

City of Keene  
New Hampshire

**AD HOC DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION COMMITTEE**  
**MEETING MINUTES**

**Wednesday, August 23, 2017**

**4:00 PM**

**2nd Floor Conference Room, City  
Hall**

**Members Present:**

Councilor Carl Jacobs  
Councilor Gary Lamoureux  
Kevin Dremmel  
Cheryl Belair  
Shannon Hundley  
Jack Dugan

**Staff Present:**

Medard Kopczynski, City Manager  
Koürt Blomquist, Public Works Director  
Duncan Watson, Public Works

**Members Not Present:**

Luca Paris  
Shane Gormley  
Katie Sutherland  
Councilor Mitch Greenwald

**1) Call to Order**

In the absence of Mayor Lane, Councilor Jacobs acted as Chair and called the meeting to order at 4:02 PM.

**2) Minutes of Previous Meeting – July 12, 2017**

Councilor Lamoureux made a motion to approve the minutes of July 12, 2017, which was seconded by Ms. Belair and carried unanimously.

**3) Board Business – Consultant’s Report: McFarland Johnson – Outline of their proposed timeline for project completion**

Chair Jacobs welcomed Jennifer Zorn, the consultant for this project from McFarland Johnson. Ms. Zorn reported she has been working with The Public Works Director and Mr. Watson to lay out the products for this project, some of which are not finalized yet and she is seeking input from the Committee. She hoped, by the end of this meeting to have some details finalized for this project to go live and to start advertising community workshops and the survey. Ms. Zorn presented the light pole banner that is in production, which will be placed in 12 locations across the City; these can also be made into posters

to be displayed in store fronts, etc. Ms. Hundley offered to distribute these to the Downtown group. Chair Jacobs agreed many organizations and businesses would be interested in responding to the survey so this is a good way to advertise.

Ms. Zorn continued demonstrating the layout of the proposed website, which was designed to look like the City website. The website is live but has not been advertised yet. She proposed having the Committee member's names on that webpage so that citizens can know who is working on this project in case they would like to provide input or ask questions. She also said he hopes as many Committee members as possible will come to the community workshops to introduce themselves and to help. The website will include a link to the survey, which has been designed to be completed in 10 minutes or less, a manageable length.

Next, Ms. Zorn displayed a fact sheet, which is not yet finalized because she wanted Committee input. This fact sheet is versatile and can be distributed in hard copy, via email, mailings, or on social media; any way the City typically communicates with citizens. Mr. Watson is listed as the contact person for this project. The City Manager suggested including it with the water bills; The Public Works Director will look into that. The community workshops were originally being called charrettes, but the decision was made to change that to be less formal and complicated. Mr. Watson is working to finalize the location and contacted Dory Masten about using the former Ingenuity Country Store; she agreed and is waiting on the dates. The Public Works Director and Ms. Zorn agreed this will most likely occur September 25-27, the same week as the Fall Festival. Additionally, September 27 is the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee meeting where a tentative initial report on this project will be presented. The Public Works Director clarified that the survey will not be a part of the workshops, they are parallel opportunities to hear from as many people as possible.

Ms. Zorn continued explaining the draft survey. Questions 1-8 address what McFarland Johnson was tasked with as a part of the overall scope of work. Questions 9-14 are a visual preference survey where photos are displayed along with a question to determine how people want their Downtown to look; questions include images of benches, bike racks, streetscapes, garbage cans, sidewalk art, etc. She said she went with modern, neutral, and traditional options for people to choose from. She asked for the Committee's input on what is included, and anything else that should be included; she wants to ensure it is easily understandable for someone taking the survey.

Chair Jacobs suggested placing the photos between the question and answers, because as currently placed, it looks like the photos refer to the question above them; Ms. Zorn will work on that layout. He also suggested adding sidewalk restaurants to question two. The Public Works Director said question one is currently unclear, because it requires respondents to know where Downtown is defined today; perhaps there is better language and it would make sense to put some landmarks in the options to see if the community concurs with what the Committee thinks. Ms. Zorn agreed but noted it is important to give good information while not leading the respondents. She added there is a box under

each question, with no character limit, where people can be encouraged to add very specific details about what they would like to see.

Ms. Zorn continued that that imagery questions 9-14 are generic as far as styles and asked if the Committee thinks there are other elements that would be interesting to get input on; the options are endless. The Public Works Director said the streetscape question includes images of seating, trees, etc. to get people to indicate the aesthetics they prefer Downtown. Ms. Hundley said she would like to see kinetic art added as an option. The City Manager suggested a question regarding pedestrians and vehicles on the street as many past discussions have been about how Downtown has a lot more vehicle than pedestrian traffic; he suggested a series of corresponding photos. He said that while the landscaping the City has been doing has been well-received, perhaps some photos of material options should be included.

