

City of Keene
New Hampshire

MUNICIPAL SERVICES, FACILITIES & INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, October 26, 2022

6:00 PM

**Council Chambers,
City Hall**

Members Present:

Mitchell H. Greenwald, Chair
Randy L. Filiault, Vice Chair
Robert C. Williams
Catherine I. Workman
Kris E. Roberts

Staff Present:

Elizabeth A. Dragon, City Manager
Thomas P. Mullins, City Attorney
Amanda Palmeira, Assistant City Attorney
Kürt Blomquist, Public Works Director
Andrew Bohannon, Parks, Recreation, and
Facilities Director

Members Not Present:

All Present

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

1) PowerPoint Presentation – Status of Dog Park and Disc Golf Park – DuBois & King

Chair Greenwald asked to hear from Andrew Bohannon, Parks, Recreation, and Facilities Director.

Mr. Bohannon stated that before the Committee tonight is the Dog Park and Disc Golf Park Concept Plan, which has been in process for about a year. He continued that about a year ago, the Committee directed staff to work with the two groups to see if Wheelock Park Campground could host both a dog park and a disc golf park, since both groups had come forward asking for use of that facility. Through the process of looking into that, the City hired DuBois & King, and had a small steering committee that included members of the disc golf group and the dog park group. From the disc golf group, Councilor Bryan Lake and Robert Johnson are present tonight. Present tonight from the dog park group are Liz Sheridan and Paige Walker. Other people from the dog park group on the steering committee were Mike Anastasia, Rebecca Lancaster, and Molly Pinney. The steering committee met several times at the Recreation Center, and had a public meeting in July. He thanks everyone who was involved. It was a long process, especially for the people in the dog park group, who have been at this since 2010. Tonight's presentation will show that they might be able to have closure and begin to move forward. Both groups are ready for the next phase, if tonight's presentation goes well.

Mr. Bohannon introduced Emily Lewis, Landscape Architect who has been working with them through DuBois & King and will now give a PowerPoint presentation.

Emily Lewis stated that it has been a pleasure working with the City of Keene on this project and she looks forward to seeing how it moves ahead. She continued that DuBois & King started in May with a kickoff meeting with the steering committee to discuss the wants and needs of each group. That was followed by a site visit to look at the existing elements within the site, such as the bathhouse, elements from campgrounds, the access road, and the elements adjacent to the site that they would need to keep in mind, such as the ballfields and horseshoe beds. The site is a little over seven acres. There is a dense, aging canopy of red and white pines. It was important to look at how to navigate that issue through design and think about stewardship of the site.

Ms. Lewis stated that the goal of the disc golf group was to have a nine-hole course. Full disc golf courses are 18 holes. A 9-hole course is both an opportunity for those who are experienced to be able to go and have a quick round, and for folks who are new to the sport to get in and learn, especially with the proximity to the schools in the area. It would be a great opportunity for people who do not have the capacity to go out to the other site in the area. The goal of the dog park group was to have two separate parks, approximately 1.25 acres for large dogs and a smaller area of approximately one third of an acre for small dogs, and to figure out how to minimize conflicts between the two.

Ms. Lewis continued that with all of that in mind, DuBois & King put together two concepts. The first one looks at keeping the dog park as far away from the other park uses as possible, so that dogs would not be startled by the clanging of horseshoes, for example, and having the disc golf park clustered. This would mean having a few holes rather close to the dog park, which could be mitigated for conflicts by having higher fencing there. Elements consistent in both concepts are maintaining the existing screen of plants around the horseshoe area, possibly relocating the vehicle gate of the access road, potentially adding some new parking spaces, and maintaining the same elements within the park. For the dog park, potentially a new pavilion and double access gates, and for the disc golf park, nine holes. The second concept looks at shifting the dog park into the center of the site. Due to where the existing building was, there is a large open area, so they tried to take advantage of utilizing that – in both concepts, actually – so there would be less tree-clearing needed. In the second concept, the disc golf course would go around the outside of that, with more of a flow going counterclockwise.

Ms. Lewis continued that there was a presentation of the two concepts in July. Approximately 65 people attended, and it was great to see people interested in both elements of the park. DuBois & King explained the two different concepts and had posters available including different elements, which allowed people to select which elements they would like to see in a dog park. Subsequent to that presentation, DuBois & King got back together with the steering committee, took their feedback and the public feedback, and narrowed it down into a draft concept. They then revised the draft concept to come up with the final plan. The main thing of note is that they went with the centralized dog park with the disc golf park going around the outside, and utilized the space

near the entrance, which they were originally reserving for potential other elements, to space out the holes a little more. They shifted the locations of some of the holes to try to minimize any conflicts between, say, errant discs getting close to the fencing. They propose six-foot high fencing, two gates, one at each park, which would be a double access gate for safety, and two maintenance gates, one in each park, for any work that would need to be done, such as tree-clearing.

