

City of Keene
New Hampshire

MUNICIPAL SERVICES, FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, April 12, 2017

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:

Medard Kopczynski, City Manager
Thomas Mullins, City Attorney
Kurt Blomquist, Public Works Director
Donald Lussier, City Engineer
Elizabeth Fox, Assistant City Manager/Human
Resources Director
Elizabeth Sayre, Human Resources Dept.
Manager

Other Councilors Present

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

1.) Presentation - Outside Agency Funding - Human Services Department

Elizabeth Sayre, the Human Services Department Manager, said that her presentation would explain the internal process used for determining recommendations for funding for outside agencies. The funding comes through the Mayor's budget, but the Human Services (HS) has been asked to do the process. She explained that it is an almost yearlong process that begins in the fall. She described the process as follows:

- All interested applicants, including those who have previously applied for funding, are invited to provide general information about the current status of their agencies.
- A timeline is developed and the documents that make up the outside agency funding packet are prepared.
- A public notice is generated and previous applicants are notified when the applications are ready.
- Applications are reviewed by a committee composed of representatives from the Fire and Police departments, from the Finance Department, from the Health and Code Department, and from HS.
- Questions raised during the committee's review are followed up with the agencies by Ms. Sayre, who then reports back to the committee.

- A summary of the agencies' requests and the services they provide is written by Ms. Sayre, who also generates a recommendation to the City Manager.
- A one-page narrative for the budget book is prepared by Ms. Sayre.

She explained that the committee uses a score sheet, generated back in 1998, to evaluate the applications. The criteria that the committee considers are as follows:

1. If the agency were not in operation, would the city be mandated to provide its service?
2. Does the agency provide a service that has a direct financial impact on any expenditures of any city department?
3. If the agency doesn't directly save the city funds, then is there a financial impact in terms of prevention or intervention that could in the future save city funding?
4. What are the number and percentage of clients served who are Keene residents for agencies that are regional service providers?
5. Are the services provided by a specific provider replicated by another provider?
6. Is the agency working collaboratively with other service providers and businesses to resolve any community issues that they are all facing, to reduce service costs, and to access other available funding?
7. In terms of efficiency and delivery, how high is the percentage of the agency budget that is directly spent on the clients (as opposed to administrative costs)?
8. In the last fiscal year, has the agency increased or attempted to increase its revenue from outside sources, such as fundraising and grants?

Councilor Filiault explained the historical background for the process described by Ms. Sayre, noting that the criteria in current use are almost exactly the same as those developed about 20 years ago. He said that the intent behind the review process created back then was to remove some of the emotion out of the budget discussions around outside agency funding that took place on the night the Council voted on the budget.

In answer to a question from Chair Manwaring about how agencies find out about applying for funds, Ms. Sayre explained that a public notice is published in the *Keene Sentinel* and there is word-of-mouth dissemination of information, i.e. agencies in communication with each other.

In addition, Chair Manwaring asked if the opioid epidemic has had an impact on the requests for funding. Ms. Sayre said that committee has taken that into consideration, citing the effort made by Chief Brian Costa when he was on the committee to increase funding for the agency dealing with substance misuse issues.

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

On a 5 – 0 vote, the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee recommends the presentation on Outside Agency Funding by the Human Services Department be accepted as informational.

2.) James Phippard - Brickstone Land Use Consultants - Request to Alter a Tax Ditch Easement on Lee Street Resolution R-2017-09

Mr. Phippard said he represents MGJ Realty, LLC, which is now the owner of property at the end of Lee Street. He said that in 2009 the City Council adopted a resolution that allowed modifications to the tax ditch. At that time, he said, the developer was seeking Planning Board approval to construct a housing project that also contained two carport buildings, which were to be partially located within the tax ditch easement. The developer filed a request to the City Council R-2009-25-A, which was adopted in early 2010 and allowed the construction of a driveway through the easement area, a bridge crossing the tax ditch, the construction of two carport buildings. He said that was granted partially on the basis that the city still maintains access to this area. This project never was built.

He said that the property was bought in 2012 by MGJ Realty, which sought to make changes in the housing project. The new project received site plan approval from the Planning Board in 2014. He explained that in the new proposal, the two 96' carports would be replaced by two 66' apartment buildings that will extend into the existing tax ditch the same 31'. However, the overall encroachment will be decreased from 5952 square feet to 4092 square feet.

