



Arlington Bicycle Advisory Committee Minutes

Date: Jul 15th, 2020
Time: 7:15PM
Location: Via Zoom conference
Attendees: *Executive committee*: Christopher Tonkin (chair), Muris Kobaslija, Adam MacNeill, Doug Mayo-Wells, Scott Smith
Town of Arlington: Daniel Amstutz

Anne Dinoto, Linda Epstein, Rod Holland, Stephan Miller, Galen Mook,
Alison Piasecki, Judith Proctor, Thomas Proctor

1. Introductions, Ground rules

Meeting opens with review of emergency remote public meeting guidance consistent with Governor Baker's executive order of March 12th, 2020: The Governor's order suspends the requirement of Open Meeting Law to have all meetings in a public and accessible location. Public meetings may meet entirely remotely as long as the public can access the meeting. Committee secretary Doug Mayo-Wells is taking minutes; the meeting is being recorded for the purposes of verifying the minutes; and the recording will be deleted after the minutes are approved.

Executive committee roll call:

Doug Mayo-Wells, present, taking minutes
Scott Smith, present
Adam MacNeill, present
Muris Kobaslija, present
Christopher Tonkin, present

From the Town of Arlington:

Daniel Amstutz, Sr Transportation Planner, present

Participants are invited to introduce themselves and affiliation, if any:

Alison Piasecki, Charlie Proctor's partner
Anne Dinoto, resident, Appleton St neighborhood

Thomas Proctor, Charlie Proctor's brother
Judith Proctor, Charlie Proctor's mother
Stephan Miller, resident
Galen Mook, executive director, MassBike

2. Previous meeting minutes approval

Smith clarifies suggested amendments to June minutes: correct a typo, and clarify that statements about mirror onto Mill Street were based on recollection

Smith moves to approve June minutes as amended.

Kobaslija seconds the motion.

Christopher Tonkin takes a roll call vote:

Christopher Tonkin: Yes

Soctt Smith: Yes

Muris Kobaslija: Yes

Doug Mayo-Wells: Yes

Adam MacNeill: Yes

SO VOTED: (5-0)

3. COBWEB

(Cops On Bikes With Education for Bicyclists)

Nothing to report

4. TAC report

(Transportation Advisory Committee)

Smith: Met last week. No appointment from TAC yet for Appleton Design Review Committee. Work proceeding on signal at Lake St/Minuteman path (DPW has returned to office). Hotel proposed near Appleton St, TAC has been asked to look at traffic impact analysis. Smith volunteered to be on the subcommittee reviewing analysis; it will be considered from the perspective of the overall effort to improve the safety of Mass Ave in the vicinity of Appleton St.

Consultants for high school rebuild wrote a memo which TAC was asked to review, tangential to the objective of connecting to the high school from the Minuteman bikeway. The consultants recommended against protected bike infrastructure on Mass Ave; some challenges were raised. It was suggested to look at it from the perspective of the parent of a 14-year-old. Led to discussion with Paul Schlichtman (School Committee) and others. Currently have conventional bike lanes. To get room for a protected bike lane would need to remove parking on one side, not insuperable, would create potential for bike/pedestrian conflicts if people are parking and walking across the bike lane. No conclusions reached yet.

Tonkin: Cambridge has protected bike lanes, passengers exiting vehicles are not always aware of bike traffic (risk of cyclists being "doored").

Smith: Everyone in agreement that safe bike route to high school is important, lively discussion on best approach.

Amstutz: Can talk further in item 10, Arlington High School rebuild update.

Tonkin: Can Amstutz comment on the likelihood of this hotel project moving forward, approval, construction?

Amstutz: Can't answer definitively. Planning director sent an email last week to Amstutz, TAC chair Howard Muise, with a request from the redevelopment board to review the traffic impact analysis that was completed for the hotel. They had not done one previously because the site plan was not finalized. Haven't seen the new site plan yet, only the one from last fall. Deadline of August 12 to return comments to the redevelopment board. Haven't scheduled time to review yet.

5. Update on Design Review Committee for Mass Ave/Appleton

Tonkin: ABAC is still awaiting formal request to nominate member, but have heard that individuals have volunteered.

Dinoto, Epstein confirm that they have interviews pending next week with Town Manager (TM) Chapdelaine for citizen participation in DRC.

