

City of Keene
New Hampshire

AD HOC DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, July 12, 2017

4:00 PM

2nd Floor Conference Room,
City Hall

Members Present:

Councilor Gary Lamoureux
Cheryl Belair
Shannon Hundley
Katie Sutherland

Staff Present:

Medard Kopczynski, City Manager
Will Schoefmann, Mapping Technician

Members Not Present:

Councilor Carl Jacobs
Councilor Mitch Greenwald
Shane Gormley
Jack Dugan
Luca Paris
Kevin Dremel

Kendall W. Lane, Mayor

1) **Call to Order**

Mayor Lane called the meeting to order at 4:09 PM.

2) **Approval of Minutes – May 31, 2017**

Councilor Lamoureux made a motion to approve the minutes of May 31, 2017, which was seconded by Ms. Hundley and carried unanimously.

3) **Board Business**

- a. **Complete Streets Grant – Complete Streets Design Guidelines for Main Street as a Gateway and Slow Street, which includes enhanced bicycle facilities and traffic calming measures – *Will Schoefmann, Mapping Technician***

Mayor Lane welcomed Will Schoefmann, Mapping Technician in the Planning Department. Mr. Schoefmann explained that with Mayor Lane's support, he has helped apply for a \$10,000 grant sponsored by the Monadnock Alliance for Sustainable

Transportation – the regional transportation advisory group from the Southwest Regional Planning Commission. This grant application was prepared in conjunction with the City Engineer and Public Works Director. If the City receives the grant, the funds will be used for:

- 650 feet of bike lanes on lower Main Street by Keene State College (KSC)
- Shared Lane markings (Sharrows) every 150-200 feet on the rest of Main Street and into Central Square
 - This will help connect to Sharrows on Marlboro Street and bike lanes on Washington Street
 - On the left side of the right lane, so not immediately adjacent to parked cars
- Bike Boxes at Roxbury Street and Central Square
 - 12-15 foot, striped bike queueing areas
 - Gives bikes more visibility in front of vehicles
 - Includes a stop line, which vehicles in Keene usually adhere to, as well as signage to stop
 - Will connect to and lead into the new Sharrows but are framed like bike lanes
 - On the left side of the right lane, so not immediately adjacent to parked cars

In response to Committee concern about safety for cyclists with vehicles backing up on Main Street, Mr. Schoefmann explained these new Sharrows on upper Main Street are to accommodate experienced cyclists who already bike Main Street; to make it safer for those who use it regularly. This adds a facility in the roadway for people traveling in cars to know there could be cyclists and to be more aware. Mr. Schoefmann reviewed that these new lines will be on the left side of the right lane, so not immediately adjacent to parked cars. He added this plan has been reviewed by the City Engineer and there is a similar layout in Concord. He noted this is only an interim solution to provide safer Complete Streets facilities; with this interim solution, Main Street will remain as wide as it is now but the space will be better utilized. This grant will also help better connect the bike paths, trails, and bike facilities already in the City. Mayor Lane agreed that connecting the Rail Trail with Sharrows on Washington and Court Streets is very desirable, as long as it is safe.

Mayor Lane asked the timeline for the grant. Mr. Schoefmann replied that the grant should be awarded by the end of July and implementation would be required by November 2017, which the City has the capacity to do. The total cost of the project is approximately \$14,600, so the grant will cover a substantial portion; the remainder will be requested from City Council. Mayor Lane thanked Mr. Schoefmann for his presentation.

Mayor Lane transitioned into further discussion of Downtown parking, for which the City Manager provided some updates; the City Manager cautioned these updates are preliminary and based on graphical data. He has been studying Downtown parking utilization, characteristic Downtown customers want, and shifts in Downtown businesses.

