

Fifth graders learn about government by 'doing it' to get bicycle paths built

A fifth grade Social Studies class at the Center School is getting a very basic lesson in how government operates these days.

In October, the class became involved in a discussion of bicycle safety. They concluded that it was too dangerous to ride their bicycles on the town's busy streets.

One of their solutions was to ride on the sidewalks, but they soon found out that riding there is against the town's by-laws and that there are very few sidewalks in the town, and none on most of the town's heavily-traveled, narrow roads.

Another solution was to build bicycle paths, and so they set out on a mission.

Realizing quickly that building the paths was too big a project for them to handle themselves, they broke into small groups and sought the aid of the town officials.

Groups of four or five then set out to enlist the aid of their government officials. Thus far, they have visited the Board of Selectmen, Town Clerk, Chief of Police, Superintendent of Public Works, Recreation Committee, Engineering Administrator, chairman of the Advisory Committee for Use of Excess V. A. Hospital Land, Superintendent of Schools and the Director of the V. A. Hospital.

Armed with maps and all types of official documents, the groups have returned to their classes, reported on their progress and assimilated their findings.

Under the guidance of their teacher, Ralph Hammond, of 286 Davis rd., they have now established their goals. They narrowed their selection of several possible bicycle path routes down to two by you've guessed it, a vote.

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Fifth grade students in the Center School who have been learning a basic lesson in government are shown with their teacher, Ralph Hammond, and Selectman Lawrence Braverman, during a talk by the latter, Thursday afternoon. The students are (left to right): seated - Charlotte Evans, Denise Costa, Susan Pike, Terry

Iovino, Debra Bumbaca, Sandra Gaudet, Lisa Connolly and Laura Heisler; standing - Chris Larson, William Kenison, Earl Fitzgerald, John McKie, William Wilson, James Powers, Fred Dutille, Frank Fischer, Raymond Earl, Joe Kusa, Jody Pulliam and Michael Eddridge. Missing is Susan Sykes. (Staff photo)

Fifth grade students present ATM articles for new bicycle paths

Six fifth grade students from Ralph Hammond's class at the Center School appeared before the selectmen at their Dec. 21 meeting to request that three articles providing for bicycle paths in the town be considered for inclusion in the warrant for the annual town meeting.

The students, accompanied by their teacher, alternated in reading portions of the three articles and supplemented their presentation with a map which they used to explain the proposed routes to selectmen.

The first route, as read by the students, would extend easterly from Concord rd. over the town-owned section of the railroad bed to the eastern most point of that property. It would proceed in the form of an access, crossing the southeastern corner of the junior high school property to Railroad ave., and extend northerly along the town-owned railroad bed to The Great rd.

The cost estimated for clearing, grading and rolling such a path ten feet wide was set at \$2,500.

Second article

A second article requests that the town raise and appropriate \$8,000 to construct a bicycle path from The Great Road north along the town-owned railroad bed, crossing Springs rd and Pine Hill rd to the southern boundary of the U.S. Veterans Hospital property. Further, it requests that the path continue along the southern boundary of the hospital property to connect with the proposed bicycle path in the first article and calls for an entrance to the Springs Brook recreation area.

The third article requests that the town vote to accept a right of way from the VA Hospital, along the southern boundary of their pro-

perty, for a bicycle path from the town-owned railroad bed to the entrance to Springs Brook Recreation Area. This article sets the maximum width of the bicycle path at 12 feet.

After the selectmen reviewed the articles, Chairman Robert Barton explained that he felt certain - with minor changes in wording pending review by town counsel -- that the article would appear on the annual town meeting warrant.

Selectman Lawrence Braverman moved that the articles be accepted for inclusion in the town meeting warrant file -- the motion was passed unanimously.

The vote to include article requests in its file for the annual town meeting is a routine procedure for the selectmen to take until they're ready to deliberate on what should, and should not be included in that warrant.

Commend efforts

Chairman Barton then commended the students' efforts, their interest in town affairs and suggested that they must now educate their peers and their parents on the advantages of the proposed bicycle paths.

Hammond raised the question of possible state or federal funds for the project. Selectman Braverman felt that federal funds were available for such a project and moved that the selectmen send a letter to the Commissioner Arthur Brownell of Natural Resources, to inquire as to what funds were available for bicycle paths under the Land and Water Conservation Act. That motion too was passed unanimously.

Presenting the articles to selectmen were Debra Bumbaca, Denise Costa, Charlotte Evans, Frank Fischer, William Kenisan and William Wilson.