The Public Works Director noted that the continuing conversation of parking is not really addressed in the questions and asked how it could be. Chair Jacobs replied the task at this meeting is to come up with questions that get the public to tell us if they want more cars Downtown or not, so we should ask that question. Mr. Watson suggested asking if the role of Downtown is business, community, socializing, or the arts. The City Manager said he thinks aesthetics are very important and the more art Downtown the better; he asked how to frame that question. He added that how we use Downtown is a crucial question. Councilor Jacobs suggested asking if you prefer to park where you shop or a pedestrian mall. Mr. Dugan suggested asking how far people are willing to walk for certain things. Ms. Zorn replied perhaps asking if people are willing to park behind Main Street to allow more pedestrian accessibility, or if people are willing to give up some lanes of traffic to allow more bike lanes; she thinks it is a good logical question to ask. Mr. Watson suggested taking a picture of Main Street as it is and showing a gradation from there. Mr. Dremmel said he likes the idea of pictures to describe different Downtown road use (narrower vs. wider) and thinks that will get more response than if people prefer a business or artistic Downtown.

Mr. Watson asked if the survey will indicate how long it will take to complete. Ms. Zorn replied yes and she anticipates no longer than 10 minutes. There are currently 14 questions and that can increase to 20 to remain within that time frame. She said that the first question asks if the respondent is a resident of Keene. The Committee suggested not excluding those who do not live in Keene as so many people who do not live here still work here and visit. Instead, they suggested the following options: I live in Keene, I live outside Keene but work in Keene, I just visit Keene; Ms. Zorn agreed. This will help distinguish what is more attractive to those who live in Keene and those who just visit.

Councilor Lamoureux said that the City Council is already on board with the parking meter kiosks and with the time this process will take, he does not think that should be a question. The City Manager agreed adding that since installing the new kiosks there have been no conflicts or complaints; all that is left to do is initiate the user cards.

Chair Jacobs said the lighting question seems more about how people want lights to look versus where light is needed; the Public Works Director agreed that is a tricky issue. The City Manager said perhaps it should ask if people prefer lighting to be aesthetic and ambient or more related to safety. Mr. Watson said the existing lighting Downtown is more decorative and there is not a lot of actual lighting. Chair Jacobs suggested asking if there is enough lighting Downtown or should there be more.

Mr. Dremmel said he would like a question on the use of public spaces such as, if there are enough types of spaces, how they want them to be used, as well as what they feel is the best use of Central Square; do people want more public art and performance spaces. The Public Works Director agreed Downtown is not currently designed to manage large events; the question is if people want it to and that will tell the City what infrastructure is needed to support it. Right now Downtown is not designed for multiple uses because all sections are controlled the same way. Ms. Zorn said there is already a question about outdoor spaces, but not that specific, so she will add that language. The City Manager said it must be kept in mind how those spaces will be used and maintained in the future and how the City will do that. Mr. Dremmel suggested asking if people prefer events at parks, Downtown, or both.

Mr. Watson noted he moved to Keene in 1989, just after the last Downtown renovations. He asked how disruptive that construction was to Downtown and the City. Councilor Lamoureux said in that case the City had money set aside to help businesses with marketing, etc. during that time, but it was still very disruptive. The Public Works Director said the same process that took place in 1989 cannot happen today; all of Downtown was ripped up at once. Chair Jacobs added Downtown was in much worse shape then as well, so people saw that they had to just get through it to end up where we are now; good things are happening Downtown now so it will be harder to shut it down.

Ms. Zorn asked if there are any existing valet systems Downtown that partner with local businesses. The City Manager replied no and he does not think it has ever been brought up. Mr. Dremmel said The Spot (the old middle school) is looking into something like that. Ms. Zorn noted there are businesses with parking lots unused at night and asked if they allow organic overflow. The Public Works Director replied some do and some do not. The City Manager said some businesses may not say so or police it; there are available underutilized lots. There is a lot of available parking that people just do not know about and he is working on installing that signage. Chair Jacobs said some lots are owned by businesses but people also live there so landlords want them as places for tenants to park. Mr. Dremmel noted some towns have removed parking in their core to implement other features and aggressively entered into partnerships with businesses to put meters on their property so the owner gets some money. Councilor Lamoureux noted the difficulty in ticketing on private property.

Ms. Zorn shared her contact information and urged the Committee to contact her at any time; there was discussion about having her on the TV and radio. Flyers were passed out for distribution at the Music Festival, the Hive, and Downtown businesses. Chair Jacobs will send Ms. Zorn contact information for Arts Alive and the Chamber of Commerce.

The City Manager suggested large copies of the flyers at City Hall, the library, the airport, and in front of the Post Office.

Ms. Zorn will send out an updated draft of the survey for Committee review before it goes live.

**4) New Business**

Ms. Hundley informed the Committee about the Hanna Grimes Center annual event in November focused on how to make Keene a destination for conferences. She also shared information on a week-long event where people brainstormed what Downtown could look like. Finally, she noted that Arts Alive is holding an Idea Jam on September 8.

**5) Next Meeting Date – September 6, 2017**

**6) Adjournment**

Hearing no further business, Chair Jacobs adjourned the meeting at 4:51 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Katie Kibler, Minute Taker