



SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Wednesday, March 18, 2009 at 9:00 a.m.
New Franklin School

The Safe Routes to School Committee met on Wednesday, March 18, 2009 at 9:15 a.m. at New Franklin School.

- I. CALL TO ORDER:** Rebecca Emerson, Co-Chair called the meeting to order at approximately 9:15 a.m.
- II. ROLL CALL:** Debbie Finnigan, Traffic Engineer, Councilor Nancy Clayburgh, City Council Representative, Rebecca Emerson, Co-Chair and School Board Representative, Kirsten Barton, Little Harbor Representative and Jean Ward, St. Patrick Representative.

Also present were George Shea, Principal New Franklin School, Barbara Pamboukas, School Nurse and Francine Horvath, neighborhood resident, Kindergarten and 3rd grade parent, walking advocate.

Absent: Christina Westfall, Christine Casa and Rebecca Hester. Excused absence: Robert Lister and John Golumb.

- III. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES: MOTION** made by Kirsten Barton to accept the minutes of the February 18, 2009 meetings as presented. Seconded by Jean Ward. Motion passed.

- IV. Discussion with Principal:** New Franklin pulls from four different neighborhoods, Atlantic Heights, Gosling Meadows and Panaway Manor are fairly remote in terms of walkability. The main walking areas are the North Mill Pond neighborhood, Dennett St. and Woodbury. From the other side up Woodbury in the gem neighborhood, Sapphire, Opals, Diamonds and Woodbury Ave over on the other side, the north side of the school, Upper Islington, from Pic N Pay, other side of Maplewood, Leslie, Cutts. Interested in hearing from parents. The big issue in the Dennett St. side area is the bridge. Sidewalks need to be replaced. It is a very narrow vehicle bridge, barely fit two vehicles with sidewalks on either side. Would like to have sidewalk on one side and increase the size of the sidewalk leaving more vehicle room.
- Rebecca Emerson feels the Committee should be involved in the bridge repair.
- Debbie Finnigan sent letter after the Route 1 Bypass public hearing that stated the City would prefer rather than splitting the width of the sidewalk on either side of the Stark Street bridge, put the width on the northerly side of the bridge.
- The Co-chair asked for an update on the changing of the traffic pattern. Mr. Shea responded they met and it was decided to hold and see what the Woodbury abatement work if that had any impact.
- Rebecca Emerson felt it had a negative impact.

Debbie Finnigan stated it would meet the traffic signal warrant at Franklin Drive/Woodbury Ave./Route 1 Bypass if we could have changed configuration of ramp so that the Woodbury/Route 1 Bypass northbound on/off ramp was combined with the Route 1 Bypass southbound on/off ramp traffic volume. Should we revisit this issue?

The Co-Chair wondered about opening up the back road, when and why was it closed, what are the benefits of keeping it closed versus opening it.

Mr. Shea felt this was worth discussion.

The Co-chair asked if this was something the school should discuss, SRTS, the City?

Debbie Finnigan responded it went through the City process and asked her to take it out of City process. Debbie Finnigan stated the school needs to decide if they want a professional opinion on how it should be changed or want to come up with their own option and see if it makes sense and feels this would be the option if we were going to listen to the parents, etc. and then make a recommendation to Traffic & Safety. Recommendation should come from the school as opposed to Traffic & Safety.

The Co-chair asked if Debbie could find out why it was closed to traffic.

The Principal had discussion that that could be a bus drop off there if the area was paved in a big circle, come in drop off and go out Central Ave. to divert some traffic.

The Principal would be happy for the school to have a sub-committee.

The Principal would like to have a bike rack and have been looking at upgrading their bike rack situation out front. There is one in the back by Central and have other plans for a face lift and in the interim a nice bike rack would be nice.

Debbie Finnigan attached the RFP for the travel plan and part of that is for each school to discuss these, whether it be sidewalks, bike racks or improvement programs, police detail, or what ever the case may be so we can do the travel plan and apply for grant funding which should be January next year, summer of this year, they keep changing it. This plan will be done before school starts next year, placed in the RFP to have two meetings at each school to discuss travel plan. The first meeting would be for ideas and thoughts and what needs to be done. The second to help prioritize from the group's standpoint what should go first, what should we ask for second for each school.

Kirsten Barton asked if Little Harbor could have one bike rack and New Franklin have the second.

Mr. Shea will speak with the Principal at Little Harbor and Debbie Finnigan suggested asking the question and bring forward at our next meeting for a decision and will send out a map.

Lastly, Mr. Shea asked Fran, coming from the North side, is she has any suggestions? Fran responded having made suggestions a long time ago that they have no crosswalk on Woodbury, now has a lot of grass, about 6 ft, in front of her house on Woodbury Ave.

Likes what they have done, however, it hasn't slowed people down, they still fly down the road.

The Co-Chair asked if we could revisit the whole crossing guard issue on Woodbury Avenue and asked if it made sense to have one at Edmond?

Debbie Finnigan responded they need to speak with the Police Department.

Mr. Shea stated that the crossing guard is the easiest, the traffic policeman is the hard. A We feel there is a need there or at Cutts and Maplewood.

Coming from the diamond district there are no sidewalks, they have to go to the corner or walk in the street, so a crossing guard there won't help.

Debbie Finnigan would rather see paint down "Pedestrian Ahead" then "Pedestrian Ahead" signage.

