

MINUTES
WEST HARTFORD PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE COMMISSION MEETING
Monday, December 9, 2019
WEST HARTFORD TOWN HALL, ROOM 400
Next Meeting Tuesday January 13, 2020 @ 7:00PM ROOM 400

Board Members in attendance: Ken Livingston, Dan Firestone, Sandy Fry, Daniel Johnson, Colin Gillespie, Paul Hogan II, Jill Morawski

Town Staff in attendance: Greg Sommers

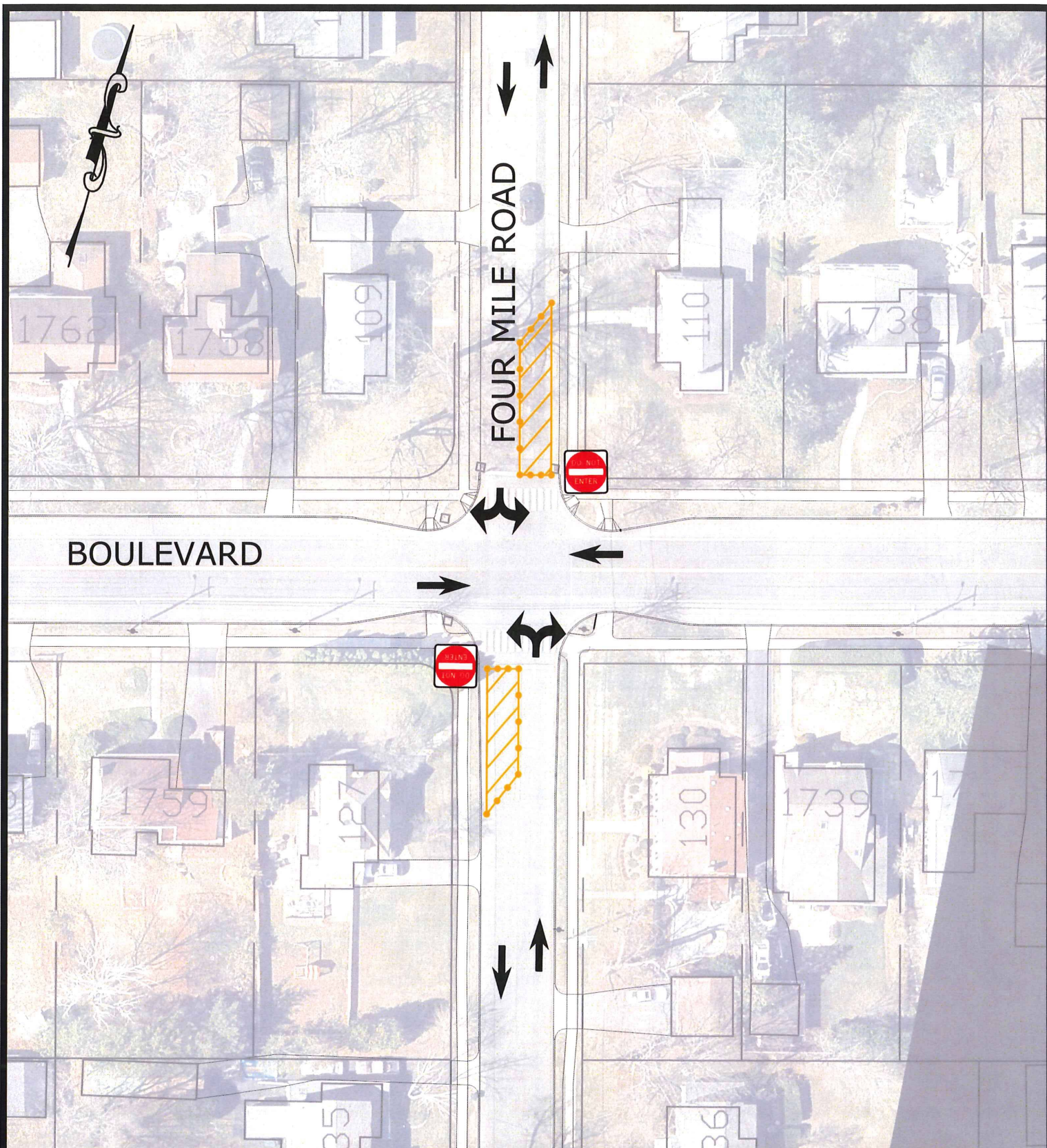
1. Quorum was held. Call to order 7:10 PM
2. Approval of previous meeting minutes on a motion by Daniel Johnson, seconded by Sandy Fry, the Minutes were approved unanimously
3. Old Business:
 - a. Report from Town staff
 - i. Greg Sommer with Town Engineering provided update on North Main Street Bridge timeframe. It is expected to begin March/April 2020 with completion of 2021. The footprint/size of the bridge will not be changing this is a replacement.
 - ii. The North Main Street road diet consultant selection and study will begin 2020 during the bridge construction. The plan is to have the road diet trial begin immediately following bridge completion. The metrics have not been determined. This item is likely to change based on consultants' recommendations and the Commission will be provided opportunities to have input on the metrics.
 - iii. The Mountain Rd and Albany Ave intersection is still in final design, the goal for the bidding to go out in Spring of 2020
 - iv. Fern Street bridge is next for replacement with construction starting in 2021, this bridge will add bike lanes and increase current weight limit.
 1. MaryEllen Thibodeau, brought up the concern with signage at the bridge that it blocks the pedestrian crosswalk signage. Greg will check on this.
 - v. New Park Ave, no update on the project for road improvements and waiting on response from DOT.
 - vi. Trout Brook Trail: Phases 5 and 6 are ready to move forward but the project is held up as the town negotiates with CTDEEP regarding maintenance concerns. Phase 3 is in design (Park Rd., south to Jackson).
 - vii. Boulevard and Four Mile intersection changes – see attached depiction- recent increase in crashes in crossing intersection to head North or South directions. Beginning Mid December, temporary measures will be in place to evaluate traffic response. The temporary barriers restrict cross entry.
 1. Colin Gillespie asked what the Town uses to pick the intersection, Greg mentioned the elevated crash rate.
 - viii. The Town is trying to formalize a traffic calming program which includes speed and different features. They are working toward a draft outline which discusses criteria which streets qualify, how can residents request traffic calming. Also part of the draft is a formal criteria and process for residents to request consideration.
 1. MaryEllen Thibodeau, asked about speed limits, Greg mentioned the speed limits are set at 85% percentile for the Town by State statute. The Town can request speed limit changes.

