

City of Keene
New Hampshire

MUNICIPAL SERVICES, FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, February 21, 2018

6:00 PM

Council Chambers

Members Present:

Janis O. Manwaring, Chair
Stephen L. Hooper
Gary P. Lamoureux
Robert B. Sutherland

Staff Present:

Elizabeth A. Dragon, City Manager
Thomas Mullins, City Attorney
Kurt Blomquist, Public Works Director
Don Lussier, City Engineer

Members Not Present:

Randy L. Filiault

Kendall W. Lane, Mayor

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

1) Winchester Street Bridge Replacement Preferred Alternative

City Engineer Don Lussier introduced Robert Faulkner of CHA Design to go over the process to date. Mr. Faulkner displayed a Powerpoint presentation. He began by explaining that this project has been to study alternatives for the rehabilitation or replacement of the Winchester Street Bridge over Ash Brook Swamp. The engineering study phase has been an evaluation of alternatives, initial environmental screening, and public outreach to determine the preferred alternatives. Mr. Faulkner noted this is partially funded through New Hampshire Department Of Transportation Bridge Aid Program, and the design process goes through their Local Public Agency or LPA program. Once the engineering study has been reviewed and approved by DOT, then authorization to begin the engineering stage of the project, then environmental permitting and final design and construction can occur.

Mr. Faulkner provided some information about the bridge. It was built in 1941 and is a cast in place concrete box. It has a waterway width of about 19 feet with height of 11 feet an overall length of about 48 feet. The bridge supports two 12 foot lanes of traffic. In the original design there were parapet curves and a railing that have now disintegrated and been replaced with a temporary concrete barrier. There is an existing sewer main that passes through the structure and partially blocks the waterway opening. There is also

telephone conduit mounted to the side of the bridge. The actual structure itself – the sides and bottom - are in good condition, but the deck is severely deteriorated that resulted in the DOT red listing.

Mr. Faulkner stated that Route 10/Winchester Street is considered a gateway corridor by the City's Complete Street guidelines. It has about 21,000 vehicles a day, and it serves as a major north/south truck route for the Monadnock Region.

He explained the design criteria for the bridge. The design speed through that corridor is 30 to 35 miles per hour, and the structure needs to carry legal highway loads. Lane widths between 10 and 12 feet, with sidewalks and shoulders for walkers and bicycle traffic to comply with the City's Complete Streets guidelines. Maintaining the bottom elevation of the deck, will not create a hump on Winchester Street as you approach the bridge. An evaluation of the hydraulic capacity was completed to mitigate flooding that occurs through that corridor. Because of the volume of traffic on this bridge, two-way traffic during construction will be necessary minimize overall impacts. Mr. Faulkner continued the Winchester Street corridor from the Route 101 roundabout to the Swanzey town line is in the City's CIP for a more comprehensive rehabilitation and improvements so they wanted this particular project to blend in well with those future improvements.

Don Lussier added that a few months ago the City asked the FOP Committee for a small change order on this contract in order to ensure planning for the future improvements were included for this corridor. He continued the City also approached the DOT to expand the scope of the study to look outside the limits of the bridge. The exciting news is the DOT has now accepted the Winchester Street Corridor project into their 10 year plan. It is in the program for 2025 construction.

Mr. Faulkner continued there was a local concerns listening meeting held March 2016 to explain the project's goals, provided some initial concepts, and answered questions in person and through mail in cards that could be submitted after the meeting. The biggest concern of participants was the flooding. He added there was also concern regarding the placement of the Route 9 culvert by the Monadnock Shopping Plaza. When replaced back in the early 2000's, increased the flows downstream exacerbating the flooding down at the Route 10 culvert. Mr. Lussier added he was surprised that the majority of the comments made by public had to do with mitigating the flooding versus any inconvenience the project might cause in travelling on the road or an impact the businesses in the area. In response to those concerns, the City will ask DOT and the Council to look at a little more detailed analysis of the hydraulic aspects.

