
Auburn Bicycle Advisory Committee - Approved

Tuesday, 25 May, 2021

Attendees

Bruno Ulrich, *Chair*
Todd Deery, Vice Chair
Tim McDonald, *Secretary*
Ben King
Brandy Ezell
Sarah Cook
Melissa Reeves
Daniel Wyatt,
Alison Frazier

Agenda

Last Meeting Follow-up

1. Approval of minutes from 30 March 2021

Old Business

1. Bike to Work (McDonald)
2. Ride and Shine report (Deery, King)
3. Parking Regs (Ulrich)
4. Easements Update (Deery)
5. City Manager meeting (Ezelle, Ulrich)

New Business

1. Johnny Ray Rails-to-Trails (Wyatt)
 2. By-law Amendment (add two members) (Ulrich)
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3. Estimating Numbers of Cyclists (Ulrich)
4. Saugahatchee Greenway Delay (Ezelle)

Other Business

Adjournment

Notes

Called to order at 6:01. Members in attendance: Brandy Ezelle, Ben King, Tim McDonald, Todd Deery, Sarah Cook, Bruno Ulrich

A motion to approve the old minutes was made by Todd, seconded by Ben, and a voice vote was unanimous for approval.

Old Business

Bike to Work


McDonald reported that the previous Friday had been Bike to Work Day, two tents had been set up manned by him and Bruno. Donuts and coffee were handed out. Five total cycling visitors showed up at the Ross Square site, Bruno had on the order of a dozen because of the number of nursing students heading into class. He felt hosting the event during the school year would be better, asked if people felt that was a good idea. Todd felt it was. Bruno asked if a motion was necessary, it was decided to be more of an ad hoc decision to be made next year.

Ride and Shine

Todd stated the next, and last presentation, would be by Danny Feldman, an attorney very knowledgeable on biking and the law. Todd felt a post mortem on the series would be appropriate. He felt there had been a very positive response from the cycling community and that, with perhaps a few tweaks, the effort had paid off and should likely be repeated. He asked for people to attend and that he would create some promotional advertising after the event.

Parking Regulations

Bruno commented that City's Bicycle Master Plan recommended that the parking regulations should be updated. Bruno mentioned he has spent a lot of time in that pursuit. He had asked for input, but only Todd and Brandy had responded. He felt this was a shortcoming on the part of the Committee. He asked if the Committee was in favor of going ahead with presenting his recommendations to the Planning Department. Todd felt the recommendations were at a good point and complimented Bruno on his efforts. He asked what was Bruno's perception of the next steps to be taken. Bruno said the next step was for he and Brandy to meet with the



Planning Department together because the recommendations in some form or another would end up in the zoning ordinance. Bruno felt the portion of the proposed rules needing review were found in Section G, the parking rules by zone. Todd asked what were Bruno's misgivings about that section, Bruno felt that Class 1 Parking facilities were the issue. Brandy felt it would be difficult to get smaller businesses to put in covered (Class 1) parking for employees and asked if the Committee should focus more on Class 1 facilities with respect to apartment buildings and the like. Bruno went through some of his reasoning on the recommendations for commercial establishments he had proposed, stating he had used square footage as the basis for requirements. That was different from other cities' regulations he had reviewed, but he felt it was more appropriate for Auburn. Todd felt it was a good strategy to ask for the higher level of requirements with the idea that it would get pared back upon review by the Planning Commission. Bruno asked again for input on the Class 1 requirements. Todd asked why square footage was used as the basis for deciding on larger businesses and not for smaller, Bruno felt it was difficult to use such a specific standard for such a broad range of (smaller) institutions. Bruno asked if it was appropriate to get together outside of the Committee meeting (e.g., Auburn/Opelika Cycling Community, etc.). That approach was agreed to.


Easements

Todd reported he, Bruno, and Brandy had identified some candidate ROWs as bike corridors, and that initial discussions with stakeholders had been positive. He asked for input on how to proceed, he felt there were really nice connections possible and that work should continue. Bruno felt the City did an outstanding job developing the Greenway Plan and that the ABC's efforts should be complementary to that project. Bruno mentioned his position on the Creeklane Project in Opelika and how challenging it was to get easements approved in that effort. He mentioned that in the first 3 or 4 miles of the proposed trail going south of the Power Company's utility station on Hamilton Road there were about 10 different property owners to deal with, which he felt was a big challenge. Ben concurred that getting property owner buy-in would likely be a challenge. Todd mentioned that Brandy had provided input on the easements more likely to be feasible, but he still needed input on how to make progress. A discussion of pipelines followed, which Bruno felt were more of interest to perhaps Daniel in his efforts and that our work should coordinate with his. Todd felt his greatest need was for help in determining property owners. Brandy and Bruno mentioned some publicly available databases for that purpose.

Meeting w/ City Manager

Brandy reported on City staff meetings to update the Bicycling Master Plan and their efforts to make sure the efforts lined up with the Auburn 2040 initiative. Todd asked about the likelihood of the Master Plan being adopted any time soon, Brandy felt the plan would likely be incorporated into the Mayor's 2040 Planning Initiative.


