



SOMERVILLE BICYCLE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MAY 2023 MEETING MINUTES

Mayor Katjana Ballantyne

Community Representatives

Tom Lamar, Chair
Lena Webb, Vice Chair
Ted Feldman, Secretary
Gregory Ely

Alex Frieden
Mark Vollinger
Ian Woloschin

Ex Officio

Willie Burnley, Jr., City Council
Viola Augustin, OSPCD Mobility
Adam Polinski, OSPCD Mobility
Eric Weisman, DPW

Thursday, May 4th, 2023, 6:30-8:00PM

Zoom link for computers, tablets, and smartphones:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89658939216?pwd=SS9WRIVwRE1CaGhuditka21aQ0ZnUT09>

Dial-in number: +1 (305) 224-1968, or find your local number: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89658939216?pwd=SS9WRIVwRE1CaGhuditka21aQ0ZnUT09>

Meeting ID: 896 5893 9216

Passcode: 419915

Procedural, General Business & Updates (20 minutes)

- Roll call and meeting logistics
 - Guests
 - Arah
 - Sarah Jansen
 - CJ
- Acting Secretary: Ian Woloschin / Ted Feldman
- Approval of February, March, and April meeting minutes
 - Meeting minutes for the past 3 months need to be approved.
 - MOTION to approve minutes and UNANIMOUS APPROVAL

Focus 1: Outreach (50 minutes)

- Discussion on SBAC's outreach efforts, ideas for moving forward, and recruitment.
 - Lena described how the Committee's membership has declined over the past few years.
 - Important to understand what is The Committee's Mission?
 - Heavy focus recently on Evaluation & Engineering, missing out on the other E's (Education & Encouragement, Enforcement, Equity), mostly due to lower levels of membership.
 - How can The Committee take a more wholistic approach and utilize new City resources (Kate White!) to help reshape ourselves
 - Alex asks [rhetorically] what we should be doing next?
 - Ian asks how do we recruit new members? We can't accomplish many of the listed goals without more help, but we rely on members' interest to guide the Committee's goals.
 - Lena views this as a positive feedback loop, we need to have good goals that align with the community to increase interest in The Committee who can then help us achieve more goals.
 - Arah the City looks very different than several years ago and doesn't really need advice on how to design new bike lanes, what else can The Committee advise on (per The Committee's charter)?
 - Alex wants to make sure we do not abandon Engineering & Evaluation advice, there will always be suggestions we can make, but one thing we can focus on is supporting Mobility & businesses that wish to learn more about becoming Bicycle Friendly Businesses

- Lena wants to see people partnering over things, not fighting over scraps, can The Committee be seen in the community as a force of positive change? How can we “get out there” and encourage the enjoyment of biking in Somerville?
 - Lena asked the guests for any input.
 - Sarah says the city built the infrastructure, but bicycle culture is very non-diverse, very focused on young & middle aged, mostly by self-choice (these groups are typically more active). For example, Sarah has gotten sneer comments about her “old rusty bikes” (fantastic City bikes!) on organized rides and asked how would someone who can’t afford a nicer bike take that sort of comment? How could The Committee attract more seniors who might feel alienated by cyclists in spandex on speedy road bikes?
 - Sarah asked about organizing an event that mixed cyclists & truck/bus drivers to help increase awareness on both sides.
 - Sarah asked about outreach at 5:30am in the morning to catch people who can’t afford a car?
 - Ian asks if the city could help with translation services as many of these folks may not speak English as a first language.
 - Adam says absolutely something to explore, including trying to get multilingual members.
 - Tom asks what is the role of The Committee?
 - How can we help the City prioritize bicycle issues? This spans everything from new bike lanes to bike parking to outreach or education to help people who are interested in biking but unsure where to start.
 - Sarah asks how we can improve bike parking on commercial corridors. This would help increase business access.
 - Greg mentions that e-bike/cargo bikes are a big concern for folks who do not feel they have storage at home, including at least one renter who was told they cannot store e-bike batteries in their apartment.
 - Tom has heard about this and wants to focus on how to help renters store e-bikes, can The City improve guarantees that residents will be able to park bikes at home?
 - Lena mentioned Bow Market as an example of a commercial area that has very little bike parking.
 - Arah brought the conversation back to the Committee’s charter; how can the Committee focus best on these things and leave other items to NGOs and other organizations? Could The Committee focus on ordinances?
 - CJ rides everywhere, he didn’t expect that when he moved to Somerville. It is “a way of life”. Can a goal be “getting more people on bikes”? Are people concerned about biking in Somerville being unsafe or crazy to bike in? Can we teach a defensive cyclist class?
 - Lena would love a defensive cycling class; can we get help from Somerville Community Access TV?
 - Ian suggests that just members of The Committee alone have a wealth of useful how to bike in the city tidbits that could easily be shared with the community.
 - CJ asks about social media.
 - Ian mentioned that we’ve tried this, but content creation is very hard, but always looking for volunteers!
 - Lena adds that social media that represents The Committee or The City must be very professional and represent The Committee and not personal opinions!
 - Adam says the city may have resources to help bolster the Committee (outreach, social media, etc)
 - Viola asks if we could explore having 15-minute focus talks with people of all cultures and ability from within the city?
 - Adam says the city can help here if The Committee has interest in this idea.
- Upcoming outreach events
 - Partnering with PTAC for Western Washington walk – Alex F
 - Hosting the first ever joint PTAC& SBAC street walk on Western Washington on May 24th, 2023. Walking the corridor of the project for this year. More details will be available soon.
 - Teen Empowerment Youth Block Party
 - Lena plans on attending to learn more about how Kate runs events.

