

City of Keene
New Hampshire

MUNICIPAL SERVICES, FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, May 24, 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
Rhett Lamb, Planning Director
Andy Bohannon, Director of Parks, Recreation
& Facilities
Will Schoeffman, GIS Technician
Mark Howard, Fire Chief
Elizabeth Fox, Assistant City Manager/Human
Resources Director

Members Not Present:

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

1) Departmental Presentation – Fire Training – Fire Department

Chair Manwaring welcomed Fire Chief Mark Howard to present on one of the many things the Fire Department does in training.

With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, the Fire Chief began by listing the services the FD provides:

- Fire Suppression
- Emergency Medical Services
- Hazardous Materials Response
- Technical Rescue (Firefighter III)
 - The Fire Chief indicated posters in the Council Chambers that provide further detail on these low frequency/high risk services such as rope rescue, hazmat, etc.
- Fire Inspection/Fire Investigation/Public Education
- Fire Alarm (municipal circuits and occupancy)
- Daily training to meet the FD mission of providing excellence in those services

The Fire Chief said these services have been apparent recently with several critical incidents, including a house fire and a fatal car accident. These are not only safety issues for the citizens involved, but also the first responders, which makes training so important. He continued explaining the FD budget:

- The FD budget in FY17 was \$6.5 million and 19% of that is for training.
- The FD spends \$24,470 on classes and \$103,000 in overtime; this does not include grant programs in the last decade that provide \$10,000-30,000 in State support.
- To date in FY 17, members of the Keene FD have participated in over 7,000 hours of training.

The Fire Chief continued explaining the FD training standards the department works toward on a daily basis that align with State and Federal requirements, all of which are required within the first year of employment.

The Fire Chief continued by outlining the minimum State requirements for a new hires, which totals 532 hours and then explained other training requirements for advancement within the department.

The Fire Chief elaborated on low frequency/high risk events. He said the Keene FD has been fortunate with the Fire Prevention Programs and he hopes the Life Safety Program improves. Structural fires are infrequent in Keene, but these low frequency/high risk scenarios do occur in the City.

The Fire Chief said that there are no other similarly trained fire resources in the region and many of these training opportunities have only arisen in the last 25 years. The FD is almost operation sustainable for the first few hours of an emergency until back-up from Nashua or Concord could arrive.

Councilor Filiault noted that in the 2000s he was with the on-call company, where he was trained weekly. He asked the status of on-call companies now. The on-call company still trains two Monday's per month, specific to fire suppression, basic rescue, and very basic EMS. They are a labor force for the Keene FD from the support staff standpoint because it is hard to get them to those training hours.

Councilor O'Connor asked if there is sufficient in-house training or if personnel have to travel. The Fire Chief replied that \$24,000 is spent on classes, specifically. Still, between 60-70% of training, including technical rescue training can be done internally with no outside cost for instructors or travel. Approximately \$6,000 is spent on EMS training per year because the FD likes to bring in outside people to train occasionally to evaluate their standards; also, not everyone recertifies in the same years. Councilor O'Connor said from his perspective \$24,000 is not a lot for training so he supports that. The Fire Chief said from a contract standpoint, members have four contract days to travel for trainings.

Councilor Hooper noted there were initial conversations about safety drones; he hopes those efforts will continue as the FD looks forward to all opportunities for fire safety, which he commends.

Chair Manwaring said in terms of regional or State emergencies, like floods, the FD is also called outside of Keene. The Fire Chief replied that during Hurricane Irene the FD deployed almost the full department and served in multiple parts of VT. Councilor Manwaring asked if there is training for forest fires. The Fire Chief replied there are criteria obtained in levels one and two for forest fires; however, urban interfaces are more commonly referred to because of proximity.

Councilor Filiault referred to a recent structural fire on Beech Street and noted when the first fire engine arrived at the Beech Street fire, there were burning arcing electrical wires; the FD called Eversource to have it shut down, but they replied it would take 40 minutes. He asked if water suppression could take place during that time. The Fire Chief replied yes and in his opinion this did not impact FD immediate actions but tactics did have to be adjusted. Ultimately, within approximately 30 minutes, power to the street was shut down. The Chief continued the FD works closely with Eversource and their response criteria are clearly laid out in categories; the Beech Street situation was a Category 1 – Life Threatening. Eversource can shut down power remotely, but until someone comes in person to confirm, there is still danger; sometimes these crews have to drive long distances to do so. Councilor Filiault suggested the Council might be interested in working with Eversource to determine if there is a way to reduce that response time. The City Manager will arrange a meeting with Eversource.

Chair Manwaring recognized Councilor Philip Jones who noted that when gas emergencies occur, for example the one before Christmas 2016, crews from other towns come for back-up; he asked if those other crews are trained for that. The Fire Chief replied all departments in our area are trained to monitor for gas, which their labor is used for in those situations; this is less efficient than reaching out to two or three State hazmat teams which bring in specific monitoring groups.

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

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities & Infrastructure Committee recommends the Fire Department presentation on training be accepted as informational.

