Chair: Bonnie Bercowetz, Vice Chair Michelle Bononi, Commissioner Jerry Katrichis, Commissioner Siddiq Abdullah, Commissioner Lenny Hudgen, Commissioner Martin Geitz, Judge Zelman and Commissioner Robert Firger were all present.

Absent: Commissioner Nyandah Robinson had an excused absence.

Also present: Ms. Denise Robidoux of Goman + York, Mr. David Mann, Town Councilman, Mr. Kevin Gough, Town Councilman and the Director of Planning & Economic Development, Mr. Jose Giner.

1. Call to Order:

Chair Bercowetz called the meeting to order at 8:34 a.m.

2. Roll Call:

A Quorum was established with 8 members.

3. Consent Agenda:

a. Monthly Written Report (Consultant)

b. Monthly Written Report (Staff)

The Commission approved the Consent Agenda with no questions or comments.

4. Minutes:

a. January 14, 2019

Commissioner Abdullah made a motion to approve the December 14, 2019 minutes with corrections and Vice Chair Bononi seconded the motion. The Commission voted unanimously to approve the January 14, 2019 minutes with corrections.

5. Public Comments: None

6. Old Business:

a. Draft Complete Streets Report and Policy – Presentation and Discussion with the Consultants:

   Chair Bercowetz preempted the February 11, 2020 EDC Agenda Material to give the EDC an opportunity to have a question and answer session with the Complete Streets Consultants.

The Consultants introduced themselves as Mr. Eric Weiss, AICP, LCI, VHB, located at 21 Meeting Street, 3rd Floor, Providence, RI and Mr. Mark Jewel, VHB located at 100 Great Meadow Road, Wethersfield, CT.
Chair Bercowetz opened the floor for questions to the Consultants from the Commissioners. She started with Commissioner Jerry Katrichis.

**Commissioner Katrichis** asked what the cost of a project with Complete Streets as opposed to one without a Complete Streets consideration? He also asked is there any data that supports or explains the differences.

Mr. Mark Jewel stated he wasn’t sure as to how to answer that question. However some Towns have found that the cost of making improvements that either need to be made or are going to be made by their Capital Improvement Plan, adding a Complete Streets element might be accomplished through a small change to a proposed project. For example, if there is an intersection that needs improvement such as putting in new signal equipment, re-striping cross walks, putting in an ADA ramp that’s required at the same time, there would be some efficiencies to having it incorporated in the planned work. There would be a greater cost associated to retrofitting an existing project that would require going back and redoing work, ripping up old work. All of these projects are expensive and cost money.

Mr. Eric Weiss added that there are a variety of improvements that fall under the umbrella of Complete Streets. Anything from improving a cross walk to improving an entire intersection. The cost of one verses the other are just as scary as you can expect. Sometimes if the project is just painting the street it can be done with no added expense. But new signals etc., are costly. He thinks the question was about cost benefits. He stated there is evidence out there but he cannot cite it at this particular time. He added, when you improve intersections for safety adding certain types of elements there is evidence that those elements improve safety. It is hard to quantify financially but the gain would be it cuts back on the number of people who get hit by a car.

Mr. Jewel stated an example would be when a Town proposes a plan for a new high school or middle school. There are all kinds of analysis/analyzing done. For example, how would this impact the response time for the fire department and the police department? What’s the increased cost to social service? That level of analysis isn’t done here. This is a Town Plan that they asked to have put together. At the last meeting someone asked how many school buses won’t be needed once new routes to school are created? That analysis was not done at this level.

Commissioner Katrichis stated his concern is if they build a hundred (100) linear feet of road under this kind of policy, does that prevent them from building a thousand (1000) linear feet in another place? He also stated there are limited resources here. Deciding how to spend those limited resources is pretty important. If it’s going to hamstring the Town into not being able to improve streets because it cost too much that is not good. Is there any data on any level?

Mr. Eric Weiss stated most of the Towns that have a policy have an exception process that is built into almost everyone’s policy for that purpose. A normal project development
process and capital improvement process. Often it involves Complete Streets but it has not historically been called that. There is a process to do this but you do not need to have a policy to do Complete Streets. It is a best practice thing. In a lot of the movements today it usually comes down from the federal government. A lot of these things are required, an example would be an ADA ramp. They must be created when you are touching an intersection.

Commissioner Katrichis asked do you have a policy or not?

Mr. Eric Weiss answered, this is not a cultural shift - it is a change in thinking.

Commissioner Katrichis stated it seems to ignore the cost.

