

Rockville Pedestrian Advocacy Committee Meeting Minutes
Meeting 20-11
Thursday, November 12, 2020 7:00 PM
Virtual - Webex

1-2. Welcome, Introductions, and Tech Troubleshooting

Marissa Valeri, facilitating in the absence of Chair Eric Fulton, called the meeting to order at 7:05PM.

RPAC Attendees: Marissa Valeri, facilitator/acting Chair, Twinbrook Community Association (TCA); Judy Rudolph, notetaker, The Upton, Town Center; Ann Gaines, The Palladian Town Center; Carl Peterson, RBAC; John Becker, Americana Centre/Town Center; Jonathan Goldsmith, Twinbrook; Mike Stein, TCA and Traffic and Transportation Commission; Paula Hubble, The Victoria Condos/Town Center

City Officials: Mayor Bridget Newton, Councilmember Monique Ashton (joined later)

City Staff: Alyssa Roff, staff liaison; Rob Dispirito, City Manager; Craig Simoneau, Director, Department of Public Works; Emad Elshafei, Chief, Traffic and Transportation; Lt. Andy Crawford (RCPD); Marylou Berg, Director of Communications

- **Review/Approve September 10 and October 8, 2020 meeting minutes**

Alyssa noted that draft minutes of the September 10 and October 8, 2020 RPAC meetings had been emailed to the RPAC distribution list in advance. There was group consensus to post them on the RPAC webpage.

3. City Updates (Alyssa Roff)

Alyssa noted that the meeting was being recorded to provide a tool to ensure accurate minutes.

- **Road Diet update:** The plan as approved by Mayor and Council will be a CIP project in FY22
- **Pedestrian Master Plan status summary and next steps:**
 - At the RPAC special meeting on 10/29/2020, discussion centered around ideas for the mission statement for the Rockville Pedestrian Master Plan (PMP) and what goals and policies the *Plan* should contain. Pedestrian master plans from several other jurisdictions were provided as samples.
 - The next topic for analysis and discussion will be to review the City of Rockville's existing [Pedestrian Policies](#) to determine which ones should be incorporated into the PMP; this will also provide an opportunity to review existing Rockville Pedestrian Policies to identify any that should be revised, added, or deleted. This review will take place in January or February 2021.
- **Vision Zero Update memo:** The 1st quarter [Vision Zero Quarterly Report](#) was sent to the Mayor and Council on November 4 Copies have emailed to all on the RPAC distribution list and the Report is posted on the Vision Zero webpage. The next formal update to the Mayor and Council will be in January 2021. In the interim, the internal City Vision Zero Taskforce continues to meet regularly to work through Vision Zero Plan action items.

- In response to Jonathan's question about the next milestone/current work in progress, Alyssa indicated that the crash data collection and analysis is taking place; staff estimates that the effort will take about one year. The results of that data collection and analysis will determine next steps. In the interim, routine Traffic and Transportation activities will continue, although not necessarily Vision Zero-related.

4. Social and Racial Equity and Pedestrian Infrastructure

Marissa opened the floor for brainstorming on the format, topics, and participants for a future RPAC-sponsored discussion on social and racial equity issues that impact the pedestrian experience. The decision to pursue such a dialog had been discussed at RPC meetings earlier in 2020.

- Paula shared her observations of differences in lighting and sidewalks between more and less affluent neighborhoods: more lighting in less affluent areas, but sidewalks tend to be in poorer condition or missing. Marissa wondered whether City planning/zoning policies or activities also play a role in such discrepancies.
- Judy noted that implicit and explicit socioeconomic bias should be discussed, including patterns of attitudes, policies, and services related to types of housing (detached/semi-detached vs. multifamily) and ownership vs. rental status.
- Marissa noted that there are many groups of residents who do not feel empowered, and sometimes even safe, to seek services from the City, in contrast the many highly organized homeowners and neighborhood associations and organizations from Rockville neighborhoods whose residents have historically been more affluent, low density, and with fewer low income and/or minority residents. She challenged the group to try to identify ways that we can eliminate such biases, citing the use of fences in medians in Twinbrook and East Rockville as examples.
- Marissa pointed out the RCPD's implicit bias training as a prototype.
- Ann suggested trying to increase participation in RPAC to create more diverse representation and input.
- Marissa asked Carl about RBAC's interest in a joint effort. RBAC has created a subcommittee to pursue this. Carl pointed out that lighting and infrastructure are areas of common concern to RBAC and RPAC.
- Emad pointed out that street lighting is complicated by the role PEPCO plays in providing lighting east of 355. He also summarized recent projects east of 355. He noted that the organized neighborhoods get attention from the Mayor and Council and budget is allocated. Marissa reiterated that people need to feel empowered, know that that City staff and leadership are approachable, and people must have the means to access the City. She expressed hope that the Traffic and Transportation Commission will join in the dialogue.
- Craig Simoneau responded that DPW's participation might benefit from participation by someone else on his staff. He then referenced the existing [Sidewalk Prioritization](#) policy and process, and also indicated that perceptions of bias should be tested and verified by data analysis to validate needs. He stated that people have to report problems when they see them. Marissa pointed out that most of those in attendance are not representative of the people who do not feel empowered.

