

City of Keene
New Hampshire

MUNICIPAL SERVICES, FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, December 7, 2016

6:00 PM

Council Chambers

Members Present:

Janis O. Manwaring, Chair
Randy L. Filiault, Vice-Chair
Robert J. O'Connor
Stephen L. Hooper
Gary P. Lamoureux

Staff Present:

Thomas Mullins, City Attorney
Elizabeth Fox, Human Resources Director
Don Lussier, City Engineer
William Byrnes, Highway Superintendent
Kürt Blomquist, Public Works Director
Duncan Watson, Assistant City Manager

Members Not Present:

Chair Manwaring called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM and explained the procedures of the meeting.

1) Presentation on Winter Snowplowing Operations – Public Works Department

Assistant Public Works Director Duncan Watson introduced himself and Highway Superintendent William Byrnes. Mr. Watson stated that the primary concern, in winter snowplowing operations, is safety for the operators and the public. He continued that if you are behind a snowplow and cannot see the operator's mirrors, the operator cannot see you. These are extremely heavy vehicles that have good brakes, but they do not stop on a dime. He asks people to give them a wide berth as much as possible. It will save you damage to your vehicle and risk of injury if you take a little extra time for your commute. He wants to remind people that when there is any kind of precipitation event that requires the City to do snow and ice control, the event requires operators' same level of effort whether it is one inch or ten inches of snow.

Mr. Byrnes gave a slide show presentation. He stated that the Highway Division utilizes staff from other departments and divisions to accomplish the goal: provide safe traveling for vehicles and pedestrians on streets and sidewalks, parking facilities and other structures in the city. He showed an organizational chart – the Public Works Director, Kürt Blomquist, heads the winter operations, utilizing Public Works administrative staff, and staff from the Highway Division, Airport, Utility Facilities, Parks and Recreation and Cemeteries, and Fleet Services.

Mr. Byrnes continued that the Highway Division has 26 people for winter operations, six of whom are from other divisions and departments. There are 126 miles of roadways and

over 52 miles of sidewalks, 26 pieces of equipment, five surface lots, and two parking structures. Parks & Rec requires six staff members, to plow cemeteries, various city facilities and parking lots, access roads, and Robin Hood and Wheelock Parks. The Airport has two full time staff members and one temporary, part time employee. They plow runways, taxiways, and ramps. They have large equipment - a snow blower, power brooms, and plows. The Waste Water/Water Treatment Plant requires a staff of three. They have 12 facilities throughout the city.

My. Byrnes explained how they prepare for upcoming snow events. He stated that for example, they heard that there is possibly snow coming this weekend, so tomorrow staff will check the equipment and Fleet Services can do any repairs on Friday as necessary. They then have a training day for operators from other divisions involved with winter operations – the insurance company, Primex, gives a presentation on winter safety, nutrition, sleep, reminders on pre-trip tripping hazards, and ice control. Then Public Works staff takes them to the vehicle storage area and reviews pre-trips on the equipment, and gives a refresher on how to use the computer controls for salt and the plow and wing. The frontline operators review their plow routes and see if anything has changed, such as a person putting up a fence that was not there last year. They will mark hazards such as rock piles with a stake so the plows do not hit them.

Mr. Byrnes continued that priority setting was developing due to lack of staffing. Winter snowplowing operations became a city-wide effort, using staff from various divisions. Priority 1 is for all streets to be plowed by the end of the storm, along with airport runways, taxiways, and ramps; the Fire Department; the Police Department; parking lots and structures. Clearing the parking lots generally takes two nights. Priority 2, during the 1-4 days after the storm, is to clear the sidewalks, pump stations, and 750 fire hydrants, and do snow removal. If another storm event comes in while they are in the process of doing snow removal, everything goes back to priority 1. Priority 3 is clearing outlying access roads, the roads in the cemeteries that were not plowed first, the wastewater treatment areas on the outskirts of town, and so on and so forth.

Mr. Byrnes explained the response: for example, there is a storm maybe coming on Sunday, which is information the Public Works Department received via the two weather monitoring services they subscribe to. They monitor information about the predicted temperatures during and after the storm, the duration, type of precipitation, road temperatures, and things of that nature. No two storms are alike. One could be an early winter storm or a late winter/early spring storm; that snow is usually heavy and wet and hard to push. They could have light, fine precipitation due to colder temperatures. They might have freezing rain. They try to make everyone aware, via press releases, Facebook, and the website. 98% of the time they leave the snow on the road to absorb freezing rain, because if they plowed the snow first and then there was freezing rain, it would create black ice.

Mr. Byrnes continued that the 750 fire hydrants are quite a task; they are often where the big snow banks are. The hydrants use a lot of equipment to open up. The FAA has strict regulations for Airport areas that need to be maintained. All snow has to be removed

within two hours, even if it is just an inch. The Parks and Recreation Department handles a lot of facilities, and the Public Works Department handles some.