Mr. Phippard said that because of previous wording, it is necessary to request that the previous easement be rescinded and it to be replaced by a new easement.

City Engineer Lussier said that his office hadn't had an opportunity to review the documents that were submitted. He said he had spoken to the applicant, and that it seems that it would be acceptable to the applicant to put this on More Time.

In response to questions from Councilor Filiault, the City Manager and the City Attorney said they could not see any problems with the proposal but both said they would need to get input from the City Engineer.

Councilor Lamoureux asked about the feasibility of passing a resolution recommending approval subject to review and approval of the City Engineer. The City Manager said he thought that would be perfectly appropriate.

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

On a 5-0 vote, the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee recommends to the full Council the adoption of R2017-09 pending review and approval of City Staff.

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

On a 5-0 vote, the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee recommends to the full Council to rescind R2009-25A pending the adoption of Resolution 2017-09.

3.) Water Street Rehabilitation Project - Public Works Department

City Engineer Lussier, with Peter Holden of Holden Engineering, the city's design consultants on this project, presented the recommended design for the Water Street Rehabilitation Project.

Mr. Lussier explained that this project draws funds from four different Capital Improvement Programs (CIP), the sidewalk repair project, curb installation program, drainage spot repair, and road rehabilitation. The funds are in the Fiscal Year 17 (FY17) budget, having been appropriated by the City Council for a total budget of \$690,000 for the project.

The scope of the project as described in the CIP for FY17 was the rehabilitation of Water Street from Grove Street to Roxbury Street. That scope and the cost estimate for it were based on an assumption that the project would involve an one-inch mill and overlay – the city's basic maintenance program for roads in reasonably decent condition.

Mr. Lussier said that the basic maintenance program would not be sufficient because the structure of the road has broken down to the point where a more extensive repair is required. Therefore the original assumption about the nature of the project back in 2012 might not be considered a valid assumption today. He said staff is recommending a more extensive – and expensive – repair construction method.

Mr. Holden explained the process that led to the recommendations for the project. He said that information had been collected about drainage structures, the amount of pavement on the road (6 to 6 ½ inches in the center, 4 ½ inches on the sides), the nature of the old concrete roadway underneath the pavement (19 feet wide and flat). He said there are drainage structures on the sides of the road of different vintages, different types of construction, and in various stages of disrepair.

Mr. Holden said that the road has been paved repeatedly, so that the curbing, which is mostly asphalt, is disappearing. If the city were to leave the pavement where it is and construct curbing now to protect pedestrians from road traffic, the top of the curbing would be seven inches taller than the sidewalk. That would cause drainage problems, with water draining toward the houses rather than toward the street.

Mr. Holden said the best method is to deal with the current condition of the street is to grind street down to the concrete and then put in granite curbing on both sides of the street. The street would be lowered by 4 ½ inches, curbing that is 7 ½ inches tall would be installed, coming just about to where the sidewalk is now, so there wouldn't be drainage problems.

In addition, he said, repairs would need to be made to a lot of the drainage structures because of their age. He said they had inventoried all the sidewalk, graded it as to whether it was salvageable so that it could be used again.

Using the a Design Review slide of the street, Mr. Holden pointed out the different parts of Water Street starting at Grove: the pavement, the sidewalk, proposed sidewalk, the point where the rail trail crosses, and the grass strip. On the lower part, there is no sidewalk because there is sidewalk on the north side of the bridge but no sidewalk on the south side – the proposal calls for the lower sidewalk to terminate at the rail trail because they didn't want to bring it to an abrupt stop at the bridge.

Starting on Carpenter Street going east, the plan calls for substantially replacing the sidewalk and putting in curbing.

The plan calls for making each crosswalk accessible for the disabled, making the sidewalks as uniform as possible, and for working out ways to blend the sidewalk construction with property-owners' existing walks.

Mr. Lussier said the original scope of the project extended from Grove to Roxbury, but because there is not enough money for that, staff is proposing to limit the rehabilitation to the stretch of Water Street between Grove Street to Eastern Avenue. In that way, he said, there would be enough in the budget to cover the sidewalk improvements, the construction of curbing, the landscaping and the full reconstruction of the pavement structure. He said this plan is being recommended over the basic maintenance type repairs, which will not provide the length of service life that would be expected.