2. Jill Morawski brought up Mountain Road which has a bike lane as a target for traffic calming. Mountain Road is an arterial road and the traffic calming program will begin by addressing roadways with lower functional classifications than arterials. But arterial speeding is a topic that the commission may want to discuss further.
 - ix. MaryEllen Thibodeau raised concern of snow on sidewalks for ADA and resident transportation. It was suggested the commission include this issue in our report to Council (see below).
 - x. Ed Pawlak asked for clarification of speed detection radar sign chosen location, specifically near a signed intersection and not in high speed areas.
 1. Greg responded, biggest consideration is the 15 speed detectors are rotated on a 4 to 6-month schedule, they [Town] try to select locations where existing speed limit signs are present to prevent additional signage and posts.
4. New Business Discussion of Focus Areas:
- i. Review 2019 Report to Mayor and Town Council, goals of the commission to carry forward in 2020, collaboration history, accomplishments, setbacks, and areas of importance.
 - ii. Sandy Fry drafted a letter report and requested the Commission members review and make comments. *Note – the report with revisions suggested by the Commission is attached to these minutes.*
5. Reports
- a. Town staff; 4th grade education program
 - i. Helen Rubino-Turco via Greg Sommer report had a preliminary discussion with Alyssa Norwood and Lisa Daly and they are waiting for feedback from assistant superintendent.
 - ii. The commission has proposed a draft letter to the board of education for 4th grade classes on bike safety. Feedback is requested by the Commission on the draft letter. *The letter, as updated with comments after the meeting, is attached.*
 - b. Update from Bike West Hartford Inc
 - i. Requested for Center Streets route to be extended to Ellsworth, this was denied from a traffic and public safety. But the bollards on Memorial will be removed during the event. Bike West Hartford Inc. is working with Bike Walk CT for bike safety rodeo. Bike West Hartford Inc, which will increase the cost for the event. Bike west Hartford will reach out to Sustainable CT to begin the process of participating in their matching grant program.