Mr. Mark Jewel stated he doesn’t think that is the case but he can see how some might think that.

Commissioner Katrichis stated what he is hearing is that there is no data.

Mr. Mark Jewel stated there is data but he does not have the citations and they did not measure that as part of this project or what the health benefits are concerning this matter.

Commissioner Katrichis asked, is there data existing anywhere for projects in general not necessarily this one in particularly?

Mr. Eric Weiss stated sure, case by case you can look at all of the ones on your capital improvement plan. If you want to go through it and say, if the Town of Bloomfield had a policy how would that change the next three (3) years of construction projects in Bloomfield. That analysis could be done. For example, you are re-stripping Bloomfield Avenue and while you are at it, you may want to put a sidewalk on one side because there is one on the other side of the street; it is not a requirement and having a policy doesn’t tell you that you need to put up a side walk on the opposite side of the street. That’s not a requirement, it doesn’t say that therefore you wouldn’t be forced to incur that cost unless you choose to incur it. And even in cases where the policy strongly encourage x, y or z be done that is where the exception policy comes into play if it’s expensive or doesn’t make sense for priority reasons. No one should view a Complete Streets policy in this Town or any Town as obligating the Town to write a check.

Chair Bercowetz asked, if the Town set up a Complete Streets Policy even if it were a very soft policy would that give the Town access to new funding sources?

Mr. Eric Weiss explained that there are some but he doesn’t think the Town is precluded from applying, there is an advantage in applying for existing pots of money. CRCOG now has a Complete Streets, DOT has one, the federal highway DOT has one and that’s where the funds flow. From the trust funds to the DOT, the federal DOT, CRCOG and to the Town.

Mr. Giner stated they received an announcement from CRCOG, the funding is out there but it’s very competitive. There are four (4) or five (5) grants available but it’s very competitive.
If you have a project you’ll get points and you’ll compete with other Towns in the Region. Other Towns have Complete Streets incorporated into their capital plans.

Chair Bercowetz asked if it’s possible to research Towns that have a Complete Street Policy compared to those Towns that do not have a Complete Street Policy. She stated, she’s interested in understand financially what the advantages are of doing what they may already want to do? She continued, before the EDC can say to the Council it’s a good idea they must be able to quantify both that, staffing and reporting. The elements of Complete Streets in the project quantified is something that may be considered. She stated that from what she read in the Complete Streets documentation, staffing will be needed and they are already understaffed. Her other concern is they may need to do some reporting.

Commissioner Hudgen stated they are creating a roundabout on the Center. Are the Complete Streets Project involved in the project?

Mr. Weiss stated that is a DOT project. But if you have a Complete Streets Policy they will evaluate all of that during the design process.

Mr. Giner stated there is money allocated for the roundabouts. The roundabouts are in the design phase. After the thirty (30%) percent design is done there will be a public information session.

Mr. Weiss stated one of the benefits that he spoke to Mr. Jonathan Thiesse about is that this draft plan included design guidelines. Because the Town of Bloomfield is very much interested in being able to tell DOT that they understand it’s a state road and a state project but the Town has design standards. The Town will request that they abide by the Towns design standards, especially the sensitive areas. That’s one of the advantages to having a policy plan in place.

Commissioner Hudgen stated back when they had a prototype of the roundabouts and what they were going to do, he made comments on the different roads and ramps coming off. It appears to be hazardous because there are a lot of elderly complexes there and elderly people in that area. Slowing down traffic is one thing but people just don’t stop and they don’t pay attention. He’s in construction, therefore he’s well versed in the subject but he’s looking at pedestrians and traffic. That is a key area. He stated that the roundabouts are great ideas but he’s looking at the safety of the people walking across the streets. His concern is how can the traffic be slowed down even more to accommodate the safety of the pedestrians? He also asked how the traffic can be slowed down even more before they even get to the roundabout.

Mr. Weiss stated those are great comments and concerns to make at the thirty (30%) percent design meeting and public information meeting. Traffic calming is under the umbrella of Complete Streets Policy. He’s been to many Rotary public meetings where the ADA advocates
have concerns about the number of crossings that have to do with wheel chairs, crutches and walkers etc., it’s a constant balance in that traffic engineers like to move traffic efficiently. But it’s not perfect for everyone. Those are all great comments to add.

**Judge Zelman** asked, with the implementation of this policy what the methodology is or what is the prioritization of the project besides the cost factor? And how is it all put together?

