

**TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2019, 8:00AM
SELECTBOARD MEETING ROOM, MUNICIPAL CENTER
MINUTES**

Members present: Town Manager Peter Elwell, Police Chief Mike Fitzgerald, Planning Director Sue Fillion, Chamber of Commerce Representative Deb Bunker, Citizen Representative Louise Zak, School Representative Alice Charkes, and Highway/Utilities Superintendent Dan Tyler.

Selectboard Representative: Tim Wessel.

Other staff members present: DPW Engineering Technician Josh Carnes.

Others present: Douglas Cox, Mollie Burke, Prudence MacKinney, Kathleen White, and others who did not sign the attendance sheet.

Town Manager Elwell called the meeting to order at 8:02am.

Approve Minutes – September 19, 2019

Elwell asked the committee to approve the minutes from the September 19 meeting.

MOTION BY LOUISE ZAK, AND SECONDED BY ALICE CHARKES, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE SEPTEMBER 19 MEETING. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Public Participation

Doug Cox, from the West Brattleboro Association (WBA), displayed some reflective arm and leg bands that were purchased about 4 years ago and funded by Local Motion and the Governor's Highway Safety Program. He said that the WBA would like to purchase some similar bands for West Brattleboro residents to improve safety for bicyclists and pedestrians, and he suggested expanding such a program town-wide. He asked if the Town would contribute to the funding and sourcing of the program. Alice Charkes, speaking as a member of BCAT (Brattleboro Coalition for Active Transport), suggested that BCAT may be able to contribute funds. Police Chief Fitzgerald said that his department may be able to contribute some funds from his safety line item in the budget.

Monthly Report on Pedestrian and Bicycle Incidents – Police Chief Mike Fitzgerald reported that in the last month, a total of 55 motor vehicle accidents were reported, with 4 containing personal injuries. He said that up until Tuesday, October 15, there were no incidents involving bicyclists or pedestrians. However, he reported that 3 accidents took place on that date in a span of about 4 hours and that all of those incidents were still under investigation. He reported that on October 15 at 1:15pm, Dispatch received a belated report of a pedestrian/motor vehicle incident that reportedly took place earlier in the day. He said that a pedestrian reported that she was in the crosswalk south of the Post Office and was crossing Main Street when she was struck by a motor vehicle that was traveling north on Main Street. She said that she was spun around and knocked off her feet. She asked Rescue to transport her to Brattleboro Memorial Hospital (BMH). Chief Fitzgerald said that no other calls had been received pertaining to the incident. He said that the second accident took place at the intersection of Main and Walnut Streets where a bicyclist was traveling north on Main Street and a motor vehicle that was traveling south turned from Main Street onto Walnut Street and struck the bicyclist. The bicyclist was transported to BMH for a broken left tibia. Chief Fitzgerald reported that the third accident involved a bicyclist traveling north on Putney Road and a motor vehicle traveling south that turned left into the Wendy's parking lot and collided with the bicyclist. The vehicle left the area, but the vehicle registration was reported and Dispatch issued an All-Points Bulletin. The bicyclist refused medical treatment. There was no discussion by the committee.

Monthly Report on Traffic Data Collection – Josh Carnes, Engineering Technician from Public Works, spoke about the data in his report dated October 16, 2019. His report contained information collected on South Street (2 locations), Greenleaf Street, Pine Street (near 117 Pine), Williams Street (2 locations in both directions) Abbott Road, Black Mountain Road (near the mobile home park), Marlboro Road (in front of Leader Home Center and a second location near Dutton's Farm Stand), and Green Street. He noted that all of the speed data collected were within acceptable range to the posted speed limit, with the exception of

South Street. He said that the likelihood of drivers traveling at the posted speed limit on South Street was only about 1% and the residents in the area confirmed the large amount of speeding traffic. Chief Fitzgerald said that he would add more police enforcement to that area. Carnes also noted that the speed on Black Mountain Road was slightly higher than the posted speed limit and the data was consistent with speed data collected last summer. There was some discussion by the Committee. Zak requested that the mobile speed device be installed on Green Street further away from the school in response to a request recently made by a resident.

Updates/Continued Discussion on Ongoing Matters

- (a) *Request to Install Crosswalk on Western Avenue at Coopers Coop On The Avenue*
- (b) *Requests to VTrans re: Pedestrian Safety on Putney Road*

(a) Elwell said that this matter was discussed at the last meeting and the request to install a crosswalk had been deemed to be inappropriate at that location. He said that staff discussed the matter further and did not have any alternatives to offer at this time. He said that the location would receive intense scrutiny in the near future when a scoping study was anticipated to take place around the request to add bike lanes along Western Avenue and consideration would be given to the crosswalk request at that time. There was no discussion.