2) Park Avenue-Cheshire Rail Trail III Loop (City Project 021605): Preferred Alternative Presentation and Recommendation – Planning Department

Chair Manwaring welcomed Will Schoeffman, GIS Technician, Rob Faulkner of CHA Consulting, and Phil Goff of Alta Planning & Design. This presentation from the Planning Department related to the preferred alternative designs for the Rail Trail III Loop project.

Mr. Schoeffman explained this project is a part of the NHDOT Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) awarded to the City in 2015. The City was awarded \$411,000 through an 80:20 match (State:Local). The City's match was comprised of \$37,000 from City funds, \$30,000 donated by Pathways Keene and \$15,000 from the Monadnock Conservancy. This project is subject to NHDOT's Local Public Agency Management Guidelines; this is the second public meeting required under the project guidelines.

Mr. Schoeffman explained the scope of work/project overview. The Planning Study has concluded. The Engineering Study, Environmental Screening, and Alternatives Development are currently in progress. One public information meeting has already taken place. Steps remaining include: preliminary engineering, permitting/ROW, final design, and construction.

Mr. Faulkner, the Project Manager from CHA Associates, explained the Cheshire Rail Trail loop will connect the end of the existing rail trail at Hurricane Road and will formalize 4,000 feet of existing trail to Ami Brown Road, a class 6 road. The trail will continue to Summit Ridge Road, to Summit Road, to Park Avenue, and to West Street, connecting to the existing trail head by the Kohl's plaza.

Mr. Faulker recalled Keene's Complete Street design guidelines, listing their benefits that influenced the recommended alternatives:

- Increased safety
- Reduced barriers for seniors and those with disabilities
- Increased economic vitality
- Improved community health
- Reduced air emissions

Mr. Faulkner continued explaining the Complete Street Designations of the roads in the loop corridor:

- *Gateway Streets* – Park Avenue and West Street
 - Sidewalks on both sides (5' minimum), bump outs, 5' green buffer ideally, trees every 40'-50', 10'-12' travel lanes, 4' minimum bike lanes (5'-6' preferred with green areas).
- *Bicycle Streets* – Summit Road, Maple Avenue, Hastings Avenue, and West Street west of Rt. 12
 - Sidewalk on one side (two preferred, 5' minimum), 5' buffer with trees every 40' to 50', 10'-12' travel lanes, 4' minimum bike lanes (5'-6' preferred with green areas).
- *Neighborhood Streets* – Skyline Drive and Pitcher Street
 - 5' sidewalk one side with bump outs, 10' travel lanes with 2'-3' paved shoulders.
- *Roads with Transit Overlay* – Maple Avenue, Park Avenue, West Street, and part of Summit Road
 - Transit shelters and covered bike racks

Mr. Faulkner provided a summary of public comments at their February public meeting:

- 29 responses were received from a wide cross section of users across the following platforms:
 - Phone interviews
 - Comment cards
 - Emails
 - Survey Monkey
- There was mixed preference for a separated facility (off-street multi-use path/sidewalk)
- There was mixed preference for upgrading a portion of Ami Brown Road
 - Some prefer current conditions because it is natural and encourages slower speed; also, groups like the Middle School Cross Country Team use it for practice
- Safety is a priority
- There is strong support for the project

Mr. Faulkner shared the Purpose and Needs statement of this project:

The purpose of the project is to improve bicycle and pedestrian access/usage along the Summit Road, Park Avenue, and West Street corridor to surrounding neighborhoods and also provide improved connectivity from Summit Ridge Drive via Ami Brown Road and the existing Cheshire Rail Trail to Hurricane Road.

The project is needed to encourage multimodal usage in the West Keene neighborhoods and improve safety for all users through the project corridor which connects to the Downtown area. This is consistent with the City of Keene's Complete Street Policies and its commitment to provide a connective alternative transportation system through the City of Keene.

Mr. Faulkner continued providing details on the different sections of the loop:

- The Cheshire Rail Trail Segment
 - Will remain the same – 10 feet wide, gravel, and multi-use path, free of obstructions. The current rail bed is in good shape so the surface will be normalized to promote positive drainage.
- Ami Brown Road
 - This irregular segment of trail is a more robust improvement including excavation, adding gravel, removing boulders and roots, and maintenance of the 10 foot, multi-use, gravel surface.
- Summit Ridge/Skyline Drive
 - This roadway is low volume and 25 feet wide, with no pavement markings. Shared Lane markings, or “Sharrows” are proposed here as well as appropriate signage encouraging motorists to share the road.
- Summit Road – Skyline Drive – Hastings Avenue
 - Currently eight feet of pavement and an existing sidewalk on the left. Propose striping the road to the minimum width for Complete Street travel

lanes, 10 feet per lane. A four foot bike lane will be added to each side and the sidewalk will be maintained.