Mr. Weiss stated for the draft plan that’s with the Town for review and comments, at present that prioritization list was developed through the public process over the last few months. But moving forward that would be up to the Town to determine whether they want to dovetail on what you are doing already on the capital improvement process or if they want to have a separate subcommittee or to vet certain proposal projects. It is totally up to the Town however they want to execute it. There are some good examples out there but it’s totally up to Bloomfield how they want to organize that process.

Mr. Jewel stated it can be based on the best outcome for the Town. One Town might determine they don’t have clusters of places where there are crashes. But through their commercial district they are driving really fast. Therefore, they decide to put traffic calming in that area so people will feel a little more comfortable visiting a shop as opposed to visiting a shop on the other side of that street. In doing so the speed goes from 40 mph to 30 mph. Most shop owners would rather see people’s wallets going by at a slower speed in order for them to see signs in their shop’s windows, and make it easier for parking etc. Another Town might determine their commercial areas are doing well. There aren’t any issues they might need to address in that area but they may determine people are driving too fast around their schools. These days everyone is driving their children to school because the times have changed. It isn’t safe for children to walk to school these days, therefore the focus of all of their attention is on the school zone.

**Commissioner Geitz** stated the West Hartford Complete Streets was adopted in 2015. He asked the consultants to share with the EDC the experience that they have had with it? Cost and the effectiveness of a more holistic solution.

Mr. Weiss stated that was one thing that he had hoped to do but it wasn’t in their scope of work for the Town of Bloomfield. People kept talking about West Hartford. He stated that he used to live in West Hartford. He called them on his own to speak with them to research the planning process there and Mr. Giner also called in reference to the same thing. West Hartford stated that, overall, it’s doing very well but the Town can’t please everyone. As for the financial question, Mr. Weiss stated he’ll have to research it more. He asked if they had reviewed and used their exception process and the answer was yes. They tried to make a bike lane - they were successful in planning but they couldn’t fit it through the intersection because of all the engineering standards they had to meet. They went through the exception process to run a sharrow through the intersection and drop the bike lanes and pick it up after the intersection.
didn’t get into details with them but if they didn’t put a bike lane there and keep it as a signed share the road situation they would have saved ten thousands (10,000) in paint for stripping. But they made the decision that they value their bike master plan and they are trying to implement it slowly. If the project comes up to repave the road they’ll re-stripe it properly to accommodate all of the users.

In terms of the big picture - CRCOG is going through their eighteen (18) month process of developing their Complete Streets Policy. That effort was funded by the CDC. The state, federal and health were interested in promoting Complete Streets Policy nationwide. AARP is also huge in supporting Complete Streets Policy because they see a net benefit at that scale. Providing facilities for all users may reduce single occupancy vehicle trips. And it may be an increase in transit bus trips, especially if there are shelters at the bus stops so people won’t have to stand in the rain. Globally there is a lot of focus on the health benefits in the communities that have done well with Complete Streets.

Mr. Kevin Gough asked if West Hartford hired new staffing.

Mr. Weiss stated they did not hire any new staff.

**Vice Chair Bononi** asked how much is the cost to implement it? The documentation that the EDC has been given does not answer the question of cost. There is a template on how to do this but then it drops the reader. Mr. Weiss stated that it sets you up for the next step.

Vice Chair Bononi stated there are probably organizations within this government that would accept that statement but it would not be good for the EDC not to have some idea. It would be ideal to have a ballpark cost that other Towns of Bloomfield’s size and character have incurred. That should be an important part of the sale and the EDC does not have that information, especially in regards to first year start-up cost, second year and into the future. Vice Chair Bononi stated, that Mr. Weiss comments about West Hartford were very interesting to her because she was employed by The Town of West Hartford as an Urban Planner years ago. She believes they still have a traffic engineer. She stated that Bloomfield does not have a professional review from a traffic engineer on any traffic plans or traffic related concerns. Vice Chair Bononi stated nor has the EDC had any kind of traffic study to tell them where they are - they do not have a bench mark to work from. It is a decidedly different situation when The Town of West Hartford did the improvements on Franklin Avenue which seems to her very successful. It makes her wonder how alternative traffic patterns occur as a result of the improvements made. She thinks the proof of the pudding will be when North Main Street between Farmington Avenue and Albany Avenue becomes two lanes. She thinks they are proposing that change. Also her concern is how many Towns, once they have implemented the improvements, have traffic patterns that change as people avoid those areas. As an Economic Development Commissioner, access to the downtown of Bloomfield is a big concern. They really have to look at that situation.
Vice-Chair Bononi asked who is the author of the version of the Complete Streets Policy documentation that was given to the EDC?

