

City of Keene
New Hampshire

MUNICIPAL SERVICES, FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, February 12, 2020

6:00 PM

Council Chambers B

Members Present:

Janis O. Manwaring, Chair
Michael Giacomo, Vice-Chair
Randy L. Filiault
Robert C. Williams

Members Not Present:

Bettina A. Chadbourne

Staff Present:

Elizabeth A. Dragon, City Manager
Thomas P. Mullins, City Attorney
Elizabeth Fox, HR Director/Assistant City
Manager
Duncan Watson, Assistant Public Works
Director
Steve Russo, Police Chief
Mark Howard, Fire Chief
Jeffrey Chickering, Deputy Fire Chief
William Schoefmann, GIS Technician

Chair Manwaring called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM, welcomed the public, and explained the rules of procedure.

1. John Therriault – Encouraging the City to Become a “Bee City”

Chair Manwaring welcomed John Therriault who encouraged the Council to make Keene a “Bee City.” He explained that pollinators support biodiversity and there is a correlation between plant diversity and pollinator diversity. Insects (such as bees, wasps, moths, butterflies, flies, and beetles) are the most common pollinators, but as many as 1,500 species of vertebrates such as birds and mammals serve as pollinators too. These include hummingbirds, perching birds, fruit bats, opossums, lemurs, and even the gecko.

In the US, pollination produces nearly \$20 billion worth of products annually. One native leaf cutter bee can do the pollination job of 20 non-native bees. Mr. Therriault credited this information to the US Fish and Wildlife Service. He said that many native pollinator species have declined dramatically in recent decades due to factors such as pesticide use and temperature changes. While he knows the City Council cannot change those pressures on pollinators, he does hope that they will consider becoming a Bee City. By doing so, he said the City would shine a spotlight on pollinators and create a more welcoming environment for native pollinator populations to flourish in spite of other external factors working against them.

Mr. Therriault continued explaining how becoming a Bee City would align with the City's Comprehensive Master Plan, specifically the second of Six Vision Focus Areas - A Unique Natural Environment. Mr. Therriault read from the CMP to illustrate his points:

- The natural environment addresses the natural areas (green spaces, plants and animals, hillsides, and waterways) within and around our city, as well as the man-made areas (green infrastructure, parks, agriculture, and gardens)
- With the proper design, open spaces and the greenway connections between them can provide an important opportunity for environmental stewardship and education.

With the need for pollinator habitat and public education on pollinators, Mr. Therriault thought that becoming a Bee City aligns well with the CMP. He continued explaining what it means to be a Bee City.

The Bee City USA program endorses a set of commitments, defined in a resolution, for creating [sustainable habitats for native pollinators](#), which are vital to feeding the planet. Becoming a Bee City includes:

- Establishing a standing Bee City USA committee to advocate for pollinators
- Creating and enhancing pollinator habitat on public and private land
- Incorporating pollinator-conscious practices into City policies and plans
- Hosting annual pollinator awareness events
- Publicly acknowledging Bee City USA affiliation with signs and an online presence

Mr. Therriault thought there were abundant opportunities for pollinator habitat and education on public and private lands in the City. He said that there is no coercion or long-term financial obligations, but rather a commitment to incremental annual improvements for pollinators in the City. Once a City proclaims themselves as a Bee City, the only obligation is a 10-page online annual report, and he speculated that would require a minimal administrative burden.

He said the establishment of an official City Committee could be individual, but it could also be incorporated into other City Committee's with similar focus. He said there are already excellent locations in the City, such as Butterfly Park and other natural locations, to support events. Regarding public signs acknowledging the City's commitment as a Bee City with signs, Mr. Therriault shared photos of signs from Asheville, NC, with the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation logo, which is the master organization funding all Bee City USA administrative activities.