Relative to flooding, Mr. Faulkner displayed a FEMA flood insurance rate map study showing that this entire area along Winchester Street is inundated during a 100 year storm event. He continued they did a hydraulic analysis to look at the effects of the improvements upstream at the Route 9 culvert had impacted downstream. What that study showed was that the flood elevations are controlled by the Ashuelot River which the Ash Brook flows into. So when the Ashuelot River comes up that floodplain spreads out and dictates the flood elevations through that area. With the Route 9 culvert

replacement further upstream there is really minimal impact associated with the 10 and 100 year storm. They also looked at the effects of that existing sewer main going through the bridge, and the impact that had on the hydraulic capacity of the bridge. What was discovered is that if debris hangs up on that sewer main during a storm event, it can actually increase the water surface elevation by as much as a foot. They also looked at what replacement structures could do and in that analysis they realized a one and a half foot decrease in water surface elevation between the 10 and 100 year storm. This assumes the existing sewer main will be relocated.

As far as future improvements to Winchester Street, Mr. Faulkner noted that in the FY 22 CIP there is a project for engineering from the roundabout at Route 101 down to the Swanzey town line, in FY24 they would secure the necessary right of way, with construction in FY 25. The goal of that project is really to improve the capacity through corridor along with the safety and mobility of vehicular and pedestrian/bicycle traffic. This is a Complete Streets gateway corridor designation.

Mr. Faulkner stated the first option they looked at was rehabilitation of the existing bridge, consisting of removing and widening the deck as well as demolishing the old wing hall adding new wing walls downstream to provide two 10 to 12 foot lanes and a dual use center turn lane which actually exists just north of the bridge that would be 11 feet wide. With this option there could be five foot sidewalks, with a minimal, 2 and a half foot width shoulders. This would not meet the Complete Streets criteria for a gateway corridor. This option would carry legal highway loads, and there would be the 10 to 12 foot lane width. However, with the high truck volume on this road the narrow lanes they would be able to accommodate would be tight for tractor trailers. There would be no improvement in the hydraulic capacity. Two-way traffic during construction with the existing bridge would be possible. This option does minimize impacts to the greatest extent practical. It does not fully address or take into account future Winchester Street improvements.

Mr. Faulkner moved on to replacement options. He went on to describe replacement option 1, consisting of a precast concrete arch that would go from the 19 foot existing clear span to a 20 foot clear span. This option would increase the waterway opening and relocate the sewer line. This will realize a water surface elevation reduction of one and a half feet to a half a foot in a 100 year storm. Two-way traffic would be maintained during construction. This alternative will carry highway loads and include two 12 foot plus travel lanes, a dual use center turn lane, five foot shoulders, a five foot sidewalk and new railing on either side of the bridge. With this alternative, we are widening upstream and downstream so there will be right of way impacts. This option is consistent with future Winchester Street improvements, and is compliant with Complete Streets guidelines.

Mr. Faulkner continued that replacement option 2 consists of a precast concrete arch much like what was proposed by DOT in the late 1990's. The DOT at that time had suggested a five lane road, with two lanes of traffic in each direction, a center turn lane and five foot shoulders as well as a five foot sidewalk on each side. This option would

have significant impacts on the right of way and commercial properties in the area, and is not the recommended option.

Mr. Faulkner went over alternatives matrix showing which criteria each option would meet. He went on to discuss the preliminary cost estimates for the various options: rehabilitation would come in at a cost of \$1.5 million, replacement option 1 would be \$2.5 million, and replacement option 2 would be \$2.675 million costs. Life cycle costs for each option were considered.

Mr. Faulkner stated the preferred alternative they are recommending is replacement option 1. He reiterated that this option would have the three lanes, five foot shoulders, and sidewalks along with full height rails on each side and dual use turning lane. The interim condition (Until Winchester Street reconstruction is completed) would have grass shoulders. Utilities, the sewer line and telephone conduits would be relocated. He showed a view of this option from above.

Mr. Faulkner stated that, due to the narrowness of the current bridge temporary bridge during construction would be built to accommodate tractor trailers, emergency vehicles and pedestrians. It would accommodate two lanes of traffic, with one lane on the existing bridge and one lane on the temporary bridge. He went on to provide a project schedule and plans for temporary traffic flow considerations during the construction process. He noted that after a preferred alternative is chosen by the Council, the engineering study is complete with the steps will be to obtain DOT approval and allow construction to begin in the 2019 construction season.