Mr. Jewel stated it was VHB, Mr. Weiss and others. It was a combination of a couple of different policies that were highly ranked - for instance, East Long Meadow, West Hartford, and Fairfield.

Vice Chair Bononi asked has any of the communities they work with enacted the whole social component? Basically, people living in Bloomfield would have the ability to choose the transportation that they would wish to use and the Town would have to assure that they receive that? Where does that come from?

Mr. Jewel stated he isn’t sure of the section Vice Chair is referring to in the documentation. Also Mr. Jewel stated if it is not communicated well they can change it because it is in draft form.

Vice Chair Bononi pointed out the section that she was inquiring about states, “the Towns transportation infrastructure shall safely accommodate all users regardless of their age, ability, race, ethnicity, income or chosen mode of travel.”

Mr. Weiss stated that’s a general statement that is found in almost any policy, it is a vision statement or a goal statement. If people want to walk to work, walk to the grocery store or walk to the post office that statement says they should be able to do so. Or ride a bike, it is about not restricting options to a single occupancy vehicle for example.

Vice Chair Bononi state when they have to explain what a phrase means and it has other meaning that could be a problem.

Vice Chair Bononi asked has anyone else that you have represented adopted this policy that you have written for Bloomfield?

Mr. Weiss stated, not as written it always starts with a template and then the locate communities structure it to fit their use and concerns of their Town.

Vice Chair Bononi asked was there a draft review of the document before it was presented?

Mr. Weiss stated only with Town Staff.

Vice Chair Bononi asked who was the Town Staff that received a draft review document from your team?

Mr. Weiss stated Mr. Giner and Mr. Jonathan Thiesse reviewed it but Ashley Stewart was the primary person reviewing the documentation.
Vice Chair Bononi asked did the Town Staff have written response to the documentation?

Mr. Giner answered stating the Town Staff that had response to the documentation.

Vice Chair Bononi asked to see the Town Staff comments. She has one persons because she asked for them. She stated the Town Staff comments are very important because the EDC will know if the policy is being rejected or implemented.

Mr. Weiss stated from their perspectives the more comments the better. He stated they would like to collect every ones comments and opinions.

Mr. Weiss asked Vice Chair Bononi do to the fact that the Town does not have a traffic engineer, how does the Town currently handle traffic review on a proposed development that has significant generation?

Mr. Giner answered, Mr. Jonathan Thiesse, the Town Engineer reviews those proposals. They have traffic study requirements for major projects and the Town Engineer makes sure it’s reviewed and accepted standards are followed.

Mr. Weiss stated he like the idea of pre-imposed traffic analysis on major capital improvement projects. He stated he doesn’t know a Town that does that but it’s an interesting idea to see whether bike, foot or auto traffic are attracted to that area or are people avoiding the area. He thinks New Haven has done it on the Ikea development but he finds it interesting.

Vice Chair Bononi stated it was one of her original questions to the group at the original meeting, whether or not by usage had they broken down the percentage the approximate number of Bloomfield citizens to determine who would use bicycle paths if they were available, who would use pedestrian pathways if they were clearly marked, who would use transit if they knew more about it. How much would it cost and how efficient is it? She also asked are they targeting a population that would not use such improvements to a degree. Or do you want to concentrate them to that segment of the population which over time may change? Or do you want to have a plus benefit analysis to the EDC before making decision or at least an estimate?

Vice-Chair Bononi stated that the EDC does not have that. As to the efficacy of review, a PE is a PE in most states. But a PE is not a traffic engineer and from the standpoint where projects are at least large enough to merit that, where traffic configurations are changing or loads to our locate roads are being impacted, you do either one of two things, you hire a consultant or you require the applicant to hire a consultant. However, often, they don’t. In reference to landscape designs, no one in-house is qualified to review landscape designs. She is mentioning these two things because it comes down to resources and Bloomfield doesn’t have them. On a case by case basis, they could require traffic analysis be done to see how their project will impact the community.
Vice Chair Bononi asked Chair Bercowetz if they came to a conclusion about the word shall? Chair Bercowetz answered yes. Mr. Giner stated the word shall doesn’t mean you have to go out and absolutely do something. Mr. Giner did research and all of the Towns use the word shall. Mr. Gough stated shall is a legal mandate.

Vice Chair Bononi also asked why businesses aren’t mentioned in the policy. They pay taxes why aren’t they mentioned?

Mr. Weiss stated that can be changed.

