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December Meeting Minutes

December 17, 2015

Attending were Mark Deshon (chair), Mike Fortner (City of Newark Planning), Karl Hassler (resident), Kirsten Jones (UD student), Joe Spadafino (City of Newark Parks & Recreation), Jonathan Kirch (American Heart Association), Paul Moser (DelDOT), Karen Rosenberg (resident), Mike Baez (UD Police), Christine Schultz (resident), and Susan Grasso* (resident).

*by teleconference

Regrets: Jeff Riegner (resident), Ban Phommachanh (UD Parking), Heather Dunigan (WILMAPCO), and James Wilson (Bike Delaware) sent regrets.

- *Report on responses of Mayor and City Council to NBC letters*

As a result of post-meeting email suggestions by James Wilson, Susan Grasso and Mark Deshon discussed and agreed that two separate letters should be sent to the Mayor and City Council—a letter outlining recommended improvements along the Cleveland Avenue corridor and a letter requesting that a Cleveland Avenue corridor task force, which would include stakeholders, be created to shepherd the project recommendations to DelDOT in advance of its pave/rehab project. These were both dated November 25 and sent to the Mayor and Council. To date, we've received no response to either of these letters.

Mark then read the Mayor's words from her comment time at the December 14 City Council meeting:

"I've been very much enjoying the extended mild weather we've been having. It's been great to be able to be outside and active this long into the [December]! I'm sure most of you remember last year's inaugural Mayor's Bike Ride, which was a lot of fun. Since then, I've had the pleasure of working with many, many dedicated individuals from many local organizations, each dedicated to a particular facet of cycling. I've learned a lot! It's really inspiring that we have so many dedicated cyclists in the community, from recreational riders like myself to dedicated daily commuters, who are dedicated to further improving our bikeability. We aren't just a bike-friendly community, we are *the* most bike-friendly community in Delaware—the third most bike-friendly state in the country! Whether it's the Trail Spinners constructing new off-road trails or the Newark Bicycle Committee working with stakeholders to bring long-awaited improvements to Cleveland Avenue to fruition, it's hard to look around Newark without seeing cyclists or

cycling amenities. I have absolute confidence that by supporting the ongoing work of city staff and volunteers, that we can achieve 'Silver' designation from the League of American Bicyclists by our 2018 renewal, and I hope that everyone can join me in setting this goal for ourselves."

It is clear that the Mayor is committed to the cause of better bicycle-friendliness in Newark. She recently shared with Mark an approach that she thinks will bear fruit. She wants to regularly bring bike matters forward in City Council meetings. She would like the NBC to feed her information (reflections of progress on whatever front) monthly to share during her personal comment time at City Council.

The other idea that came up when Mark met with her was that we, as an advisory body, should commit to making a general presentation on the benefits of moving forward as a city with improving all aspects of bicycling in this city.

Susan, Karl Hassler, Kirsten Jones, and Mike Fortner agreed to help get a group presentation together to share at a February City Council meeting. Mark will see that it gets on the Council agenda for either February 8 or 22.

- *Status on UD-City BikeShare project*

Ban, who was not able to make today's meeting, emailed a brief update.

- The contract is sitting with UD General Counsel. Counsel is scrutinizing University, Gotcha (provider of the bicycles), and sponsor liability.
- UD is also waiting on whether or not Gotcha will accept its request for them to increase their liability insurance coverage from \$1 million to \$5 million. Ban has been working with Sean Flood, Gotcha's CEO, on getting this increase.
- Even if the contract passes General Counsel's approval, the University will not move forward until its liability limit is met. Finally, Ban has made progress on the sponsorship side.

Mayor Polly Sierer introduced a proposal to add \$12,000 to the city's 2016 Capital Improvement Projects' budget last month, specifically for ten bikes for the community BikeShare. After much discussion, this addition to the budget was voted down 4-3. "No" votes were from Luke Chapman, Mark Morehead, Rob Gifford, and Todd Ruckle.

Why do we think there was resistance? A *Newark Post* article had mentioned a city budget shortfall, and indeed the City is projecting an increase in taxes to help fund its Capital Improvements Projects. Questions of liability were also an issue for some.

As a result, we need to increase our efforts to effectively influence our city government representatives. Mark suggested that those of us who are Newark residents can help by contacting your councilperson to dialogue with him/her about his/her position on the City's involvement in the BikeShare, saying that you want the city and UD to work together to make this a true community venture, and that you welcome the city's investiture in this effort. He and Mayor Sierer met yesterday with Ban and UD's Michael Smith, Director of Strategic Initiatives and Partnerships, to discuss strategy with respect to engendering city involvement in the BikeShare.

In the meantime, Ban will be working internally with a UD graphic designer to make final mock-ups for how the bikes will look with BikeShare logo on the basket front and sponsor logo(s) on the down tube. This was one of the “hangups” for one of the City Council members. This will involve creating signage for the bike stations as well.

Though the BikeShare would operate on a nonprofit model, all agreed that there are plenty of benefits that should positively sway our city government representatives. Karl concluded that “the value proposition” of the BikeShare may not have been clearly highlighted in the October presentation to City Council.

Mark said that we need to pull together info and success stories from around the country. Karl said that we need to highlight economic vitality, health benefits, etc. Christine Schultz and Karl volunteered to help Mark with this.

Joe Spadafino brought up the liability question. Mark said that he thought the City would not be held liable for any incident associated with the program.

