

Richmond Transportation Committee

Meeting Minutes – February 21, 2023

Committee members present: Chris Cole (Chair), Cathleen Gent (Vice Chair), Keith Jennings, Jon Kart, Allen Knowles, Cameron Wong

Others present: Ian Stokes (Richmond resident and member of the Richmond Climate Action Committee)

All attended remotely.

A quorum was reached and the Chair convened the meeting at 5:33 PM.

Abbreviations used in these minutes: ARPA = American Rescue Plan Act of 2021; CCRPC = Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission; D&K = Dubois and King; GMT=Green Mountain Transit; PPL = Project Pipeline Document; RTC = Richmond Transportation Committee; SB = Selectboard; TAP=Transportation Alternatives Program; UPWP = Unified Planning Work Program; VTRANS=Vermont Agency of Transportation; RVC=Riverview Commons

Public Comment: Ian Stokes requested time for public comment:

Stokes: In requesting a few minutes of your meeting I noted to the co-Chairs that while making comments I also can't resist the temptation to make a few "helpful suggestions".

Of course I do want to thank your Committee, and all other Town Committees for your commitment and dedication. I'm aware of the frustrations inherent in local democracy, as well as nationally and globally, that initiatives usually take years or even decades to realize. And I'm sure you know that I share your anxiety that Transportation as practiced today is a major threat to the viability of life on this planet. The threats are immediate and we don't have years to act, certainly not decades.

Focusing on the immediate, it's been frustrating to see recent Front Porch Forum (FPF) discussion about traffic calming on Town Roads largely uninformed by the recommendations of the Bike/Ped task force and by your work especially regarding Bridge Street and Cochran Road. People love to vent, and there is a very wide range of opinions, largely focused on people's desires to travel fast and in comfort while also wishing to use roads for recreation and to live on quiet and safe streets. There's been very little about the need to use our roads for non-vehicular transportation. (By which I mean getting to work, the library, shops, meetings, etc.). We know that active transportation has huge benefits for people's health as well as that of the planet.

Which brings us to questions of communications. I know that Town Committees can't impose solutions, but can they proactively advocate for the lifestyle changes that are now essential to addressing the

existential threats we face?

Which brings me to two cases in point:

- The Richmond Climate Action Committee (RCAC) is not a Town Committee, so it is endowed with a greater ability to make statements and actions about lifestyle changes that can have an impact. The RCAC website, posting on FPF and showing up at the Farmers' Market have been some modest contributions.

- Ethan Tapper (as County Forester) is increasingly assertive in his abundant writings about what must be done to ensure the health of our forests and the habitats they provide.

It's a tall order, but perhaps an essential one: Can the RTC develop and encourage dialogue that informs people and promotes behavioral changes in how we travel.

Of course I have to ask – how might I and others work with you in such an effort?

Cole replied that he has followed the FPF discussions and has also noted factual inaccuracies in postings there, for instance in how roads are funded. He noted that RTC has focused on gaps in infrastructure for active transportation, and on planning and funding to remedy those gaps. This has been in alignment with the Town Plan of 2018. RTC has not engaged in setting policy, nor in educating the public as a specific mission, other than about specific RTC projects.

Gent noted that RTC does make considerable efforts at communication about its projects, for instance in relation to the current Western Gateway Corridor Study there are four focus groups and a public survey occurring this month and next. She noted that further public advocacy in support of our projects would help push them to fruition.

Kart noted that RTC was formed to meet the need for planning and finding funding to remedy gaps in community infrastructure.

Stokes reiterated the need to change people's behavior – but how?

Cole briefly reviewed the planning and scoping projects underway and that have been completed.

Wong mentioned RTC's communications with GMT for possible public micro-transit, such as the pilot shuttle project done in Montpelier, these methods being more appropriate for low population density areas than fixed route buses or for-profit ride sharing.

Jennings noted a frequent lack of understanding in the community of facts about transportation, such as the laws about 4 ft. space for passing bicyclists and pedestrians, the requirement for adequate sight lines when passing, and how transportation infrastructure is paid for, i.e. with general revenues, not exclusively gas taxes and user fees.

Cole thanked Stokes for his attendance, interest, and useful discussion.