(b) Town Manager Elwell summarized the considerable safety concerns on Putney Road expressed by this committee at several meetings. He noted that recent discussions had revolved around adding a pedestrian crossing at the Hannaford Store intersection. He said that after several conversations with Jesse Devlin at Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans), it now appears that VTrans was willing to move forward with two proposals: (1) designing and implementing a pedestrian crossing signal at the Hannaford intersection, and (2) installing a pedestrian RRFB (rectangular rapid flashing beacon) and crosswalk at a Putney Road location to be determined between Town Crier Drive and Noah's Lane. He said the proposals would act as interim solutions while the larger Putney Road Improvement Project was progressing. He said that VTrans asked for a prioritized safety list from the committee, but cautioned about implementation of additional requests at this time. Elwell added that VTrans also expected to initiate a speed study along Putney Road from Town Crier Drive to the roundabout with the intent of lowering the speed limit, if appropriate. Fillion suggested using street paint for the crosswalk at Hannaford and green painted bike lanes along the road as used in other locations around the State. MacKinney and Charkes spoke about the possibility of installing a RRFP at the Wantastiquet Drive intersection as a future improvement project. There was much discussion by the committee.

MOTION BY LOUISE ZAK, AND SECONDED BY ALICE CHARKES, TO MOVE FORWARD WITH THE TWO LARGER SCALE PROJECTS AS THE COMMITTEE'S "ASKS", AND IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE SPEED LIMIT REDUCTION THAT VTRANS IS CONSIDERING INDEPENDENTLY TO USE STREET PAINT TO THE DEGREE NECESSARY TO HELP JUSTIFY A LOWER SPEED LIMIT AND SPECIFICALLY GREEN BIKE LANES FOR THE SEGMENTS VTRANS BELIEVES ARE APPROPRIATE AND CONSISTENT WITH HOW THEY ARE BEING USED ELSEWHERE. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Street and Sidewalk Safety Policy Safety Action Requests

- (a) *Request to Plow Sidewalks from Burger King to I-91 Bridge*
- (b) *Speed Limit on the State Highway Section of Route 9 (Marlboro Road)*

(a) Elwell said that a citizen submitted a Safety Action Request asking to increase the plowing of the sidewalk starting at Burger King to the I-91 Bridge. Tyler said that with the addition of the second sidewalk plow and the number of pedestrians use of that sidewalk, Public Works supported the request to extend plowing the additional amount of sidewalk – at least to the Outlet Center. There was a brief discussion.

MOTION BY LOUISE ZAK, AND SECONDED BY ALICE CHARKES, TO ENDORSE THE EXTENSION OF THE SIDEWALK PLOWING, AS REQUESTED. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

(b) Elwell said that a request had been received from Doug Cox, of West Brattleboro Association (WBA), to reduce the speed limit on the portion of Route 9 (Marlboro Road) from Edward Heights to Paradise Farms.

Cox spoke about WBA's safety concerns and its request for the speed reduction, including the dense population of families and pedestrians in that location, the concentration of low-income housing which included people who did not own cars and relied on alternate forms of transportation, improving the road so as to conform with the Town's Master Plan, and making West Brattleboro a walkable village. He said the request came out of a meeting on October 4 with VTrans, legislators, Marlboro representatives, and others to discuss VTrans' proposed Route 9 "2021 Reclaim Project" and improve the safety along Route 9. He asked the committee to endorse a draft proposal that he provided that would lower the speed limit to 30mph from Edwards Heights to the Paradise Farm. Elwell clarified that the stretch of road included in the proposal was under the jurisdiction of VTrans and such a request would have to come from the municipality. He asked the committee to discuss the matter, and said that any recommendations would then be forwarded to the Selectboard for action. He noted that the speed data presented earlier in the meeting did not support a suggestion that excessive speed was particularly problematic, so he suggested framing the speed reduction request in conjunction with the creation of bike lanes that would be a part of the larger VTrans reconstruction project. He suggested that this was a good time to make the request to VTrans because the project was in the advanced design phase. Mollie Burke suggested that lowering the speed limit would also provide a strong argument to install pedestrian crosswalks in the area near Westgate, Edward Heights, and Mountain Home Park. Fillion added that Mountain Home Park contained about 8% of the town's population and when population figures from Westgate and other nearby residential areas were included in the number, it would increase to about 10% of the town's population, which also included a large number of elders and children. There was much discussion by the committee, including improving safety along Marlboro Road, the location of sidewalks, inconsistency of roadways and bike lanes along the road, and the desire to make Route 9 safe and pleasant for parents with children and bicyclists to use. Elwell was asked about the process to move forward with such a request. After conferring with Cox, Elwell agreed that staff would write a letter of support and present it to the Selectboard at a meeting of the Board on either November 5 or November 19. Cox offered to assist with the process and said that the WBA would provide a letter of support of the Town's request.

MOTION BY LOUISE ZAK, AND SECONDED BY ALICE CHARKES, TO PROCEED IN THE MANNER THAT HAS BEEN PROPOSED BY THE WEST BRATTLEBORO ASSOCIATION, AS DISCUSSED. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Other Business – Informational Items

Elwell said that he would be out of town for the November 21 meeting and asked if the committee wanted to meet without him present or cancel the November meeting. The committee agreed to cancel the November 21 meeting and meet next on December 19.

Wessel said that a bicyclist friend expressed concern about the narrow portion of roadway available to bicyclists crossing Melrose Bridge. Cox suggested that if a cyclist was not comfortable entering into the travel roadway, they could use the sidewalk to cross the bridge. Charkes requested that this matter be added to the December 19 Traffic Safety Committee agenda for further discuss about the signage at the bridge.

There was no further business.

ELWELL ADJOURNED THE MEETING AT 9:18AM.