D.C. Pedestrian Advisory Council

(DRAFT) Meeting Minutes

February 24, 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, Heather Foote, Ivy Benjenk, Ameen Beale, Katherine Gray, Priscilla Magee; Agency reps: Dulce Naime (DPR), Rita Abou Samra (OP), Joe Brown (DCPS), Sharada Strasmore (DDOT); Public: J.I. Swiderski, Daniel Singer, Bill Sisolak, Aysha Ghadiali, Toby Bokum-Fauth.

Start: Eileen McCarthy started the meeting at 6:38 p.m.

Introductions: Attendees introduced themselves.

Public Comments: None

MPD Report: None

DCPAC Elections: Cheryle Adams volunteered to be Treasurer. No one else volunteered. Eileen McCarthy introduced the motion to elect her, David Tumblin seconded the motion, and the members of the DCPAC approved the motion. Priscilla Magee volunteered to be Secretary. No one else volunteered. Eileen McCarthy introduced the motion to elect her, Janice Ferebee seconded the motion, and the members of the DCPAC approved the motion. Moira McCauley volunteered to be co-chair, but her term has ended and she is in the process of being reappointed. No one else volunteered, so election to this position was postponed to a future date.

Treasurer’s Report: The Department of the Treasury has loaned the DCPAC funds to replace the balance stolen earlier this year until Wells Fargo completes its investigation. The loaned balance is at about $8,400. OCFO is going to anti-fraud training.

DDOT Report: Sharada Strasmore reported that there are currently 5,000 scooters and 3,000 dockless bikes permitted and briefly reviewed the program. She asked for the comments and concerns of the DCPAC members. Cheryle Adams commented on the lack of designated parking areas for scooters and the resulting haphazard storage of scooters on sidewalks and crosswalks. Jim Elliott reiterated Adams’ comment on vehicles’ parking. He also commented on concerns of unequal distribution of dockless vehicles throughout the city (needs to be distributed across all 8 wards). Janice Ferebee commented on the lack of education for users (i.e., not scootering in central business district), lack of enforcement (i.e., many minors seen on scooters, two users on one scooter), and dangers for vulnerable users. David Tumblin commented on improved signage on the scooters, but reiterated the importance of preventing scooters from being ridden on sidewalks. Ameen Beale said that there are twelve-year-old children with access to scooters. Strasmore said that some of the companies require a valid driver’s license, but this is not something that DDOT is requiring them to do because of issues around equity. Mark Rodeffer reiterated that there is a need for more bike lanes for scooters to use. Rodeffer also mentioned that someone on the DCBAC had suggested that the scooters should not have kick-stands, so that the user would have to put it against a wall and not just leave the scooter on the sidewalk. Ivy Benjenk discussed the need for data to be collected on the scooters, including tracking scooter-related injuries and associated scooter brands and frequency of scooter maintenance by companies. Katherine Gray suggested that scooters have locks, so that they will not be placed on the ground or fall over. Eileen McCarthy suggested that there be an easier way of reporting poorly parked scooters. Right now, you need to bend down to see the scooter ID and then you call the individual company, which can be difficult for some people, to let them know that the scooters are parked incorrectly. McCarthy thought there should be a 311 reporting mechanism that does not require all of this information. McCarthy also commented that more space for scooter riding and scooter parking should be taken away from car driving and parking. She also observed that when her father was injured by a dog in D.C., the hospital to which he went reported the injury to the Department of Health (DOH), which called her father to get information about the dog and its owner. She suggested that a similar process could be established between hospitals and DOH when patients are injured while on or by a scooter. Strasmore said that a scooter-specific 311 request is coming, but you will still need to know the ID. There was some additional discussion on this point. Dulce Naime (DPR) reported that certain neighborhoods do not want bike racks because of concerns of that it will bring scooters, specifically Minnesota Avenue triangle. Heather Foote reported that the scooters are being leaned against the Woodley Park Metro bike rack and scooter riders are making older adults feel unsafe on sidewalks. She also reported that there is a need for research showing whether scooter usage is cutting down on single-occupancy car use, adequate and timely enforcement of ADA regulations and pedestrian right of way, sounds emanating from scooters so that pedestrians can hear scooters coming from behind, education of consumers who are renting scooters from commercial companies, and education from D.C. government to residents about micro-mobility.

