



City of Keene
New Hampshire

**MUNICIPAL SERVICES,
FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE
COMMITTEE
AGENDA
Council Chambers B
January 10, 2018
6:00 PM**

Janis O. Manwaring
Randy L. Filiault
Stephen L. Hooper
Gary P. Lamoureux
Robert B. Sutherland

1. Conservation Commission Recommendation on Eversource Energy - Trimming and Removal of Trees and Brush Along Scenic Roads & Eversource Energy - Tree Trimming on Scenic Roads
2. Vicky Morton - Safety Concerns with City Infrastructure
3. Department Presentation - Remote Water Systems Monitoring
4. Gilbo East Parking Lot Improvements – Public Works Department

Non Public Session
Adjournment



City of Keene, N.H.
Transmittal Form

December 19, 2017

TO: Mayor and Keene City Council

FROM: Conservation Commission

ITEM: 1.

SUBJECT: Conservation Commission Recommendation on Eversource Energy - Trimming and Removal of Trees and Brush Along Scenic Roads & Eversource Energy - Tree Trimming on Scenic Roads

COUNCIL ACTION:

In City Council December 21, 2017.

Referred to the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Conservation Commission recommends that the Council approve the petition from Eversource Energy related to the trimming and removal of trees and brush adjacent to and beneath its power lines along scenic roads provided that:

1. The 24" oak tree near line 101 from pole 13 on Chapman Road be removed from the list of trees slated for removal
2. Eversource Energy make landowners aware of the option for leaving topped dead or diseased trees for the purposes of supporting wildlife habitat.

Motion made by Councilor Hansel and seconded by Andrew Madison

BACKGROUND:

At its meeting on December 18, 2017, the Conservation Commission reviewed the petition from Eversource Energy related to the trimming and removal of trees and brush adjacent to and beneath its power lines along scenic roads. A presentation was made by Cory Keefe of Eversource Energy on the project and the proposed work. Mr. Keefe reiterated much of the information provided at the public hearing held by the City Council and Conservation Commission on December 7, 2017.

The comments provided by the Commission on this request are included below:

- Mr. Von Plinsky IV commented that he visited many of the sites on the handout provided by Eversource entitled "List of Trees Keene Scenic Roads." Of the trees on this list, he felt that the 24" oak tree close to phase near line 101 from pole 13 on Chapman Road should not be removed from the site. Mr. Keefe agreed to remove this tree from the list.
- Dr. Reilly commented on the value of leaving topped dead or diseased trees on sites for supporting wildlife and wildlife habitat. The Commission agreed that Eversource Energy should make landowners aware of the option for leaving topped dead or diseased trees for the purposes of supporting wildlife habitat.



Transmittal Form

December 13, 2017

TO: Mayor and Keene City Council

FROM: Vicky Morton

THROUGH: Patricia A. Little, City Clerk

ITEM: 2.

SUBJECT: Vicky Morton - Safety Concerns with City Infrastructure

COUNCIL ACTION:

In City Council December 21, 2017.

Referred to the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee.

ATTACHMENTS:

Description

Communication - Vicky Morton

BACKGROUND:

Ms. Morton is commenting upon various infrastructures within the City in terms of safety concerns. She also is expressing her opinion about several engineering designs for upcoming infrastructure initiatives.

In City Council December 21, 2017.
Referred to the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure
Committee.

December 13, 2017


City Clerk

Mayor Kendall Lane
City Manager Elizabeth Dragon
Members of the Keene City Council
3 Washington Street
Keene, New Hampshire

Vicky Morton
275 Water Street
Keene, New Hampshire

I write today regarding concerns that loosely fit under the title of “potential slip and falls.”

While walking on the bike path bridge that spans the Ashuelot River, between Pearl and Island Streets, the weekend following Thanksgiving, I slipped and nearly fell due to the icing that had accumulated on the bridge deck. When the bridge was constructed, the boards of the decking were tightly abutted without spacing between them. This allows for the accumulation of water that freezes, thaws and refreezes. I have previously asked to have small holes drilled into some of these boards to allow the water to drain and was informed that doing so would endanger the integrity of the decking. This situation boggles my mind in that I believe the continued collection of water that settles on those boards for days, and then freezes, thaws, refreezes, thaws, and refreezes must also endanger the structural integrity of that bridge. The accumulation of water can be up to 2 inches deep at times. It just is not safe and has been ongoing for years. Even City Councilors have attested to these conditions at municipal committee meetings. There has to be a remedy beyond accepting the status quo and ignoring it further cannot be the answer.