1. Revisions to the agenda: Gent requested an addition to General Updates, time permitting, related to a new Vermont State Walking College.

2. Approval of Minutes from January 24, 2023: There were no corrections or additions to the minutes. **Motion by Kart, seconded by Gent, to approve minutes. Approved unanimously.**

3. Updates:

a. RTC Recommendations to the ARPA Committee: Cole reported on his attendance at the February 8, 2023 ARPA Committee meeting as well as the email he sent them prior to the meeting. He stated that the RTC recommendations/requests for funding were favorably received and he thinks that funding is likely. However, the entire ARPA committee was not present, and voting on funding has not yet occurred. Gent noted that ARPA committee indicated they want to wait to see if we get the TAP grant we have applied for.

b. FY23 Western Gateway Scoping Study: The focus group for cemetery commissioners took place Feb. 8. Gent attended for RTC and took notes for the steering committee. CCRPC is arranging for a Rt2 residents and landowners focus group, and a school focus group, tentatively March 6 or March 10. Participation for a RVC focus group has not been achieved yet. The public survey is set for March. Knowles noted that minutes for the last steering committee meeting have not been received from D&K. He will inquire about that.

c. FY23 Cochran Rd Study: This is proceeding under the aegis of the SB. Gent provided the following:

1. The Richmond Selectboard has purchased Radar Speed Feedback Signs, two of which are intended for the east end and the west end of Cochran Road. There is a desire to have those in service as soon as feasible. Sai Sarepalli from CCRPC is advising Josh Arneson and the Selectboard on the placement of those signs. This item is on the 2/21 Selectboard agenda.

2. CCRPC traffic counts, which the Town has formally requested from CCRPC. These traffic counts are expected to be done sometime between April and May, depending on CCRPC staffing and cooperative weather. The traffic counts will provide a baseline and will inform both the traffic calming and FY24 corridor/scoping study of Cochran Rd. Follow up traffic counts will be done after the traffic calming measures are in place to monitor any changes.

3. FY23 UPWP Mid-year Adjustment Program – This is the temporary traffic calming project that has just been approved by the CCRPC board. CCRPC is amending the existing contract with DuBois & King to add the traffic calming tasks. This project will lay out temporary traffic calming measures – and will be completed by June – to be implemented at a future time, perhaps this summer.

d. FY23 Rt.2 Pinch Point Study: The Town and CCRPC have authorized Stantec to proceed, and Stantec has provided a scope of work. A kick off meeting is planned for early March, and a site visit is planned for early April.

4. Cochran Road/Bridge Street/Thompson Road/Huntington Road Intersection – Next Steps per 2021 Scoping Report: Due to time constraints, this item was deferred to the next meeting.

5. Review of Walkability Audit Report, Executive Summary, and Deficiencies and Solutions Matrix:

Wong has added photos and formatting to the report. Jennings has provided an Executive Summary. Gent has provided a Deficiencies and Solutions matrix. All of these were reviewed and placed in the Google drive for final suggestions and editing. A request has been made to place the Walkability Audit on the SB agenda, probably for late March or early April.

6. General Updates: These items were curtailed due to time constraints.

a. Town Planner Hiring: Interviews continue.

b. Dialogue with railroad about future projects: Deferred

c. Vermont State Walking College: Gent requested this addition to the agenda, but time did not allow any discussion of it. It is a 6-month, distance-learning fellowship program for walkable/livable community advocates, sponsored by AARP Vermont and America Walks. The deadline to apply is March 10th. Please see the link at: <https://states.aarp.org/vermont/calling-all-walking-enthusiasts>

7. Adjourn: Time having run out, the meeting was adjourned by consensus at 6:58 PM.

Agenda Items for next meeting: The next meeting will be by March 14, 2023.

- Cochran Road/Bridge Street/Thompson Road/Huntington Road Intersection – Next Steps per 2021 Scoping Report: The goal is to review the 2021 Scoping Report for that intersection, including the Transportation Committee's views as discussed in the report. Cathleen will provide a summary during the meeting. There will be a discussion about getting this item on a SB meeting agenda. Safety issues remain at this intersection and the Selectboard recently discussed this area/project.
- General Updates
- Vermont State Walking College

Minutes by Allen Knowles