

West Hartford Pedestrian and Bicycle Commission (PBC) Monthly Meeting Minutes
Tuesday October 11, 2022, 7 PM
Room 24, Elmwood Community Center

1. Call to Order: 7:02 pm

Attendance: Colin, Dan, Jill, Paul, Ken, Ed - Quorum plus 3 WH citizens and 2 guests - Town Manager Rick Ledwith and energy expert Catherine Diviney

2. Introductions

3. Approval of previous meeting's minutes

Motion from Paul to approve and 2nd by Jill. Minutes approved.

4. Old Business

a. Proposed "umbrella" Sustainability Commission - Town staff will answer questions from the PBC and public

Ed asked: Where did umbrella commission idea come from, what unmet needs does it satisfy, and provide basics on commission.

Rick - explained about sustainability advisory group (SAG) that produced report (to public works and sustainability) – the report recommended collaboration among PBC, Clean Energy, and Conservation/Environment (waste management could also be rolled in as a 4th). Multiple similar meetings in March and July. Rick asked that we as a commission consider the idea of an umbrella commission...but answers not delivered yet on key questions.

Catherine - stated idea from SAG about 4 separate commissions (new one above) with quarterly structure overlay and meetings where all commission reps and others would meet quarterly to "check each and brainstorm." So SAG had not originally recommended a single collective commission. The umbrella idea was inserted more organically in March and July meetings. Opportunities for collaboration among the commissions was discussed at these meetings. They observed/heard that some commissions were less active/strong than others. The group identified need for more communication among commissions and discussed how other towns have created benchmarks umbrella organization like these. Catherine also mentioned that some WH residents felt there were too many commissions.

Jill - explained and advocated for separate commissions based on need to get detailed work done under short time constraints. She described her potential support of the SAG concept (quarterly meetings etc.) but the not unified umbrella only concept.

Catherine - detailed how an umbrella commission could have committees that could as act current communions do. Jill mentioned this seemed overly complex.

Catherine - felt umbrella could reduce silos. Also, residents could have a one stop shop for sustainability in WH. This could come alive as a website, synergy in outreach channels, and collective opportunities to brainstorm.

Ed asked if all current Commission members would become part of new umbrella commission. Rick said the PBC could decide members. He also said that the PBC could abstain from this.

Catherine said Clean Energy Commission and Conservation/Environment Commissions voted to merge while PBC could stay separate.

Colin stated it wasn't clear which of the original structural choices/ideas were still alive. Catherine reiterated idea of benefits from a consolidated work plan (with inputs from

new committees). Ed described that there are not formal communication channels to Town Council while Jill said these are available now, just unused.

Jill discussed how PBC was about different goals than environmental organizations.

Catherine asked if PBC discussed vehicle emissions. Paul indicated that we have different measurements (or lack thereof) than Clean Energy. An attendee mentioned about PBC

being entirely focused on safety. Ed discussed that the work of the PBC supports sustainability in many ways, including building strong in communities. An attendee described that there is not a surplus of engineering staff in WH. So there should be a benefit for PBC to be engaged prior to where it currently is in the planning cycle. Ed gave further examples of this.

Ken brought up idea of “Vision 0” community like other progressive towns.

Of note: decision by other bodies has been made leaving only 2 options for PBC:

1. PBC continue as separate commission and work alongside umbrella commission.
2. PBC join umbrella commission and dissolve its status as a separate commission.

Kevin Feely (citizen with wife Christine) thinks umbrella is a good idea.

Catherine respects the decision that PBC continues in either option 1 and 2.

Ed described that we could vote on joining umbrella commission ... more discussion ensued.

Paul mentioned the benefit of a formal town staff member supporting the new umbrella commission.

Jill stated more conversation could come to make a decision to join or not. Commission agreed.

b. West Hartford Center Infrastructure Master Plan update tabled to next meeting.

c. Woodrow Street traffic calming tabled to next meeting.

5. New Business

a. Engineering updates

b. P&Z updates

c. New bicycle repair station-discuss possible locations

Ed called for a vote across 4 ideas:

- o Blueback Square bottom of steps at Noah Webster library: Commission supported this choice by vote
- o Parking near Flora.
- o Norfeldt Field parking lot.
- o Farmington Avenue and Trout Brook Drive intersection.

6. Announcements

Shared #WeHaCanDoBetter conduits for sharing ways to “Improve Bike-Walk Transit for All.

7. Input for next PBC meeting on 11/7/22

8. Adjourned at 8:40 pm - Dan motioned and Paul approved to adjourn.