Ms. Lewis continued that they propose maintaining at least part of the existing access roads. They cited the dog park so it is adjacent to the existing gravel road/path. The rest of the path could potentially be removed or could remain, depending on the desire of the groups and the City. They anticipate there should be some tree clearing done for the dog park, upwards of approximately an acre. That would be mostly the aging pines, since they were all planted at the same time and have gotten very close together. The canopies are very high. They will move those and allow the deciduous trees to grow and flourish, promoting more diversity in the park. There would be some selective clearing throughout the disc golf course. The disc golf holes would vary in length from approximately 140 feet to 180 feet.

Ms. Lewis continued that the last slide is the proposed cost estimate, broken into three sections. The first section is for the dog park in two different phases - one, the elements that would be necessary to get it up and going, and two, future elements that the group might want to add in later, such as a pavilion and agility features. The second section is the elements for the disc golf course. The third section is the site preparation elements, including demolition of the existing building. What percentage of which costs each group would be responsible for is something to be determined.

Councilor Williams stated that the font on the slide is very small and he cannot read it. He asked Ms. Lewis what the bottom line is. Ms. Lewis replied that phase 1 of the dog park is \$42,000, and phase 2 is \$139,000, for an overall total of \$181,000. That includes approximate percentages for construction contingency and mobilization. She continued that disc golf is about \$15,000. The site preparation elements are just under \$100,000.

City Manager Elizabeth Dragon stated that this is being proposed as a fundraising project, similar to the skate park, where each group would raise the funds for construction of these elements.

Councilor Filiault asked what would happen if one group raises the necessary funds and the other group does not. He asked if it is correct that that would change the whole design and concept. He asked when they would start design if they are not sure if either or both groups will come up with enough financing. The City Manager replied that she is definitely concerned about that. She continued that her sense is that the disc golf group will be able to raise the funds quicker. The challenge is the site preparation work, which is a shared cost. That is something they will have to work out. Right now, it is an unknown. Councilor Filiault replied that his question is where they go from here, when they have more unanswered than answered financial questions.

Mr. Bohannon stated that both groups are here tonight to speak to the project. He continued that during this process, he was pleased to learn that the dog park people have submitted all of their information to establish themselves as a non-profit organization. That had not been done in the past. They are waiting for the final paperwork to come back, hopefully in the next month or so. Looking at this opinion of cost, there are certainly some things that might not cost as much, for both groups. For example, do they leave the road paved or take it out? Where people would come in for the dog park is all unpaved. On this map, where the letter “N” is, that is where it diverts and the Y is created on the road. All the way through the back until about hole #4 is where that pavement ends. If they do not have to do that, it saves money. The dog park itself is shown as a big area that does not have trees. Much of that exists now. The map does not show the building that will be removed, creating a lot more open space. There was an opinion of cost related to some trees. Both groups [hope to do something] similar to what the bike park did, where they were able to get a lot of donations taken care of related to the trees’ removal and possible sale. They will not be removing nearly as many trees in this particular design, so that might not generate a lot of revenue, but both of these groups are savvy and will be able to minimize some costs.

Councilor Roberts stated that as he has said before, he finds it extremely disappointing that there are a number of issues that most cities view as quality of life issues, and the Council has to tell groups “Form a non-profit, raise the money, and we might do it for you.” He continued that the dog park group started in 2010, giving stores and businesses donations containers, coming on a monthly basis to report how much money those brought in. These are quality of life issues, things that are important to the community, and he thinks saying “Nope, you have to raise the money” [is not right]. Pumpkin Fest was important to the community, but the amount of money the City donated to the Pumpkin Fest far exceeds this.

Councilor Williams asked if there is any potential to fund this through dog registration fees, potentially a voluntary charge on top of dog registration fees. The City Manager replied that the dog registration fees are already accounted for in the general fund revenue, so it would have to be a new revenue. She is not aware of the option to charge an additional fee. Staff can look into it, but unless the State tells them they can do it, they cannot do it. They have the ability on motor vehicle registrations, but those funds are used for highway-related purposes. The State has given [municipalities] that ability, but she does not know if they have the same flexibility with dog licensing. She would be happy to check.

Mr. Bohannon stated that they have looked at that option, and unfortunately, they are not able to do it. He continued that they are at the current cap allowed by the State of NH for the dog licensing registration fee, and the City is not able to exceed that at all. There could be some kind of volunteer opportunity on that, choosing to send additional [money], but he does not know how they would register those funds through that process.