Next meeting is scheduled for January 13, 2020 7PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel Johnson, Secretary and Board Member
West Hartford Pedestrian and Bicycle Commission



TOWN OF WEST HARTFORD

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT - DIVISION OF ENGINEERING

FOUR MILE ROAD AT BOULEVARD SEMI-DIVERTERS

DESIGNED BY: J. BRENNAN

SHEET NO. 1 OF 1

SCALE: 1"=50'

DATE: 11-26-2019

West Hartford Pedestrian and Bicycle Commission: 2019 Report to Mayor and Town Council

The West Hartford Pedestrian and Bicycle Commission is pleased to submit this report to Mayor Cantor and members of Town Council.

2019 has been a year of progress for addressing bicycle and pedestrian issues in Town, with some setbacks and some areas where more attention needs to be paid. The Commission sees its role as a partner to the Town and we offer this report to assist us in furthering that partnership.

The Pedestrian and Bicycle Commission was created in 2017 *to promote bicycle and pedestrian safety through education and advocacy and to recommend facility and rights of way improvements*. The Commission meets on a monthly basis and we usually have in attendance at our meetings several non commission members who are interested in the work we do. In 2019 four new Commission members were appointed and their varied backgrounds and experiences have enriched the work of the Commission. Former members of the commission continue to support our work with their attendance at our meetings.

In May of this year the Commission set aside time at its meeting to discuss goals and vision for the Commission. We created a simple vision - *in ten years time, many more children will bicycle in West Hartford and more people will choose to walk or bike rather than using a motor vehicle*. Specific actions needed to realize this vision include

- provision of a network of bicycle and pedestrian facilities that are safe for children and adult users.
- education campaign to inform all road users - bicyclists, pedestrians, motor vehicle operators - of their rights and responsibilities on the road.
- on bike bicycle safety education in elementary schools

In 2019, the following new facilities were completed:

- signage for the blue bicycle route was completed
- the pathway that parallels the north side of Park Road between Trout Brook Drive and Raymond Road was completed
- bike lanes and sharrows were marked on Boulevard from Quaker Lane to Whiting as part of the roadway repaving.
- buffered bike lanes were marked on Boulevard from South Main to Raymond Road. This work required modification of a curb bumpout and removal of existing roadway markings and corrects a hazard for bicyclists traveling west on Boulevard at Raymond Road..
- buffered bike lanes were marked on Fern Street from Main Street to Trout Brook.
- sharrows were marked on these roads as part of repave projects: Hilldale Road, Richmond Road, Ridgewood Road (not sure this is all correct)

Important collaborations with Town staff:

- the Commission was invited by Town Planner Todd Dumais to participate in the Plan of Conservation and Development Transportation discussion
- Town staff provided space for a bike corral to be operated by Bike West Hartford during Celebrate West Hartford
- Helen Rubino-Turco invited the Commission to work with the Parks Department in developing bike rides as part of the ten minutes to a park promotion. Scott Franklin of Bike West Hartford planned the rides.
- The Commission worked mightily, as did many non Commission members, to convince the town to undertake a road diet on North Main Street. While we look forward to working with Town staff in the implementation and evaluation of a road diet trial after the upcoming bridge construction is complete, we continue to believe that a road diet could have been planned as part of the bridge reconstruction. The Engineering Department has responded positively to Commission inquiries and suggestions about needed data to establish the "before road diet" conditions.
- At least one member of town staff has attended all but one of our monthly meetings. We were pleased when the police department sent two representatives to our May meeting, and had expected that they would attend regularly, but this has not been the case. There are many issues that we discuss that would benefit from police department input.
- The engineering department consults with the Commission regarding roadway projects, including all paving projects, seeking the Commission's input. We appreciate this openness to our input and feedback.
- The Town's energy specialist, Catherine Diviney shared with the Commission information about the Sustainability certification program and new grant program. Bike West Hartford intends to apply for one of these grants.