Mr. Therriault explained the steps to becoming a Bee City:

- Complete the Application Form and Resolution Template (a draft example was provided to the Committee)
- Assign facilitation to a local government body or non-profit organization
- Designate a local government department as a sponsor

- Draft your Bee City USA Resolution and review with Bee City USA headquarters (a simple process via email)
- Submit Application & Resolution to local government for approval
- Finalize your Bee City USA designation by submitting the Final Application, the Adopted Resolution, and Fee Payment (one time payment of \$200.)

Mr. Therriault does not want becoming a Bee City to be a budgetary issue for the City, so he offered to pay the \$200 fee himself, after which there would be no further financial obligation.

Mr. Therriault continued explaining the benefits of being a Bee City:

- Ensure survival of vital animal species – pollinators are the foundation of our food chain and therefore their survival secures ours.
- Improve local food production – a farmer with native pollinator populations near their land can see up to 20% improvements in crop yield.
- Stimulate local plant nursery market – theoretically, once the public is educated on pollinators, there would be increased demand for native flowers at local nurseries.
- Engage community in removing invasive plant species – For example, Japanese knotweed is an invasive species of particular interest to pollinators because they are full of nectar in the fall and can replace native species that provide the same nutritional benefit, such as goldenrod.
- Address pest problems less toxically.
- Heighten awareness of seasonal changes.
- Increase small business opportunities, such as for ecological landscaping companies.

Mr. Therriault welcomed questions and Councilor Williams said he is a fan of pollinators and having a garden himself, he would benefit from better knowledge as well as the availability of native plant species at local nurseries. The Councilor asked if Mr. Therriault imagined the need for a standing Bee City committee as its own or incorporated into an existing one. Mr. Therriault replied that the City would be best to decide where this would fit within the City structure and he imagined there were various opportunities such as the Parks and Recreation Department or the Conservation or Agricultural Commissions.

Councilor Filiault asked for comments from Elizabeth Dragon, the City Manager, who said she saw no negatives or administrative burdens. The City Manager said her greatest challenge is finding the right place for the activity/committee in the City structure, which is why she recommended placing this matter on more time. She thought she could bring this Committee a suggestion within one Council cycle.

Chair Manwaring wondered if one Council cycle would be sufficient if the Conservation and Agricultural Commissions need to be consulted. The City Manager said the Agricultural Commission is not very active right now and she is consulting

soon with the Conservation Commission to determine their interest. The City Manager stated it may take longer than one cycle if she consulted with the Conservation Commission.

Councilor Giacomo thought there were many opportunities for this effort, including many open spaces being developed in the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) process currently. He thought the most important part is incorporating pollinator conscious practices into City policies and he said that doing so is free, so he supported this effort. The Councilor continued asking what non-native insect species are invading this region. Mr. Therriault said that he is a master gardener and keeps honeybees. He said that invasive insects entering this region include many bumblebee species, mason bees, and leaf cutter bees. Some pollinators have short pollinator seasons and so seasonal overlap of native pollinators is essential for maintaining a healthy and steady food supply. Councilor Giacomo asked which insect species are native to this region. Mr. Therriault replied that essentially everything except the honeybee is native, which proliferated across North America when brought from Europe by settlers.

Councilor Williams asked what people at home could do to encourage native bees. Mr. Therriault replied that the best way is to plant native flowers, which coevolved with native pollinators. Additionally, one could cut back on pesticide use and, if they must, only apply chemicals to the nonflowering parts of plants, after dark so it dries before bees return the next day. Pollinators are only active during the day.

Chair Manwaring welcomed public comments and recognized Tammy Adams of Keene, who is a beekeeper and thanked Mr. Therriault – a fellow member of Monadnock Beekeepers – for being so prepared for this presentation. Ms. Adams asked the Council to consider incorporating this into City practices.

Mr. Therriault noted he would be happy to visit the Conservation Commission if they have questions.

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

With a vote of 4-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities & Infrastructure Committee recommended that the request that the City of Keene become a “Bee City” be placed on more time.

