

Meeting Minutes

Salem Bicycling Advisory Committee

Wednesday, July 6, 2022 | 6:30 p.m.

Remote Meeting

Members Present: John Wathne (Chair), Michael Williamson, Michael Jaros, Alex Maranto, Connor Ryan, Colleen Downie

Members Absent: Eric Papetti, Josh Gillis, Matt Caruso

Also Present: Tom Devine, Senior Planner

Call Meeting to Order

Wathne called the meeting to order.

Public Comment

Wathne opens the meeting to public comment.

Josh Nagle, 35 Washington Square, Unit 2, introduces himself and expresses interest in helping make biking safer in Salem.

Staff Update

Devine provides the following updates:

- North Street's Liberty Hill Ave. pilot is ready to proceed, but there is additional utility work that needs to be completed first. At the same time, the City Council has approved first passage of all the parking ordinance changes that are necessary for the full North Street project to proceed. Wathne asks if there has been adjustment to handicap parking spaces. Devine says staff worked with a resident to move one space from North Street to a side street.
- Protected bike lanes are in design for Lafayette Street between West Ave. and the Marblehead Line. Staff have met with the two Ward Councilors and residents who have on-street parking in front of their homes that is proposed to change to parking protected lanes. Staff also had an initial discussion with about this with Salem State University. The resulting feedback is supportive about continuing with design and expanded neighborhood engagement.
- The Town of Marblehead has been awarded a MassTrails grant for designing improvements to the multiuse path from Lafayette Street and along the Lead Mills. Salem is a partner on this because a portion of the path is in Salem and it will include improvements to the road crossing. Members express support for removing bollards from the path.

- The City has funding to further the design of bike facilities and traffic calming improvements this fiscal year in the area of Winter Island Road.
- The Crescent Lot development that includes a multiuse path segment is on tomorrow's Planning Board agenda, but they intend to request to continue to the September 1 meeting. El Centro at Lafayette and Derby Streets will be presented at tomorrow's Planning Board meeting with some changes to the project design. Devine did not notice any changes to the project's path extension. The project may need to refile to reestablish a Planning Board quorum. Devine will share the plans for both projects again with the Committee. Devine says the Planning Board meetings start at 7pm.
- Members asked at a previous meeting if bike routes get street sweeping treatment. DPW reports that multiuse paths get swept as needed. On-street painted bike lanes get swept as part of regular street sweeping. Willson Street is an exception because the bike lanes are too narrow for a normal street sweeping, so they are swept each year prior to installation of the flex posts. There is pending grant request to fund the purchase of a narrow street sweeper. Fort Ave.'s lanes are wide enough for the standard sweeper.
- The group had previously asked about creating an Adopt-a-Bikepath program. There is a program where people sponsor maintenance of traffic island landscaping, either paying to have it maintained or maintaining it themselves. Such a program could possible translate into a program for paths.
- The Wathne and Downie will prepare a letter summarizing the prioritization of projects based on earlier discussions.

Ward 5 Councilor Jeff Cohen speaks. He is the Planning Board liaison and points out that the meetings start at 6:30 p.m., not 7:00 p.m. For the Lafayette Street bike lanes project, he is advocating for an improved crossing at Savoy Rd. He understands there could be a change in the parking on the Salem State side to facilitate the improvements.

Jaros is a professor who teaches at that location at Meir Hall. He himself has been nearly hit at that crossing. He supports the improvements.

Ward 7 Councilor Andy Varela speaks. He thanks for Committee for their work and echoes Councilor Cohen. He hears concerns about safety from neighborhood residents and hopes the improvements will help.

Josh Nagle speaks again. He asks if snow is removed from bike paths. Devine states that bike lanes and paths are cleared of snow. Devine states that there had been some discussions with DPW and Disabilities Commission earlier. Main roads are cleared first, but then key pedestrian routes are done, which includes some off-street paths. After that immediate triaging, everything is cleared. It is a continuing issue of concern and the Bike Committee has sought to have another meeting.

Bluebikes Bikeshare Program Data & Promotion

Document referenced: Salem Bluebikes Data, Through 6/30/2022

Devine presents ridership data for June. Ridership is increasing year over year, but it is not apples to apples because the system launched halfway through June 2021. Devine expects the numbers to rise into the summer and fall with students and tourists riding. The peaks have not only been weekends, but some weekdays. Salem's ridership is generally in line with some of the other municipalities in the system outside Boston, but always trailing the overall ridership driven by heavy utilization in Boston, Cambridge, and Boston. Devine has added distance ridden to the data presented monthly. Salem Willows is the busiest station in June. And there has been a small uptick in active memberships for people with Salem's zip code.

Councilor Varela says the Committee should put more pressure on the Council and Administration to advocate for neighboring communities to join the Bluebikes system so that it can succeed as a regional service.

Devine reports that the City plans to do more tabling at the Farmers Market to promote Bluebikes and other transportation services. He continues to promote half-price Bluebikes membership for City employees. And he has a stack of flyers for anyone who wants to hand them out. A big wave of promotion will come out in September when the 7 additional stations are deployed. The Committee Chair had been quoted in a press released that included information about ARPA money going toward the bikeshare and other transportation services. There is also some state funding being released as soon as October for another three stations. One of those will probably be in Vinnin Square in response to advocacy from Matt Caruso and Salem State University. There happens to be some pretty good potential spaces for that station.

Fort Lee Bike Trails

Williamson had requested that the Committee discuss this. He displays the site on Google Maps where it is labeled "Fort Lee Revolution Bike Track". He also displays trails mapped there on trailforks.com. It is through a mix of public and private property. Devine states that someday the City will do some restoration work to formalize where you should mountain bike and where you shouldn't. In the meantime, he suggests being sensitive to the historic site.

Public Meeting Remote Participation Policy

Devine reports that unless the State Legislature and Governor act, the policy allowing remote meetings will expire July 15. Therefore, the next meeting will have to follow the normal Open Meeting Law. The City has a new policy that allows limited remote participation, but it can't go below the minimum requirements of the state law. A quorum still must be physically present. If the Committee chooses to have hybrid meetings, the public, guests, and members beyond the quorum can participate remotely, subject to limitations. Devine would encourage members to be present in person.

Committee Vacancy

The Mayor will be appointing a new member. His name is Walter Morrell and he is a resident of the Point neighborhood. Another vacancy remains. The Chair suggests that Josh Nagle apply.

Josh Nagle says he is interested in applying to join the Committee. He supports the work to make biking safer.

Discussion of Committee Name and Webpage Content

Document referenced: Draft Bike Committee Webpage Text Revision, undated.

Wathne says that he sees Salem “bike paths” being used by many people not on bikes. He understands that there can be conflict among the users, but it is also a sign of a successful path. Jaros says he also appreciates the diversity of ways the paths are being used. Wathne presents draft language for a new Committee name and website text. He reads the draft aloud.

Downie suggests adding another bullet about the environmental benefits. Downie and Williamson suggest improved language regarding alternatives to cars. The group discusses the Committee name and further refinements to the text.

Devine will post the revised text on the webpage, but the name change requires City Council action. Devine also wishes to talk with other staff to be sure there is no conflict between the Committee and Traffic & Parking Commission. Wathne will reach out to City Councilors to get feedback on the name change first.

Meeting Minutes

Williamson motions and Downie seconds to approve the 4/6/2022 minutes and all vote in favor.

Adjourn

Williamson motions and Jaros seconds to adjourn at 7:57 p.m. and all vote in favor.

Approved by the Bicycling & Shared Path Advisory Committee on 11/2/2022.