



City of Keene
New Hampshire

**MUNICIPAL SERVICES,
FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE
COMMITTEE
AGENDA
Council Chambers B
February 12, 2020
6:00 PM**

Janis O. Manwaring, Chair
Michael Giacomo, Vice Chair
Randy L. Filiault
Bettina A. Chadbourne
Robert C. Williams

-
1. John Therriault - Encouraging the City to Become a "Bee City"
 2. Harris Center for Conservation Education – Temporary Road Closures – Jordan Road - Jefferson Salamander and Future Administrative Requests
 3. PowerPoint Presentation from Fire Station 2 Study Committee

MORE TIME ITEMS:

- A. James Phippard/Brickstone Land Use Consultants, LLC – Request to Discontinue Easement for Possible Future Road Extension at Black Brook Road
- B. Councilor Philip Jones – Maintenance of the Wilson Pond Dam on Arch Street and Communication from Robert Malay/Keene School District – Maintenance of the Wilson Pond Dam
- C. Katie Schwerin – Proposal for Permanent Public Art Installation – Airport Property
- D. Councilor Williams – Accessibility Access at City Facilities

Non Public Session
Adjournment



City of Keene, N.H.
Transmittal Form

February 3, 2020

TO: Mayor and Keene City Council

FROM: John Therriault

THROUGH: Patricia A. Little, City Clerk

ITEM: 1.

SUBJECT: John Therriault - Encouraging the City to Become a "Bee City"

COUNCIL ACTION:

In City Council February 6, 2020.

Referred to the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee.

ATTACHMENTS:

Description

Communication_Therriault

BACKGROUND:

John Therriault is recommending that the City of Keene becomes a "Bee City".


City Clerk

January 22, 2020

Mayor George Hansel

Keene City Council

3 Washington Street

Keene, NH 03431

Subject: Bee City USA Application

All,

A Bee City promotes a healthy and sustainable environment for pollinators. This is important because much of the food the citizens of Keene live on depends on the services of our insect and bird pollinators to set fruit or fertilize the seeds necessary for the next generation. I suggest that the City of Keene consider becoming a Bee City.

The Xerces Society has established criteria to become a Bee City. In broad terms the steps needed are to: Raise Pollinator Awareness, Enhance Habitat and Celebrate Success. The administrative steps include an application, assigning a liaison for Bee City USA within a city committee, working with Bee City USA on a draft resolution, approving the resolution, making the formal application and following up with annual reports on activities and successes.

Currently there are only two cities within New England that have been approved for the program: Burlington VT and Durham NH.

There is more detailed information on this program at www.beecityusa.org. I would be happy to make a presentation explaining this program to any committee designated by the city to review this suggestion.

In the event that the city decided to move forward, I would also be honored to volunteer to be a Grassroots Leader on the effort and as an officer of the Monadnock Beekeepers' Association I could also be a liaison to our local pollinator stewards.

Should you have any questions please contact me as indicated below.

Respectfully,



John Therriault

76 Bradford Road

Phone: 903-0213





City of Keene, N.H.
Transmittal Form

January 22, 2020

TO: Mayor and Keene City Council

FROM: Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee

ITEM: 2.

SUBJECT: Harris Center for Conservation Education – Temporary Road Closures – Jordan Road - Jefferson Salamander and Future Administrative Requests

COUNCIL ACTION:

In City Council February 6, 2020.

Voted unanimously to carry out the intent of the two recommendations in the committee report.

RECOMMENDATION:

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities & Infrastructure Committee recommended that the City Council authorize the closing of a portion of North Lincoln Street for several evenings that are coordinated with City staff between March and April 2020, when conditions are favorable for amphibian migration. City staff may cancel the closure and/or reopen the road at any time, if deemed necessary for the convenience and safety of the public.

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities & Infrastructure Committee recommended the issues related to the specific closure of Jordan Road as well as future requests being handled administratively be placed on more time.

