

**Pedestrian Infrastructure Advisory Committee
To the Darien, Connecticut, Board of Selectmen**

Draft Minutes

Date: August 11, 2015

Place: Darien Town Hall, Room 119-B

Present: Terry Duffy, Susanne Handler, Ted Hawkins, Jennifer Morgan, Pat Morrissey, Holly Schulz-Amatruda, and Bert von Stuelpnagel

Absent: Joanna Garrett, and Beth Harmon

Guest: Reese Hutchinson, Darien Board of Realtors

This was a regular meeting of the Pedestrian Infrastructure Advisory Committee (PIAC).

Acting Chair, Pat Morrissey, called the meeting order at 7:40 pm. The minutes from the meetings of July 28 and August 4 were approved.

Reese Hutchinson was introduced and invited to present his thoughts on pedestrian and bicycle issues. As a long-time resident of Darien and previous member of several town commissions, a SWRPA rep, member of the Flood Advisory Committee, active on Darien Revitalization, and currently President of Darien MLS we thought his perspective would be valuable. Reese mentioned that Darien is one of the few towns in Connecticut where downtown business owners do not own the property underneath sidewalks in front of their stores but nevertheless have to pay 1/3 of any sidewalk renovation and are liable for damages if someone trips and falls. He thinks the maintenance approval process is a mystery and that Darien should have a means of fast-tracking sidewalk maintenance. It seems to take an inordinately long period of time to get sidewalk repairs approved and done. He cited the sidewalks in front of 5 Brook Street where he owns property that haven't been touched for decades.

Reese believes that with three major multi-tenant projects proposed for Darien and Noroton Heights, pedestrian safety considerations will become paramount. He suggested that having police officers patrolling on foot (as they did in the past) in the central business districts would greatly add to an improved climate of safety when our downtowns become more populated. As Darien becomes more urban we will have higher population densities and many more people walking around.

Reese had specific suggestions of areas to town that could be improved with better crosswalks, signaling and lighting. He brought photographs to the meeting to illustrate:

1. The cross walk at Leroy West Parking lot (Squab & Leroy) is badly aligned, painted, lighted and has obstructed sight lines because of overgrown vegetation at Clock Hill Homes. This is an accident waiting to happen.
2. The Ledge Road and Post Road intersection on the Whole Foods corner provides poor protection for foot and bike traffic. It should have more substantial lane dividers,

markings and better signaling for someone trying to walk, run or bike between the Library and town.

3. Better lighting under our two railroad bridges and the I-95 bridge on the Post Road would encourage foot traffic.

A discussion ensued on the need to change our local culture which gives the car top priority (“SUVs Rule” according to Holly) along Darien streets. Bert mentioned that the town should be shifting emphasis away from keeping autos speedy and safe to protecting and encouraging pedestrians. It should be made clear that pedestrians have a priority. To begin this process the PIAC needs clarity on right-of-way priorities. Reese suggested that the committee hear from Town Counsel on right-of-way laws and regulations.

When asked by Chair if he had any recommendations for the committee, Reese said PIAC should - for our long term perspective - focus on the process and structure of town decision making with regard to pedestrian and bike infrastructure issues. We should look for some recommendations on how to improve the speed and quality of decision making. It was also suggested that if the committee ends up putting together a recommended bundle of projects relating to improved pedestrian and bike opportunities, that we should endeavor to determine an approximate cost of each. The town could then consider bonding these to fund them.

The committee had a general discussion about the hot-spot sector analysis. Bert passed around a PowerPoint presentation that he is working on for his sector – the Darien Train Station. He will forward a pdf file to Pat for dissemination to the committee. It is a work-in-progress but it has some excellent ways of organizing the information that each of us will be gathering for our sectors. There is a need to standardize the color and type of map notations that we will be making. Therefore members were asked to bring to next week’s meeting suggestions for this, i.e. five or six symbols.

The meeting adjourned at 8:59

Respectfully submitted by Ted Hawkins, Clerk