



Town of Merrimack, New Hampshire

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MERRIMACK BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN MASTER PLAN WORK GROUP

APPROVED MINUTES

Tuesday, January 13, 2015

Planning Board Members Present: Bob Best, Desirea Falt, and Nelson Disco.

Others Present: Assistant Planner Donna Pohli and HEAL NH Active Living Coordinator Nik Coates.

1. Call to Order.

Desirea Falt called the Merrimack Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan Work Group (Group) meeting to order at 7:35pm in the Matthew Thornton Meeting Room.

2. Overview of Helpful Documents by Nik Coates, Active Living Coordinator with HEAL NH.

Nik Coates introduced himself and gave a little bit of background on himself and the documents before the Group. Nik Coates also said that it seems that the Group has already begun some of the initial assessment pieces as outlined in the Livable Walkable Toolkit and his documents in the member's packets. He strongly recommends completing the full bike/ped assessment by walking around the community. He will send the Group the document on how to complete a bicycle/pedestrian assessment. He encouraged the Group to ask the public for the origin destinations (where do people want to go to) and consider specifically the citizens who fit in the category of those that are "interested in bicycling or walking but feel slightly afraid to". He went through examples such as Manchester and their new Bike/Ped plan. Nik Coates also offered to send the Group documentation that shows that sidewalks increase property values in which some members of the Group were very interested in. Nik Coates also discussed setbacks for commercial properties and was impressed that Merrimack already modified its parking requirements in 2013. Nik Coates also discussed Concord and their complete street policy.

3. Questions for Nik Coates, Active Living Coordinator with HEAL NH.

Nik Coates asked if the Group had any questions for him. Desirea Falt asked whether the community should help with the assessment. Nik Coates explained how other communities held round table discussions which each had a facilitator and note taker. The Group discussed the need for the meetings and workshops to be more interactive. Bob Best explained what Merrimack has done so far, such as reviewing setbacks and large parking areas in their site plan and subdivision reviews, requiring sidewalks in our regulations, and having narrowed streets (with the exception of a few). The Group mentioned that one of the biggest obstacles was figuring out how to patch the sidewalks together to get rid of the existing gaps along DW Highway and other major streets. Nik Coates suggested the Group focus on projects that are "really going to add value to the community". One of the members asked how to get the community energized about the subject. Nik Coates explained that in other communities, they wrote good press releases, related bike/ped infrastructure to the importance of safety, visited groups in the community such as the senior center, schools, etc., and worked with the police and fire departments which are well respected. Nik Coates also said that one of their

community events was a 40 minute presentation/update on the project and then had multiple 10 minute short films highlighting bicycling and walking. They also had tables at schools' open houses with a tri-fold poster and fliers for parents. Nik Coates explained how surprised other communities were at the results of some traffic speed studies. Nik Coates suggested Merrimack have wayfinding in the Town Center to which the Group explained Merrimack has the blue signs around Town Hall and in the Town Center area currently, but there is room for improvement. Nik Coates said to try to do anything to make the community gain a sense of place such as focusing on villages or neighborhoods to try to slow down traffic on D.W. Highway. The public should be asked what kind of community they value such as local shops, biking/walking or would citizens prefer being alone in their own vehicles. Nik Coates will send us pictures of Pleasant St. and Clinton St. in Concord for examples of lane narrowing. Nelson Disco asked what the term "complete streets" means to Nik. Nik Coates responded that he feels it means that everyone has an opportunity to use the road to get where they need to go safely. He stressed the importance of being pragmatic and recognize the context. Nik Coates mentioned Silver Street in Dover as an example. Bob Best asked Nik Coates how Dover used developer dollars to get them to build a complete street piece by piece. Donna Pohli explained that the Silver Street project has been on the town's CIP for years and that it is Dover's tax dollars being spent on the project.

4. Discuss Revised Livable Walkable Toolkit Table.

Donna Pohli explained that she took the original Livable Walkable Toolkit table and modified it to better represent previous discussions and decisions made by the Group in previous meetings. She further explained that the document is still a draft for the Group to change and edit to represent what they want the process to be. The Group requested that the timeline and color-coding be removed so that it is simpler to look at and understand. Regarding the sidewalk maps that Donna created using GIS, Nelson said he wanted more. He wanted to be able to see drainage infrastructure and obstacles in the road that would make sidewalks difficult to construct or to bicycle safely.

It was decided by the Group to first focus on gaining more public participation and to increase momentum and energy for the project. The Group also decided to pick 3 intersections in Town to focus on and ask the Community for their input on. At this scale, drainage and other infrastructure along with intangibles such as how safe the intersection feels to cross can be noted on the plan while in the field. In order to determine what intersections might be good to study and to gain initial feedback, Bob Best will post on the Merrimack Forum on Facebook. Desirea Falt suggested the Group have a way to let residents give their feedback on the subject intersections without having to attend the sitewalk meetings.

Desirea Falt started going through November's task list and said that she will reach out to the Town Manager and Assistant Town Manager on January 14, 2014 to try to schedule an appointment between January 22nd and 30th. She will then let the Group know when the meeting is scheduled.

5. Discuss Data Provided by Alastair.

The Group looked at the data provided by Alastair Millns and felt it was a good start. Nelson Disco would like more data and feels that the short site walks and the Group either driving or walking down our subject roads will be further help.

6. Other Items of Concern.

The Group agreed that all of the items were previously spoken about earlier in the meeting including the sidewalk maps Donna Pohli created, getting the ball rolling with communication to the Town Manager and Town Council, and starting initial assessment site walks. The Group then decided on February 10th and March 10th to be the next meeting dates both at 7:30pm. Donna Pohli will reserve a room.

7. Minutes—November 4, 2014.

The minutes from the November 4, 2014, meeting were approved, as submitted, by a vote of 3-0-0 on a motion made by Nelson Disco and seconded by Bob Best.

8. Adjourn.

The January 13, 2015 meeting of the Merrimack Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan Work Group was adjourned at 10:05pm, by a vote of 3-0-0 on a motion by Bob Best and seconded by Nelson Disco.

Task List:

1. Donna to schedule room for February 10th and March 10th.
2. Desirea to schedule meeting with Town Manager, Assistant Town Manager, the Group, and CDD Staff.
3. Bob to post on Merrimack Forum.
4. Donna to receive additional documents/photos from Nik Coates and pass along to the Group.