

Pedestrian Infrastructure Advisory Committee to the Darien, Connecticut, Board of Selectmen

Draft Minutes

Date: September 29, 2015

Place: Darien Town Hall, Room 119-B

Present: Terry Duffy, Susanne Handler, Beth Harmon, Ted Hawkins, Pat Morrissey, and Holly Schulz-Amatruda.

Absent: Joanna Garrett, Jennifer Morgan, Bert von Stuelpnagel

Guest Speaker: Nancy Rosett, Director Community Relations, Sound Cyclists Bicycle Club

This was a regular meeting of the Pedestrian Infrastructure Advisory Committee (PIAC).

Chair Beth Harmon called the meeting to order at 7:32 pm. The minutes from the meeting of September 22nd were approved as drafted.

Nancy Rosett of the Sound Cyclists Bicycle Club (SCBC) was invited to speak about the club's activities especially as they relate to the usage of Darien roads. She started with the Mission Statement of the Club which is to promote safe cycling and provide organized bicycle rides for members. The club has been around since 1977 and currently has 1,078 members, the majority of whom live in Fairfield County. Nancy was careful to point out that SCBC is not an advocacy group because they do not seek to engage with governmental authorities in support of bicycle riding. Other organizations like Pedestrian Friendly Stamford and Fairfield Bike/Ride and the PIAC are advocacy groups. SCBC believes strongly in working to make bike riding a safer activity. They train their ride leaders annually, check proposed ride routes and instruct all participants to wear helmets and treat the bike as any other road-worthy vehicle by obeying all traffic signals.

We discussed the changes in the Connecticut bike laws. Of particular interest was that the old law required bikers to stay to the right side of the road "as far as practicable". The new law's standard requires bikers to stay to the right "as far as the cyclist deems it safe". This change is considered quite an improvement for safe biking as the cyclist can now legally adjust distance to avoid road hazards on the right side of the road. When questioned on bike riding accidents Nancy said that SCBC has approximately three to four riding accidents a year. Most are caused by road hazards like debris, sand, broken curbs, drains, etc. Only one in four accidents involve bike-car interactions.

SCBC has been endeavoring to inform the public about Connecticut's law requiring drivers to stay 3 feet away from bikers. As part of this campaign they have been making yellow road signs available to communities that say: " 3 FEET PLEASE" with an arrow between the images of a car and biker and "IT'S THE LAW".

These signs cost \$25 each but SCBC makes them available for free to communities that would like to deploy them. Nine Connecticut communities to-date have deployed the signs including our neighboring towns of Norwalk, Westport, Wilton, Fairfield, Redding and Easton. Darien was asked last year if they would like some, but the Traffic Authority, according to Nancy, said they were not interested and didn't want to promote cycling on town roads. Stamford and the DOT

have said no because the signs are not approved by the FHA's Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). There appears to be no interest by the FHA reviewing these signs because the 3 foot rule is not a national law.

Asked about her impression of Darien's roads for bikers, Nancy said the town has good north/south roads (Brookside, Hollow Tree, Middlesex, etc.) but the east/west Post Road is problematic for bikers, though there are exceptional residential stretches in Darien that make our Post Road easier for bikers to navigate than in Stamford or Norwalk. Nancy said that there is a company that makes computers for bikes that uses GPS technology to record bike trips. They have created maps of the most frequently used routes based on that data. So anyone can go to the internet at <http://labs.strava.com/heatmap/#14/-73.41700/41.11089/blue/bike> and find a map of Darien's bike route usage.

Audience member Andrew Calderwood raised the issue of the town's preliminary proposal to provide a T stop intersection and crosswalk at Middlesex Road at Leroy Avenue junction. He and a few neighbors would welcome a crosswalk but are concerned about the narrowing of the road and would like to propose an alternate plan. Several committee members have studied this intersection and have been concerned about how to improve it for walking (especially kids to the high school) and biking. We directed him to contact Ed Gentile at Public Works.

The committee reviewed plans for a letter to the editors which should be published next week and the timetable for launching our on-line survey at SurveyMonkey.com. As regards to Board of Education (BOE) guest speakers and contacting school principals, we agreed to put on hold the latter until we could hear directly from someone from the BOE or Education Department. We expect that to happen at the meeting next week.

The meeting adjourned at 9:01

Guest in the audience: Andrew Calderwood

Respectfully submitted by Ted Hawkins, Clerk