- In response to Marissa’s request, Marylou Berg indicated that she will revisit the issue of whether the City is moving information to the right people and access to City services, in the context of the City’s initiative to establish a broader dialogue about issues of racial justice and bias. She suggested that the City identify people in Rockville neighborhoods who know how to reach out to their own communities.

6. Incident & Enforcement Update (Lt. Andy Crawford, RCPD)

- Lt Crawford reported that the last reporting period showed an increase in bike, skateboarder, and/or pedestrian incidents, but no serious injuries or fatalities. Of the 6 incidents, the “At Fault” status was that 3 were drivers’ fault, 3 the fault of the skateboarders, biker, or pedestrian struck. John Becker asked for more detail about the pedestrian struck at Monroe Place and 355, an intersection of particular concern to residents of the Americana Centre. Mayor Newton asked staff to continue to consider additional actions that can be pursued to reduce risk at that intersection. Mr. DiSpirito indicated that staff is going to work harder to be vigilant in ensuring that the infrastructure is maintained.
- Marissa will update the incident map; she also noted the intersection of Halpine and 355.
- The issue came up about a common expectation that pedestrians are responsible to dress to make themselves visible. Once again, issues of socioeconomic equity play into these attitudes, and the need to acknowledge shared responsibilities between drivers and non-drivers. Emad pointed out that the Monroe Place crash occurred in daylight, yet the driver indicated that they did not see the pedestrian.
- The group brainstormed on ways that to proactively distribute reflective clothing and accessories to the populations who need it.
- The question came up about whether those involved in pedestrian crash incidents within the City are Rockville residents or people passing through. Rockville outreach and public information efforts are unlikely to reach the latter.
- Mr. DiSpirito added that the staff is working on a request to the state to reduce the speed limit on Veirs Mill Road, which might possibly lead to the ability to install speed cameras.

7. FY22 City Budget (Alyssa Roff and RPAC)

- FY22 Budget Process Overview:
Alyssa reported that the City is about 5 months into the FY21 budget year. FY22 budget process is beginning. FY22 budget (CIP, Vision Zero) will be based on FY21. Many items are “open ended” to provide flexibility for projects not projected at the beginning of the budget year.
- FY22 Budget - RPAC Discussion:
 - Marissa encouraged everyone to take the time to study the current and proposed budgets; the process provides insight into how the City does business.
 - Judy pointed out that its likely that funds will be tighter for the next few years and suggested that RPAC advocate at the upcoming budget public hearings for the M&C and staff look at priorities: pedestrian issues involve human lives

- Emad clarified that the budget process starts with staff developing the baseline proposed FY22 budget, with subsequent opportunities for the M&C and residents to provide feedback. He expressed optimism that the funding stream will be adequate to support the current level of services and activities for the next few years. Mr. Dispirito added that pedestrian safety and enforcement will continue to be priorities
- Judy suggested that we should not be willing to accept the *status quo* being “enough,” in view of the unmet needs of full representation and expediting the Vision Zero timeline. Marissa agreed that there are opportunities to “think outside the box” and that it’s important that the decision-makers know what the residents’ priorities are.
- John Becker asked where one can locate budget information on the City website. Emad pointed out that the format of the CIP budget presentation does not aggregate specific projects. There was consensus that an additional memo summarizing pedestrian safety-relating items, similar to that provided last year, is needed.
- Mayor Newton emphasized that the budget is predicated on the Mayor and Council priorities; thus, it is important that residents make their preferences known.
 - Judy asked if there might be approaches we can implement quickly for this year to reach out to the portions of the community who are not yet able to communicate their needs and priorities
 - Marissa asked whether the City can help communities and/or neighborhoods with organizing and communications. Several suggestions for new and different ways to reach the community followed. Councilmember Ashton expressed that hope that the budget survey be made available in multiple languages.
 - Jonathan asked about how the city leverages and seeks grants. There are several RPAC members with experience in grant and contract proposals
- Marylou noted that the [FY2022 Budget Survey](#) is already on the City website. She will confer with Hjarman Cordero about additional ways to get the budget survey out.

8. Future Agenda Topics

- Permitting and Planning Process, and whether and how pedestrian concerns are factored into the process
- Revisiting RPAC Mission and Goals statements
- John Becker suggested a briefing to clarify jurisdictional responsibilities between the City and the County
- Marissa suggested a joint RPAC/RBAC meeting
- Paula suggested discussion of an over- underpass for 355 near the Metro
 - 355 issues
 - Wooten Parkway

9. Open Discussion

- Marissa: need to be aware of the impact/spinoffs of tightening COVID-19 restrictions—speeding
- Kathleen Kleinmann has been appointed to the Traffic and Transportation Commission and Marissa, John Becker and Judy Rudolph have been appointed to the Charter Review Commission
- Marissa pointed out that COVID-19 has offered opportunities for more community connection with meetings/listening sessions via WebEx/Zoom.
- Judy asked if the City can try pushing communications to the owners/property managers on the Landlord-Tenant database and asking them to share

The meeting adjourned at 8:59 PM.

The next meeting is Thursday, December 10, 2020. The major item will be to finalize the draft *Pedestrian Master Plan* Mission Statement and Goal