Community Engagement:

Mr. Lussier explained prior Council discussion of Water Street:

- July 22, 2013: a resident sent a letter to the city expressing a desire for a grass belt between the sidewalk and the street (from Eastern Avenue to Victoria Street) for snow storage and provide buffer and safety.
- November 4, 2015: the same resident sent a letter requesting that the sidewalk be abandoned between Eastern Ave. and Victoria St.

Mr. Lussier said that after considering past discussions and evaluating the sidewalk issue, staff is not recommending the removal of the sidewalk. He said there are about seven properties that have walkways or stoops that come out to the sidewalk, but more importantly Water St. is designated as a bicycle street and as such should have sidewalks at least on one side, with both sides being preferable. He said he didn't want to foreclose on the possibility of having a complete street someday.

He said there was a Public Listening Session on the project held on February 28, 2017, which was attended by approximately 15 residents.

- There was a consensus among the residents that a sidewalk between the Rail Trail and the bridge wasn't needed.
- There was a request that the city consider creating a four-way stop at the intersection of Water, Community and Grove streets. Engineering and Public Works staff looked at the intersection, at the traffic counts, and concluded that it didn't warrant a four-way stop.
- There was acceptance by the residents about the need for tree removal with the caveat that they be replaced. Trees will be replaced at ratio of about two replacements to one removed.
- There were concerns expressed about vehicle speeds, especially coming down hill to where Water St. and Eastern Ave intersect. Staff collected speed and traffic count data, finding that the top speed measured over a three or four-day period was 37 mph on a road that is posted at 30 mph. It was not consider the level of speeding that would lead staff to conclude there was an engineering problem there.

He discussed direct discussions with property owners. In one issue with Segal Associates, city staff is attempting to work out an agreement regarding fitting the sidewalk between three utility poles carrying high voltage wires and a fence. The city will seek approval from the property owner for a sidewalk easement in that case.

The city received a request from the management of Bentley Commons a new crosswalk near the Beaver Brook Bridge, but he said he is not proposing to create a crosswalk that will draw people into an area that doesn't have a sidewalk.

He summarized the main components of the project:

- Reconstruct pavement from Grove to Eastern
- Repair and replacement of sidewalks and curbing within that replace existing sidewalks and curbing
- Construct new sidewalk from Bentley Commons to Victoria St.
- Construct new sidewalk from Grove to Rail Trail (south side)
- Create shared lane "sharrows" for bicycles.
- Replace trees as required.

Councilor O'Connor raised the issue of the difficulty trucks have in making the turn at the intersection of Water and Victoria streets. Mr. Lussier said this project does not propose any changes or improvements on Victoria St., adding that work on Victoria is in the CIP for 2022.

In response to a question from Councilor Hooper, Mr. Lussier said the expected service life for a fully reconstructed street is 18 to 20 years. In this case, the budget doesn't allow for the removal of the underlying concrete roadway, so the perpendicular joints will still be there. He said staff is exploring ways to minimize the "reflective cracking" that occurs, but that will still be an issue.

In response to a question from Councilor Hooper about work related to underground utilities, Mr. Lussier said Liberty Utilities is going to replace a gas main between Carpenter St. and Eastern Ave before the start of work on this project.

Mr. Lamoureux expressed support for Mr. Lussier's commitment to keeping existing sidewalks and for extending them where possible for safety reasons.

City Manager Kopczynski asked: If any of the residents want a tree planted, would the city honor that request as opposed to designating where the tree would go? He cited the starkness of Water St. in terms of landscaping and its connection to the downtown.

Mr. Lussier said that if the project is approved, invitations would go out city property owners to host city trees on their property.

The City Manager also asked: Even though there is not enough warrant for stop signs, is there an opportunity for putting a traffic calming mechanism at the intersection perhaps of Eastern and Water, or perhaps Grove and Water?

In response to this question, Mr. Lussier said he didn't want to promise additional scope that might be beyond the budget, but that staff is considering a pedestrian activated signal at the intersection of Grove and Water streets if it is something that the city can afford.

Chairwoman Manwaring asked about how the sharrows could be accommodated on Water St. Mr. Lussier said the lane width would be 11 feet through the corridor, and there would be shared lane markings on the side of the road. It's not a dedicated bike lane, he said, but a reminder that there are bikes on the street and drivers need to be cautious.

In response to a question from City Attorney Hanna about work that would potentially extend onto walkways on private property, Mr. Holden said the city would be working with each one of the homeowners individually.