The City Manager stated that she wants to remind the Council of the Capital Plan. She continued that a project like this, if it were going to be a City-funded project, would need to go through the Capital Plan, which is planned out six or seven years. A request would come in, they would look at the cost, and evaluate where it might be able to fit in the Capital Plan. Councilors know that is such a balancing act, because they are trying to keep the capital investments of the City at a somewhat level amount each year so they are not impacting the tax rate. Oftentimes, groups present something that they really want to do and say that they are willing to raise the money for it, not wanting to wait 7 or 10 years for it to get into a Capital Plan.

Chair Greenwald asked for public comment.

Paige Walker of 84 Bradford Rd. stated that she is here representing the dog park group. She continued that they were very pleased with Ms. Lewis's design of the dog park. The dog park group did not have any changes to make to this final design. As Mr. Bohannon said, the dog park group has applied for non-profit status and are just waiting for paperwork to come back. The directors will be Molly Pinney and Rebecca Lancaster. She herself is listed as an officer. Ms. Pinney has extensive international fundraising expertise, and they are confident that she will do a good job fundraising for the dog park. Their 1,800+ followers on social media support the dog park and would support additional fundraising efforts. They established a website through which people can donate money, time, and/or in-kind services. They raised money in the past and have about \$10,000 waiting for approval. In addition, they have received some verbal and in-kind donations. They are just waiting for approval on the site and are ready to go with more fundraising efforts, and are hoping for breaking ground in the spring. The dog park group broke it into two phases to make the initial efforts more feasible, in terms of being able to break ground and stay in line with what the disc golf group is able to raise.

Bob Johnson of 47 Sesame St. stated that he is here representing the disc golf club, and they have the same story. He continued that they have done this before with the Otter Brook disc golf course. They raised all the money and provided all the labor for that project; thus, they have experience in this realm. As a club, they have about \$3,000 in the bank ready to go. Similar to the dog park group, they have people who have verbally committed to helping out with this project. They are very confident that their \$15,000 piece is no problem. The one detail would be the third section. The disc golf club believes a lot of that can be mitigated. For example, they do not think the pavement has to go away. The club has arborists, whom they believe can mitigate many of those last line item costs; that seems to be up in the air. He will not go too much further because it is the same story as that of the dog park group, but he is happy to answer questions.

Councilor Workman stated that she is really glad the two groups were able to come together and that this project is moving forward. She continued that this updated plan is great, and she has been excited for a long time to have a dog park in the area. Hearing about the plan has also gotten her excited about disc golf.

Chair Greenwald stated that he, too, is very excited that the groups are working together and probably combining resources, which will reduce the costs for each group. He continued that he remains interested in having a dog park downtown in addition to this one, but he will have to wait on that. There are many dogs living downtown.

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

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee accepted the dog park and disc golf park presentation as informational.

The City Manager stated that she wanted to clarify that there were no concerns in making sure they are coordinating raising the funding with the two groups and coordinating the work, and that if the City Council also accepts it as informational the groups will move forward with their fundraising efforts. She asked if that is correct. Chair Greenwald replied yes.

- 2) **Aaron A. Lipsky – Requesting Tree Removal – 64 Hastings Avenue**
- 3) **Tree Removal – 64 Hastings Avenue - Public Works Director**

Chair Greenwald asked to hear from Aaron Lipsky.

Aaron Lipsky of 64 Hastings Ave. stated that he was born in Keene and has lived here for 78 years. He continued that a hazardous tree is on City property in front of his house. He likes trees, and in his previous capacity, he served on the Governor's committee for community trees in NH. He has a lot of respect for trees, knows trees do a lot of good, and does not want to cut a tree unless there is a reason that outweighs the good of the tree. In this case, the reasons do outweigh it. The presentation about the [dog park and disc golf course at] Wheelock Park included reasons to cut down some healthy trees for the greater good of reconfiguring the park to make it available for more activities. It is also necessary to cut trees for the airport, for the safety of people in the airplanes and the people on the ground. Similarly, this hazardous tree on his property blocks his view. It has grown and is lopsided, tipped toward Hastings Ave. It is tipped toward the power lines on the other side of the street.

Mr. Lipsky continued that he is not an arborist and does not know what the criteria are for a healthy tree. This tree has three spindly trunks, which start at a low level. As far as he can tell, one trunk is dead; it has no leaves. The other two trunks have leaves, so perhaps that is why they call it a healthy tree. An arborist may have more criteria than just leaves; they might say it is lopsided, all the branches are on one side, and it has a dead trunk. He does not know. Assuming this is a healthy tree, it is still hazardous. The trunks have expanded over the years, and it has tipped further over time. When he tries to leave his driveway, he has to poke his car out into the lane to see if someone is coming, going in a southerly direction. Hastings Ave. runs north south. When he comes out of his driveway, this tree blocks his view. If he pokes his car out into the lane and there is a car coming, if there is no traffic in the opposite lane, then a car coming toward him can swerve around him. If there is traffic in the opposite lane, the car coming toward him

has to stop for him. He does not like it, nor does the other driver. This is not a good situation. It is hazardous for him while exiting his driveway and it is hazardous for visitors and workers who come to his house, and to the public traveling on Hastings Ave. Taking down this tree would increase his safety and quality of life.

