

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

Draft Minutes

Date: August 25, 2015

Place: Darien Town Hall, Room 119-B

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

Guest Speakers: Emily Provonsha, Public Space Planner, Stamford Downtown Special Services District, and Jerry Silbert, People Friendly Stamford

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

Chair Beth Harmon called the meeting order at 7:34 pm. The minutes from the meeting of August 18 were approved.

Jerry Silbert who was one of the founding members of People Friendly Stamford chronicled for us their four year development. They started as just a small group of concerned citizens who wanted to bring people and government together to safely connect neighborhoods for pedestrians and bikers. They are non-political and non-affiliated and are working to change the culture by being squeaky wheels bringing attention to the need for change. They have worked with Mayor Martin who has been supportive of their initiatives. Some of their successes include:

1. Encouraged hiring of a new Transportation Bureau Chief with an extensive background in bicycle & pedestrian programs in NYC.
2. Fostered passage of a Complete Streets ordinance which replicates the one passed by the state. It requires those involved with street and highway maintenance or development consider all users and all transit modes: a somewhat "holistic" way of thinking about thoroughfares.
3. Held a rally supporting bike lanes on High Ridge Rd which attracted 100 participants.
4. Encouraged Stamford to paint "sharrow" bike reminders on roads within a 1 mile radius of the train stations.
5. Supported installation of more bike racks in downtown.
6. Emily started a series of walking audits (the website www.walkability.com has audit checklists on-line) for Stamford.
7. Worked with the city, state and WestCog to help obtain a \$250,000 grant for the city to fund the production of a bicycle and pedestrian plan.

Jerry emphasized that culture change is not a quick fix. It has taken them over four years just to get this much done. An important element in affecting change is to build relationships with key players, but don't expect leadership to be forthcoming. It has to be provided for even the best most obvious ideas for improvement. His group has been most successful when they focused on a project and worked to get public support.

Emily mentioned that one way to look at the process is to break it into three key elements: Education, Engineering, and Enforcement. Jerry's final comment was that they stand ready to help us. Emily offered to provide us with the names of key players like planners at WestCOG, the Safe Route to Schools coordinator in Hartford, the Bike & Pedestrian Coordinator at DOT, etc. One of current priorities of People Friendly Stamford is to get the Merritt Parkway Trail built.

When asked what they'd do differently, Emily and Jerry said they had been pleasantly surprised by the outpouring of support. Jerry said it had been a positive experience overall so he didn't feel he'd do much differently. Emily has only been on it for two years so she withheld judgement. Jerry added that he was very uncomfortable with the loosely structured nature of how pedestrian and bike projects are dealt with in government.

The meeting adjourned at 8:40

Respectfully submitted by Ted Hawkins, Clerk