Another potential slip and fall situation is the disintegration of the patio on the south side of Nicola’s Restaurant. I understand this is not technically city owned property. It appears that many pavers have slipped and some have fallen onto the bike path. The concern is not only for Nicola’s patrons who use the patio but also for walkers/bikers that may trip over the pavers on the bike path. Additionally, it just looks badly. It sends the wrong message to our guests and visitors.

Lastly, the rejuvenation of Water Street. Let me be very clear: The crew of Bazin Brothers Construction Company has been more than admirable. If the mess of this project does not scare them from ever bidding on a Keene project again, we will be fortunate. The problem with the project is NOT the construction crew; it is clearly with the design. This is a case of escalation of commitment, in that no matter how bad the design, the City of Keene is going forward. There was a time when some who recognize the faults of the project could have said, “Let’s wait. Let’s fix this before proceeding.”

- The project started 3 months behind schedule. We were told at the public hearings it would commence in June. Therefore the project has not been completed this year but hopefully will get precedence in the spring. Since the grass strips could not be planted or seeded, there is the possibility that topsoil will be eroded with spring run-off and rains.

- The issues with tractor-trailer trucks entering Victoria Street from Water have not been resolved. I believe we should have addressed those before spending all of this money on the street redesign. Mr. James Whitten of Bazin Brothers actually had a suggestion to more easily assist big trucks in making the corner to Victoria Street, which was likely better than the one we suggested, but apparently was not accepted. I urge us to listen to the folks who do that work every day when they make suggestions. The statement that we suspect the intersection is not going work and we can revisit and assess the damage in the spring, just was not good enough.
- Yes, the extension of Victoria Street is indeed in the CIP for the far distant future. Imagine the cost savings if the extension of Victoria Street had been left on the CIP so many years ago. Some issues we just keep pushing forward to the future, and this feels like another “it is good enough.”
- However, it has been confirmed that Water Street will likely degrade in about 18-24 months back to the bump/thump every 50 feet or so. The possibility exists that when the street degrades it will coincide with the CIP project to extend Victoria Street and we can spend money to fix it all over again.
- While the “complete street” concept is the accepted street design, it does not work well on every street in every town. Travel lanes on Water Street have been reduced from nearly 30 feet to 22 feet. Tractor-trailers are already having a tight fit when meeting garbage trucks and school buses on that street and we haven’t yet had to contend with huge snow piles.
- Even before the public input meetings and public hearings on this project, there was the stated issue with the storm drains west of the intersection of Grove Street/Community Way/Water Street. The elevation of these storm drains is above the street grade and therefore the water does not drain well or completely. Puddling is evident after storms and the accumulation of ice in colder temperatures threatens safety. Multiple City Councilors, and even a couple City Staff, affirmed that this would be remedied with the Water Street renovations. Bazin Brothers Construction crew were not aware of these issues, even though many City representatives assured these storm drains would be part of the project.
- The crew of Bazin Brothers (Jim Whitten and his team) and Public Works employee, Phil Kohler, became the City’s best assets as they made the disruptions of and problem solving for this project workable.

There is this perceived sense of satisficing, that “good enough” is good enough. The bridge over the Ashuelot is good enough. After all it does provide conveyance to the other side. Disintegrating infrastructure is ok; after all it is not on City property. There are multiple flaws with the Water Street redesign, but after all, the street will possibly be better than when we started so that appears to be good enough. I am truly hoping that with new leadership in the City, there will indeed be a change of attitude and “good enough” will not be.

Respectfully,


Vicky Morton



City of Keene, N.H.
Transmittal Form

December 13, 2017

TO: Mayor and Keene City Council

FROM: Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee

ITEM: 4.

SUBJECT: Gilbo East Parking Lot Improvements – Public Works Department

COUNCIL ACTION:

In City Council December 21, 2017.
More time granted.

RECOMMENDATION:

On a vote of 3-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee recommends placing the Gilbo East Parking Lot Improvements on more time with staff returning in January with more options for the Council.

BACKGROUND:

The City Engineer explained he was at this meeting to give a brief presentation and overview of the proposed Gilbo East Parking Project. This project was a part of the 2018 CIP and was originally proposed for FY19, but Council elected to move it to FY18. The project is in the design phase, surveys are complete, and meetings have been held with the Parking, Police, and Planning Departments. This included consultation with the Highway Department responsible for plowing the lot. The City Engineer showed a design of the optimized, feasible scenario for this project within the budget. Goals include improving the streetscape aesthetics along Gilbo Avenue, softening edges, defining sidewalks (raised concrete), and connecting sidewalks to those that currently exist near Lindy's Diner. This plan includes a few vegetative islands along Gilbo Avenue to improve aesthetics. A recommendation from the Planning Department was to close one of the three curb cuts to reduce the number of conflicting traffic movements; the downside to this will be the loss of nine parking spaces (101 spaces as opposed to the current 110 spaces). This project does include removal and restoration of deteriorated pavement and repair of drainage issues. Ideally the parking meters will be replaced with kiosks, but this cost was not originally included in the FY18 project costs. The kiosk cost is in the FY19 CIP budget and timing of the project should be consistent with those funds being available. If the Council does not approve the kiosks, the original parking meters will be placed back in the lot. This proposal does not include any lighting changes. The current light poles should still suffice as the parking locations will remain largely the same. In the future these lights will likely be replaced with solar fixtures.

