

TOWN OF BELMONT
COMMUNITY PATH IMPLEMENTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE -2 PH 2:24
MEETING MINUTES
05.23.2018

Present: Russell Leino, Brian Burke, Michael Cicalese

Absent: Heather Ivester, Vincent Stanton

Staff: Spencer Gober, Office of Community Development

7:15 PM Meeting called to order

Mr. Leino informed the Committee that Town resident and former State Representative Anne Paulson would be joining the meeting to provide insight on her experience pursuing Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds for the Underwood Pool (the Pool) project.

Updates were provided by Mr. Leino regarding:

1. His meeting with Sen. Brownsberger, MassDOT, and MBTA. At the meeting, MassDOT expressed concern over the ability to fund the Alexander Underpass (the Underpass) as part of the Community Path, but be funded as a public safety project. Jackie DeWolfe from MassDOT offered to arrange a meeting in Belmont with CPIAC and MassDOT specialists;
2. The MassDOT meeting is scheduled for June 11 and will be attended by a team from MassDOT, CPIAC members, staff from Rep. Rogers' office, Selectman Paolillo, and Planning Staff. Mr. Leino asked Mr. Gober to contact PARE consultant, Amy Archer, to ask if she is available to attend;

Mr. Burke asked about the de-vegetation along the MBTA route. Mr. Leino stated that Mr. Gober could provide background information, and Mr. Gober stated that the de-vegetation was part of the MBTA's Positive Train Control (PTC) project. PTC is federally mandated, rail safety project, and the de-vegetation was necessary to allow for the installation of PTC-related infrastructure.

Ms. Paulson arrived and Mr. Leino introduced her to the CPIAC and members of the public. The following discussions were had with Ms. Paulson:

1. Comparing the scale of the Pool project with the Path. Ms. Paulson highlighted that the private funds needed for the Pool were significantly less than the Path. Mr. Leino commented that the Design-phase portion of the Path was similar to the overall Pool budget. Ms. Paulson recalled the challenge grant received from Belmont Savings Bank in the amount of \$250,000;
2. CPA funds are appropriate for the Path as "open space" is one of the three "buckets" that CPA funds can be used for. The other two buckets are: historic preservation and affordable housing;

3. Building stakeholder support. Ms. Paulson suggested engaging the following:
 - a. Town Treasurer, as he is the chair of the Community Preservation Committee, the entity responsible for allocating CPA funds at the local level;
 - b. State-level elected officials, Senator Brownsberger and Representative Rogers, and those representing neighboring communities that will also benefit from the path, such as Cambridge;
 - c. United States Senators and Representative;
 - d. The local designee for Transportation Improvement Program (TIP);
 - e. Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR);
 - f. Livable Streets Alliance;
 - g. Massachusetts Bicycle Coalition “Mass Bike”;
 - h. Councilman Steve Winslow in the City of Malden, who has been a strong advocate for “Bike to the Sea;” and,
 - i. Local citizenry – via outreach and education events.
4. Experiences with the Fitchburg Cutoff Path and similarities to the Community Path;
5. Local interest in having construction of the path begin on the eastern, Cambridge side of Town and work west to the Waltham side of Town;
6. Making an argument for why the Underpass is more than a public safety issue, that it is also a transportation issue;
7. Belmont’s defunct Bicycle Committee and the need for a Pedestrian and Bicycle Committee in Town to advocate for topics surrounding alternative modes of transit and encouraging increased bicycle and pedestrian modes in Town; and,
8. Keeping the momentum going and make sure citizens are informed and aware of the Path.

Mr. Leino highlighted the nexus between the Path and the new high school projects. He stated that the Belmont High School Building Committee’s (BHSBC) study showed there is demand for bicycles in town and that he was happy to see that the plans for the new school made accommodations for bicycle and pedestrian access. The plans assume that the Path will be built and provide connections to the Underpass. However, he expressed concerns over the fact that in their determination for parking requirements at the new school, it was necessary for the BHSBC and their consultants to assume that the Path and the Underpass would not be built.

Mr. Burke commented that the new school will be a “trail head” or access point for the Path, and Mr. Leino agreed. He went on to state that the BHSBC inquired with the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) if state funds for the school could be used to build the Underpass.

During the meeting, members of the public raised the following topics:

1. Questions about whether or not Sen. Brownsberger supports the Path;
2. The Path will require additional trees to be removed along the its route;
3. Do not support the Path if it runs behind the homes on Channing Road; and,
4. There is no apparent biking culture in Belmont, while motorists speeding through Town and the lack of sufficient bicycle infrastructure does not facilitate such a culture.

Mr. Leino discussed a need to meet again prior to the June 11 meeting with MassDOT. It was determined that June 7 at 8:15 AM was the preferred date and time.

Meeting adjourned at 9:15 PM.