

Richmond Transportation Committee

Meeting Minutes – May 11, 2021

All participants attended the meeting remotely.

Committee members: Cathleen Gent (chair), Chris Cole (vice-chair), Mark Damico, Erik Filkorn, James Floyd, Jon Kart

Absent: Allen Knowles

Others present: Ravi Venkataraman (Town Planner), Jason Charest (CCRPC), Dan Noyes

Cathleen Gent opened the meeting at 5:34 PM.

Meeting Minutes: April 15, 2021 moved by Damico, seconded by Floyd. Approved unanimously.

Route 2 Repaving Project Updates - Ravi Venkataraman provided a status report on what has transpired since the last meeting. He noted that, at the last meeting, he had conveyed there were plans for re-building the sidewalks on East Main Street this year, which is not the case. Venkataraman discussed a letter sent by the Richmond Selectboard to the VTrans Secretary last week (included in committee packet) and indicated that a meeting with Secretary Joe Flynn is expected. There is a long history with this project, with many moving parts with this project, a long history. Three main scenarios pertain to the sidewalks, streetscape and water/sewer infrastructure portion of the project. Scenario 1: VTrans will complete the sidewalks as part of their Route 2 project. There are differing views as to whether VTrans committed to the sidewalk component. The meeting with Secretary Flynn may help clarify this point. Scenario 2: Town applies for grants to construct the sidewalks. Local matches are required and staff are investigating utilizing a bond for the required local match. Scenario 3: The bond approved by voters in 2016 may be tapped for the sidewalk construction. Staff are investigating whether the bond vote may apply today for project funding.

The VTrans grants are due by June 4th. Because there will likely not be an answer ahead of that deadline about whether VTrans is including sidewalks in the Route 2 scope of work, Ravi Venkataraman will prepare draft grant applications and send the draft to a committee sub-group for review: Mark Damico, James Floyd and Jon Kart. The draft grant will be provided to the Transportation Committee at our next meeting.

Discussion followed. In response to a question, Ravi Venkataraman said that Waterbury was not required to pay for sidewalk improvements as the project was “grandfathered”.

Motion by Jon Kart, seconded by Mark Damico, that the Transportation Committee endorses the Selectboard letter to VTrans, dated May 3, 2021. Voting in favor: unanimous. If additional support from the Transportation Committee is needed, such as contacting public officials, staff will bring those requests forward. Staff will update the Transportation Committee about the Route 2 project at the next meeting. (Chris Cole joined at 6:10 PM.)

UPWP – Bridge Street Project - Ravi Venkataraman and Jason Charest re-capped the three alternatives for the upper portion of Bridge Street presented at the public input session on April 8th. The Trails Committee is recommending Alternative 3 and the project leads would like to hear from the Transportation Committee.

The Transportation Committee first discussed the area near Jolina Court north to the main business block. There was unanimous support for part of Alternative 2, namely for a sidewalk on the east side of

Bridge Street – to connect to the sidewalk in front of the former bank and The Big Spruce restaurant. Committee members did not think a shared use path is desired for that area, as it could add to confusion and pedestrians/bicycling may move across the vehicle travel lanes. Several committee members said the at-grade striping with no raised sidewalk raises safety concerns for pedestrians. Dan Noyes expressed concern about making any changes to the current arrangement in front of the Richmond Market and would like to keep the striping in front of the market instead of placing a sidewalk there. He said that the set-up is working well for large trucks and noted that he owns quite a bit of the area being considered for improvements. Committee members agreed the town should work with Dan Noyes as an active partner for the project. Jason Charest will follow up with the railroad to assess the required distance from the railroad tracks for a sidewalk.

With respect to crosswalks in the upper block, the committee discussed alternative 2 and alternative 3. Discussion ensued about having two crosswalks – one in the current location and one at the Pleasant Street/Depot Street intersection. Bump outs at each would add safety. However, having two crosswalks would result in the loss of an additional parking space. Five members supported having two crosswalks and one member preferred the Pleasant Street/Depot Street location only. Dan Noyes and Jason Charest discussed the width for parallel parking, which is 8 feet. Jason will follow up with Dan to discuss parallel parking in that block.

Dan Noyes left the meeting at that time. Jason Charest and Ravi Venkataraman reviewed the alternatives for the Bridge Street/Huntington Road/Thompson Road/Cochran Road intersection. Venkataraman noted that the Trails Committee preferred alternative 3, for a mini round-about. There was general committee agreement that the mini round-about is ideal, but the project length of time and cost are problematic. Chris Cole said it would be unlikely that federal funds would be available, due to lower crash incidents. None of the alternatives seemed ideal and the Committee asked Jason Charest to work with the consultant team to come up with a revised alternative based on alternative 2 that would slow traffic and add safety for pedestrians (e.g., flashing crosswalk signs).

Northern Bike Ped Master Plan – A steering committee meeting will take place during the week of May 24th, date to be determined. Ravi Venkataraman will send date to Transportation committee members and will post the meeting via public outlets for members of the public. There was not enough meeting time to review the draft section of the plan for Route 2. Committee members will bring comments to the steering committee meeting. Jason Charest left the meeting at this time.

Future of Rural Transit Pilot Project – Cathleen Gent reported that the MMUUSD pilot project proposal was approved and that a kick off meeting will take place in mid-May. A transportation committee from Jericho, Underhill, and Cambridge is advocating a bus system similar to the one advocated for Route 2 and that pilot project will assess both options. The consensus of the Transportation Committee is to not take an active role in this project. Cathleen Gent and Mark Damico may attend the kick off meeting to learn more.

Old and New Business – Cathleen Gent noted the next Committee meeting is on May 25th and that both she and Venkataraman will be out of town for the June 8th meeting, although Venkataraman plans to participate. Mark Damico asked when in-person meetings may resume. Venkataraman said Josh Arneson and the Selectboard are working on a new set up for hybrid meetings.

At 7:30 PM, motion to adjourn by Filkorn, Seconded by Cole. Approved unanimously.

-Cathleen Gent