Fran stated it did help with the truck traffic, they hit the snow banks and now that the snow has melted, sees tire tracks in the 6 ft. of grass where they are passing people and

going over the curb. People still try and pass me on the right and smash into the granite curbing.

Barbara Pamboukas suggested doing other signage such as downtown “Pedestrian Crossing” must stop to add to Rockingham as well as Maplewood and Edmond. There’s a crosswalk there but cannot see it as it was painted several years ago. Also asked to have one put on Maplewood and Central as there are a lot of children crossing that area with parents. Some come from a path that crosses Market St. down Central Ave. and needs a crosswalk and placard at Rockingham and Woodbury.

Repairing Sidewalk on Maplewood, a lot of children walk here as well as downtown, there is a 9” wide sidewalk going on the ramp going over the bridge.

V. NEW BUSINESS:

- A. Dondero Pathway project – Debbie Finnigan reported there is a path the kids use that gets very wet in the spring. The plan is to install lighting as sometimes it is dark and remove the under brush as part of the issue is it is overgrown and concern of people hiding out. The problem is the path goes right through the wetlands. They are walking through the wetlands and they maybe walking on private property and of course cannot put a path on private property. The wetlands was flagged as shown on the plan. A paved pathway would be in the wetlands. Would not be in the wetlands if a bridge was put there, the problem the bridge may end up on private property and we don’t have the funds for a right-of-way. How do we want to resolve this?

Councilor Clayburgh stated for years they have been walking through there.

Debbie Finnigan stated that a high environmental level permit would require a lot of money.

Debbie Finnigan stated whatever you do requires a permit.

Kirsten Barton suggested making it safe by placing lighting and cut the underbrush.

The Co-Chair suggested free standing solar powered lights, not having to deal with electrical and would be considered temporary.

Debbie Finnigan suggested writing a letter requesting the brush be cut back for the kids safety.

Debbie Finnigan received a call from a lady asking what she could do, she works during the day and would like to contribute, however, we don’t have a way for her to do that. Perhaps during part of the grant process we can bring this up at the travel plan meetings to get together and sort of be custodians. Perhaps they could do something on lunch hour, after work or before school to help out which would make this more of a community effort.

Mr. Shea suggested instead of a committee, have a meeting at the beginning of the year for anyone who can come and have a person go to the committee for representation and then to PTO for updates.

VI. OLD BUSINESS:

- A. National Course for SRTS – October 2009** – Kirsten Barton explained the National SRTS group has a day long course where they go to committee meetings to inform them how to better get community support and increase participation, what should be done at each school for walking, biking. It is a day long course, a site review is done of a school of your choice where you will observe a drop off, pick up for ideas to improve walking/biking.

Jean Ward stated St. Pat's has very few bikers and fewer walkers as they are in middle of the City and a large portion of students come from out of town. They do walk to a park and to the theater downtown.

The Co-Chair stated that it is funded through grants. As October is National Walk to School Day, it will be held in October at the Library and observing drop off at the Middle School. The date will be selected once the testing date is known.

Mr. Shea suggested a holiday as testing is avoided. The testing probably will be October 5 through 23rd and it was suggested Tuesday, October 27 for the course.

Kirsten Barton will reserve the library.

Debbie Finnigan will contact National SRTS and write letter to state.

The Chair stated that once we receive the information we can prepare the To-Do list, invitation to City Council, SABER, Library Board, etc. and the public.

Francine Horvath will be the representative for New Franklin School and will submit information to City Clerk.

A representative is needed for the Middle School and the Co-Chair will contact Mr. Stokel.

Rebecca Emerson said that at one point we thought it would be nice to have two representatives from each school and Debbie Finnigan suggested having three-at-large members, not necessary tied to the school, or a parent.

Debbie Finnigan will forward the form to Sherri at Little Harbor School and stated we need a vote stating we will have three at-large members and send a memo to Manager to forward to City Council.

MOTION made by Kirsten Barton for Debbie Finnigan to forward letter to create three at-large positions to City Manager to forward to City Council. Seconded by Jean Ward. Motion passed.

- C. Walk to School Day** – Will be held on Thursday, October 29th.

Debbie Finnigan reported that she spoke with Ann Nuttle about a mascot for SRTS Portsmouth and will prepare a flyer to be sent home to the parents/kids explaining what we are trying to do, will send a press release

to the paper. Ann Nuttle will review for content to make sure it is specific enough that we are getting what we need to put on a t-shirt. Will send an e-mail to John Corrigan that we are starting this process and would like to spend the money on banners, ordering t-shirts, etc.

Rebecca Emerson will work on the other part of the To Do list, goodies, signs, etc.

Debbie Finnigan said that is the kind of thing to have the kids to as an art project.

Councilor Clayburgh stated that Dondero students went to St. James Church and was not successful.

Rebecca Emerson said we will be working with the bus company and find them a place to drop off away from the school and talked about having the buses stop at the lower City Hall parking lot and walking to Little Harbor.

Rebecca asked to have the Walk to School Day on the next agenda and to give us an update on the booking of the woman for the course and will let us know if the Hilton Garden Room is available. Update on creating the three at-large positions. Place the Weebles on the agenda as well.

VII. INFORMATION:

Committee list will be completed with the additional members

VIII. ADJOURNMENT:

The next meeting is scheduled for April 15, 2009 at 9:00 a.m. at St. Patrick School.

The Complete packet is on file at the Public Works Department

Respectfully submitted

Elaine Boucas, Recording Secretary