Mr. Lipsky continued that Mr. Blomquist has been kind enough to talk with him, and he appreciates it. He asked if he will have a chance to speak to the Committee again after Mr. Blomquist speaks. Chair Greenwald replied yes.

Chair Greenwald asked to hear from Mr. Blomquist.

Public Works Director Kürt Blomquist stated that the agenda packet contains a brief memorandum about the situation and several pictures. He continued that in general, when they are looking at trees in the right-of-way, they are looking to make a determination as to whether there is an imminent hazard. That is important, because they would be spending general fund/general taxpayers' money for any particular action, and they want to make sure that in general there is a public issue. They look at the general health of a tree. If it is of concern, the Public Works Department has the authority to take the actions. In cases where the tree is generally in good health, if the property owner is still interested in having the tree removed they can proceed through the process, which includes coming to the MSFI Committee to request removal.

Mr. Blomquist continued that in this particular case, as they can see in the photos, this tree split into three leaders as it grew. It is currently fall, which is one of the challenges for his staff. He stopped by and saw that the tree appears to generally be in good health; he and his staff did not note any specific problems. Certainly, some trimming could be done to take some weight off. The tree is in the same structural condition as the other trees as you move down Hastings Ave. Another photo, looking north, is the other side of the driveway of 64 Hastings Ave. looking toward where the YMCA is and the intersection with Summit Rd. The bottom picture looks southbound toward Hurricane Rd. This situation is not unusual in the city. Many driveways have trees, bushes, stone walls, and other objects that could block the view of a person moving in and out of the driveway. Staff also looks at the situation for the drivers. In this particular case, if you look at the southbound view, a driver approaching would see that a vehicle is sitting there. This type of situation is all over the city. At this point in time, he recommends that the Committee accept Mr. Lipsky's correspondence as informational.

Mr. Lipsky stated that he has not seen the memorandum or photos. He asked if he could review them. Mr. Blomquist replied yes, and they are available online.

Mr. Lipsky stated that this is one tree, although all three trunks start at the ground. He continued that two trees behind it on private property do not present a hazard, and will grow better if this hazardous tree was removed, as it is in competition for nutrients and root space. Mr. Blomquist is correct that a driver approaching can see his [Mr. Lipsky's] car, but he himself cannot see the

other car until he is out in the road, and the car would have to stop or swerve around him. They cannot swerve around him if there are cars coming in the opposite lane. Staff was able to take these photos when there was not any traffic, but there are times when there is a lot of traffic. The YMCA and middle school are to the north and the high school is to the south in this neighborhood. He requests that the tree be removed. Mr. Blomquist brought up the financial concerns of the City. The elimination of this hazard is so important to his safety, the safety of the people using his driveway, and the safety of the people on Hastings Ave., that he would be willing to split the cost 50/50 with the City if this can be done by the end of 2022. He thanked the Committee for their consideration.

Councilor Williams stated that he hates to lose a street tree. He asked if there would be a good location to put in a replacement tree, if this tree was removed. Mr. Blomquist replied yes, possibly somewhere in that area. He continued that they would have to look, as the power lines are on the other side of the street and it is fairly narrow in this area between the stone walls and the street.

Councilor Filiault asked what the City's policy has been over the past several years when requests like this have come forward. Mr. Blomquist replied that in the circumstances when the Council has found a public interest, they have moved forward and the City has removed such trees. He continued that in other instances when the Council has not determined that there was a public interest, they have given permission to the property owner to remove the tree if the Council felt their issue was compelling enough. Regarding the splitting of the cost, he cannot recall such a situation. The Committee and Council can consider that if they feel that there is some public involvement in this particular case.

Chair Greenwald stated that he remembers a situation in which splitting the cost came up. He continued that a business owner downtown was asking that a planter in Central Square be removed and she offered to split the cost, and it got very dicey. Looking at that precedent, he thinks the City should either do this or not do this. Mr. Blomquist replied that he does not remember if there was cost splitting in the situation Chair Greenwald is referring to; he thinks the City ended up just doing it. The City Manager replied that it was before her time, but she thinks the City paid to have that planter removed. She continued that in the past when they have looked at requests for tree removal, they have looked at the health of the tree and whether there is a safety concern. The City does remove trees every year. They prioritize them based on their location, whether they are a hazard, and the health of the tree. Those have been the guideposts. As Mr. Blomquist said, for trees that do not meet those criteria, the Council in the past has given the option for the property owner to remove the tree at their own cost.