Mr. Byrnes continued that recovery and clean up gets tricky. They have to plow the snow downtown and play with it. Most of that work is done during the night. The Gilbo Avenue parking lots can have snow removal operations during the day, but the other areas are too congested to make it possible during the day. The parking facilities basically take two nights. During the first day they open all the runways and travel lanes they can, and then a crew of two comes at night to finish up the parking lots. Alternate night parking allows them to do the job. The next night, they push the snow into piles and then remove the piles. The Airport has an enormous snow blower to move the windrows back. If there is a substantial amount of snow they have to do snow removal on the streets, too. There is a photo of a snowplow that pulls a row of snow from a snow bank onto the street so they can remove it. If the snow banks are too large the sidewalks cannot be plowed. For a “normal” event it takes approximately two nights to remove the snow/clean up.

Mr. Watson stated that this overview is based on the assumption of adequate and available personnel and equipment. He continued that if either or both are not available it affects their ability to do snow removal operations.

Councilor Lamoureux asked how many hours it takes to do one pass around the City. Mr. Byrnes replied that the average is six hours per route, on the streets. He continued that the sidewalks take about 8 hours without snow blowers and about 12 hours with. If it is during the day the plowing increases to approximately 8 or 9 hours for one pass through the City. Many times they try to get the roads open as best they can during the day and then come back at midnight when there is less traffic. If there are parked vehicles in the way the Police Department helps to get those vehicles towed. The sidewalks are a very challenging task.

John Therriault, of 76 Bradford Road, stated that last spring he sent a letter to the City Council asking how much the plowing and snow removal on city streets costs. He continued that he was given an average of about \$10,000 per winter. There are 52+ miles of sidewalk. He has lived in nine different places including MA, FL, NY, TX, and VA. He has seen a lot of municipalities and Keene is the only one he knows that clears the snow from all sidewalks. He sees that towns would be responsible for clearing downtown and where they charge people to park, but he thinks clearing all residential sidewalks is a waste of tax payer money and most of the sidewalks are only in wards one and two and residents of the other wards thus “subsidize those two wards.” He thinks property owners should be responsible for clearing their own sidewalks and fire hydrants. The City could save money by putting the responsibility back on property owners.

Mr. Blomquist stated that he appreciates that thought but as the City Council knows they can only do what State law allows. In about 1868, Manchester passed an ordinance requiring businesses to clear their own sidewalks. A businessman sued, claiming it was double taxation since property taxes include highway maintenance. The Supreme Court

ruled that the businessman was correct and municipalities cannot require residents to clear sidewalks. In about 2004, there was another lawsuit in the east coast, maybe in Bedford, from a man with a disability who used a motorized device to get to the store and was unable to do so in the snow when the town decided to not clear certain sidewalks. He sued on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and went to the Superior Court, which ruled yes, municipalities had to clear the sidewalks because of the ADA. That is not necessarily applied statewide because the Supreme Court has not decided on it, but the general feeling of staff is that if that similar argument were to come forward in this community the City would most likely lose. Yes, it would be great if they could give that responsibility to property owners but in the State of NH they cannot.

Councilor Filiault stated that about a decade ago the City did a thorough look at where they could cut costs. He continued that they considered cutting back on snow removal. Their phones rang off the hook. Citizens were loud and clear about not wanting that.

Councilor Hooper asked if there is a measurement of snow that has to fall before they clear the roads or sidewalks. Mr. Byrnes replied about three inches for roads. He continued that for the sidewalks it depends on the duration of storm, staffing, and the weather after the event. Many times they just do the main and secondary sidewalks and then when the streets are complete the operators come at midnight to do the final plowing on sidewalks. Otherwise, plowing the streets just pushes more snow on sidewalks, so it is less effective if they clear the sidewalks before the streets are cleared.

Councilor Terry Clark asked why fire hydrants are not priority 1, since they are a safety issue. Mr. Byrnes replied that operators would be out for more than 15 hours. They do not have enough personnel to include fire hydrants in priority 1. Councilor Lamoureux stated that many times when there is a lot of snow the Public Works Department asks for the KFD's assistance and the KFD will go out and help clear hydrants. Mr. Byrnes replied yes, the KFD helps many times. Mr. Watson stated that they welcome having people "adopt" fire hydrants and assist with clearing them. Councilor Lamoureux agreed and stated that he thinks it is working well when there is coordination between the Public Works Department and residents who assist with clearing hydrants – in his neighborhood, plows put the snow to the side of fire hydrants instead of burying them, so residents can clear the hydrants more easily. Mr. Byrnes replied that there are many people in the City who help clear fire hydrants and drains and they very much appreciate it.

Mr. Watson stated that he knows people get frustrated when the City plows a lot of snow into their driveways on their way by, and he assures them that the operators are not trying to do that and there is no real way to avoid it. They have to do their work. He continued that they want to discourage people from blowing snow onto the street because it creates a hazard. If a contractor is doing that work it is against the City ordinance. They need to put the snow in a different place. Mr. Byrnes replied that they can push snow into the street and then into the existing snowbanks, but they cannot be left in the road or on the sidewalks. If there are big piles of snow on the sidewalks due to residents putting it there, it slows down City snow removal operations.