Councilor Sutherland asked if there would be any issues with flow when the sewer line is relocated. Mr. Faulkner stated they will be installing a syphon that is "U" shaped. Mr. Lussier added that syphons are not ideal because they require more maintenance, and they are used judiciously when needed. At listening sessions residents and business owners stated that debris was hanging up on the existing sewer line causing flooding issues making it necessary to find an alternative.

Councilor Sutherland stated timing is a concern because there is an overdue project for reconstruction of the Main Street Bridge, and he surmised a significant amount of that traffic would utilize this route. Mr. Lussier agreed and commented that is the reason they are not under construction at the same time.

Councilor Lamoureux stated he understands why they are not adding sidewalks in the interim because there is no sidewalk along the corridor, and asked if it was a legal issue in terms of safety. Mr. Faulkner agreed and said there is also a winter maintenance issue.

Councilor Hooper asked if the grass will be lawn or turf, wondering about the routine maintenance needed. Mr. Lussier stated it will be like other grass belts in City, and the City will likely ask adjacent property owners to assist with maintenance. Councilor Lamoureux suggested installing turf (fake grass) to avoid having to maintain the area. Mr. Lussier agreed this was a good idea.

Chair Manwaring made note that there are no sharrows or bike lanes and expressed a safety concern for bicyclists. Mr. Lussier stated there are five foot wide shoulders that will allow for bikes. This shoulder area is in addition to the travel lanes and sidewalk. Bike lanes (5 foot shoulders on both sides) will be included both in the interim and final project.

Councilor Sutherland asked how this project will be funded. Mr. Lussier said the project will be funded at 80% by the State through the State Aid Bridge Fund, and the city will fund 20%. We will also be responsible for ongoing maintenance because this is located in the urban compact.

As there were no further comments, Chair Manwaring called for a motion.

Councilor Sutherland made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Lamoureux. Move to recommend that "Option 1", as presented, be selected as the preferred alternative for the rehabilitation of the Winchester Street Bridge over Ash Swamp Brook, and that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to implement this proposed alternative.

Mr. Lussier asked that the motion also include wording clarifying the Committee was recommending replacement option 1, so it is clear they are not choosing the rehabilitation option.

Councilor Sutherland made the following motion at the request of staff to clarify the wording. The motion was seconded by Councilor Lamoureux.

On a vote of 4-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee moved to amend the motion to add the word "Replacement" so the chosen option would be referred to as 'Replacement Option 1'.

Back to the main motion on the floor:

On a vote of 4-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee recommends that "Replacement Option 1", as presented, be selected as the preferred alternative for the rehabilitation of the Winchester Street Bridge over Ash Swamp Brook, and that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to implement this proposed alternative.

Chair Manwaring asked if the Conservation Commission be involved in this project. Mr. Lussier answered yes, because there will be a significant wetland impacts.

2) **Brett Amy Thelen - Request to Temporarily Close a Portion of North Lincoln Street, and**

3) Portion of North Lincoln Street Closure During Amphibian Migration – Public Works Department

Brett Amy Thelen stated she is the Science Director for the Harris Center for Conservation Education. She stated she is here to provide some further information on her request to close a portion of North Lincoln Street over several evenings for amphibian crossings. With the aid of a Powerpoint presentation Ms. Thelen explained that for the last eleven years she has been organizing salamander crossing brigades focused on reducing road kill during the spring amphibian migration and also providing a hands on environment education experience. She explained that many do not know there is a spring amphibian migration when thousands of salamanders and frogs leave wooded areas where they spend the winter to go to vernal pools and wetlands to breed. Many times they are returning to the wetland where they were born. Unfortunately, many now have to cross roads to make this journey to their breeding pools. She continued this migration is highly weather dependent requiring three things to happen: thawed ground, minimal snow cover and warm temperatures at night (over 40 degrees Fahrenheit), as well as fog or rain.