Chair Greenwald stated that he likes trees, and these trees give Hastings Ave. its character. He continued that however, he is interested in seeing this tree in the spring when the leaves are back, and seeing whether one of those leaders could be cut so the tree can be maintained and there could be better visibility like Mr. Lipsky is asking for. He understands Mr. Lipsky's safety concern and wants to address it. Looking north, cutting off the main leader may accomplish the

safety issue and still maintain the tree. He does not think planting a new tree would be a positive.

Councilor Workman stated that she understands the precarious situation and understands Mr. Lipsky's safety concerns. She continued that however, a bigger concern, and something the Council should be looking at and prioritizing for safety, is maintaining the city's speed limits and enforcing the speed limits on residential roads like this. Many of the near misses could be avoided if drivers were following the speed limit so they are aware of oncoming and incoming traffic. Chair Greenwald replied that Councilor Workman is right on, and Hastings Ave. has [drivers speeding], particularly on school mornings.

Councilor Filiault stated that he has a question for the City Manager. If Mr. Lipsky decided to spend the money himself, would this be viable? The City Manager replied that it is up to the Council. She continued that Keene is "The Tree City," so they try not to take down trees if they can help it. If the Council feels that there is a justified reason for this, but it does not meet the criteria for the City to pay for it, they certainly could [allow Mr. Lipsky to pay for removal himself]. Councilor Filiault thanked her and added that regarding the idea of adding a new tree, he was driving around the city looking at all the trees, and he thinks they are all set with trees.

Councilor Williams stated that speed limits are great but really need to be enforced. He continued that what they really need to do is design roads so people are not inspired to speed. A road such as Hastings Ave. could maybe use a few bump outs or something like that. He does not necessarily think the geography works for a bump out at this location, but he would like to see traffic calming devices built into the road itself as a resolution to speeding, as opposed to hoping enforcement works, which it rarely does. Regarding the tree, he hates to lose trees. In the past, someone came before the Committee and he spoke against removing the trees in that case, because a driveway had come in after the trees had already been there and was pushing out the trees. In this case, the tree made a decision to start leaning and became a bigger hazard. It looks like a danger to him and he recognizes the risk. He would be willing to sacrifice this tree.

Chair Greenwald stated that he views it as three trees, and if they can eliminate the hazardous one that is leaning and blocking the view, maybe that would accomplish it and they could still keep the tree.

Mr. Lipsky replied that that would not work, because it is the low part at eye level when you are coming out, looking from your car. He continued that it is the three trunks together. Removing the one that appears dead would not improve the situation at all. The tree would still be blocking a driver's view coming out of the driveway.

Chair Greenwald asked for public comment. Hearing none, he asked for further Committee comment.

Councilor Filiault stated that if this tree does not meet the City’s criteria for removal, if the petitioner wants to take on the cost of removing the tree because he feels that it is a safety concern for himself, he would be in favor of letting the petitioner do that. The City, in the past, has not provided the funds to take these types of trees down and does not want to set a precedent now, but if the petitioner feels this is a safety issue at his property the Council should work with him and allow him to remove the tree if he wishes to do so.

Chair Greenwald asked how they get closure on this. Mr. Blomquist replied that they could grant the request to Mr. Lipsky to remove the tree in front of 64 Hastings Ave. at his cost.

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

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee recommends granting Aaron Lipsky’s request to remove the tree in front of 64 Hastings Ave. at Mr. Lipsky’s expense.

- 4) **Requesting No Parking – 191 Washington St. – Juliana Bergeron, Vic Pantesco, Randy Lowenberg**
- 5) **No Parking Request – 191 Washington St. - Public Works Director**

Chair Greenwald stated that they will take items 4 and 5 together. He asked to hear from the petitioners.

Juliana Bergeron stated that she is the owner of 191 Washington St., where there has been a similar situation to Mr. Lipsky’s but with no trees involved. She continued that she has owned the building for 35 years. In the beginning, she did not start keeping track of how many accidents there were on Washington St. with people either coming or going from her parking lot. She can think of two. One involved an elderly man, now deceased, who lost his license because he was at fault for causing the accident while coming out of the 191 Washington St. parking lot. In September, she herself saw an accident from her office. She watched an 18-year-old [driver] who looked and thought it was clear and then was in an accident with an 80-year-old. At least one car was totaled, and it looked to her that perhaps the other was, too. She felt that it was time to bring her concern back to the City. She knows the City has done some things to help before, such as changing the Franklin School bus route, which has been a great help.