The City Manager stated that somehow the contractors, when they are clearing, will also block the sidewalks and then operators have to return and do more work and/or deal with complaints from citizens. He continued that it helps a lot when people do not do this so operators do not need to go back to the same area many times. Cooperation helps a lot.

Chair Manwaring asked how citizens can sign up for weather alerts. Mr. Watson replied that they are available on the Facebook page and via press releases. Mr. Blomquist replied that the storm announcements can also be found on Twitter, the website, or the City email list. They are also working on getting the updates onto Instagram. He continued that on Mondays and Thursdays Mr. Byrnes is on the radio with Dan Mitchell at 7:10 AM to talk about what is happening that week.

Councilor Lamoureux made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Filiault.

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee recommends the presentation on winter snowplowing be accepted as informational.

2) Kathryn Blair/United Church of Christ – Request to Remove Trees in Front of the Church

Dale Pregent, member of United Church of Christ (UCC)'s fundraising committee for the resurrection and reconstruction of the steeple at the head of the square, introduced himself and Linda Mangones, UCC member who has been working on the project.

Ms. Mangones stated that the project, which is scheduled for next year includes the complete rehabilitation of the steeple and painting of the building and the steeple's façade. She continued that this may be the biggest project done since the steeple was built. It will require four months of scaffolding, starting early in the spring. There will be very little interruption to the City except when the scaffolding is going up and down. They need full access to the steeple and the façade. There are two trees on the sidewalk with branches that are completely touching and covering the entire façade. It would be impossible to put scaffolding up or down with the trees there. In theory, the branches could be cut back drastically. The UCC has talked with the Public Works Department about the church being allowed to remove the trees and making a financial contribution to the City's tree fund so they could be replaced, according to whatever plan the City has.

Mr. Pregent stated that about a year ago Rick Zucker asked him to join this organization and help raise the money to resurrect the steeple. He continued that recently people may have seen the work they have been doing. They will have musicals and concerts to raise money. They received a donation from LCHIP and others and need to raise about \$80,000 more. He held up a photo showing the church before the trees were blocking it. They are not asking to go quite as far as making it as clear as the photo shows. They would love to work with the City. He read their request out loud: "Working with the Public Works Director and City Engineer, we would like to propose: the United Church of Christ seeks permission from the City to remove the two trees at our cost." Mr. Pregent continued that he wants to emphasize that any work done would be at the cost of

the church, not the City. If the City pays for something, the UCC would reimburse the money. The UCC would give a contribution to the tree fund or do whatever the City wants them to do. It is important for the trees not be there, for protection of the scaffolding and people on and under it. The work will also involve a crane and the area needs to be clear for that. The trees in front rub against the church and they rub the paint off very quickly. The plan is to start the work in the spring of 2017. They want to work with the City Engineer and Public Works Department to schedule this so it does not hold up their planned work in the spring.

Councilor Filiault stated that he agrees that the trees should come down, not just because they are a hindrance to the painting. He continued that he would like to not replace them, and maybe do landscaping in the front. The steeple is a landmark and he would like it to remain open. It would be beautiful to be able to see the church more clearly when you come up Main Street. People get upset when you remove trees downtown, but in this case, he thinks they can get along well with two fewer trees downtown.

Ms. Mangones stated that when she moved here in 1973, she was astounded at how beautiful the church was. She agrees that it would be great to have that view again.

Mr. Pregent stated that the committee did just what Councilor Filiault stated. They set it up so it becomes a community project. He continued that people from all over drive into Keene and expect to see the beautiful steeple at the head of the square. He, too, would like to see it as open as possible.

Councilor O'Connor stated that he is in favor of not replacing the trees. He continued that they would grow and eventually need to be removed again. Not having trees is also helpful for maintenance purposes, so they do not create mold or rub the paint off.

Councilor Hooper stated that he agrees that the trees should be removed. He continued that over the years when he photographed the church he used to be able to get great shots from far away but then he needed to get closer and closer with special lenses, and now he cannot get any good shots because the trees are in the way. The view to the church should be kept open.

Mr. Blomquist stated that he appreciates the committee's comments about what should happen afterwards. He continued that the downtown was designed specifically. There are folks who enjoy the trees. This evening the focus of the discussion is about whether to allow the church to remove the trees for their purposes. From his perspective it is appropriate for the church to pay for replacement trees, as the City would require of anyone removing City infrastructure. What the City decides to do after the trees are removed is something to discuss down the line. Staff will come back, over time, with recommendations about that. This project will take about 12 to 18 months to get through and planting would not occur until the spring of 2018, so there is plenty of time to talk about what will happen when the church's project is done.

Councilor Lamoureux stated that there is funding put aside to do a survey about the downtown area and look at its revitalization. He continued that he thinks they should hold off until those studies are completed. If trees needed to be replaced they could be planted either there or another location. Coming up Main Street, you used to see that church clearly, and now you cannot see it at all. He is in favor of removing these trees, even if other trees went in, maybe a different type of tree that would not grow that tall.