Areas where we had hoped for more progress:

- The Commission is dismayed by the outcome of the Mountain Road/Route 44 intersection design. The design of this roadway "improvement" project, in spite of efforts by staff to address other needs, has resulted in a project that will speed motor vehicle traffic, eliminate existing pedestrian access, and provide substandard bicycle facilities. The Town's complete streets policy was designed to keep this from happening, but it appears that the needs of motor vehicles continue to be given more attention than the needs of bicyclists, pedestrians and transit users.

Areas where we hope to work with the Town going forward

- We would like the Town to begin a 4th grade bike safety education program. South Windsor and Simsbury already have this program up and running. There is a curriculum available for the program, what is needed is a commitment to try to make it work in West Hartford.

- Because of its importance in creating safer conditions on the roads for bicyclists and pedestrians, we support increased enforcement of traffic law, particularly with respect to speeding.
- More attention should be paid to pedestrian needs - an assessment of all traffic signals to determine if pedestrian signals are needed is a good first step.
- We look forward to working with the engineering department as it develops a traffic calming program.
- Identifying and filling gaps in provision of bike parking facilities.
- Continued development of the Trout Brook Trail.
- Improved policies and procedures for snow removal from sidewalks and curb ramps. Failure of property owners to clear snow from pedestrian facilities restricts to their homes those who depend upon walking or forces them to travel unsafely. We believe that the need to clear sidewalks is as important as the need to clear snow around fire hydrants. The tactics the town uses to insure the hydrants are kept clear could be applied to snow removal from sidewalks.
- Implementation of bike share in West Hartford
- encouraging town staff to consider concurrent pedestrian phases with leading pedestrian indicators, rather than exclusive pedestrian phases (where all signals go red while pedestrians cross) at traffic signals.
- working with town staff to develop objective measures for deciding which roads need traffic calming or other speed tampering devices.

Sandra Fry, Chair

Denisse Gutierrez

Daniel Firestone, Vice Chair

Paul Hogan

Daniel Johnson, Secretary

Ken Livingston

Colin Gillespie

Jill Morawski

Ryan Nobrega

West Hartford Board of Education and Superintendent

The West Hartford Pedestrian and Bicycle Commission is writing this letter to encourage the West Hartford Schools to explore the development of a 4th grade bicycle safety education program in the schools. A similar program was piloted by South Windsor in a single elementary school in 2010 and that program is now provided to every 4th grader in South Windsor every year. Simsbury also offers this education to all its fourth graders.

We believe that a similar program in West Hartford could be implemented and would have many benefits for the children who experience the program:

- development of skills for a healthy activity that can be enjoyed over a lifetime
- understanding of how to operate a bicycle safely on the road, so that as they mature and ride on their own, they can apply good safety habits
- understanding of traffic law and traffic signs
- ability to bicycle to school, developing independence and maturity

We are aware that this type of program can fill a void in our community based upon our experience with the Center Streets event. This annual event, held on a Sunday in August, closes a few streets in the center of town and offers families an opportunity to bicycle without any concerns about traffic. The smiles on the faces of children as they ride and feel the freedom that comes with moving under their own power are priceless. But when the event ends, the bikes tend to go back into the garage and children are not encouraged to continue riding. Why? Because children are not educated on how to operate a bike safely around town and their parents often don't feel capable of providing this education themselves. A systematic program for teaching bike safety to all West Hartford children is needed.

Recently, Alyssa Norwood, a parent of children in the West Hartford schools submitted a proposal to town and school staff outlining how such a program could be set up. We understand that a meeting was held with Ms. Norwood and staff from the school system and the town to begin to discuss this program. We encourage the school administration to empower its Physical Education staff to explore how such a program could be set up. The Pedestrian and Bicycle Commission stands ready to assist with this exploration.