Questions and Comments from the public

Vicky Morton, of 275 Water Street, asked if it is the city engineer's intent to make the sidewalks on both sides of Water St. 5 ½ feet. Mr. Lussier said the intent was to make them 5 feet wide on both sides.

Ms. Morton asked how fast the cracks at the seams would reappear, given a hard winter. Mr. Lussier said that cracks could be expected to reflect up through the pavement within 18 months. The city then seals them, but added that they are looking into some new materials that might help with that problem. He said short of removing the concrete at a cost of hundreds of thousands of dollars, there is nothing that can be done about them.

Tim Jordan, of 275 Water Street, asked about the location of the bike lane and its effect on parking on the street. Mr. Lussier said it doesn't affect parking anywhere it is legal to park.

Mr. Jordan asked about the need to construct new sidewalks where they didn't already exist, suggesting that it was not a good use of city money. Mr. Lussier said that sidewalks were in keeping with the city's Complete Streets policy.

Mr. Lamoureux clarified the parking ordinance, explaining that parking is allowed even though there is no signage as long as the car does not block any portion of the roadway.

Following up, Ms. Morton asked about the width of Water St. and the approximate of cars. Based on those numbers – the street being 24 feet curb to curb and an estimated width of 7 feet for cars – there is not enough room to allow for parking. She said so there is no parking on Water St.

Choice of Options

Mr. Lussier identified the three options offered for the committee to consider.

- a. Reduce the project extents to Grove Street to Eastern Avenue and provide the full project scope, which can be completed within available budget and is the recommended option of staff.
- b. Provide the full project scope between Grove Street and Roxbury Street. Refer the request for additional funding of about \$225,000 to the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee.
- c. Reduce project between Grove Street and Roxbury Street. This may include the elimination of the replacement of deteriorated sidewalks, elimination of granite curbing installation, and reduction in the width of pavement rehabilitation.

Chair Manwaring said she was uncomfortable with the plan because it does nothing about the entrance to Victoria St, which poses such a challenge to trucks trying to make the turn. In response, Mr. Lussier said that they could make sure that the geometry at the intersection adjusted to make it a little easier for trucks to turn.

Ms. Morton said one of the issues at the intersection of Water with Grove and Community Way, is poor drainage. She said that from Bentley Common to Victoria St. no sidewalk exists, and people don't walk there on the south side of the street. She said that the sidewalk from Victoria St. up to the crosswalk at South Lincoln St. is a little used sidewalk and becomes hazardous due to iciness in the winter. She said she advocates keeping the pedestrian traffic on the other side of the road. She pointed out that the crosswalk at Eastern Ave. is situated at a dangerous point on Water St. She suggested eliminating the crosswalk there and moving it down to South Lincoln. She said that Water St. from Eastern Ave. up to Robin Hood Park is extremely hazardous, due to conditions of the road and limited visibility. She predicted that tractor trailer trucks making the turn at Victoria and Water streets would end up going over the sidewalk constructed on the south side of Water and destroy it.

City Engineer Lussier said staff did consider moving the crosswalk to South Lincoln, but staff was concerned that if the crosswalk was moved farther to the west, people who wanted to walk to Robin Hood from Eastern Ave. would be forced to cross without the benefit of a crosswalk.

In terms of curbing, Mr. Lussier said if the decision is made to remove sidewalk, he would still want to put in some granite curbing.

Councilor Filiault said he was okay with it the way it was presented, but the one issue that he would like to see taken care of is the turn onto Victoria St., which is a longstanding issue that has not been resolved. He said he wanted assurance that the city would work to the best of its ability to fix that intersection.

Councilor Lamoureux asked if there were any way to bring the curbing back on Water St. Mr. Lussier said that he and Mr. Holden would work to expand the radii further at that corner. He said he didn't know how much room was available to expand the right of way on Victoria.

Chair Manwaring said she agreed with the concern expressed about the crosswalk on Eastern Ave., suggesting that at least another crosswalk be added at South Lincoln. Mr. Lussier said that could be done.

Mr. Lussier said there would be some vegetation management that would be undertaken this spring to improve sightlines.

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

On a 5-0 vote, the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee recommends that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the recommended design option for the rehabilitation of Water Street between the intersections of Grove Street and Eastern Avenue with crosswalk as amended.

Adjournment

Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee
April 12, 2017

The meeting adjourned at 7:32 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathleen Fleming, Minute-taker