Chair Manwaring stated that the Savings Bank of Walpole on Marlborough Street has a photo of downtown and it shows the church right in the middle. She continued that she is not sure what year it is but the trees are small. It is a very different view.

The City Manager stated that normally, newly introduced items to the committee are placed on more time. He asked if this item will be placed on more time so the Public Works Department can work out the details and bring back more information. That was the understanding he had.

Councilor Filiault asked if they *need* to bring this back a second time. Chair Manwaring asked if they could have it handled administratively. Mr. Blomquist replied that City Code states that if someone is removing a healthy tree they need permission from the Mayor and the City Council. He continued that staff does not have a recommended motion for tonight. Putting it on more time would be appropriate since the committee is hearing this for the first time tonight.

Councilor Filiault stated that this is not rocket science and they know what decision they want to make and they can do this tonight. He continued that the City Council can send it back if they want, if they disagree with the MSFI Committee.

Councilor O'Connor stated that he thinks it should go to the Mayor and the Public Works Department for more discussion.

Councilor Lamoureux stated that he did not see what the total expected cost is for the project. Ms. Mangones replied \$330,000. She continued that the steeple work is \$300,000 and the rest has to do with the trees. Prior to going to the public, the church, between the LCHIP and others, had raised \$50,000. There has been an additional \$100,000 since the public campaign started. A generous donation came from the Putnam Foundation. They still need \$80,000 and that fundraising will continue.

Councilor Lamoureux stated that he applauds the church for doing this. He continued that this is a great investment, keeping the church looking nice, improving the infrastructure of downtown, and he appreciates it. This type of investment is what they are looking for to keep the downtown area vital. Ms. Mangones replied that it is very energizing to hear that. She continued that that is what they like to hear and she hopes it inspires the community to give contributions.

Chair Manwaring asked how Councilor Hooper feels. Councilor Hooper replied that he would like to see this go on more time for one cycle.

The City Attorney stated that he understands Councilor Filiault's position, but from his perspective there are details not heard yet that need to be answered, such as whether the City removes the trees or the church does, what the relationship is between those parties, how traffic flow will be handled, and so on and so forth. He continued that there should be some agreement. They will be doing work in the right-of-way and that requires some sort of licensure and insurance provision. If this was on private property they would not need to think about this. He would like to see the protections in place via a written agreement between the parties. Councilor Filiault could make a motion saying the MSFI Committee approves this subject to all of that.

Councilor Filiault replied yes, he was going to do that – say that the MSFI Committee recommends approval in conjunction with City staff. He continued that if staff said next week at the City Council meeting that they need more input, fine, but he does not see why they would have to come back to this meeting to say the same thing twice. He is frustrated when every topic is placed on more time and the committee cannot do anything on the fly. Even simple things have to be placed on more time. He cannot imagine opposition as long as they allow for the church to work in conjunction with staff. Councilor O'Connor stated that he would like to see this go on more time for one more cycle. He continued that no, this is not rocket science, but it is an involved project and it would be important to have a Memorandum of Understanding in place.

Councilor Lamoureux asked the City Attorney if it works if the MSFI Committee recommends approving this request if it involves the City Manager negotiating and executing an agreement with the UCC. The City Attorney replied that that would help. He continued that the reason they were looking for staff to have more opportunity to consider this is: yes, it is an involved project with a fair amount of work in the City's right-of-way. There should be some kind of protocol meeting to hammer out all the issues. They can do it in the way Councilor Filiault suggests but the law of unintended consequences comes into play and it might take even more time if it has to get sent back again. It is normal to have a protocol meeting with the entity before finalizing everything. Chair Manwaring asked if it can be done in one cycle. The City Attorney replied yes.

Councilor Lamoureux asked if this has to be done in the next month, considering the trees would not be moved until the spring. Ms. Mangones replied that if City Council approved this next week, and weather permitted, and the agreement they discuss with Public Works is for the church to remove the trees (and, she always assumed there would be an agreement), the UCC could remove the trees in about a week after that. If approval is in January they would probably have to wait until spring to remove the trees.

Councilor Filiault made a motion for the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee to recommend granting approval to the United Church of Christ, in conjunction with the input and approval of City staff, including the City Manager and the City Attorney, to remove two trees in front of the United Church of

Christ at their expense, to allow the restoration and repair of the historic steeple.
Councilor Lamoureux seconded the motion.

Councilor Lamoureux stated in the past that taking a little time gives the City staff time to look at it to make sure they are covered liability-wise and make sure they can complete the project. The City has a tree removal person they trust, and he would like to see if that person can be used even if the City is not paying for it. There is no reason why the trees would have to come down before January. He would like to give staff more time with this. Based on what he has heard from the City Attorney's comments he wants to place this request on more time.

Councilor O'Connor asked, if this was approved next week, is it that simple? What is the process for hiring a company to cut the trees down?