2. **Harris Center for Conservation Education – Temporary Road Closures – Jordan Road - Jefferson Salamander and Future Administrative Requests**

Chair Manwaring welcomed the Assistant Public Works Director, Duncan Watson, who said that the staff’s position after talking at length with the Harris Center is to pull back on the potential closure of Jordan Road this year and to proceed with sufficient research to be able to assist them moving forward. He said there needed to be more conversations with residents who would be impacted on Jordan Road and how they can support future closures. While there has been success on North Lincoln Street, he said jumping ahead and building on that with something

similar on Jordan Road is ill advised at this point. He advised a larger conversation next year to propose a possible detour on Jordan Road.

Chair Manwaring asked how staff arrived at this conclusion. Mr. Watson said there has been great public willingness to assist amphibians in their migratory crossing on North Lincoln Street, but he thought public education was important before making a unilateral decision to close Jordan Road, to ensure there is no inconvenience. The goal is to have a solid proposal for next year. Chair Manwaring asked how staff would develop that proposal. Mr. Watson said that staff would continue working with the Harris Center as they have for many years on successful closures of North Lincoln Street, which he said is a successful foundation to build on and identify opportunities for the next logical step on Jordan Road.

Councilor Filiault said he had no problem with the recommendation and understood. Still, he advised staff to proceed with caution next time something like this is brought before the Committee to ensure everyone is on the same page. He did not think it reflected well on the Council or City to depict something as moving forward in the City process for staff to then come back saying they are not on the same page.

Councilor Williams clarified that people will still be participating in amphibian crossing on Jordan Road this year without closure. Mr. Watson said that Harris Center volunteers have been counting amphibians at that location for over a decade and he anticipated continuance.

Chair Manwaring said she thought there were ways to have made this closure on Jordan Road work. Just having done the Main Street Mile, with volunteers placing and removing barriers, she thought something similar should have been possible on Jordan Road, especially as it is only an approximately two-hour event. She talked with the petitioner, Brett Amy Thelen, about sending letters to residents who would be impacted explaining the importance and asking for their understanding. To Chair Manwaring, it was only two nights for roughly two hours at a time. She would not support staff's recommendation.

Mr. Watson said that closing the road for a few hours while volunteers are there is great, but the amphibians are traversing the road all night, which is why North Lincoln Street is closed all night until migration stops at sunrise. He wants to find a way to close the road all night for effective migration after volunteers leave.

Councilor Giacomo asked the total number of residents that would be impacted on Jordan Road. Mr. Watson did not know exactly but said ultimately a couple of residents, but added that many people use Jordan Road as a thoroughfare. This season he hopes to get a more accurate traffic count. Councilor Giacomo asked if all these studies were conducted before implementing closure on North Lincoln Street. Mr. Watson said that there were no homes impacted on North Lincoln Street so staff had better data in advance. Councilor Giacomo noted that he wanted an idea of the scope of an outreach program for residents impacted on Jordan Road.

Chair Manwaring said she understood that ideally the road would be closed all night, but she thought that even a two-hour closure to protect volunteers was better than nothing.

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

With a vote of 3-1, the Municipal Services, Facilities & Infrastructure Committee recommended that the communication from the Harris Center for Conservation Education be accepted as informational and that future requests for the closure of North Lincoln Street be handled administratively by the City Manager. Chair Manwaring was opposed.

3. PowerPoint Presentation from Fire Station 2 Study Committee

The City Manager, Elizabeth Dragon, provided introductory comments. In 2018, the City was given ownership of the former NH National Guard building, which is now the Fire Station 2 location. The City had previously operated there under a lease and therefore were hesitant to make any investments in the building. The City Manager said it is an inefficient building designed for a different purpose, resulting in a lot of wasted space and lost energy. Additionally, there has been minimal upkeep by the State during the City's time there. The Council will briefly visit Fire Station 2 during their Capital Improvement Program (CIP) tour on March 7 to have a better understanding of what it looks like. The City Manager continued explaining that \$20,000 was allocated in the CIP for fiscal year (FY) 2019 for the Phase One Location Study and has now been reallocated to FY2021 for the Phase Two Building Study. The Location Study Committee met from July 2018 to December 2019 and members included Chair Manwaring, former Mayor Kendall Lane, and many staff.