Tonkin: will email TM to advise that ABAC has nominated Tonkin to participate in DRC from ABAC with Roderick Holland as back up if required.

Amstutz: Confirms that interviews with residents to be on DRC are in progress, chair has not been confirmed (possibly Amstutz). Extent of TM or TM's office direct involvement in committee not established. Will be a somewhat large committee, representatives from nearby business owner and St. Athanasius also defined.

6. Ghost Bike memorial update

Mook: Nothing to report, waiting to hear from TM's office

7. Arlington Shared Streets Pilot

Amstutz: Will provide an update to Select Board on Monday. Proposing design standards. Community self-nominated streets that stood out included Mary St, Waldo Rd, Amsden St. Will reach out to residents to get support for shared street or temporary traffic calming intervention.

Learned in pilot that traffic calming component needs to be more robust to increase comfort with shared streets.

Update is also the basis for applying for Mass Department of Transportation (MassDOT) "Shared Streets and Spaces" grant program, which can provide funding for material and labor costs for temporary projects like shared streets, outdoor dining, etc. Planning outdoor dining on Broadway (at Broadway Plaza), possibly on Medford St near Mass Ave. Grant program is rolling with funding available from July to approximately the end of September.

The update to the Select Board is not a request for approval or endorsement; that has already been obtained. Brooks St will also be included in next phase as pilot there was successful.

Holland: Raleigh St between Everett and Grafton Sts has been turned into an informal shared street by several families, with parents monitoring – self-organized community effort – most mornings/afternoons in good weather

Amstutz: Raleigh also was a self-nominated street. Self-organization not very surprising, given elapsed time since initial pilot.

Smith: Also self-organized street closings on Amherst St for social distant community event

Amstutz: DIY is one model that could be explored, but hasn't been discussed with Select Board

Tonkin: received a communication recently about closing off some areas in Arlington Heights , ABAC invited to comment on several different plans. Bike lanes may be impacted?

Holland: Confirms this is the parklets proposal.

Amstutz: Not directly related to cycling. Parklet is repurposing parking space for seating or other public use, e.g., green space. Not meant to take space from bike lanes. Understands that high barrier next to bike lane could be a drawback (but likely better than car). Aware of the initiative, already have approval to do outdoor seating in parking spaces in Arlington Center, working with economic development coordinator to identify potential areas in the Heights as well.

Kobaslija: Somerville, Cambridge did similar things, has anyone viewed, heard positive or negative reports, any learnings we can apply?

Amstutz: Visited Jaques Street in Winter Hill on weekday morning approx 9am, saw a lot of parked cars, not many pedestrians or bikes. Hard to judge success, some signs, cones knocked aside.

Mook: different tactics needed for different locations. Re: cones knocked aside, need volunteer collaborative approach for neighborhood to reset cones, signs, e.g., twice a day. If there is

buy-in from the neighborhood this strategy can be successful, observed in Somerville, Brookline.

MassBike shares concern that parklets continue to be a part of crosstown bike network rather than precluding it.

Tonkin: Leonard St in Belmont seems successful, especially for restaurants, on nice days (in repeat visits), but reports of communication issue between Town of Belmont and business (comes as a surprise).

Mayo-Wells: Anecdotal impressions from Elm St in Somerville, already heavy traffic down to one lane, so some vehicle congestion, takes extra caution as a cyclist, but many pedestrians using amenities.

Smith: Garden St in Cambridge, observed early weekend morning traffic volume was low, signs on every corner acted as obstruction/traffic calming.

Amstutz: Neighborhood volunteer model likely needed, Department of Public Works (DPW) may not want to assume the burden of resetting cones, etc.

Also, sidewalk reconstruction going on in Arlington Center now, so parklets on Broadway and possibly Medford St won't come on line for 2-3 weeks after sidewalk work is complete.

Mook: Is there an uptick in construction because traffic is low?