Mr. Blomquist replied, if it is a City project and there are on-call people for doing tree removals that are a public hazard, they would follow the City's purchasing process – if the cost is above a certain number they would get three quotes, and if the cost is above a higher number (he does not know the number) it requires a more formal process. This would probably be expensive, maybe \$2,500 per tree, due to the trees being on Central Square and the use of cranes. He has not really talked with the UCC about whether it makes sense for the City to do this or if the UCC should do it. These are the kinds of discussions the City Attorney was saying they should have.

Chair Manwaring called for a vote on the motion. The motion failed with a vote of 1-4. Chair Manwaring, Councilor O'Connor, Councilor Lamoureux, and Councilor Hooper were opposed.

Councilor O'Connor made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Lamoureux.

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee recommends the request from the United Church of Christ to remove trees in front of the church steeple be placed on more time for one cycle.

3) Roxbury Street Crosswalk – Public Works Department

Don Lussier, City Engineer, stated that they first talked about this issue at the October 26 meeting. He continued that they considered four different locations for a crosswalk. Option 1 was improving the existing one, option 2 was straightening out the crosswalk, option 3 was terrible, and option 4 was putting a crosswalk directly across the street and adjacent to the City garage exit. They came to consensus that options 2 and 4 were preferred. The petitioners expressed a strong interest in option 2. The committee asked staff for more detailed analysis and review, specifically in regards to option 4. The City Manager suggested moving option 4 a little to the west to alleviate concerns about pedestrians crossing the exit drive. This was a good idea. Mr. Lussier showed this option on a drawing on the easel. He continued that it would be perpendicular to traffic,

with better visibility by eliminating a few parking spaces. They could make it work but the curbing has a 3- to 4-inch reveal and when the street gets rehabilitated staff would have to make the curb the standard 8 inches and it would not comply with the ADA anymore. In the graphic you can see the existing crosswalk markings that used to service the YMCA facility. They talked about reconstructing it at that location. They looked at moving it about 25 feet to the west, to be on the opposite side of the City Hall parking garage exit, which he calls option 4B. That idea worked out well. It still has the advantages of not affecting parking in either direction, and it moves the crosswalk away from the business's front door. They would not have problems with curb ramps affecting access to the business. The disadvantage with either version of option 4 is that the tree on the corner would have to be removed. He thinks that 4B is the preferred option.

Yvonne Gilbertson, of Central Square Terrace, asked if the crosswalk would lead to the parking lot across the street. Mr. Lussier replied no, it would be within the hatched area shown in the drawing; you can see that the drive aisle is further to the west. He continued that it lines up nicely with the facility across the street. Ms. Gilbertson stated that they discussed people hanging out in front of the building. If the crosswalk is on the exitway, it will cause a lot of problems. City folks and residents try to come out, and people take the shortcut because they do not want to go around the circle, and all of those youth will go under the parking garage. They come out if they do not want to walk all the way down and around. They will go through the parking garage where people park and that will cause a lot of problems. They already have problems with bicyclists and a lot of people. City employees need to use it, too; as it is where they park their vehicles.

Mr. Lussier asked if she means children using MoCo Arts. Ms. Gilbertson replied yes. Mr. Lussier asked if she thinks the increase in pedestrian traffic will be affected by the location of the crosswalk or if it will just be a result of the MoCo Arts development. Ms. Gilbertson replied that she is not sure and wants to say "both." She continued that she is concerned about someone getting hit, because there will be so many people in the area. Mr. Lussier asked if she thinks the volume of pedestrians using the crosswalk would be less if they went with option 2. Ms. Gilbertson replied that she prefers where it is now but she cannot get what she wants, because it is a lot of people. Healthwise, the City is choosing the best option, but she is concerned about the area under the parking garage and people trying to get out. Someone hit a bicyclist and it was the bicyclist's fault.

Chair Manwaring asked if there will be a sidewalk further down where MoCo Arts will be. Mr. Lussier replied yes, MoCo Arts is proposing (and has been approved) to improve and reconstruct the sidewalk in front of their facility, with an ADA-compliant ramp so people can cross the driveway. There is already a walkway along the side of the building. You can take sidewalks in almost any direction from this area.

Ms. Gilbertson asked if the Roxbury Street crosswalk will have lights like the ones on West Street. Mr. Lussier replied that Public Works recommends a push-button, pedestrian-activated signal with flashing lights like at the crosswalk on West Street.

The City Manager stated that there is no perfect solution to this. He continued that all options have problems one way or another. The City Engineer has to look at the ability to build this and to make sure it meets standards and the ADA. He also has to look at sight line distances so people can reasonably see what is in the crosswalk. The development occurring on the property adjacent will likely generate additional foot traffic. He is balancing the constructability of the sidewalks and crosswalks and the safety factor. What he is advising is the best option based on safety, sightlines, and the ability to construct. Other options would work, too, but not as well.

Councilor Filiault stated that he agrees and wants to point out that this will leave the MSFI Committee and go to the Finance, Organization, and Personnel (FOP) Committee for more extensive review. No matter how much they talk about it tonight, it will still get that extra review. The topic is far from over.

