



BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

City of Billings & Yellowstone County
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, July 26, 2022 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 AUGUST 23, 2022

Call to order: Anna O'Donnell, BPAC Chair, called the meeting to order at approximately 11:30 am.

Members present: Kristi Drake, City; Dave Coppock, Planning Board; Margy Bonner, City; Dorothy Dupree, County; Nikki Zimmer, County; Joan Schey, County.

Others present: Elyse Monat, Active Transportation Planner; Monica Plecker; Scott Walker; Ellie Lanz, RiverStone Health.

Public Comment Period:

- a. **Comments on items not on the agenda and request to add items to future agendas –**
None

- b. **Online comments and comments received by the Active Transportation Planner –**
Councilmember Joy of Ward III sent on a concern from a constituent about a fading crosswalk at 8th and Cook. Debi Meling, Billings Public Works Director, replied via email and said that crosswalks are repainted once a year right before school starts so this will be taken care of soon.

Motion. Approval of the meeting minutes of March 22, 2022: Margy Bonner, BPAC member, moved to approve the June 28, 2022 minutes as presented. Joan Schey, BPAC member, seconded. There are two corrections for the minutes: it should be the trail north of Lillis Park parallel to the Arnold Drain, not Lewis Park and the Big Ditch Trail instead of the Rimrock West Trail. The motion to approve the minutes as corrected passed unanimously.

New Business:

Coordination between Planning Division and BPAC

Monica Plecker, Planning Division Manager, spoke to BPAC about coordination between the Planning Division and BPAC. She wanted to emphasize and clarify a couple of areas as the Planning Division depends on limited resources. It is important that members of BPAC members feel that their work is valuable and staff wants to help BPAC do meaningful work. However, it is not the role of BPAC to direct staff. If there are areas of priority such as the work plan that BPAC is working on, that helps staff manage the allocation of resources. If everything is a priority, nothing is a priority.

Monica emphasized that collecting public input is still important, even if not every request that comes out of it can be accomplished. Collecting input helps to inventory and log concerns.

Monica also wants to help talk about priorities as way to manage expectations. She knows that can be frustrating when things don't happen immediately, but that is sometimes a reality of how government works. The Planning Division often has to engage Public Works as a lot of the concerns that are brought up are related to the state of infrastructure and Planning does not have the staff to send people into the field to fix those concerns. The role of Planning is to facilitate the exchange of information. She emphasized that BPAC should not be discouraged because things are not happening right away. It doesn't mean that staff are not working on issues; there are truly limitations sometimes. Planning will get the right information to the right people, but sometimes the outcome will not be what is desired.

Dorothy Dupree, BPAC member, asked what the Planning Division does. Monica responded that the Planning Division has very big jobs from subdivision review, zoning, to transportation planning, etc. They support 7 boards and commissions in addition to BPAC and spend a lot of time at City Council. They have to be strategic about way resources are allocated. A lot of Council priorities touch land use issues. They report to City Council and County Commissioners.

Kristi Drake, BPAC member, commented that she likes the new trail by Rose Park and the new neighborhood bikeway. Elyse Monat, Active Transportation Planner, said that the neighborhood bikeway was first identified in the Bikeway and Trail Master Plan that the Planning Division oversees, which helped set the stage for implementation of the route. Monica said that it is more effective to work at a policy level so that more projects can be built with these facilities included.

Dave Coppock, BPAC member, asked about new subdivisions and whether or not trails were required. Monica said that if the trail is in the Bikeway and Trails Master Plan, they can ask for it, but Elyse has requested exploring how to take things a step further to require trail connections to be built. The Planning Division is working on pushing that. Elyse reviews subdivisions for identified trail connections. Dave also asked about parkland dedication/cash-in-lieu. Monica explained that based on the size of the subdivision, the developer has to dedicate parkland or can choose to give a cash contribution instead of park dedication. Money given for parks cash-in-lieu must benefit that subdivision. The Planning Division is currently revising the subdivision regulations. This should help implement more design standards for parks. BPAC wants to be help influence the new subdivision regulations. Monica said that she hopes to have public outreach for this process in the fall.

Margy asked if the City was moving beyond Complete Streets to be even more bike/ped friendly. Monica said there were strides made in the new zoning code in influencing connectivity and providing open space. There hasn't been another overarching policy besides complete streets. Margy also asked if BPAC should just rely on the City's recent survey instead of doing their own, and Monica said that there is value in anecdotal information so she thinks it is worth continuing.