There could be significant changes with the new housing project, MoCo Arts, and the new Colony Mill apartments. Following anecdotal suggestions that parking patterns have changed, the City Manager asked Parking Services to track patterns between 2:00-10:00 PM for several weeks. Results showed that parking is highest after 4:00 PM and throughout the night; nighttime parking far exceeds daytime parking. Possibilities to address these parking pattern changes include:

- Rent permit parking in the 46 generally unused spaces in the Wells Street lot
- Possible changes to how the lot behind City Hall is used at night
 - Possibly reserved for a fee
- Rent lower Main Street parking by KSC
- Shift parking meter times to include high traffic in evenings
 - This may not be well received by businesses whose customers plan for free parking after 5:00 PM; however, free parking behind the Colonial could counteract that.
 - Many Main Street employees use that free parking so they do not have to walk as far to their cars late at night; a solution could be permit parking for employees behind City Hall at night.

The City Manager recalled that these are only preliminary conversations to prepare a proposal for City Council. Not shifting parking times, etc. could lead to financial issues with parking permits, reduce staff and programs, and reduce the productivity of maintenance. Efforts have been made to increase the feeling of safety Downtown; enhanced police patrols, few places for people to hide, better lighting, etc. There continues to be difficulties with the lighting and the unsafe perception of the Wells Street lot, despite meeting standards and codes; people can hide in the stairwells, it is isolated, and not well lit at night.

Councilor Lamoureux noted push-back from Downtown business owners on changing parking hours in the past; he thinks that working with the Downtown business groups on this matter will help make progress. He noted that extending parking hours will require Parking Services to monitor in the evening as well; a lot of illegal parking takes place at night that could be deterred if better monitored.

Ms. Hundley addressed the parking ticket fee and the feeling that \$5 is too low to discourage people from abusing parking timeframes; other Committee members agreed.

The City Manager continued explaining the trial parking kiosk in Central Square. Potential advantages to expanding kiosks to other parts of Downtown include:

- Ability of customers to use credit cards
- Better facilitates extended parking hours
- Access to Park Mobile app, which alerts customers when their meter time is running out and does not require returning to the kiosk/meter to extend parking time
 - Currently used by 1,400 customers per month in Keene
- More consistent with popular modern technology

- Kiosks alert Parking Services when money needs to be emptied, which could reduce staff hours and be more secure
- Kiosks are easier to maintain, which could reduce staff time
- Kiosks provide statistics about timing, etc.

The City Manager demonstrated the layout of the current kiosk implementation. He continued indicating the next place for improvement is in front of Timoleon's, where the Highway Superintendent has identified trees that pose a safety threat. The City Manager is trying to only make reversible changes so that any future decisions of this Committee and the City for Downtown will not be impeded; the trees, however, must be addressed. He questioned if the curbs should be put back in this location after excavation; removing the curbs and placing pavers would better accommodate both snow plowing and handicapped access. The Committee agreed the curbs should not be replaced once removed. Councilor Lamoureux asked if this project will go before City Council for approval. The City Manager replied that this is maintenance, which usually does not require Council approval; Councilor Lamoureux and Mayor Lane suggested it be presented to Council at a minimum, so that there is not a negative perception of the work. Councilor Lamoureux added that other parts of Main Street could use this same treatment so it will be advantageous for Council to understand how it will be phased in over time.

Mayor Lane noted that the property lines of some businesses extend into the wide sidewalks of Main Street; still, the City maintains those sidewalks. He said while these smaller projects can take away incentive for larger projects, some of these things have to be done for safety. Still, he expressed concern about maintaining design consistency Downtown. He agreed it does not make sense to put the curbs back once they have been removed. The City Manager said he is trying to avoid a domino effect and is prioritizing these maintenance projects based on urgency and safety in a way that is reversible.

4) New Business

Based on when there is the highest activity in the City, the consultants have been asked to wait until fall, when KSC is back in session, to begin their thorough studies. They intend to advertise the program and begin outreach in August followed by small meetings in September. The consultants are still seeking a Downtown vacant store front for outreach.

5) Next Meeting Date – August 23, 2017

6) Adjournment

Hearing no further business, Mayor Lane adjourned the meeting at 5:06 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Katie Kibler, Minute Taker