Amstutz: No, aware that Newton is accelerating some efforts, but Arlington is not

Epstein: Additional observation on Garden St, in Cambridge, weekend afternoon, traffic level was down compared to usual, was more cautious than usual

Mook: Burlington Vermont, another self-organized neighborhood volunteer safe streets initiative, coordinated morning and afternoon setup/takedown of cones via spreadsheet. Run by nonprofit, Local Motion (localmotion.org)

Holland: Suggests coordinating with Local Motion

8. Connect Arlington, the Town's Sustainable Transportation Plan

Amstutz: virtual forum scheduled for Jul 30 at 7pm - has been advertised. Will present progress of project, conditions, goals, next steps. May do some zoom breakout groups. Currently drafting agenda, putting presentation together. Need to convene Sustainable Transportation Advisory

Committee meeting to review facilitation plan. Will be doing additional focus groups, collecting names for groups on topics public transport, neighborhood transportation, and getting around with disabilities or mobility impairments. Factbook of existing conditions with maps, tables, charts will release end of July or early August; includes transit system, crash data, bike, pedestrian roadway network, demographic analysis.

9. Bike-friendly Community Re-certification

Tonkin: Received comments from Smith on draft

Amstutz: Deadline pushed to August 26; League of American Bicyclists removed enforcement section from this round of applications - may replace with something else, not clear yet

Tonkin: Everybody please read, review draft

10. Arlington High School Rebuild

Kobaslija: Phil Goff (East Arlington Livable Streets) had mentioned recently renovated school in Cambridge had a similar issue with protected bike path on Cambridge St – pedestrians had to cross protected bikeway to drop-off area, wonder if there are learnings there.

Dedicated budget line item for link to bike path is still on hold, status unclear.

Amstutz: TAC working group is meeting tomorrow to review supplementary traffic impact analysis, including review of protected bike lane in front of the school. Will diagram what it could look like to facilitate discussion – cycle track could be on same level as sidewalk, with a space in between the curb and cycle track to safely exit cars. Will be firelane in front of high school on Mass Ave but still used as drop-off/pick up zone. Frequent crosses over bike lane for period of 20 minutes to half hour would not be safe.

Mook: Waltham High School is also undergoing redesign – Mass Bike is concerned about bike infrastructure there – high speed traffic, not enough space for protected lane. Severity of pedestrian/bike collisions is not the same as between a bike and truck. Urges ABAC to advocate for protected lanes wherever possible, as a "safe routes to school" town, encouraging kids to bike to school at early age, we should expect them to be able to bike safely to high school as well.

Smith: There are several issues with high school, where should ABAC focus for maximum impact? Opinion: connection to Minuteman, and bike parking are top priorities for ABAC. There

are bigger issues on Mass Ave west and east of the school for 14-year-olds to be comfortable riding it.

11. Bike counts

Tonkin: Amstutz has summarized and produced graphs

Amstutz: 1600 on June 25th; not far from typical bikeway day ~40 bikes/hr, ~90 pedestrians/hr

More active in afternoon after 3/4pm

~470 bikes total

1000+ peds total

Only 8% bikes on sidewalk (36)

Doesn't necessarily support contention that many more people are biking during the pandemic (although some of that traffic may be on the bikeway). Elisabeth Carr-Jones (Envision Arlington committee) forwarded a March/April 2003 study TAC conducted on Mass Ave, seeing more hourly traffic now than in that study.

Holland: Personally riding off of the Minuteman to avoid congestion, suspects others may be doing that as well.

Epstein: Is this both east/west, west/east or both? Is it more eastbound in the morning, westbound in the evening?

Smith: Both directions were measured. Didn't look at difference, but seemed more or less equal, (much more than pre-Covid)

Tonkin: Didn't notice many obvious commuters with panniers & bags (as in previous counts).

MacNeill: Also commuting by roads vs. bikeway.

Tonkin: Commutes partly by rail trail, but before/after peak hours.

Tonkin: Where/when else would counts be helpful?

Amstutz: Maybe in the Heights, between Lexington line and Park St? Or on Park Ave, would be helpful to substantiate that people are using the bike lanes (or not). Trail use in the heights, e.g. by Trader Joe's would be interesting.

Automatic counter has effectively been broken since May. Multiple new components have been received from manufacturer and need to be installed. Need to dig up manhole, etc. so need to support from manufacturer for correct installation – hope to complete by end of month

Epstein: Weekend in heights have the most bike traffic on the road, bike group go out around 9:30 towards Lexington. Park Ave seems mostly used for hill training.

Tonkin: Should we plan a count for September in the heights?

Amstutz: If there is interest, challenge is we don't know what will happen with school. Transportation patterns are disrupted, no real peak hours. Bikeway might be most interesting.