The City Manager continued explaining that \$20,000 was allocated in the CIP but when defining the scope of work, staff found that much could be accomplished internally utilizing the GIS Technician, William Schoefmann, Database Administrator, Rick Lemieux, and Deputy Fire Chief, Jeffrey Chickering. These staff members were crucial in compiling data from firehouse software and GIS systems and determining how to analyze what culminated in four years of data. The Study Committee was instrumental in helping staff to ask probing questions of what is next. The City Manager said that at this meeting, the Committee would hear from Mr. Schoefmann about the study accomplishments and the results of analyzing four years of real-time call data in addition to drive-time models. She thanked all who were a part of the study team.

Mr. Schoefmann restated the purpose of the location study to determine if the location of Fire Station 2 is effective and can service current and future needs of the City prior to investment in upgrades to the facility. He also reiterated the need for the study to identify Fire Department baseline information, map calls, complete service area analysis, and analyze alternative locations for comparison. Mr. Schoefmann continued describing the five parts of the location study and then used maps to describe the results of each part (he was often asked to demonstrate where downtown was on the maps):

1. Geolocation: all calls were located using addresses, coordinates, and records research.
 - a. Results – 100% of calls from the beginning of 2015 through the end of 2018 were located (four years of data)
 - i. Total calls mapped: 17,411
 - ii. Calls located by coordinates using FD reporting software: 835
 - iii. Calls the FD researched: 382

2. Service Area Analysis: drive-times calculated into polygons outwards along roads from both stations creating a visual model.
 - a. Per National Fire Protection Standards – 1910 Department Deployment – minimum standards require that 90% of calls are reached within four minutes or less. With this premise in mind, service areas were calculated using response time statistics that helped test the service area models later.
 - b. The analysis factored in times of day (4:00 PM- 6:00 PM), time of year (November-December), mode of travel (emergency vehicle), and drive-time areas (four, five, six, and 10 minutes).
 - c. Results – there was little difference between the four and five-minute service areas. Downtown was within the 10-minute area.
3. Key Destination Analysis: key destinations were tabulated based on four, five, six, and 10-minute service areas to help understand accessibility to critical facilities.
 - a. This further analysis was conducted to determine how many key destinations fall within the drive-time areas. Key destinations provided by the State of NH include schools, hospitals, daycare centers, and retirement homes, among others.
 - b. Results – 43 key destinations were included. Of those, 29 were covered by Fire Station 2 within four minutes, 40 within six minutes, and all 43 destinations were covered within 10 minutes. In response to Councilor Giacomo, Mr. Schoefmann assumed the three destinations not covered in the six-minute area were shopping plazas.
 - i. Key destinations in four-minute area:
 1. Both stations: 29
 2. Central Fire Station: 20
 3. Fire Station 2: 9
 - ii. Key destinations in six-minute area:
 1. Both stations: 40
 2. Central Fire Station: 28
 3. Fire Station 2: 12
 - iii. Key destinations in 10-minute area:
 1. Both stations: 43
 2. Central Fire Station: 40
 3. Fire Station 2: 37
4. Response Time Area Analysis: calculation of response area based on geolocated points and their call times for comparison with the Service Area Model.
 - a. An in-house method was used to visualize the extent of Fire Station 2’s “actual reach” in how far out from the station crews could reach within four minutes. The response time area provided real life comparison with the earlier drive-time model that focused on specific travel parameters. Extents were determined by filtering call for 2018 by: Fire Station 2 (172), joint responses (314), total (486), and selecting response times equal to four minutes or less.
 - b. Results: road data from the national database was compared to real calls in the City and data of emergency vehicles traveling through town. A map demonstrated overlap of both datasets.
5. Service Area Analysis conducted for three alternative sites as comparison to Fire Station 2’s baseline data.