Councilor Lamoureux asked, if the MSFI Committee recommends option 4B, would the FOP Committee only be considering the cost of the lights? Mr. Lussier replied that the FOP Committee would be considering the entire project costs.

Councilor Clark asked how many crosswalks they are talking about, at the end of the project. Mr. Lussier replied that his recommended motion has the MSFI Committee granting authority to install one and remove two, including the one in front of Central Square Terrace.

Councilor Clark stated that the City has goals about walkable, safe streets. He continued that he wonders how having fewer (instead of more) sidewalks meets those goals. Mr. Lussier replied that they are talking about crosswalks, not sidewalks. He continued that mid-block crosswalks are problematic from a pedestrian safety perspective. Vehicles travel slower at intersections and they want pedestrians to cross at intersections as much as possible. That is not always feasible. Staff recommends one improved, highly-visible, well-signalized, mid-block crossing, instead of two that meet standards but are not very well designated. Councilor Clark replied that that makes sense and he knows they are using the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) as guidance. Those rules and tonight's conversation are based on the idea that "cars are king," and he thought Keene was not talking about that anymore and were talking about making streets more walkable, especially downtown, and the mindset of multi-modal transportation, including bicycles, wheelchairs, and legs. He continued cars are not king and they do not dictate policy anymore. How will they get to the safe streets goal unless they start taking steps to do so? How will the mindset ever change? They should have more crosswalks and take steps to slow down traffic and encourage multiple modes of transportation instead of using the MUTCD guidebook, which is based on old ways of thinking.

Councilor O'Connor asked about construction time. Mr. Lussier replied that this is a spring project.

Councilor O'Connor stated that it is difficult to cross, where the crosswalks are now. He thinks people have a hard time seeing him when he crosses. People try to speed up to get

through the light, or they speed up to try and get by the pedestrians. That is why he is not in favor of having many crosswalks. People do not want to keep stopping every 20 feet to let pedestrians go by. Unfortunately, yes, when a car is coming at you the car is king – it is 3000 pounds of metal, plastic, and fuel and he is not going to step in front of it, but they are still trying to make crosswalks and streets safer.

Mr. Lussier stated that traffic engineers know that multiple mid-block crossings lead to less compliant driver behavior. He continued that the reason they are trying to consolidate crosswalks is not because they think cars are king, but because they want to make the interactions between cars and pedestrians safer. They are not trying to prioritize vehicles; they are trying to give pedestrians better facilities by moving it to a location where parked vehicles are not a problem and they can have better sightlines, signalization, and visibility. He does not see the recommended improvements as prioritizing vehicular traffic; he sees it as prioritizing pedestrians' and bicyclists' safety.

Ms. Gilbertson asked about the loading zone. Mr. Lussier replied that in option 2 the loading zone would have to be decreased to allow the opening up of the sightlines. He continued that with option 4, if someone standing on this side has unobstructed views to the west and there is no parking (existing or proposed) so there are no sightline obstructions and there is no need to decrease the loading zone. Ms. Gilbertson asked if emergency vehicles are fine to park there then. Mr. Lussier replied yes. Ms. Gilbertson replied that in that case, she is all set and understands now.

Councilor O'Connor made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Filiault.

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee recommends the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the improved pedestrian crosswalk as presented by the City Engineer in the vicinity of 32 Roxbury Street, and abandon the crosswalks at 21 and 37 Roxbury Street; and further, that the funding of the proposed improvements be forwarded to the Finance, Organization, and Personnel Committee.

4) Safety Concern at Intersection of West Street and Bradford Road – Public Works Department

Mr. Lussier stated that last time they spoke about this, Sabrina Lee mentioned some concerns with visibility of Bradford Road for vehicles traveling east bound on West Street trying to turn onto Bradford Road and not being able to see the sign and make the turn. He continued that they put the item on more time and staff reviewed this situation. They agree that there is a problem with the sign's location and vehicles approaching from the west cannot see the sign until they are about 25 feet away. The Public Works Department will relocate the sign to the south side of the street so it is visible from a greater distance. They will also install an "Intersection ahead" warning sign. There is some tree-trimming work they can do in the right-of-way to improve visibility. All of that work is within the Public Works Director's authority and they do not need the City Council's permission for this.

Mr. Lussier continued that to address the Lees' request for speed reduction measures, the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices, MUTCD gives universal standards for when it is appropriate to have a multi-way stop. Staff studied the area and found that the average speed in both directions was 28 mph, which is below the 30 mph limit. The 85th percentile speed was measured at four miles per hour over the posted speed limit. That means 85% of the vehicles traveling there go at or below 34 mph. The speed limit is the speed limit, but from an engineering perspective this is not a speeding problem. The MUTCD indicates that for an intersection of this volume the 85% percentile speed would need to be 10 mph or more over the speed limit for them to consider a four-way stop. Staff does not see this as a speeding issue and does not recommend a stop sign or a speed table.