Tonkin: comparing traffic between Swann Pl and the heights could be interesting

12. Social distancing on bikeway

Miller: Minuteman.org site has received quite a number of complaints in last month about lack of masks, and social distancing. Has personally observed ~60% masked, and bikes passing pedestrians within a foot, people passing each other without distancing.

Holland: Minuteman mask compliance has improved, but people passing are buzzing people a lot – observed an adult w/in 6" of small child on small bike. Was horrible.

Miller, MacNeill: Behavior is normal (if bad) but awareness is increasing.

Mayo-Wells: We'd previously discussed painting 6' indications at access points. Any progress?

Tonkin: Not clear what paint to use.

MacNeill: Can DPW do? Or does it need to go through budgetary process?

Tonkin: Still a labor crunch for DPW, don't have summer interns available.

Mook: Could MassDOT funding for quick infrastructure improvements be applied?

Amstutz: Maybe? Can apply up to 3 times, \$5K minimum – but grant is focused on shared streets, new bike networks, so not a perfect fit, probably not a strong priority.

Tonkin: Can we get more of the sandwich board signs?

Amstutz: Materiel issue, DPW only has a certain number of sandwich boards, will need to order more for shared streets because they need to be available for construction, etc. Already at major access points.

Miller: Sign at Trader Joe's is not very prominent for through cyclists

Amstutz: Bikeway is less of a Covid risk than little league games, kids on baseball, softball fields etc.

Miller: Should still try to eliminate bikeway transmission even if it's only a few percent of total.

Holland: Lack of masks, distancing is very evident on bikeway, whether or not people are getting sick there specifically.

Holland: Arlington poster adopted for Fresh Pond bikeway

Amstutz: Kelly Lynema did those

MacNeill: is a letter from the committee more impactful, or a citizen report?

Tonkin: Will send letter from the chairman to request cutting knot weed, etc.

Amstutz: Copy me, planning department can bring to TM's attention.

13. Bikeway map update

Smith: Sent edits to Peggy Enders' proposal for updated bikeway map, which includes guidelines for use, such as "pass on the left." Suggesting to change from "responsible e-bikes are permitted" to "the bikeway welcomes users of all abilities: motorized wheelchairs and low-speed electric bicycles are permitted" Goal is to emphasize connection to assistive devices and establish that class 1 e-bikes are OK. May revisit/loosen based on pending legislative changes.

Epstein: What about motorized skateboard, monowheels, etc?

Smith: Should just emphasize use of motorized equipment by people with disabilities should be permitted.

14. DPW Liaison (mirror at Gold's Gym)

Tonkin: Conducted (with Holland) measurements to validate helpfulness of mirror. Mirror would be on right of way, not Gold's property. Gold's gym has started some open air operation. Knot weed cut to improve visibility but sightlines toward Lexington are still poor, already at least one accident.

Amstutz: Maintenance concerns can be routed to DPW, but new, or safety-related things (like this) should go to Amstutz to help prioritize.

15. Tour of Arlington

Tonkin: noticed that Bikeway closed around spy pond on Rt 2 side – suggested idea of self-guided route with stops to find "places you've never been" in your community. Could have ABAC members stationed, appropriately distanced, at locations to tell people about the locations. Or use one of the former routes.

MacNeill: Sounds like a good idea.

Mayo-Wells: Might be a large time commitment. Could facilitate with tech, e.g. QR code. Could introduce game mechanics, hill-explorer badge, arlington history badge

Smith: Might be simpler to gather small groups of 5-6, no police escort, keep more spirit of what we did before

16. Other business

Holland: Appleton street is on people's minds - but after clearing Appleton St hit patched hole that looks safer than it is, needs attention

Amstutz: Use the request answer center, that's a DPW concern

Tonkin: letter regarding 130 unit residential project Mill Brook between Mass Ave and Bikeway – Can we leverage this, would they invest in infrastructure on bikeway?

Amstutz: Not abutting bikeway. Materials are June 29 Select Board agenda. Located at 1165 R Mass ave. Will have access to Rider St entrance to bikeway. Town will be meeting with the developer.

Holland: Suggests proceeding with caution.

MacNeill: Should keep lines of contact open, good that they are prioritizing bike access.

Tonkin: The committee wishes Phil Goff a speedy recovery and luck in job search.

Smith: motion to adjourn

Smith: aye

Mayo-Wells: aye

MacNeill: aye

Kobaslija: aye

Tonkin: aye
(adjourned)