D.C. Pedestrian Advisory Council

(DRAFT) Meeting Minutes

Jan. 27, 2020, 6:30 p.m.

441 4th St NW

Attendees: Cheryle Adams, Janice Ferebee, Katharine Gray, Eileen McCarthy, David Tumblin, Moira McCauley, James Elliott, Mark Rodeffer. Agency reps: Dulce Naime (DPR), Karyn McAlister (DDOT), Sgt. Terry Thorne (MPD), Assistant Chief Jeffery Carroll (MPD); Franklin “Skip” Chrisman (DCPS), Reginald May (DPW); Public: J.I. Swiderski, Shannon Mills, Aaron Parrott.

Start: McCarthy convened the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

Introductions: Attendees introduced themselves.

Public comment: None.

MPD report: Sgt. Thorne reported on the traffic fatalities since the last PAC meeting he attended. A pedestrian was killed on January 1, 2020 at Minnesota and Pennsylvania. The driver involved did not negotiate their turn to go around the park, mounted the sidewalk, and struck and killed a pedestrian on the sidewalk. Two additional fatalities so far this year involved vehicle occupants. One fatality remains under investigation as to whether the actual cause of death was the crash or something else.

Assistant Chief Carroll spoke about MPD’s activities as well. He said that MPD is focusing on enforcement in high crash areas. Every month they evaluate feedback and data from the community to make decisions about their focus and approach. Members asked about illegal sidewalk riding by scootists and bicyclists in the Central Business District, MPD priorities with respect to Vision Zero, enforcement against impaired and/or speeding drivers, and generally about enforcement of pedestrian right-of-way. Chief Carroll indicated that impairment and speed are the issues that have receive the most focus because they play the most significant role in DC’s traffic fatalities and also are the issues about which MPD receives the most complaints. MPD focuses on impairment enforcement Thursday through Saturday, but conducts other types of enforcement, including enforcement of pedestrian right-of-way at crossings (and pedestrian violations), as well. Crosswalk enforcement is primarily conducted on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, most recently on Alabama Avenue. Thorne explained that the enforcement his area conducts (including the aforementioned impairment and crosswalk enforcement) is funded by NHTSA grants and any MPD officer can volunteer for overtime that will be funded through those grants. If MPD is not able to stop a speeding driver at the time (e.g. high speed driving where police pursuit would endanger the public), the officer who identifies the speeding vehicle may be able to apply for a warrant; it can be difficult to meet legal requirements, however.

Complaints about sidewalk riding by scootists and bicyclists are best addressed to DDOT. DDOT also is now handling automated traffic enforcement, so questions about that should be directed to DDOT.

Discussion of Snow Removal with DPW: Reginald May, Deputy Associate Administrator of the Solid Waste Education and Enforcement Program (SWEEP) at the DC Department of Public Works presented information about DPW’s snow removal activities. He said that DPW crews go out once they have a threat of snow to clear city streets. They want citizens to take care of the sidewalks in front of their businesses and homes, within 8 hours after a storm to remove snow in from of property. There is an exemptions for folks 65+ or disabled. Serve DC has a program to help those who cannot shovel snow. At one time, DPW and SERVE DC did attempt to coordinate the exemption process with SERVE DC’s program, so that sidewalks of exempt residents would be cleared by SERVE DC volunteers automatically, but the outcome was overwhelming for SERVE. BIDs are responsible for removing snow from main thoroughfares within their districts. DPW does not coordinate with the BIDs.

In 2019, DPW issued about 400 citations for failure to remove snow from sidewalks. May explained that employees who inspect sidewalks also have other snow duty assignments, including inspecting streets to be sure they are clear of snow, that take priority. If you see a snow issue, you can dial 311 and make a complaint. DPW will get that service request and will review it. DPW does train its drivers not to push snow into curb ramps and crosswalks. DGS is responsible for clearing snow from sidewalks around DPR facilities.

DDOT Report: Karyn McAlister provided information about the upcoming Street Smart Spring 2020 Campaign. There will be four weeks of concentrated ads and streaming networks will be used. The Vision Zero office is starting a “20 is plenty” speed campaign. DDOT also wants to have a longer conversation with the DCPAC about scooters and bikes on sidewalks.

Report on Distracted Driving: Cheryle Adams led the discussion. She summarized her significant research on the topic. All 50 states and DC have seen an alarming rise in pedestrian deaths. Distracted driving is very difficult to enforce. After presenting her findings, Adams made three recommendations:

1. DCPAC members should discuss distracted driving with their councilmembers and request that councilmembers include information about the dangers of distracted driving on their website.

2. Ask the D.C. Council to fund a media campaign about distracted driving.

3. Consider possible recommendations to amend the Distracted Driving Safety Act of 2004 to ensure that it remains current.

Members discussed the recommendations and agreed to continue the discussion at the February meeting, as well as use that meeting to have a broader discussion of how they envision the DCPAC’s role on this and other issues.

Report from PAC/DDOT Oversight Hearing and Discussion of PAC Participation in Additional Oversight Hearings: McCarthy spoke briefly about the DCPAC oversight hearing and explained that members who are interested in testifying at future oversight hearings should either reiterate testimony that the DCPAC has previously submitted or, if they wish to propose new ideas, ask for time at the February DCPAC meeting to present their ideas.

December Minutes: McCarthy made a motion to approve the December minutes; McCauley seconded the motion and the motion was approved.

Treasurer’s Report: Magee explained that the DCPAC account was drained in late December by someone who wrote fraudulent checks. The DCPAC discussed this issue and McCarthy and Magee explained that the funds are held in a Wells Fargo bank account and OCFO staff had advised that a claim would be filed but that it would take 60-90 days to restore the funds. McCarthy also spoke to MPD and contacted the Office of the Attorney General for advice about her responsibility for reporting the theft to MPD or other agencies and, based upon the advice received, was planning to report it to MPD’s Financial Crimes Unit. OCFO also had informed Magee that the theft was being reported to the Office of the Inspector General. The DCPAC will not be able to use the services of its administrative staff until the funds are restored.

Election of DCPAC Officers: Due to time constraints, the elections were postponed until the February DCPAC meeting.

Designation of Alternate for Attendance at Mayor’s Autonomous Vehicles Working Group meetings: McCauley serves as the primary representative from the DCPAC to attend the Mayor’s AV Working Group meetings, which occur about once a month on Thursday from 4-5 p.m. The DCPAC needs to designate a backup attendee for days when McCauley cannot attend. McCarthy asked DCPAC members to consider volunteering. She also indicated that she would ask the AV meeting coordinator if it might be possible for McCauley to attend by phone.

Adjournment. McCarthy adjourned the meeting at 8:32 p.m.