



BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

City of Billings & Yellowstone County
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, December 7, 2021 MEETING TIME: 11:30 am

1st Floor Conference Room of 2825 3rd Ave. N

Live Coverage was available here: <https://www.facebook.com/Billings-Planning-Community-Services-Department-1738982159659260/> Recording is also available on same Facebook page link.

APPROVED BY A MOTION ON JANUARY 25, 2022

Call to order: Scott Barber, BPAC Chair, called the meeting to order at 11:32 am

Members present: Kristi Drake, City (attended virtually); Dorothy Dupree, County; Rose Cook, County; Anna O’Donnell, City; Ed Gulick, Planning Board

Others present: Elyse Monat, Active Transportation Planner; Scott Walker, Transportation Planning Coordinator; Kathy Aragon, Community Advocate; Jenna Solomon, Healthy By Design; Councilmember Mike Yakawich; Quinn Lincum, member of the public.

Public Comment Period:

- a. **Comments on items not on the agenda and request to add items to future agendas –** Councilmember Mike Yakawich came to thank the members for their service and to wish them luck in the new year.

Anna O’Donnell, BPAC member, mentioned that in the future she wants BPAC to discuss community issues that community members have reached out to BPAC on and to wrap this into seeing City Council more.

- b. **Online comments and comments received by the Active Transportation Planner –**

None.

Motion. Approval of the meeting minutes of September 28, 2021: Anna moved to approve the October 2021 minutes. Ed Gulick, BPAC member, seconded. The motion to approve the minutes as amended passed unanimously.

Old Business:

Scott Barber, BPAC Chair, will send out the letter about the Jim Dutcher trail closure later today for BPAC to look over. Ed commented that no provision had been made accommodate non-motorized traffic. BPAC members commented that in 2021, we need to look at a way to accommodate community when infrastructure is being closed for so long.

New Business:

Year of Walkability Movers and Shakers Program

Kathy Aragon, community advocate, came to speak with BPAC about the Year of Walkability and Movers and Shakers program. She is helping Healthy By Design with the efforts.

Kathy stated that she is at the BPAC meeting to ask BPAC to recommend to Billings City Council that 2022 be proclaimed the Year of Walkability. Walkability helps make all transportation modes safer. It also helps with equity and economic development and leads to a better quality of life.

Kathy is chairing the Movers and Shakers program that will work on finding projects, people, and organizations that move walkability forward in Yellowstone County.

Kathy's request is for BPAC to write a letter to Mayor and Council to ask them to declare 2022 as the Year of Walkability. Jenna Solomon, Prevention Health Specialist working on behalf of Healthy By Design, stated that Healthy By Design would be happy to help draft the letter.

Ed said that he anticipates the Council might ask what would be expected of them as a result of proclaiming the Year of Walkability. Kathy said that she thought the ask might be to ask them to look at all transportation projects with the lens of walkability.

Jenna said that part of the goal of this year is to define what walkability is and to define it inclusively.

Several members expressed concern with the term walkability because they felt it wasn't inclusive.

Jenna said there isn't a term yet that exists to include everyone so it is a chance to define it. Kathy said that walkability is being used in many other professions and would help people start networking around it.

Kristi Drake, BPAC member, thanked Kathy and Healthy By Design for the initiative. She mentioned that Billings TrailNet has a project committee with 3 engineers that look ahead to future projects.

Jenna mentioned that there will be several programs included as part of the Year of Walkability including We Walk, Walk Your Ward, winter walking promotion, and Jeff Speck's presentation. The main ask of BPAC right now is to write the letter to get the year declared, but BPAC will not be in charge of the initiatives.

Ed moved that BPAC submit a letter to the City recommending that it declare 2022 as the Year of Walkability, a year of learning about the many benefits of walkability, understanding barriers to walkability, and working in concert with the Healthy By Design coalition. Kristi seconded.

All but Dorthey voted in favor of the motion. Dorothy abstained. The motion passed with 5 members in favor and one abstaining.