BACKGROUND:

Chair Manwaring welcomed Brett Amy Thelen, Science Director at the Harris Center for Conservation Education, which does nonprofit work all over the region, including Keene. Ms. Thelen said that this request is based on a natural phenomenon of amphibian species migration that occurs during the first warm, rainy nights of spring after the snow pack melts. Thousands of salamanders and frogs cross roads on these nights to move toward breeding wetlands. The Harris Center organizes volunteers on many of these nights to counteract the growing conservation concern of roadkill. Volunteers carry the amphibians across the roadways. The Harris Center worked with the Public Works Director and they received Council approval in 2018 and 2019 to close a portion of North Lincoln Street between George Street and the Woodland Cemetery. No homes are impacted by the closure. In 2019, 3,500 amphibian crossings were documented at the North Lincoln Street crossing, through the same animal could possibly be counted more than once. Still, Ms. Thelen said this was likely a significant underestimate of total crossings. This has become a popular activity for families with young children because road closures make it safer. Volunteers are trained each year for safety. Keene is the only City in NH to take these steps for amphibian roadkill prevention and Ms. Thelen said this activity has generated significant positive press for the City.

This year, Ms. Thelen said her request is to continue the road closure arrangement on North Lincoln Street. Ms. Thelen noted it is challenging to predict the weather and if the conditions are not specific (40°F, raining,

after dark, when the ground has thawed in the spring) then the migration will not occur that night. The Public Works Director needs to be notified by 12:00 PM on the day of closure so staff can implement the barricades and road closure signs before the end of business; the barricades can be moved quickly and easily in case of emergency. Sometimes however, the weather may appear conducive early in the day but is then unfavorable in the evening and the event is canceled. For example, in 2018-2019, Council approved closures for up to six nights, but not all were used in either year. Ms. Thelen expressed her hope that the North Lincoln Street closure could be incorporated into normal annual City operations with the understanding that Council can rescind that approval anytime.

Ms. Thelen continued explaining that she spoke with Duncan Watson, Assistant Public Works Director, about a possible experiment in 2020 implementing a similar temporary closure of Jordan Road. While North Lincoln Street has the highest annual amphibian crossings on average and most public participation because the closure is safer, Jordan Road annually has crossings of the Jefferson salamander, which is a species of special conservation concern. Ms. Thelen noted she is seeking approval to work with the City to close a portion of Jordan Road for up to two nights to see if it can work. The Jordan Road site is more challenging to detour because people live there, whereas there are no impacts to residences at the North Lincoln Street closure.

Chair Manwaring asked where the closure would be on Jordan Road. Ms. Thelen replied that the salamanders are all moving toward the vernal pools in Robin Hood Park, so the closure would affect Jordan Road between Peg Shop Road and North Concord Road. Chair Manwaring asked the plan to notify the residents of Jordan Road. Ms. Thelen said for the past two years the City and Harris Center spread the word widely on their respective social media and there have been articles in The Keene Sentinel. Chair Manwaring suggested a letter to the effected homeowners with the information that is posted on social media. While Ms. Thelen believed anyone who has lived on Jordan Road long enough are likely familiar with the event, she could discuss a mailing with staff.

Councilor Williams said he lives on North Lincoln Street and the event there is great for kids. He asked what changes Ms. Thelen seeks there. Ms. Thelen replied that moving forward she hoped the North Lincoln Street closure could be a regular event that does not require annual Council approval, whether by a memorandum of understanding or another agreement.

Councilor Chadbourne recalled volunteering at both locations in the past and being amazed at people stopping on Jordan Road to support volunteer crossing. She supported the experiment on Jordan Road and said she could not imagine people complaining. She recalled that even with how cooperative drivers were, there were many roadkill, and if the Jefferson Salamander is a species of concern, she thought it a detriment if Council did not take a larger step.

Councilor Filiault expressed support for this conservation effort. He asked the City Attorney, whether a street could be temporarily closed on such a basis without Council approval. The City Attorney said that the City Manager could authorize a temporary closure in collaboration with the Police, Fire, Public Works, and other relevant departments, which should be specific in any motion this Committee makes.