John Therriault of 76 Bradford Road stated that he goes through this intersection two or three times a day. He continued that he applauds the proposed improvement to the intersection. There is a hedgerow along the northern side of the street on the west side of the Bradford Road interchange. There is a stone wall that abuts one of the properties and there is a lot of tall vegetation that makes it impossible to see traffic when you are trying to turn off of Bradford Road onto West Street, when the leaves are out. Trimming that would greatly improve safety and visibility. Several times he has had near-misses here because of this issue. Mr. Lussier replied that they plan on clearing this. There are low-hanging branches that overhang on Bradford Road that keep you from seeing the stop sign. Mr. Therriault replied that he thinks this is a bigger hindrance – the brush line on the stone wall along West Street. Mr. Lussier replied that they will trim it to the right-of-way, which is basically the stone wall.

Councilor Hooper made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Filiault.

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee recommends the update about the safety concerns at the intersection of Bradford Road and West Street be accepted as informational.

5) Two-hour Parking, Washington Street North of Vernon Street – Police Department

Mary Lou Caffrey, from Bradley and Faulkner Law Firm, introduced herself and Sam Bradley, Senior Partner at the law firm. She stated that they were here a few cycles ago. She was pleased to read the staff recommendation and she hopes they are willing and able to put two parking meters in front of 50 Washington Street.

Steve Russo, Captain with the Keene Police Department (KPD), introduced himself and Ginger Hill, Parking Operations Manager. As an overview, staff is looking at a variety of parking issues that will take some time. They found this request reasonable and doable and they recommend having the MSFI Committee recommend a 2-hour parking zone on the west side of Washington Street for about 80 feet. This would give the law firm immediate relief while the KPD does their more comprehensive review. They feel the law firm should not have to wait several months.

Chair Manwaring asked if any members of the public had questions. Hearing none, she asked for a motion.

Councilor Lamoureux made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Filiault.

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee recommends that staff be instructed to introduce an ordinance for a first reading which would provide for a two-hour parking zone on the west side of Washington Street from Central Square to a point north of Vernon Street, except where otherwise posted.

6) Speeding on Jordan Road – Request for Speed Humps – Public Works Department

Mr. Lussier stated that last time, Liberty Ebright and her children were here and talked about speeding on Jordan Road and wanting to be able to safely ride bicycles. He continued that the topic went on more time and staff collected data during a three week period, with six different sets of measurements. They observed that the average speed was 26 to 32 mph and the 85th percentile speed was up to 36 mph. It is a little bit faster than West Street, but only slightly. There were a few outlier vehicles with speeds in excess of 40 mph. He explained that the large majority of vehicles, about 9% of the traffic, exceeded 30 mph and about 1.5% exceeded 40 mph. The top speed measured was 57 mph, which is not appropriate for Jordan Road. For two weeks they measured it with the display boards turned off, so drivers did not get feedback about their speeds. They turned it on the third week. The statistics reflected a decline from 9% of vehicles going over 30 mph to 5% to 6%. There was a little improvement.

Mr. Lussier continued that the equipment recorded the speeds and their times of day. They looked to see what times of day vehicles were speeding. A spike in the graph shows that a large portion of speeding happens during the 6 AM to 9 AM commute. There is another spike in the afternoon but it is most noticeable in the morning. They shared this information with the KPD. The KPD replied that when they get a request for a Police presence in a neighborhood, they perform “targeted patrols” – an increased presence in the neighborhood as staff is available. Jordan Road was already on their docket for targeted patrols and that will continue. Hopefully now that they understand the times of day better, they can focus the patrols even further. Seeing the small number of outliers and the very specific window when the behavior is happening, they think there should be an enforcement solution instead of a physical barrier solution.

Mr. Lussier continued that Jordan Road is scheduled to be improved in 2017. When that happens he recommends adding fog and center lines. They will also install additional speed limit signage. There is currently no signage in the middle, just the beginning and end of the street. Hopefully they will see the average speeds lowered a bit. With striping added, drivers feel that the travelway is restricted and slow down. The cost of the striping would add to the City’s operating budget - about \$1,500 per year to maintain them - but he believes there would be benefit. The Manual of Uniform Traffic Control

Devices, MUTDC does not address when traffic calming measures are indicated but the State has developed guidelines: if the 85th speed is 10 mph over the posted speed limit, then a physical barrier (speed tables) would be added. Staff does not see the need for that here and they are not recommending that.

Chair Manwaring asked if committee members or the public had questions or comments. Hearing none, she asked for a motion.

Councilor Filiault made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Lamoureux.

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee recommends the update on Jordan Road be accepted as informational.

7) No Parking - Spring Street, South Side – Police Department

Captain Steve Russo, Keene Police Department, introduced himself and Ginger Hill, Parking Services Manager. Captain Russo stated that the Planning Board required a person who sought permission to build on Spring Street to petition the City Council to make the southeast side of Spring Street no parking. He continued that the petitioners came to the MSFI Committee with the request in October and it was placed on more time. Staff from the Public Works and Planning Departments and Keene Police Department met and reviewed it and walked the entire area. They got input from the Keene Fire Department, too. Their recommendation is to go forward with this and have staff draft an ordinance. There is also signage on Spring Street that needs to be cleaned up. He asks that the MSFI Committee recommend that staff draft an ordinance amendment. With the assistance of the Public Works Department, the Police Department would put an electronic message board out there to let the public know about upcoming changes.