- *Status on coordinating Bicycle Community Meetings*

Heather Dunigan reported in an email that she’s still working on nailing down an early 2016 date but that it may have to wait until the additional required restroom facilities are completed at Newark Bike Project.

Karl said that Newark Natural Foods has a meeting room downstairs. This might be a good temporary location. Heather should look into this, at least to get the ball rolling.

- *NBC community-support database and Facebook management*

Susan Grasso is interested in improving how and what we communicate as a committee. Mark told her he’s very much in favor of this and trying to figure out who our various audiences are and how we can most effectively stay on top of the communications part of what we do. She and I will be meeting after the holidays to discuss further. Karen Rosenberg agreed to champion this effort, with help from Karl, Susan, and Mark. Susan mentioned that Sean Watson from UD would be interested in helping with this as well. Mark will reach out to him.

- *New effort to get businesses in Newark to not only support but begin leading bicycle-improvement efforts*

Mark met with Mayor Sierer and the city’s Ricky Nietubicz on Monday to begin discussions on getting the business community involved in leading efforts to push our biking agenda.

A number of goals were discussed:

1. Gather articles and data on how investment translates into revenue in order to back up our premise that more bicyclists and better conditions for cycling mean more business.

2. Address the economic value of bicyclists to the business community at a Downtown Newark Partnership meeting—push as an economic development tool.
3. Develop our own plan for initially getting six businesses to apply for BFB status with the League of American Bicyclists. Begin by identifying the “low-hanging fruit.” (As an example of such, Mark said that Fusion Fitness would be a sure-fire candidate.) Mayor Sierer suggested this plan be launched at a Mayor’s Networking Mixer through personal invitations.
4. Get businesses to help fight barriers to local shoppers who might otherwise bike.

We need a person on this committee to become actively involved in leading this aspect of our committee’s work on a business subcommittee. The first meeting of this subcommittee will take place on Wednesday, Jan. 27, at Grain on Main Street. Susan and Kirsten volunteered.

Mike mentioned that Ricky’s new boss will become a key player in communicating the overall message from the city with regard to bike-related causes. Paul mentioned that it might be a good to have a representative from the Delaware Bicycle Council on the committee too, because it has some discretionary money.

As a sidenote, the Mayor indicated that Newark Shopping Center is interested in sponsoring The Mayor’s Fun Ride for 2016, which would begin on the Pomeroy Trail at the Shopping Center. This will become a good venue for maximum visibility for this event.

Karl mentioned corrals in front of businesses and mentioned Portland, Ore., as a real success story. He said that bike corrals in front of businesses increase revenue to those businesses in closest proximity. Now there is a waiting list in Portland for corrals. Kirsten says there is research to back this up. Paul suggested business-sponsored bike parking as a potential way to get businesses involved in this concept.

- Final draft of bike-commuting brochure
 - Discussion about funding for printing costs

Mark wanted to get final committee approval on the bike-commuting brochure introduced at the November meeting and wanted to discuss how to fund its printing. Mark suggested that this brochure be widely distributed (City Municipal Building, many locations on UD campus, downtown shops, etc.). Karl suggested minimizing printing costs, though Mark does not want to sacrifice quality in so doing. Mark mentioned the only change in wording that he’d like to introduce is the heading “Bike Gear Basics” on the initial right flap where the current heading is “Basic Bike Gear to Use.” Karl said he feels strongly about mentioning the need for a white front light in the that section under “Lights.”

In terms of funding, Kirsten suggested printing organization logos in trade for partial funding of the printing of this brochure. All thought this was a good tactic.

Mark will begin soliciting from the various organizations listed on the back of the brochure (see attachment).

– Similar brochure for UD student population, ELI students, or other uses?

Mark also introduced the idea that we might piggyback off this brochure by making a similar one directed at UD and ELI students about biking in general (and maybe about biking in Newark in particular). Kirsten said that what students care about the most are the aspects of financial benefit and speed (cheaper and faster). She also urged that we spell out the rules most applicable for students. Karen says we need more education on sharrows within the community.

Mike Baez then distributed a large flyer that his department (UD Police) had helped produce along with T² (UD professor Rusty Lee's engineering group) that provides tips to students on walking and biking. We briefly discussed whether what we were proposing would duplicate this publication and, therefore, be unnecessary. Though there was no uniformity of opinion, some members thought that there is still a need for a specific information tool about biking that would be beneficial for distribution to the college student and ELI audience.

- Safety issues

Mark introduced this topic by saying that January's meeting would focus heavily on bike safety, particularly with regard to pedestrians, in the wake of a couple of nasty bike-ped crashes recently. He thanked Mike Baez for coming to today's meeting, unaware that the topic had been pushed to January.

Paul suggested adding removable bollards where there are a lot of pedestrians. Jonathan Kirch said that there needs to be a design solution that addresses these areas. Susan said this whole idea of bicycling on campus has come up before. It seems like we could be a partner in coming up with an overall cycling plan. Jonathan said this might very well affect the BikeShare in some way(s).

Susan said there's an economic case that is important as well.

- *Old or new business / announcements*

Karen asked whether the West campus underpass would remain open. Mike Baez said he thinks it will remain open.

Jonathan said that the federal government changed the name of some programs and redid some transportation legislation (5-years), but that it probably won't negatively affect us here in Newark and our committee work.

Our next meeting will be on Thursday, January 21, at 4 p.m. at WILMAPCO.
Call-in #302-737-6205 x126.