Vice Chair Bononi stated there are reference to freight modes in the document that was submitted. It sounds like a sensitivity to commercial traffic having an impact. Was that the intent?

Mr. Jewel answered yes, obviously no one wants to ignore any sector in terms of how they impact or benefit from transportation.

Vice Chair Bononi stated in the documentation submitted there is a comment or phrase in terms of social equity being provided. Who wants to provide social equity specifically?

Mr. Jewel stated he is of the belief that the Federal Government, State and the Town of Bloomfield want to provide social equity. It basically means equal opportunity. Traditionally, greater access to resources and opportunity is held by those who live in neighborhoods. He stated by writing the content the way they did they are saying everyone throughout the Town should have equal access to all of these opportunities. For example, in the United States it cost about nine thousand ($9,000) dollars a year to own an automobile. It prohibitive for a lot of families because they may need two cars but can only afford one. For lower income neighborhoods social equity would mean it is easier to get to public transit to go to school, the library, the Town Hall, grocery shop and all of the resources the Town offers without the need of having a second vehicle or even the first vehicle because of the high expense.

Mr. Weiss stated it may be beneficial to promote sidewalks in a neighborhood where vehicle ownership is lower. Or have certain bus shop located in certain places. That is the meaning of that statement.

Vice Chair Bononi stated she understands the intent but whose to interpret what it is and who is to interpret how it is to be implemented?

Mr. Jewel stated the Town of Bloomfield solely should interpret it.

Vice Chair Bononi stated to a point she agrees and to a point she doesn’t agree. She asked what the responsibility of the individual is - she’s not quantifying and neither have the consultants. To throw it out there with no data to suggest how it should be done, it makes a great template but it does not give specify advice. Back to the percentage of citizens who would use
certain services, she understands in regards to mass transit but they are not looking for any number of improvements in that because they cannot justify the number of people who currently use the system. If the mode of transportation was improved and made more attractive maybe more people would take advantage of it. How about safe and comfortable transportation, she understands the safety part but what is comfortable?

Vice Chair Bononi stated that a program that gives information and advice on how to prioritize based on what other communities have done might be helpful but it is not included here. There is no benchmark here. As for jurisdiction issues, the Town don’t have the authority to insure that DOT does anything. The language should be changed to suggest that the Town will be perfectly willing to cooperate and collaborate with DOT in any form that they can. The document (Complete Streets Policy) suggests that ordinances be adopted. By adopting an ordinance you are requiring compliance. Ordinance are local laws, they are not suggestions or guidelines. If you ask for them to be adopted then you must provide compliance resources. If the Town isn’t in compliance with the ordinance they can be sued. This could bring about a compliance nightmare in regards to catch basins, streets, deicing streets and a whole host of other problems with circumstances that may be an emergency to one person and just a detail to someone else. She stated she doesn’t know how they would implement performance measures. Section 7 deals with an exclusion review panel which requires a diverse representation. How would one describe diverse representation on the exclusion review panel and how many professionally experienced people would be represented on that panel? Have other Towns done this successfully?

Mr. Weiss stated the answer to the last question is yes other Towns have done it and were successful. It will be up to the Town Council to identify that panel and what they define it as, professionally or otherwise.

Commissioner Abdullah stated he thought it was well done and he appreciates their work. He would like to see the cost broken down part by part.

Commissioner Firger would like to see all comments incorporated into the policy.

Mr. Mann and Mr. Gough had input into the matter. Mr. Mann touched on several topics and he was concerned with sources of funding. Mr. Gough would like to see more discussion on how it would affect businesses in the Town.

Mr. Weiss stated these are all great comments, this meeting was beneficial because they can take this information, finalize and alter it to fit Bloomfield. He stated they can give the Town the best template to start with that has all of the elements of a good policy but it is up to the Town to give the necessary feedback that will allow them to tailor it to the Town of Bloomfield.
The EDC and all other departments involved will send all comments and concerns to the Complete Streets Policy Consultants to create a Complete Street Policy that fits the Town of Bloomfield.

7. **New Business:** None

9. **Commission Member Updates:** None

10. **Public Comments:** None

11. **Staff Reports:**
   a. **Town Project updates**
      N/A for this meeting.
   b. **TIF Study Progress**
      N/A for this meeting.

12. **EDC Consultant Reports (Goman + York):**
   a. **Additional Reporting and Information**
      This material was included in the EDC packets.

13. **Adjournment:**
    Commissioner Abdullah made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Judge Zelman seconded the motion and the Commission voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 10:25 a.m.

    **NEXT MEETING:** Tuesday, March 10, 2019