Ms. Bergeron continued that she is not looking for no parking in front of her office in the building next door. Lower Washington St. has signs saying “No parking here to the corner,” and she thinks if there were such signs here, it would give people enough space to see. People have been blocking her driveway with their parked cars, and she calls the police when that happens. Lately, people have been parking right after the corner, and it is almost as if a driver turning into the driveway could hit those parked cars if they were not being careful. Her building has therapists upstairs who have patients in and out, and she has clients in and out. Many people from the building have written to the City, and have given her letters, perhaps also forwarded to

the City. You pull up to Washington St. and look the best you can, and eventually when you think you can make it, you gun it. Thus, everyone comes out [of the parking lot] too fast. That will be tragic someday, if they cannot make some sort of a parking change there. She knows they need parking. She lives on Main St., across from the college, and there is no parking in front of her house. A couple times a day there is a lot of traffic on Main St. but it has never been a problem getting out of there because you know when to go and when not to go. On Washington St., for most drivers in that section – not just from her building, but also from some of the others - everyone is complaining about how dangerous it is. She wanted to know if there could be “No parking here to the corner” on both sides of a couple of those driveways.

Chair Greenwald asked to hear from staff.

Mr. Blomquist stated that his memorandum provides an aerial view that shows the current situation. He continued that currently, there is a no parking zone from Greenlawn St. down to about 90 feet, which nearly takes you to the property line at 191 Washington St. In the City Code, “No parking here to the corner” only deals with intersections. City Code specifies that no parking is permitted within 30 feet of an intersection. Regarding parking involving driveways, the City Code does not specify any kind of distance. The Code says that you cannot park to block a driveway. Thus, when the Police receives a complaint of this type, the Officer looks to see whether the parking situation, in the Officer’s opinion, means the person whose driveway it is cannot use their driveway because of the way a vehicle is parking. The Code does not specify how far back from the edge of a driveway it is okay to park. Some communities do specify this; usually about two or three feet is the standard. Keene does not have this, so there is no way to put “No parking here to corner” signs up next to driveways. He has been working through some requests; there are illegal signs that staff have been taking down, such as on Court St., because they are not enforceable.

Mr. Blomquist continued that while “No parking here to corner” only applies to intersections, options available to the Council include creating a no parking zone in this area. They could say “no parking” all the time, or specify certain times when parking is not allowed, as is the case in many locations in the city. Currently, an Officer can only ticket a vehicle if they determine that the vehicle is blocking a driveway.

Chair Greenwald stated that the diagram does not show any lined spaces. Mr. Blomquist replied that the lined spaces on Washington St. stop just below Beaver St. He continued that from Beaver St. north, the City does not mark parking spaces.

Chair Greenwald stated that he is looking for a compromise. He continued that if the Council says “no parking” here, [his question is], what about the next [request], and the next? Going the route of “no parking” on Washington St. would make the neighborhood unhappy. He wonders, if the spaces were lined, and if each side of the driveway was a little more than the bare minimum, if that would force the opening.

Ms. Bergeron stated that the Police Officer who was at the last accident said that the other problem is the speed on Washington St. She continued that there are flashing lights when school is [starting or ending], but she believes part of the problem with the accidents was that drivers from her building could not see to get out and the drivers they were in accidents with were all driving over the speed limit, is her guess.

Chair Greenwald stated that the other part of the conversation is that this has come about a bit too late to get the Franklin School principal involved, but the school district really needs to get into it. They need to speak to their employees, and put out the word to parents. He has had three children and five grand children go through Franklin School, so he is familiar with [the issues] Ms. Bergeron is talking about.

Ms. Bergeron replied that the [school traffic] used to block her driveway all afternoon. She continued that if you knocked on a driver's window or beeped your horn, they did not even turn their head and continued blocking her driveway. It means that her building's customers and clients could not come in. It is better now that the bus route changed; the busses do not come out in front of the school anymore, which has been a great help. Thus, there is a short period in the morning and the afternoon when there are more people there, which [she and the people in her building] try to work around. She is not sure that this general problem is [due to the school]; she thinks it is Washington St. residents or people parking there for other reasons. Some of it might be due to the school.

Councilor Williams stated that he has strong feelings about this. He continued that he lives in Ward 2 and comes down Beaver St. all the time, and it is "a nightmare" trying to get out on Washington St. People driving trucks might have good visibility, but for drivers like him in small, compact cars and looking up Washington St., invariably there is something in the way like a big van, and there is not good visibility. Making that turn from Beaver St. to Washington St. is concerning. When his son starts driving, he will have to make that turn, too, and he is worried. He recognizes this is a big problem, on that whole stretch between Beaver St. and the school. Other driveways there probably have similar problems to Ms. Bergeron's. His thinking is similar to Chair Greenwald's – it might help to demark with white lines where appropriate parking spaces are. Near the intersection of Beaver St., he does not know if it is 30 feet, but he would love for it to be 40 feet, because it is very difficult to see through a car that is on that corner. He is a big fan of the white lines idea.