Chair Manwaring asked if they talked with residents. Captain Russo replied that they did not see any at the time, but one resident from Brook Street emailed Planning Director Rhett Lamb to ask why they were out there.

The City Manager stated that the advantage of using the electronic message board for this purpose is many residents on Spring Street are renters. He continued that this notification will not trap the City in a notification process that is not really described by statute, but it alerts everyone who uses Spring Street that there is this consideration so they can really get the input they need.

Councilor Lamoureux asked if they know how many cars are parking on that side of the road and where they will be displaced to. Ms. Hill replied that they did daily counts for about a month at different times during the day and there were never cars on the south side and there were between four and eight on the north side. Chair Manwaring asked if parking is allowed on the north side. Ms. Hill replied for a good portion of the street, yes.

Bob Beauregard, of 47 Spring Street, stated that he physically walked the area today and the street will lose 14 parking spaces if this goes through. He continued that he lives on the south side of the street and is quite familiar with this. The problem is that any parking on Spring Street will be pushed to Franklin or Brook Streets. He disagrees with the traffic study that was done for the middle school project; it was not done at the correct times of day. The Unitarian Universalist Church has a tremendous group that uses that facility. In addition, Spring Street is a major cut-through from Washington Street. It will increase the cut-throughs from Franklin Street if parking is eliminated on the south side of Spring Street. He will be losing a parking space in front of his building, and other residents will, too. They are losing parking spaces all over the place because of the project in the former middle school site. He has no parking for guests; they have to park on the street. Spring Street is unique and needs more study. It is not a straight shot like other streets. There are features like a pinch point at the top of the hill. He asks that they study this more instead of recommending an ordinance tonight. People who live in that area will be affected, particularly elderly residents who have visiting nurses and who need a place to park.

Councilor Filiault asked if the study included evening or overnight hours. Ms. Hill replied no, it was all done during the day. Councilor Filiault stated that it sounds like cars are parking on the south side at night. Ms. Hill replied that that could be.

Capt. Russo stated that they have read all the Planning Board minutes and notes and he understands the concerns. He continued that here they are mixing two points. He has read the parking study that was done and he agrees the times when it is used the least were mid-day, and yes, they probably should study it at more times. However, he does not think there would be 14 spots eliminated because there are not even 14 spots today.

Councilor Filiault asked if the only reason this is before the MSFI Committee is because the Planning Board required the developer to request the no parking. He asked if the Planning Board's request/requirement will be fulfilled even if the committee says "no". The City Manager replied that the Planning Board's requirement was for the builder to request that the City Council address parking on Spring Street. Staff looked at it and had things they noticed and made recommendations about. Regardless of what action the City Council takes, unless there needs to be an ordinance change, the KPD sees signage issues to clean up (some things are mis-signed). Whether or not the City Council wants to do anything about parking on Spring Street is entirely up to the City Council.

Chair Manwaring stated that one of the committee's concerns was what the residents think. They were all aware that many residents are renters. She thinks the variable message board is a good idea. She continued that she is concerned that they have not heard from residents other than Mr. Beauregard.

Councilor Lamoureux replied that they had this same issue with Summer Street – the ordinance reads that if any of your part of your vehicle is parked on the roadside it is illegally parking. A problem in neighborhoods is that it is not possible to get a parked car to fit on the grassbelts without being in the roadway. The question is whether they clean

that up. It would be an issue all over the city. Do they have to address it now, because it is before the City Council? He understands Mr. Beauregard's concerns; yes, it is sometimes difficult to get through there if there are vehicles on the side of the road. During the daytime it sounds like there is no one parking there. From November to May there is no overnight parking allowed. They are thus looking at from 5:00 PM when Parking Enforcement goes home to 1:00 AM, to see what parking issues are there.

Councilor Filiault stated that it seems like they are trying to fix a problem that does not exist. He continued that if the Planning Board had not asked them to look at this, they would not be here talking about it. He will say no to the petitioner's request, which the petitioner brought forward because he does not think this is a problem. It is an old neighborhood, where what used to be a one-family residence is now a 2- or 3-family residence and there is not enough parking and people park on the street. Maybe there is a signage problem, but the City can handle that administratively. The City Council does not need to do anything about parking.

Councilor Lamoureux replied that he agrees – the petitioner fulfilled the obligation to the Planning Board by asking, even if the City Council decides not to eliminate parking. This whole area will be under review with regards to parking, due to upcoming development, and he thinks it would make sense to leave this alone for now and wait for that full scale review. Spring Street, Brook Street, and many other streets would be involved in that process.

Councilor Lamoureux made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Filiault.

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee recommends the request for the south side of Spring Street to be designated as “no parking” be denied.

8) Adjournment

Hearing no further business, Chair Manwaring adjourned the meeting at 7:57 PM.

Respectfully submitted by
Britta Reida, Minute-taker