Ms. Thelen continued there are four species in particular that—migrate across the road: the spotted salamander, wood frogs, spring peepers, and the Jefferson/blue-spotted salamander (which is rare and considered a species of greatest conservation need). Amphibians are important to our wooded areas and are important prey for other animals. They are an integral part of the food web with many predators relying on them as a food source. They also eat an incredible amount of insects. There is new research that they may also help with carbon sequestration in our forests helping to combat climate change.

Ms. Thelen continued there is a growing body of knowledge that shows that amphibians are the hardest hit animals when it comes to road kill mortality. People don't always notice amphibians because they are active at night, are small and soft bodied so by morning they are usually gone. She went on to reference a study of a two mile stretch of road in Canada where over the course of a four year period over 30,000 amphibians were killed. She continued that location matters, with roads near water having the highest impact. Traffic volume is another consideration. A dirt road with two houses on it would not have a high impact on the amphibian population, whereas a highway would have lost its amphibian population long ago. For this reason, the lower and mid-range traffic roads are the ones that are targeted. There are crossing brigades that move the animals across the road faster than they can get across themselves. Some other communities are incorporating amphibian tunnels, which are very effective but expensive. Also highly effective, but less costly is the instituting temporary closures and detours around specified roadway areas on migration nights.

Mr. Thelen continued what they are proposing is that the City allow for road closures to allow the crossings to occur on certain nights this spring, the dates of which would be dictated by weather conditions. Over 900 plus volunteers have been trained. Lots of families volunteer, and return from year to year. It truly is a transformative and powerful

educational experience. Safety is paramount for families with children. At all trainings safety is always emphasized: flashlights, reflective gear, etc. are strongly encouraged.

Ms. Thelen continued that 35,000 live amphibians have been moved off roads throughout the Monadnock region. In Keene this occurs at Jordan Road, Eastern Avenue, and North Lincoln Street. Tonight we are discussing closure of North Lincoln Street where amphibians are moving off the forested hillside of Robin Hood Park into the wetland that is part of Woodland Cemetery. She noted that since 2006, the crossing brigade volunteers have moved 12,211 off the roads in Keene and counted more than 3,000 dead. These are under-representations relative to the number that actually get hit on a given night. Most volunteers come out at sundown and leave before midnight, but the migration goes on all night. On a really busy night there will be more than 25 volunteers and they will move about 1,000 amphibians across the road in about 4 hours. Temporary road closures would protect the amphibians while giving the families a way to be part of the migration in a safe environment. The road would be closed just north of the last house on North Lincoln Street at Beaver Street. No one lives on the closed stretch of the road. She went on to provide their plan for notifying the City staff about the road closures needed during optimal weather conditions. The staff would carry out support activities during business hours to avoid overtime charges. This would occur on three to six nights in a six week span from mid-March to late April.

Councilor Sutherland asked why there are no migrations on the west side of Keene. Ms. Thelen stated there might be, but on the east side of Keene these migrations have been identified. The one area she is aware of in west Keene is on Base Hill Road, but it is too unsafe to place volunteers there.

Councilor Hooper asked about the health of the ecosystem in these areas impacting the migration. Ms. Thelen stated she was not sure. There is still a good population there but she can't speak to the health of the ecosystem.

Assistant Public Works Director Duncan Watson stated that the Public Works Department, Engineering and the Police Department have consulted on this request and determined this could be accommodated to help with the amphibian crossing while maintaining safety. He is recommending this be done in consultation with staff as to when closures will happen. There will be variable message boards and social media posts put out to inform the public and keep the inconvenience to a minimum. Staff is supportive of this detour program and ready to assist if the Council chooses to allow this to happen.

Margaret Kasschau of 40 North Lincoln Street stated her home is very close to where the detours would go. She stated she thinks this is a fabulous idea and many of her neighbors that she inquired with agree.

Jan Lambert of Charlestown, New Hampshire stated she is the Editor and Chief Writer for *The Valley Green Journal*. She noted Keene in general has really impressed her because this is the only community she could find in the area that has done things like

include rain gardens in new construction projects and municipal facilities. She has done the crossing brigade as a volunteer in Westmoreland. She will be writing about salamander migration and would be excited to include Keene in her story. Given that this is almost the season when salamanders will be migrating she hoped the Council will support this effort.