Council proposal from Ed Gulick

Ed was elected to City Council in November 2021 and will be starting his term in January 2022. He is interested in working with councilmembers and staff on getting dedicated funding for on street bikeways and neighborhood bikeways. He believes that part of the City of Billings' transportation funding should be specifically for active transportation. Last year, the City spent about \$220,000 on active transportation funding, which was about 1% of the budget. He would like to see that level of funding consistently. When it comes to off-street trails, Ed thinks the City might need a mill levy and a bond levy for parks projects and the remainder of the Marathon Loop.

Walkability is much more than providing sidewalks. In order for a community to be walkable, things need to be close by. Ed wants to see transportation funds prioritized in areas that offer the best value to tax payers, such as downtown. He wants to see the rest of one-ways converted to two-ways.

Jeff Speck will be at the Babcock on Wednesday, April 6 from 6-7 pm. There will be a reception beforehand starting at 5 and book signing after. Support from the community in bringing him here has been great; there are a handful of sponsors.

Public comment:

Councilmember Mike Yakawich gave BPAC some ideas: He suggested leveraging Council and BPAC more. He suggested BPAC work on branding more. The Year of Walkability Proclamation is good for the new year. He said BPAC has a lot more power and energy when come before council because they are the designated representative for Council. A letter to give a heads up about the proclamation is a good idea, but Ed could bring a proclamation for the first or second meeting in January. Councilmember Yakawich suggested buying Jeff Speck's book for every council member and giving it to them. Tangible is important. PowerPoint is not as relevant. He said that when you come before council, you should bring graphics and props. A handout is very helpful. He suggested bringing BPAC's vision to the Council. He wants BPAC to shine. He said to always have 15 handouts. He suggested having a t-shirt for every councilperson for the Year of Walkability. He suggested doing a wheelchair walk from one side of side of town to another. He suggested giving away a pair of shoes at the end of the campaign.

Kathy stated that they are working with Timeout Sports to get one pair of shoes donated per quarter to raffle off to one of the Movers and Shakers winners.

Quinn Lincum, a member of the public, stated that he hears a lot of talk about infrastructure, but if there is not education to go with it, things don't work out. When talking about walkability, there needs to be more understanding of how to interact with people walking and biking. Without education, infrastructure really falls through. In his personal experience, there is a lot of friction without education. He suggested allocating some money needs to education. He suggested sending an educational piece of mail to everyone in Billings.

Ed suggested it would be good to have a few spring organized rides along the neighborhood bikeway route. Ed would be happy to lead a walkability tour in downtown to talk about two-way traffic.

Jenna mentioned that Healthy By Design will have *Rad Resources* to spread understanding about walkability.

Anna suggested making a one pager to educate drivers and cyclists and pedestrians too. She suggested an educational piece or making it part of the permit process a in race to let people know about the neighborhood bikeway.

Kristi said that Billings TrailNet partnered with Billings Public Works on commercials. Kristi suggested she could present at next meeting and see how we can revive those. Ed thought the *Take the Hi Road* campaign positively impacted him and helped to humanize interactions. It takes a long time to shift a culture. Kristi mentioned that Billings Public Works has a contract with Q2 and she thinks they could show the PSAs again.

Other Business:

Pioneer Park Trail – Community Development is allocating Community Development Block Grant (CBDG) funds towards the Pioneer Park trail. Funding for this project has already been recommended by the Community Development Board and Parks Board. It is going to the Council on Dec. 20 for approval.

Community Safety Summit – The Planning Division has been working on the Community Transportation Safety Plan (CTSP) which is a data-driven plan looking at how to reduce fatal and serious injury crashes in the Billings area. The Safety Summit on January 25 brings partners together to look at the chosen emphasis areas (unrestrained occupants, impaired driving, inattentive driving, and speeding, with the lens of young drivers). Anna and Kristi would like to receive information about the summit.

Future agenda items:

Take the Hi Road campaign

Adjournment

Ed motioned to adjourn; Rose Cook, BPAC member, seconded. All voted in favor.