Bruno then followed up on his thinking about a meeting with Megan Crouch about the Master Plan. Bruno felt that, until the ABC had developed objectives in meeting with her,



there was not really any impetus to do so. He then went into a discussion about his thinking on the possibilities for the Committee itself and how it could proceed in influencing City policy for the betterment of cycling. The first would be to link with some other organization, he mentioned the EACC, which he felt was not a good option. The next option would be to become a Council-appointed body and becoming subject to Alabama meeting laws. Another would be to work under a multimodal transportation committee format, as done in other cities. Bruno felt a holistic approach to transportation was an appealing idea. Todd asked if going down that path was on the table as an option. Bruno said not at this time, but that he would be in favor of that approach and that the Committee should ponder this concept and decide if it might not be a reasonable thing to propose to the City Manager in some future meeting. Todd reminded the Committee that we had discussed organization before and that we had decided it was satisfactory as it was, at least for the time being. The discussion turned to agenda items to discuss with the City Manager. This was a wide-ranging discussion that covered a lot of issues, including the lack of credibility of the Committee with the City. Brandy brought up the possibility of the City Manager saying she had no use for our services and asked if we were ready to accept that outcome. Ben mentioned perhaps we wait for that rejection and then consider an alternate approach, like becoming a 501C-3.

Brandy then expressed her feeling that the Committee should be focused on getting people in the Community to cycle, as opposed to becoming involved in City planning. She felt the Committee has historically been in a difficult position being outside the City's formal structure but having a desire to influence decisions affecting cycling. She referenced a negative perception of the Committee within the City staff, and Council, and she acknowledged the efforts of the Committee to rectify that impression, and of the possibility of a negative outcome in any meeting with the City Manager. Todd asked if there was some way to change the Committee's reputation without meeting with the City Manager and Brandy said sure, by continuing work such as the Ride and Shine series. Ben summarized his perspective on the matter by saying we should confirm to the City Manager our role as advocates for cycling, not as planners, but that message still needed to be sent. Alison reviewed the role of the Committee in times past of providing input to City planning needs, but current planning processes, especially budgeting, were much more open to the public at large and that Committee role of influencing was not as helpful now and that advocacy was the bigger issue now.

Bruno asked if there was a consensus on how to proceed. Todd felt he was open to the possibility of waiting until the Committee had polished its resume before approaching the City Manager, but he felt it was still a priority to meet with her to at least let her know we were here working for the betterment of the City. Bruno asked if there was any urgency to meeting with her, Todd felt yes, if there was a need to reiterate the importance of things



like the parking regulations. A discussion of the pros and cons followed. Brandy made the point input had been solicited by the City on parking regulations and Todd said we should perhaps make it official Bruno had the Committee's support in continuing to provide input to City administration on that subject.

New Business

JR Rails-to-Trails

Daniel provided some background on the proposed trail. He informed the Committee that meetings have been ongoing on getting a Technical Assistance grant from the National Park Service, similar to the one received for planning on the Creekline project. A small working group was formed and a proposal has been submitted. He mentioned that there seemed to be growing support for the trail, and for extending it into downtown Opelika. He mentioned his need for some support from the City of Auburn and for Auburn and Opelika to work together to elevate a trail Master Plan that fit into existing Cycling Plans for both cities. Bruno asked how we could help, and Daniel said our support. He laid out his vision for how all the stakeholders would need to provide input on the planning document. He said the Committee should be part of the conversation on development of the Plan. Bruno mentioned we could best support the process by assisting the Opelika Bicycle Committee.

Cox Road Update

Bruno gave an update on the City Council's discussion on eliminating the bike lanes on Cox Road. He reported on his conversations with Councilperson Dawson, who said the initiative did not reflect any lack of support on his part for cycling in general. Bruno expressed to him that a traffic study should be carried out to objectively evaluate the needs for those facilities. A discussion followed on Councilperson Dawson's perception of cyclists and their needs, and how those perceptions differed from actual cyclists' views on the subject. He mentioned the upcoming Council meeting where people could express their views on the subject.

Meeting Change

Bruno asked if we could change the next meeting to June 20th or July 20th as he would be out of town during the regular meeting period (27 July)> It was changed to 20 July.

Membership

There are three applicants, Bruno would like to postpone voting on those appointments until the next meeting, and it was agreed to do so.

By-Law Updates

There was a proposal to amend the by-laws, adding two new positions. Bruno asked for some of the groundwork to be done advertising the new positions.

Numbers of Cyclists



A discussion of the sources of such a number was engaged in.

Saugahatchee Creek Greenway:

Brandy said the construction had been delayed due to potential pandemic-related drops in funding availability. Other projects had also been mothballed.

Budget Numbers:

Sarah reported a balance of \$11,776.62 in the Committee account. Bruno mentioned about \$77 would need to be reimbursed to Tim McDonald for expenses incurred for purchases made for the Bike-to-Work Day event. The Committee approved the reimbursement.

Adjourned circa 7:30 p.m. CDT.