Mary Kate Sheridan of 60 Martin Street said she has been doing the crossing brigades since the beginning. . Often she has been to North Lincoln Street, and no matter what families do show up for this. Safety is important. They are not always prepared in terms of safety and allowing the road closure is important to allow them to participate.

Beth Caldwell of 27 Langley Road stated in answer to Councilor Sutherland's prior question, there are a lot of salamanders in west Keene particularly on the Horatio Colony land, but most of the activity does not have to cross the road due to the location of the wetland area. She went on to say there was a close call on Base Hill Road once years ago when this program was less organized and for that reason they have chosen not to do it in that location. She noted her children were involved with this in the 1990's and 2000's, and it was an amazing experience. She noted there is a concentration of vernal pools in Robin Hood Park area, and for that reason she would like to see a crossing that includes road closure on Jordan Road in the future.

Ms. Thelen added that there are volunteers on Jordan Road but they decided the North Lincoln site was the easiest one to start with in terms of trying a road closure because it is an unpopulated area.

Nora McIntire of 26 Barker Street explained her family has been crossing these amphibians for some time and it has meant a lot to them. It has been a great experience for her entire family. She urged support of the road closure request.

Jess Bown of 67 Woodburn Street also thinks Eastern Avenue warrants closure in the future. She has been doing this a long time, and it is such an important program. This migration was happening long before humans were even in this area and it is magical to watch and be connected to nature in this way.

Denise Burchsted of 93 Grant Street said she is here to echo that the neighborhood is supportive of this request. Grant Street runs parallel to North Lincoln Street. She appreciates the wetland they have in their neighborhood and is very much in support of this minor inconvenience that will continue to support that system.

Kristen Riley from Peterborough, New Hampshire stated she and her family has been part of the crossing brigade in Peterborough and is asking Council to support this request.

As there were no further questions or comments, Chair Manwaring requested a motion.

Councilor Lamoureux noted there was a staff recommendation to add some language allowing staff to cancel the closure and reopen the road if needed. Mr. Watson stated this came from City emergency services to address any concerns with public safety.

Councilor Hooper made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Lamoureux: move to recommend that the City Council authorize the closing of a portion of North Lincoln Street for several evenings that are coordinated with City staff between March and April when conditions are favorable for amphibian migration. City staff may cancel the closure and/or reopen the road at any time, if deemed necessary for the convenience and safety of the public.

Councilor Lamoureux moved to amend the Committee recommendation to include the year so it was clear this pertains to March and April of 2018. The motion was seconded by Councilor Sutherland.

On a vote of 4-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee recommends that “2018” be added to the motion after the words “March and April”.

Back to the main motion on the floor:

On vote of 4-0 the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee recommends that the City Council authorize the closing of a portion of North Lincoln Street for several evenings that are coordinated with City staff between March and April, 2018 when conditions are favorable for amphibian migration. City staff may cancel the closure and/or reopen the road at any time, if deemed necessary for the convenience and safety of the public.

4) Councilor Jacobs – Process for Consideration Proposed Art Projects

Councilor Carl Jacobs stated he has been involved with Arts Alive and with Friends of Public Art, a group under the fiscal sponsorship of Arts Alive. They have done some public art projects in Keene. He noted that each time a project was done, how to go about it has to be reinvented. They are seeking a process for acceptance and display of public art to provide clarity and continuity. There could be a lot of different parts of the city involved depending on the location where the art would be installed and what the project is. This is an effort to come up with a way to specify how we will do these things. Questions about the art would need to be answered, such as: would it be a gift to the City or would it be on loan for period of time. If the City took ownership of a piece of art, will there be maintenance issues, costs for infrastructure, storage, insurance, utility needs, etc. This proposal comes from an ad hoc group that has been working on this.