City Updates (20 minutes)

- Code of Conduct forms must be submitted by June 12th.
- Hybrid meeting options for June
 - Not much luck so far
 - Tufts Admin Building, VNA Building or Assembly Community Room
 - Ian likes hosting a meeting in Assembly Square, but we should probably not do that for our first in person meeting again.
 - Lena suggests if we do Assembly, we organize a group ride to/from
 - Sarah asks if the meeting must be at city property.
 - Adam says meetings must meet accessibility and technology requirements; requests we try to use one of the suggested properties.
 - Agreement to look at TAB or VNA for June
- Construction updates
 - Bow St markings are complete, green & flexposts not done yet.
 - Alex has ridden it and says it is night and day difference.
 - Adam & Viola mentioned this was a City-wide effort, not just Mobility.
 - Grand Union Blvd signs and meters are moved, layout is nearly complete, striping delayed due to weather.
 - Powder House Blvd marking crews moving here after Grand Union Blvd is complete.
 - This is the “Option E” from 2019 plans.
 - Alex asks if there is pushback from the community.
 - Adam says yes, but the city has been able to answer concerns and is not expecting this to be a problem.
 - East Broadway final plans will be posted this week, marking crews moving here after Powder House Blvd.
 - Holland St delayed due to weather; crews are scheduled though!
 - Lena asks how long for flexposts?
 - Adam says hopefully not long after
 - Pearl +6
 - Sidewalk reconstruction has wrapped on the eastern part.
 - Intersection work is now beginning, once complete crews will go back to sidewalk work.
 - Western Washington
 - The sidewalk near Argenizano will be reconstructed this summer, this is intention to avoid conflict with kids getting to school.
 - Most of the rest of the work will be in 2024.
 - Somerville Ave
 - Final street work is wrapping up.
 - Spring Hill
 - Ongoing through the entire area, work will continue through 2024.
 - Powder House / Alewife Brook Pkwy
 - Ongoing construction, work will continue through 2024.
- SBAC-requested updates on:
 - McGrath Hwy bike lane conversion
 - Broadway & Rufo Rd
 - The contractor is working on bridges.
 - Portions will be paved & stripped this year.
 - Community Path – delayed opening
 - MBTA contractor continues punch list items.
 - Current project completion targeted for mid-June.
 - Arah asks if the contractors are working expediently or are they balancing multiple projects?
 - Viola says it is definitely a reduced crew, but their priority is CPX.
 - Still station punch list items as well
 - Bike Network Plan has been published!

- Next steps include a City Council public hearing.
- Viola says the Bicycle Network Plan is already having an impact on City projects.
- Alex asks if a Cycling Safety Ordinance is needed?
 - Viola says it would absolutely help.
 - Alex suggests to the Chair that the SBAC writes a letter to advocate for a Cycling Safety Ordinance
 - Lena asks about reaching out to Councilor Burnley who has expressed interest in this area.