Councilor Giacomo also recalled volunteering at this event in 2019. He asked if the Jordan Road request was for a specific number of days or times of day. Ms. Thelen requested up to two nights with the ideal weather patterns described above. The closure and activity would be the same as past North Lincoln Street events.

Councilor Chadbourne said it does not take many cars to do a lot of damage when there are hundreds of amphibians on the road, even with volunteers. Ms. Thelen agreed that in the last few years on North Lincoln Street and Jordan Road, where there are the most volunteers, estimated amphibian mortality was 10%. Whereas on Eastern Avenue where there are fewer volunteers due to lower road safety there, amphibian mortality has been estimated as 50%, which is likely low because the dead are counted less when efforts are underway to move those alive. Councilor Chadbourne recalled picking-up more dead than alive when she volunteered at

Jordan Road.

Chair Manwaring requested comments from the Public Works Director, Kurt Blomquist, who agreed that this event is important for conservation and said it generates great press for the City to reach a different audience. However, he said staff would need to return with proposed language for the annual North Lincoln Street closure. He agreed with the City Attorney that per State Statute and City Code, the Public Works and Police Departments have the authority to close roads in certain instances. If the closure does not meet those standards for closure by law, then City Council has the ultimate authority to close roads for any purposes. The Public Works Director continued saying that past North Lincoln Street events have been effective, safe for families, and easy because there are no residences affected by the closure between Roxbury Road and George Street. He said that Jordan Road would be a harder closure to accomplish without significant impacts to residents who live there, but he wanted to look at the possibility more closely. He said the issue is less about the closure itself and more about where people would turn around to detour because Jordan Road is not wide enough to do so in all locations. In general, he said that residents have understood the slight inconvenience because of these events and the few complaints are typically from the traveling public using those roads to move through the City. The Public Works Director recommended that the Committee place this matter on more time to allow staff to draft the correct language to delegate authority moving forward so the City Manager could authorize the closures in the future without Council review. Staff did not have enough time to do that research between receiving this request and this meeting. The Public Works Director thought one Council cycle would be sufficient time to return with a recommendation.

Councilor Filiault did not understand why the matter should be placed on more time versus wording a motion at this meeting giving the City Manager that authority. The City Attorney suggested voting on the first recommended motion provided by staff and placing the second and third recommended motions on more time as the Public Works Director requested. Councilor Filiault agreed.

The Police Chief, Steve Russo, said that the North Lincoln Street closure has occurred safely in the past, but said he could not support the Jordan Street closure, calling it unsafe because there is a lot of thru travel with nowhere to turn around on a dark night on an unlit road. He was not comfortable and did not recommend this closure on Jordan Road. He continues to support the North Lincoln Street closure.

Ms. Thelen said it was unfortunate that Mr. Watson was not present because he described the closure on Jordan Road as simpler than it sounded from the Public Works Director and Police Chief. She understood it as a full closure from Peg Shop Road to North Concord Road, with only local traffic allowed, so there would be no need to turn around. The Public Works Director said this confusion is why he recommended more time.

Chair Manwaring recognized Karen Seaver, an adjunct professor at Keene State College and staff ecologist at the Harris Center. Ms. Seaver thought the safety concern about closing Jordan Road was serious and said it sounded smart to take more time to find the smart way to move forward based on practical considerations. She added that amphibian populations are in a huge global decline due to human influence, climate change, invasive species, and more. Still, she said the Jefferson salamander on Jordan Road is rare and extra efforts should be paid to it. Ms. Seaver and Ms. Thelen agreed that in the last five years, 176 volunteers have participated safely on volunteer nights, including between 5-25 on any given volunteer night on Jordan Road, where they both expected increased participation with road closure and thus increased safety.

Councilor Giacomo made the following motion, which Councilor Filiault seconded.

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities & Infrastructure Committee recommended that the City Council authorize the closing of a portion of North Lincoln Street for several evenings that are coordinated with City staff between March and April 2020, when conditions are favorable for amphibian migration. City staff may cancel the closure and/or reopen the road at any time, if deemed necessary for the convenience and safety of the public.

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