Councilor Jacobs stated depending on where the art is proposed to be displayed, some locations are under the purview of the Parks and Recreation Department and some are under Public Works. Many of these are related to facilities so it makes sense to at least initially funnel things through the Parks and Recreation Department. They are not

proposing a rigid decision tree because this needs to be a flexible process. If many of these issues are addressed in the first three sections of the policy, the City can then make an informed decision as to whether to accept a piece of public art or approve the installation.

Parks, Recreation and Facilities Director, Andy Bohannon thanked Councilor Jacobs for bringing this forward. He continued he has been part of many projects and worked with The Friends of Public Art since their creation in trying to help them foster different ways to support public art. When this larger group came together they were able to formulate a process and that is what is outlined here. The Parks and Recreation Department would like to formalize this process a bit more, by looking at what other communities are doing. Often times when he is able to attend larger conferences, he seeks out public art sessions. He strongly believes there is art in recreation as evidenced by the many murals that have been done around town. Mr. Bohannon noted there are many opportunities we would like to pursue, such as the Emerald Street project that will hopefully come next year and hopefully create some economic impact for the community. It will have national recognition, so there are a lot of opportunities that we could seek. This policy is a part of moving that process forward.

Councilor Lamoureux thanked Councilor Jacobs for doing this. He noted this is a great starting point for getting the conversation going on setting these policies. We have been talking about public art in the community for a long time, and public art adds value to the community. He added he does have a couple concerns relative to liability, insurance and first amendment rights as to what type of art might be proposed. He feels we need to hone in on that a bit.

Public Works Director Kurt Blomquist stated we are talking about multiple spaces and there are opportunities here. He stated that about 4 years ago he discovered that St. Paul, Minnesota has an artist in residence and they do maintenance art working with City Departments in that regard. He went on to mention several art installations in Keene including the murals at the Recreation Department and the Community Room. Mr. Blomquist ended by thanking Councilor Jacobs for bringing this forward.

Councilor Sutherland stated last year on Planning, Licenses, and Development Committee there was a request for a piece of art to be placed on Railroad Square. At that time he brought up that we need a policy for these types of installations to apply in the future. He went on to ask how they envision this plan to work. Will there be rotation of art pieces or seasonality to displays. The obvious concerns about safety and insurance also need to be addressed. This is a great start and there are a lot of issues with this that need to be worked through. One of his concerns is if we are gifted artwork, what will be done with it in terms of ongoing storage. Councilor Jacobs stated there has been a lot of discussion about that and those issues were raised during the drafting of this proposal. If there are strings that the owner of the art piece would want to include, the City would need to consider those things and decide if they are willing to take that on.

As a follow up, Councilor Sutherland asked if this would be treated differently than the current policy on acceptance of gifts. The City Manager stated that is something the Council will need to consider. The acceptance process still needs to be outlined and this gets people thinking about it. This isn't necessarily a policy but an internal process that would be conducted in the event an artist comes forward. After the information is gathered then the policy comes into play.

Chair Manwaring noted the policy could stipulate suggested locations and set parameters, etc.

Councilor Lamoureux said at this point it seems that staff needs to put together a proposal using Councilor Jacobs' work as a starting point. He asked if that is the intent. The City Manager answered that is what they would like to see happen.

Councilor Jacobs stated he wants to see this moving forward and that is the reason he put this letter in to Council. We may not all agree on what "art" is obviously and this will require further discussion. Chair Manwaring asked if this is focused on City property. Councilor Jacobs answered yes. He added this could be an opportunity to provide for art as we do city projects. Winchester Street in the park area as the project to reconstruct is done was given as an example from by Mr. Lussier.

Councilor Sutherland asked about commissioning art for various installations. Mr. Bohannon stated this has been done noting the murals at the Blastos room and the Recreation Center as examples. We have a lot of examples from around the country we can pull from. This is an important thing to move forward, particularly given the Monadock region and what the arts means to us. He added public art was mentioned the CMP as well.

Steve Hooper thanked Carl and Andy Bohannon for moving this initiative forward.

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

On a vote of 4-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee recommends this matter be referred to City staff to create proposal to bring forward the first cycle in April for consideration by the Council.

The meeting adjourned at 7:35 PM.

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