School Coordinator who stated they don't pay salary for people, but you pick a project for training, they will help support training for a crossing guard, but won't support salary and benefits of a crossing guard. If we could get Police on board to support another two or three crossing guards, maybe we pay for the training so it doesn't come from their budget as salary will be coming out of the Police budget.

Jonathan Bailey stated that at previous meetings both here and Traffic & Safety have talked about a potential crossing guard at Miller and Lincoln, but the traffic flow and number of kids doesn't necessarily warrant it. We have designated that as an area of concern that we need to continue to work on.

Rebecca Emerson asked if on the Traffic & Safety end, has there been discussion of changing the flashing yellow light to either a 4-way stop or light. Jonathan Bailey responded it does not meet warrant.

Debbie Finnigan stated it definitely doesn't meet a traffic signal warrant, there's not enough traffic there and is not aware of the accident data.

Rebecca Emerson asked if making it so that Miller had to stop and Lincoln had right-of-way. There is more traffic coming down Miller.

Debbie Finnigan responded we can look at that. If you're going to have any directional stop, it's always the direction of the least amount of traffic, as there's the least amount of delay to the through traffic. If you have 1000 cars coming one way and 200 cars coming the other way, if you stop a 1000 cars then they would be idling at a stop sign.

Debbie Finnigan stated that at the next Grant, it maybe a good one project for this Committee. Mr. Corrigan stated that, we didn't understand last time, we thought there was \$100,000 limit per town, but \$100,000 limit was per project, realizing there is 1 million dollars per year. He also stated they were going to try to up it go \$200,000 for some of the projects. Maybe Miller/Lincoln is the one big project we ask for an upgrade, \$150,000 or whatever it is going to take.

John Golumb referred to crosswalks and asked when does the City paint the crosswalks?

Debbie Finnigan stated it is her understanding they try to hit the crosswalks at the schools prior to school being in session, August.

Mr. Golumb then asked how long the paint lasts, referring to Miller Ave. doesn't feel it has been painted in a year and would like to ask Steve Parkinson about this. Throughout the City the paint on the crosswalks doesn't last at all.

Debbie Finnigan explained that it was paint and when you have pavement five years old there's not enough asphalt for the thermo to grab onto, so you put paint down and is suppose to be painted every year. The thermo doesn't stick to old pavement. Thermo is used for new construction.

Jonathan Bailey stated that at Traffic & Safety one of the things we hear most is that crosswalks need painting.

2. **E-mail Agenda** – The Chair stated this was e-mailing the Agenda out as opposed to sending out hard copies.

Jonathan Bailey stated that the Committee voted on hard copies. The Chair suggested tabling this and revisiting this after the committee has new members.

MOTION by Jonathan Bailey to table to be revisited at a later time. Seconded by John Golumb. Motion passed.

III. Acceptance of the Minutes:

MOTION made by Jonathan Bailey to accept the minutes of the October 22, 2007 meeting. Seconded by Rebecca Emerson. Motion passed. Rebecca Emerson and John Golumb abstained.

MOTION made by Jonathan Bailey to accept the minutes of the October 29, 2007 meeting. Seconded by John Golumb. Motion passed. Rebecca Emerson and John Golumb abstained.

MOTION made by Jonathan Bailey to accept the minutes of the December 10, 2007 meeting. Seconded by John Golumb. Motion passed. Christina Westfall, Rebecca Emerson and John Golumb abstained.

VI. Adjournment:

Next meeting is scheduled for February 11, 2008 at 7:30 a.m.

Debbie Finnigan will mail out the list of members.

Respectfully submitted

Elaine Boucas
Recording Secretary