Dorothy asked for some examples of policies that benefit biking and walking. Monica said the best example recently is new zoning code as it requires street and block layout connectivity. Elyse mentioned that BPAC helped influence the new zoning code to require bike parking in some zoning districts.

Dorothy commented that it is important for BPAC not just to act on their own experiences, but to look at the community need that is out there. Monica offered that if there are light agendas, she can work with Elyse to bring land-use planning topic presentations to BPAC.

Public Comment:

Councilmember Joy complemented BPAC on working on a work plan. That helps with prioritizing. Public engagement is really important. Public engagement for the neighborhood

bikeway is really important. What makes things fail at Council is the perception by people that the bikeway would bring criminals to area or lower housing values. Public perception of trails and bikeways can't be overemphasized. Developers want to sell houses-if they understand value of bikeways and trails to home values and the probability of finding buyers, that is really important. A developer may think that infrastructure costs too much money or imposes too much regulation. In order to undercut that, we have to have public input to Council. Constituent calls to Council are extremely important and they can kill things at Council very quickly with only 2 calls. That shows the importance of public engagement and the public understanding why these are important to us. We have had good success in trails in parcels that have come along in annexation and in the South Billings Urban Renewal District. Some commercial properties that go along the river will have trails, be beautiful, and be of high value. Have to have the public understand how valued these trails are. One person emailed to say she like the neighborhood bikeway and CM Joy and the Mayor responded. It doesn't have to be a lot of people, but it has to be the public engaging council and engaging what is positive. The negative calls about the bikeway stopped.

Old Business

Weeds across from Ben Steele Middle School-the weeds were taken care of, but if the weeds should grow back again, the most Code Enforcement could do is send a letter and request that the weeds be mowed.

Letter to County requesting it accept maintenance for the future trails in front of the Metra and on the Dick Johnson bridge – There was some confusion with MDT about which facilities were being discussed. Kristi will keep Dick Johnson Bridge in the letter. She will send the letter out to the group for review and Anna O'Donnell, BPAC Chair, will send it to the Commissioners.

2022 BPAC work plan

BPAC reviewed the work plan they worked on at the past two meetings and updated it. The attached work plan has the updates. Elyse said that as part of the public outreach campaign, it is very important to set expectations with the public on how their comments will be incorporated to emphasize that they are being listened to, even if the change does not happen right away.

Public Comment –

Councilmember Joy suggested BPAC put the 6th St. underpass on their radar. MDT is going to reconstruct that intersection. This is an issue of equity as there is a food desert on the south side and Albertsons is on the north side. People cut a path through the fence to get to Albertsons. That fence has been fixed twice. People walk on the side of the underpass where there is no sidewalk and walk on a small ledge. The sidewalk takes you farther from Albertsons. Councilmember Joy shared statistics: Native and black pedestrians are more likely to be killed by being struck by vehicles. Pedestrian deaths have increased 4.5% since 2019. Pedestrian deaths continue to climb even during the pandemic when car use was declining. Pedestrian deaths are a very important part of what to consider when talking about putting in sidewalks, particularly in the 6th St. underpass area where there is an equity issue. There are sidewalks included, but the increase in the size of the intersection will make pedestrian crossing even more difficult than it already is and the sidewalk is on the west side where it is less likely to be used.

Monica suggested adding a third work plan item in terms of adding an overarching policy to encourage integrating best practices in all facets of City work. BPAC did add this item to their work plan.

Margy moved to adopt the 2022-2023 BPAC work plan, Kristi seconded, all voted in favor.

Other Business:

None

Future agenda items:

None

Courtesy public comment on items not on the agenda:

Councilmember Joy – CM Joy did an active transportation planning training and has planned to attend another course about Dangerous By Design which looks into how we design and engineer streets that make them more dangerous for pedestrians and bicyclists. People walking in low income areas are killed at a higher rate. Equity is a very important concern. The safety of people without cars often doesn't come up for built environment. BPAC may want to incorporate equity in the overarching policy and consider the impact of what we design has different impacts on different racial or economic groups.

Dave moved to adjourn the meeting, Joan seconded, all voted in favor.