Councilor Filiault stated that he was thinking the same thing. He continued that a couple gallons of paint and a few lines could be a short-term solution, and maybe even a long-term solution. Initially they might be able to alleviate a problem while they take a longer look at it, but in the short term, some painted parking spaces with some angled lines at driveways might work.

Mr. Blomquist stated that he is not saying this would not work, but he will caution the Committee, because the question is, where do they stop? He continued that the City used to [paint] spaces above Beaver St., but then during budget discussions, at the end of the day, the

Public Works Department does not do the painting. It is a contract. Every spring, the contractor comes in and does all the line painting. This would be added to their line painting contract. That is not a problem, but it would mean additional cost. The question, again, for the Committee's consideration, is where they would stop. Certainly, they could do the immediate area in question. Right now, the standard would be that if the next set of folks ask, "well, can you [paint parking spaces] in front of our building, too?," he would go ahead and add those to the contract. Do they do it across the street? There is parking on the other side of Washington St., too. This is one of the "see-saw" issues the Council has struggled with, regarding how much to do. He will add that Court St. has similar issues. They have similar discussions with property owners there. Painting designated parking spaces would make sense for them, too. Thus, he is not telling the Committee they cannot do this, but he is cautioning them that it would be an expansion of what the current service levels are, which means he would at some point need to come and ask for more money from the Council for the line painting.

Councilor Roberts stated that regarding Mr. Blomquist's point, he sees a big difference between Court St. and Washington St. He continued that most of the old-time buildings on Court St. are still residential, whereas on Washington St., over the years, more and more of those buildings have become businesses and there is more traffic coming out of people's houses, especially during the day. His question is what to do about streets that have a lot of business traffic now.

Mr. Blomquist replied that it is similar on Court St. He continued that at least up until Union St., the first floors of many buildings have been converted to offices, and that is the area he was referring to when he talked about Court St. having similar issues to Washington St. Further north on Court St., toward the hospitals, there are more residential buildings. This is just one of the challenges in the urban environment, particularly as you are looking to increase density and trying to encourage the use and re-use of large buildings.

The City Manager stated that she is glad Mr. Blomquist mentioned that they do line painting in the spring once a year. She continued that the next time they would be able to do this would be in the spring, if they were going to expand where they were painting lines. That is okay, because she thinks they need some time to look at how it would be laid out and where it would apply, because they cannot just apply it here [near 191 Washington St.] without some sort of policy. They know they have issues on Court St. and other areas of the city, and they should look at whether they need additional line painting and what that means in terms of liability. They need to look at all of this before they do anything. If they are going to paint lines for parking spaces, it lets people know it is okay to park there and it is safe, and so on and so forth. She would like time to be able to come back to the Committee with more information about what they would need to do to make this happen.

Councilor Filiault asked if it would be okay to put this on more time and have a report come back in the next 30-day cycle. The City Manager replied yes, absolutely. She continued that they should have a good sense of what other areas they would need to look at, whether they need

to create a policy to protect the City in terms of liability, and the timeline for painting and what that would do in terms of the number of spaces.

Ms. Bergeron stated that it warms her heart to know the City will look at this and try to solve the problem. She continued that she did not expect to have it solved tonight.

Chair Greenwald asked if there was any more comment. Hearing none, he asked for a motion.

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

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee placed the communications requesting no parking at 191 Washington St. on more time for staff to look at recommendations to report back to the Committee at next month's meeting.

6) **Verbal Update on the Former Findings Property and Keene Skate Park Project - Parks, Recreation, and Facilities Director**

Mr. Bohannon stated that the Committee had asked for an update on the skate park, and he provided them with a map that is a conceptual plan for the former Findings property. He asked SLR, who designed Russell Park, to do a sketch that would show where the skate park could go on that property. The existing parking lot is where the skate park will be. There is ample space. There are some bio infiltration areas to help with some of the storm water and the flooding issues that occur on Beaver Brook. They hope a lot of those will be addressed through the Russell Park design. The space on the map that is colored orange is a space that could be used for a multitude of community events. Keene Skatepark's budget is at \$225,000. That is in the operating budget right now on the capital side. In the next cycle, Keene Skatepark will be coming through with a new check of \$17,566.16 from Pathways for Keene, closing out that agreement with Pathways to be the fiscal agent. Keene Skatepark has a survey that is out until next Tuesday, November 1, which can be found at keeneparks.com or keeneskatepark.com. It stems from the meeting held on October 19, attended by 37 members of the public. It was a very positive meeting with a lot of good feedback. The consultant complimented him at the end of the meeting, saying how enthused and educated Keene's skaters are about the design process. His reply to the consultant was that they have been waiting for this a long time and have been through this before. Keene's skaters are very knowledgeable and they will have a great design as a result.

