

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Time and Date: The Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee met on May 5, 2014, at 4:00 p.m. in the Board Room of Wausau City Hall.

Members Present: Valitchka, Follendorf, Gisselman, Winters, Plath, Ruff

Others Present: Kim Rantanen-Day, Tyler Vogt, Jon Kurth, Rollie Thomas, Pat Peckham, Brad Lenz

In compliance with Chapter 19, Wisconsin Statutes, notice of this meeting was posted and transmitted to the *Wausau Daily Herald* in the proper manner.

Welcome and introductions

Chair Valitchka called the meeting to order at approximately 4:00 p.m. and welcomed members. Everyone present introduced themselves.

Approve minutes of March 24, 2014 meeting

Ruff motioned to approve the minutes of the previous meeting. Winters seconded, and the motion carried unanimously, 6-0.

Discuss enforcement of traffic laws for bicyclists and skateboards downtown

Valitchka said the committee has visited this topic in the past, but not particularly in regards to skateboards. He wasn't aware of the specific ordinances pertaining to skateboards but knew some ordinances were enacted for public safety purposes.

Follendorf said last year that some downtown business owners expressed concern about safety on the sidewalks for people coming out of stores. She said discussions focused on educating people on the rules and taking a positive approach with law enforcement. She said the community service officers have generally issued warnings first before citations. She shared data from the police department on warnings and citations issued.

Kurth understands why there are ordinances for prohibiting bikes and skateboards on the sidewalks downtown, but he also wants to bring as much business to downtown as possible. He said alternative transportation is going to continue to grow. He said if people get a citation, they may feel that they are banned from downtown. The parents of younger people may not allow their kids to go downtown if they are coming home with tickets. He said he would like to see more written warnings for skateboarders – there were only 4 warnings versus 40 citations. He liked the fact that skateboarders can use the river edge trail to get to and from the skate park. He liked the encouragement of traffic laws rather than citations. He said longboards are huge right now – they are meant for transportation. He said some people are given citations who don't know the rules. This is less money to spend downtown because they now have fines to pay. He said there are no bike lanes downtown so this makes it difficult for families to ride downtown without taking the sidewalks.

Vogt said there used to be classes to teach kids about safety and road rules. Valitchka said there is a Safety City program, plus there will be a bike rodeo which will teach safety. He said the committee has talked to the police department before about education versus citations.

Thomas asked if there are maps or communications on where longboards are allowed. Kurth said they are basically banned from downtown. He wanted to find a way to get longboarders and younger bikers to downtown to shop. He thought the approach should be to inform them how and where to use their boards and bikes rather than just giving them a ticket.

Vogt agreed with Kurth and said he sees people carrying boards into his business. He thought we should put rules of the road or maps easily on display for people to find. Kurth said that east-side kids are going to come the wrong way down the one-way to get to the mall. Gisselman said 3rd Street is the point of entry for everything that's happening and it's a one-way in the wrong direction. He thought 3rd Street is the major issue and we've been talking about it for 2-3 years but we still don't have an answer. Kurth said more bike lanes would help. Valitchka said bikes are street legal and can get to downtown by following the traffic laws, but he understands the desire to make it easier and safer. He said parents can choose to have their kids ride on the sidewalk, even though it is safer for bikes to be on the street. He said placards on the bike racks could tell people to walk their bikes on the sidewalks. He said we can continue to speak with law enforcement about public education versus citations. He said we want young people to feel at home, but also to follow the rules.

Lenz shared the ordinance regarding the area downtown where skateboards are prohibited. Thomas said it's not evident to everyone where this area is. She thought something should be developed for educating people. Kurth said using the river edge parkway helps, but he needs to tell people what routes they can take. Valichka asked if the city can create a map of the prohibited area, distribute it to the PD and on the river district website, and storefronts, and take a proactive educational approach. Valitchka thought the PD would be welcome to this feedback. Vogt suggested showing routes and a taking a positive approach. Valitchka thanked the business owners and invited them to stay involved in this discussion moving forward.

Discuss bicycle-vehicle crashes

Valitchka said he asked the police department to take a look at crash data, and he would like to discuss this item at a future meeting when they are present.

Discuss local bike sharing program

Ruff said that in previous conversations regarding bike sharing, the program at the Neighbor's Place was brought up. He went with Heider from regional planning to visit them, and they were surprised by how big the program is. He said that there were 50-60 bikes and the supply would be gone in a few weeks. He said a referral is needed for a bike to be used for transportation to a job, job-training, etc. He said it's not like a bike-sharing program for the general public. He said they are in need of more bikes, and bike locks. Ruff said he is working with Catholic Charities to get bike locks for the Neighbor's Place. He said he would like to publicize the program to get people to donate bikes and to use the program.

Ruff said he has been discussing with Heider doing a bike share feasibility study to see what the possibilities may be. Plath said we should do the study and include what Weston is doing. Ruff said using a bike shop as the hub for rented bikes is a good model to follow. Valitchka said the impetus in Weston is coming from the hotels. He said it is an interesting commercial approach, compared to some cities where they are provided on the street. He said a hybrid model may also be appropriate, and liked the idea of a feasibility study.

Recap bike rack

Valitchka said the event took place last week and included students from NTC, East, West, and EGL. There were five entries. He said the top three will be placed on 3rd Street. Ruff suggested one of the racks be used at the farmer's market on River Drive. Peckham said a good spot for the U-shaped racks would be in front of city hall to replace the rusty ones that are there now.

Update on Bicycle Wausau Rodeo and Safety Day and other events

Valitchka said the rodeo will be held on Saturday with the intent on educating families on how to be good bicyclists. Bike shops will be there and helmets available to make sure everyone is riding safely. The event will be held at the Library with lots of other partners.

Follendorf said the Mayor's ride will be next week and start at St. Anne's. There will be a grab-n-go breakfast at city hall and anyone can meet there. She said there will be some promotion and encouraged others to spread the word.

Valitchka said next week is bike and walk week and there will be other events throughout the area. Ruff said there a list of events on the website bicyclewausau.org.

Elect new chairperson and discuss committee membership

Valitchka said with reorganization happening as a result of the local elections, he would like this committee to consider a new chairperson. He has spoken with Ruff who is willing to accept the chair if the committee chooses to elect him. The committee could forward their request to the Mayor for the official nomination. Winters motioned to nominate Ruff as the chair. Plath seconded, and the motioned carried unanimously, 6-0.

Adjourn

Plath motioned to adjourn. Gisselman seconded, and the motioned carried unanimously, 6-0. Valitchka adjourned the meeting at 4:55 p.m.

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee is next scheduled to meet on Monday, June 9th, 2014 at 4:00 p.m.