- a. Purpose: consider how alternative locations might affect the “reach” of drive-time areas when compared to the existing site of Fire Station 2.
- b. Method: drive-time areas were compared with the existing “reach” of both stations and analyzed with their coverage of key destinations that fell within the four-minute footprint. The service area tool was used to map three alternative locations including First Baptist Sandpits (Maple Ave/RT-12), Kingsbury land (Court St/Maple Ave/Old Walpole Rd/ RT-12A), and former Triumph Auto Glass (West St/RTs-9, 10, 12).
- c. Results:
 - i. First Baptist Sandpits: within four-minute drive-time area there is no change to number of key destinations accessible (nine)
 - ii. Kingsbury Land: within the four-minute drive-time area there is no change to number of key destinations accessible (nine)
 - iii. Former Triumph Auto: within the four-minute drive-time area, coverage of key destinations increased (thirteen)

The City Manager provided concluding comments. The staff wanted to prove that Fire Station 2 is in the best possible location where it has resided since 1998. A benefit of remaining at this location is an amenable neighborhood accustomed to the FD operations. Still, it was important to ensure the FD could not do better elsewhere. The City Manager said that this analysis ultimately proved wrong her assumption that this was not a good location and this analysis actually showed that Fire Station 2 is providing the reach needed. Only the former Triumph Auto site reached four more key destinations but that additional reach was not determined to be significant enough to sell the current Fire Station 2 and purchase more land in a new neighborhood to work with. Staff is seeking concurrence from the Council that Fire Station 2 is in the correct location and support to move forward with Phase Two of this study. Because the work on Phase One was possible internally, the \$20,000 budgeted for Phase One has been reallocated to the next phase, which would focus on determining if the building needs refurbishing or replacement.

Councilor Filiault said he was on the Committee in 1998 looking at Fire Station 2 and he recalled the amount of time, effort, and studies looking into it were intensive and controversial at the time because of traffic studies, response times, and neighbor concerns. He was not surprised this current study proved the Station is in the best location and he was in complete agreement that Fire Station 2 should remain at its current location.

Councilor Giacomo noted that the current Fire Station 2 location is both good for four-minute response times and is in a more densely populated area than the former Triumph Auto location would be. As a passive benefit, based on response times, having the station nearby reduces insurance costs for the community as well.

Chair Manwaring recognized Councilor Terry Clark, who asked if the number of calls were evenly split between ambulance and fire, and how these plots differ from when the City considered moving Central Fire Station on Vernon Street. Regarding the Central Fire Station, Mr. Schoefmann said that this current study was not compared to the 2010 study that Councilor Clark mentioned because the same methodology and software were not available then.

Fire Chief, Mark Howard, spoke to the Councilor's question about calls and said that citywide, the service calls are approximately 65% EMS and 35% Fire or other. He added that each station also supplements work in the other's district when available and needed. The goal to meet the national four-minute response time standard has been included in the FD budget matrix for several years. The decision whether to move Central Fire Station several years ago was based on modeling, which is why he suggested to the City Manager that talented people on City staff were capable of handling the first phase of the study and this would save money as well. He was pleased that the real-time data and models virtually overlapped. As Chief, he was comfortable that the Fire Station 2 location is the best one based on facts and hypothetical models.

In closing, the City Manager read the names of the Study Committee members: Former Mayor, Kendall Lane, Councilor Jan Manwaring, Councilor Gary Lamoureux, City Manager Elizabeth Dragon, Fire Chief Mark Howard, Assistant City Manager Beth Fox, Assistant City Manager Rhett Lamb, and Parks & Facilities Director Andy Bohannon.

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

With a vote of 4-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities & Infrastructure Committee recommended that the City Council concur that Station Two is in the right location and that the City move forward with Phase Two of this project, a Facility Analysis.

There being no further business, Chair Manwaring adjourned the meeting at 7:05 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Katrinya Kibler, Minute Taker
February 16, 2020