Councilor Hooper said he likes the idea of two entrances to the parking lot instead of three. He asked if vegetation will be short enough for people to clearly see when entering and exiting the lot. The City Engineer replied the plan includes shrubs and low maintenance vegetation; the Highway Superintendent is knowledgeable about landscaping and will be consulted. What is shown on the design is only a concept sketch; the next step will be converting that into construction drawings to put out to bid.

Chair Manwaring asked if this concept drawing is the only choice for Council. The City Engineer replied this is

what staff recommends and an option developed to fit within the available funding; staff is open to guidance and requests for changes. This is the fifth iteration of concept designs to minimize parking impacts and fit within the budget.

Mayor Lane asked, when parking meters are removed, if landscaping or curbing will be installed to prevent drive through parking; he also noted the Planning Department has standards for internal landscaping in parking lots. The City Engineer replied there is no plan for raised curbing for islands of vegetation inside the lot; that option was considered as there is sufficient space in the lot but the cost of curbing would put the project over budget.

Chair Manwaring recognized Councilor Carl Jacobs who asked why parking kiosks are more expensive than replacing the parking meters. The City Engineer replied the kiosks would have to be purchased new, whereas the existing meters could be put back in place with no purchasing cost.

Chair Manwaring said she is concerned about the loss of parking spaces because that lot is always full; she asked if vegetation is necessary or if that area could be used to maintain parking spaces. The City Engineer replied the sidewalks, as shown in the concept drawing, are on the edge of the public right-of-way; part of the logic in that design was to delineate the line of public versus developable space. The vegetation could be eliminated to push the sidewalks further into the right-of-way but that would blur the lines between City and public property. The Public Works Director said the Gilbo lot is highly utilized, but the Commercial Street parking lot (only 30 feet away) is only at 40% occupancy providing sufficient space for increased demand. On-street parking is also not fully utilized. In general, this is a fairly minor loss in parking space, as the Police Department agreed. Chair Manwaring replied she does not park in the Commercial Street lot because she is uncomfortable with the kiosk technology and she might not be the only one in the City with that hesitation. The Public Works Director said he hopes phasing kiosks in over-time throughout the City will help enhance public comfort with the technology.

The City Engineer showed a second drawing, which staff does not recommend because it significantly exceeds the budget. This drawing would only eliminate five parking spaces and add more diagonal parking and a sidewalk along St. James Street, which would require \$60,000 more than is budgeted. He said staff is not insensitive to the concern about lack of parking, but after many iterations of this design, this is the most feasible.

Councilor O'Connor echoed the Mayor's question about how this design will meet Planning Board requirements for parking. The City Engineer replied this design was approved by the Planning Director and does not require Planning Board approval because the project is on existing City property. Chair Manwaring said she feels uncomfortable if there are rules about how a parking lot should be configured and the City is not abiding by those standards. The City Engineer said he cannot provide answers about the Planning Board authority and review process. He continued this is not a time sensitive decision and he suggested coming back after the New Year for a joint presentation with the Planning Director. The Public Works Director said that projects on City property usually do not go through the Planning Board process because their authority is for private property. Chair Manwaring said she understands that, but thinks the City should comply with its own requirements. Councilor Jacobs agreed with Chair Manwaring and asked if there is a design that complies with Planning Board standards. The City Engineer replied there is a plan for that. He continued this parking lot is in the Gilbo Avenue Overlay District and the first plan was for that lot to completely comply with City Code. However, the City Code was written and developed to apply to private development projects. The Public Works Director added those plans would require 10-15% green space and screening. Because this development is public parking, they have tried to maximize the number of spaces available; this is also necessary because adjacent property owners in the Central Business District do not have to provide parking. Councilor Jacobs said he is concerned about the optics. Mayor Lane agreed he does not want to create roadblocks for this project and agrees the lot needs to be redeveloped, but in the past the City has complied with their own regulations regardless if they have to go before the Planning Board. He thinks everyone would be more

comfortable if the Council has an option to decide which proposal they want to move forward with in terms of compliance; it should be a Council decision, not a staff decision.

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

On a vote of 3-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee recommends placing the Gilbo East Parking Lot Improvements on more time with staff returning in January with more options for the Council.