- Park Avenue
 - Three distinct segments
 - Near the cemetery – sidewalk on the right with green buffer; propose 10 foot lanes, four foot bike lanes, and maintain existing buffer and sidewalk.
 - Near Kendall Road – four foot sidewalk on the right side with green buffer; propose 10 foot lanes, four foot bike lanes, and maintain existing buffer and sidewalk.
 - Near Balsam Street – sidewalk on the left and shoulder on the right with paved areas varying from 3-10 feet; propose 10 foot lanes, four foot bike lanes, and maintain existing buffer and sidewalk, but shoulder will vary.
 - Near Pine Avenue – sidewalks on both sides and existing green buffers; propose 10 foot lanes, four foot bike lanes, and maintain existing buffer and sidewalk.
- West Street
 - A challenge because the overpass provides physical constraints. Propose sharrows on both sides instead of the current bike lanes. Mr. Goff said he has implemented this strategy in many urban areas with success. With budget and improvement constraints, this is the best alternative for West Street. There will be continuity so more seasoned cyclists can continue on the street under the overpass.

Mr. Faulkner reviewed the project schedule:

- Alternative Development/Environmental Screening – February/June 2017
 - Local Concerns Meeting
 - MSFI/ City Council Meeting
 - Cultural/Natural Resource Meetings
 - Develop a preferred alternative
- Draft Engineering Study – June 2017
- Public Hearing – July 2017
- Final Engineering Study/NHDOT Approval – August 2017
- Preliminary Design – November 2017
- Final Design – January 2018
- Construction – 2018 Construction Season

Councilor Hooper said the project looks great and asked if speed needs to be reduced with narrower lane widths. Mr. Faulkner said the standard 30mph will remain perfectly adequate with the addition of striping for bike lanes. A 10 foot lane will appear narrower but is not unusual in an urban context. Mr. Goff said on roadways signed for less than 45mph, 10 foot lanes have no increased propensity for side swipes; there is still a shoulder when necessary and tends to work well on non-arterial roadways. Councilor Hooper questioned continued education for vehicle drivers to ensure they understand a cyclist has as much right to the road. Mr. Goff agreed a cyclist has a legal right to use

lanes, even without marking; striping and signage are minor improvements to encourage both cyclists and motorists to move with caution. Mr. Faulkner agreed there will be robust signage in addition to marked lanes.

Councilor Lamouroux asked if part of the project will include fixing storm drains that are hazardous to cyclists. Mr. Faulkner replied yes, in segments where grates are not compliant or shoulders in poor condition, the need for partial pavement patching and grates for storm drains will be evaluated and replaced where appropriate.

Chair Manwaring asked if parts of Park Avenue that are in poor condition will also be repaired. Mr. Schoeffman replied they are unsure what the schedule for resurfacing Park Avenue is, and it will depend where it falls in the resurfacing program.

Chair Manwaring recognized Mary Arnott, 44 E. Surry Road, Keene. She said she frequently walks her dogs on Ami Brown Road and she is concerned about where cars will park when there is a trail head there. Currently, when there are three cars parked on the road, there is no room for others. She also expressed concern about dual use, recalling an experience when driving down Park Avenue and a family biking on the side of the road had a near collision that could have spilled into car traffic.

Chair Manwaring recognized Chuck Redfern, 9 Colby Street, Keene. In response to Ms. Arnott's concerns, Mr. Redfern said NH law says there must be three feet of passing area between cyclists and an automobile. Also cyclists have the right to be on the road as much as cars, he said, but our City is car-centric. He said it makes sense for there to be some provisions on the side of the road for cyclists, such as demarcation. He said the purpose of traffic calming is to make the road safer and lessen the potential of collision situations, like the one Ms. Arnott described. He is pleased to see City Council working toward implementing the Complete Street policies.

Mr. Faulkner addressed parking on Ami Brown Road. He said there is a proposed trailhead with parking at the ends of Ami Brown and Summit Ridge Roads, as well as a trailhead at Whitcomb's Mill Road. There will be some provisions for parking and a small kiosk at each location. Andy Bohannon, Director of Parks, Recreation & Facilities, demonstrated where the trailheads will be located on the map; he said there will be no parking in the Ami Brown Road neighborhood; an old field will be converted.

Chair Manwaring recognized Nancy Hall, Newbury Lane, Keene. She said her street intersects with Skyline Drive and she loves the idea. She asked who owns the field that will be converted for parking. Mr. Bohannon replied the City does not own the property and once the engineering phase commences, negotiations will begin with the various property owners.

The Assistant City Manager/Human Resources Director noted that the Park Avenue rehabilitation is not scheduled to commence until FY21.

Ms. Arnott said her concern about dual use is not that it is impractical but there are still dangers when many bikers ride together; she said accidents are inevitable with dual use. She is in favor of moving bike traffic to the sidewalk.

Mr. Redfern noted the TAP grant the City was awarded is among the most competitive in the nation, in a time when transportation improvement funds are being cut. He said it was through the great grant writing of Mr. Schoeffman, Mr. Bohannon, and others that Keene received the award and was ranked highly in the region. He commended the City and said there will not be many more similar grants; he is glad they are working to keep costs down. He also commended Pathways Keene and the Monadnock Conservancy for their hard work and contributions.

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

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Infrastructure & Facilities Committee recommends the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to complete the design of a preferred alternative for the Park Avenue Cheshire Rail Trail III Loop project.

3) Adjournment

Hearing no further business, Chair Manwaring adjourned the meeting at 7:18 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Katie Kibler, Minute Taker