Mr. Bohannon continued that regarding the timeline, after the survey is completed on November 1, Keene Skatepark will combine the information gathered from that with the information gathered at the public meeting, and should have a design a few weeks later. The final design would possibly be ready around the end of December. He and Keene Skatepark would return to the MSFI Committee with the final design, and the build would happen in the spring. They are working with the Public Works Department's Engineering on some of the site issues. They also have submitted a grant for the demolition of the Findings building. They have a back-up plan of another grant to go forward for the demolition, and a back up to the back up; they will be

applying for multiple grants to make that happen one way or another. They recognize that should they not be able to execute any of those grants, they can still build a skate park in that location, and later demolish the building with no impact to the skate park. That had been one of his concerns. He asked the engineers multiple times about whether the shock from the demolition would impact the concrete of the skate park, and the answer is no. He has asked them that question so many times they are probably tired of it, but he is just verifying.

Mr. Bohannon continued that the fundraising continues. There is \$225,000. An account will be set up through the Parks & Recreation software to allow people to donate. He is saying this because there is a difference between \$225,000 that is already project-ready - they are in the contract with the consultant for the design/build - and tonight's earlier conversation where there is [not something project-ready], with the exception of the \$10,000 for the dog park. They have to come forward with a lump sum, similar to what the skate park did, for something project-ready, before they would take the \$5 donations that Councilor Roberts mentioned earlier tonight. There is a big difference between the two, but if they ever get to that phase, they might be opening a different conversation.

Mr. Bohannon continued that he is confident that Keene Skatepark is in good shape, and the skaters feel confident. They love the idea and the location. They were enthusiastic. They will see how the first rendition of a concept plan comes back, and the skaters will have their say to fine-tune that and come back with a final design.

Councilor Williams asked Mr. Bohannon what the space shown in orange is. Mr. Bohannon replied that that could be used for a multitude of things. He continued that when they first thought about this, and thought about the other space that they had desired to be a part of Russell Park by the basketball courts, potentially they could think about having farmer's market, artist's markets, renting the space, and so on and so forth. It is an open area that would allow for community activity of some sort. It is rentable. There are many possibilities. This is only a concept. The idea behind it was to make sure there was enough space for the skate park. They can add some additional parking, because he thinks once the field is up and running, they will have rugby tournaments drawing a nice crowd and the economic impact they had all envisioned is going to happen. That could certainly be overflow for multitudes of reasons.

Councilor Williams asked if it would be grass or gravel. Mr. Bohannon replied grass. He continued that they could change their minds and make it something else. Mr. Blomquist stated that this is very, very conceptual, but the idea is to have this open space that they can talk more about and determine what to put in it. He continued that they could do reinforced grass and allow vehicles but maintain it as a green space. There are some great ideas and he is excited.

City Attorney Thomas Mullins asked if it correct that what they can do with that space depends ultimately on the funding for taking the building down. Mr. Bohannon replied that they have applied for Invest NH funding. He continued that tomorrow night he will be presenting related to LWCF (Land, Water, and Conservation Fund). If FEMA or LWCF funding becomes an

option, that is in perpetuity green space, so that will always be a park. You would not be able to redevelop it without other contingencies, just like Russell Park. You would not be able to have anything permanent there. For example, a farmer's market seven days a week would not be possible, but something seasonal, operations here and there, would be possible. That is something they will consider when they apply for the various grants.

Chair Greenwald asked about bathrooms. Mr. Bohannon replied that the bathrooms are not shown on the map, but they will be there, right on the other side of that parking lot.

Councilor Williams stated that he does not see great pedestrian options on here. He continued that it seems like there is a big parking lot and a pick-up/drop-off area, but he does not see any place that is separated for bicyclists, pedestrians, or people on skateboards. In his experience, skating is the best way to get to a skate park. Not all sidewalks in this area are particularly good for skating. If they do put a skate park here, they should pay attention to having surfaces that skaters can actually ride on to get there, so they do not need to get in a car to go to the skate park.

Mr. Bohannon replied absolutely, and he will remind them that this is purely the 30,000-foot view. They have not done anything with design yet. Having walked the space multiple times, he fully agrees with Councilor Williams. The most important element of this vision, to him, is the connection to the Cheshire Rail Trail and making sure that connection is all skateable and walkable.

Councilor Roberts stated that by the time they are putting up the new Hundred Nights shelter, regarding that area right up to the trail and up to Carpenter St., there is no question that that whole sidewalk would have to be upgraded to meet the traffic needs. He walks there, and there are so many ups and downs and there is a high risk of people falling and getting injured. He thinks that would fall into the Capital Improvement Plan going forward.

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

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee accepted the skate park conceptual plan as informational.

7) Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Greenwald adjourned the meeting at 7:22 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

Edits submitted by,
Terri M. Hood, Assistant City Clerk