Bill Sisolak from takebackoursidewalks.com came to discuss the formation of his group, which has mobilized around the need for enhanced scooter laws, education, and enforcement. He reported that his group has been meeting with Councilmember Cheh on her bill and they support the use of geotracking to ensure scooters are being ridden and parked in the appropriate places.

Daniel Singer (public) brought up legal issues around indemnity. Currently the risk for injury lies with the user, not with the scooter companies. There needs to be greater mechanism for holding companies financially liable for injuries.

The group also raised concerns that there is no way for MPD to write tickets for scooters. Strasmore reports that this is forthcoming.

DCPAC Discussion of Plans/Goals for 2020: Adams said she thinks that distracted driving could be a good focus for the PAC. She reviewed the Vision Zero Action Plan’s provisions on distracted driving and said she thought it would be good for MPD to do step-out enforcement around cell phone usage while driving. This would help raise awareness and data collection. Adams also recommended safety trainings for vehicles-for-hire and recommended that the Director of DMV come to discuss questions about distracted driving on the driving exam. MPD could come to discuss data collection on distracted driving and how it is fed back to DDOT. DDOT could provide an overview of the annually published report on the relationship between crashes and the use of cell phones. Vision Zero does a Distracted Driving month. This is something that we could highlight on the PAC website and to ask Councilmembers to post this on their websites. McCarthy noted that Howard University can come in to do a presentation on the crash data that they analyze (under contract to DDOT), including distracted driving data.

Elliott mentioned traffic calming and curb space allocation. He also commented that DPR, DCPS, and the Office of Planning should give regular reports to the PAC. McCarthy will be meeting with Emily Dalphy of DDOT to discuss next steps about the traffic calming policy. The DPR representative commented that she would like to give regular reports and a more detailed presentation to the DCPAC. DPR tentatively will be on the schedule for March. Ferebee indicated her continued interest in working on bike and scooter issues. Tumblin’s priorities are a comprehensive sidewalk plan and how to fund it and a comprehensive crosswalk plan. Rodeffer wants us to continue to discuss the role of speed in injury severity. McCarthy mentioned that Councilmember Allen has a proposal to lower the speed limit to 20-25 mph on all city streets and suggested bringing in DDOT to discuss automated traffic enforcement (ATE) and the large role it plays in enforcing speed limits. Moira McCauley was also interested in speed and ATE. Benjenk is interested in ATE, traffic calming, and sidewalks. Gray expressed interested in safety around SUVs and trucks. McCarthy said she also is interested in speed and SUVs and noted possibilities such as increased licensing requirements for drivers and higher registration fees for SUVs. Foote wanted the DCPAC to look into the nature of our advisory role. She is interested in diving deeper into a few issues, instead of looking at so many issues.

Members of the public commented: J.I. Swiderski commented that the DCPAC should focus on ATE. There is a need for more. Aysha Ghadiali commented that the PAC should focus on motor vehicles as they are the major cause of fatalities. She suggested the PAC focus on speed and target drivers who are repeat offenders (require classes, lose their licenses). She also is interested in seeing the DCPAC look at the role of SUVs. McCarthy noted that speed and impairment are the biggest behavioral factors in traffic fatalities and said that Councilmember Silverman has introduced a bill that addresses repeat offenders through a restorative justice approach.

Minutes: McCarthy moved to approve the January minutes. Rodeffer seconded the motion and the DCPAC voted to approve the minutes.

Adjournment: McCarthy adjourned the meeting at 8:30 p.m.