

City of Keene
New Hampshire

MUNICIPAL SERVICES, FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE
COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, April 11, 2018

6:00 PM

Council Chambers

Members Present:

Janis O. Manwaring, Chair
Randy L. Filiault, Vice-Chair
Stephen L. Hooper
Gary P. Lamoureux
Robert Sutherland

Staff Present:

Thomas Mullins, City Attorney
Kürt Blomquist, Public Works Director
Andy Bohannon, Director
Elizabeth A. Fox, Assistant City
Manager/Human Resources Director Human
Resources

Members Not Present:

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

1) **Skate Park Update-Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department**

Chair Manwaring welcomed Andy Bohannon, Parks, Recreation and Facilities Director. Mr. Bohannon gave the Committee a brief history of the skate park located on Gilbo Avenue. In 1996, the skate park was built through the efforts of a group of young men within the community who sought to create a skate park due to the lack of space available to skate. The group collaboratively came together to raise enough funds to build a skate park within the downtown footprint. Mr. Bohannon commended the group on their hard work and effort.

Mr. Bohannon reported this group visited a well-known skate park in Pennsylvania called Woodward. After the visit the group decided to mimic that park here in Keene. Over the years Mr. Bohannon explained they have removed some items in the park due to wear and tear. He said part of the problem with the skate park is the design, not the flow or transitions of the design. Mr. Bohannon explained that a wooden frame in New England with steel plates deteriorates over time and has become a maintenance challenge. He reported Primex inspected the park once in 2010 and again in 2014. In 2017, the City hired SCT Engineering to evaluate the structural integrity of the ramps and platforms. After the evaluation report was received, Mr. Bohannon said initial repairs were made.

In addition, the results from the evaluation noted that the structure is good and well built. The outer surfaces were noted as a challenge.

Mr. Bohannon said the park was originally designed for the use of skate boarders and rollerblades. Over the years BMX bikes have become very popular which has led to the use of bikes. Mr. Bohannon noted the amount of force from a bike is completely different from the force and use of a skateboard. The weight that comes down on the platform causes the boards to deteriorate.

Mr. Bohannon reported that in 2015 a group of young professionals came up with a design for the park that was put in the CIP with a price tag that was \$773,000. He noted the full price never went into the CIP and only went in as \$500,000 because the extra cement bowl was never phased into the cost. A short time later that group of young professionals went in different directions and were not as invested in the skate park. The City decided to keep this figure for the skate park in the CIP last year as the Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department decided to conduct a structural study. During this time Kathy Burke came to Mr. Bohannon stating that her son was a big advocate for the park and had a group of people that want a new park and could do some fundraising. Mr. Bohannon reported he met with this group in the fall during the time when the CIP was due. He noted there was not enough information about the new skate park at that time to update the CIP. In addition, Mr. Bohannon stated it was the desire of this group to keep the park downtown and had a goal to raise \$300,000. He noted this new group chose the downtown location due to the proximity to downtown businesses.

Mr. Bohannon explained that his department has gone back to Spohn Ranch to create a mock design for the 9,200 square foot of City land. Spohn Ranch recommended the group move forward with their fundraising efforts and once the funding has been established, they will create a design mockup.

At this time, the group has begun to assemble a fundraising team to begin raising the \$300,000. In addition, they are working with Pathways for Keene, as their fiscal agent.

Councilor Filiault asked what the current condition of the park is and if it was plausible to keep it maintained for another year. Mr. Bohannon replied that the steel is the issue and to get another year out of the park will take some funding. He explained that the last time they had to replace the steel it had to be customized and the park would need to be shut down for a week in order for someone to come in and weld the steel. Mr. Bohannon said he could find out the cost to have the park updated and report back to the Committee.

Councilor Filiault said it is important to weigh all the options available in order to make a good decision. In addition, he also wanted to have something open for the kids to use. Councilor Filiault recommended Mr. Bohannon come back before the Committee with all of the available options, the recommendation from the City and what the group would be doing for fundraising.

Councilor Sutherland asked Mr. Bohannon to explain why a group interested in providing an area for recreation located on City property is asked by the City to provide their own funding. He stated that he looked at what the City was doing by engaging the upcoming Senior Center that is an independent organization. In addition, he said the City is planning on spending an estimated 1.6 million of tax payer money and in the case of the skate park this group has to go fundraise on their own. Councilor Sutherland asked Mr. Bohannon to explain the difference between these two groups. He reiterated that one location is on City land and the other is going to be given funds to expand their facility, parking and allowed to house their origination within the City. Mr. Bohannon replied this particular park came about the same time as Ashuelot Park and these two are models of how advocates for these types of amenities must fundraise. He explained this was the messaging he has received over the years and that these models have worked in the past. Mr. Bohannon said if the City Council does not want to continue with these types of models, there should be a conversation with the City Manager. Councilor Sutherland said there seems to be conflict of engagement rules for different groups and there should be standards.

Councilor Sutherland stated that he submitted materials on a number of skate parks that feature pre-manufactured parks and asked if that had been assessed. Mr. Bohannon replied they have looked into Skatelite as well as a couple of other companies that feature the same material and asked for quotes to replace one ramp. The quotes received to fabricate one ramp were in the range of \$60,000. He noted this was only for one piece and were talking similar money to replacing the entire park.

Councilor Lamoureux referred to Councilor Sutherland's comment about the fundraising models and explained the City Council votes on how to move forward and gives direction to City staff on how to move forward with those types of models.

In addition, Councilor Lamoureux asked if there was a decision made that the skate park was going to Wheelock Park or if it was a process that this was a good location. Mr. Bohannon replied few years ago there were two things leading a discussion regarding Wheelock Park. One was the dog park and the other was the skate park. He said there was a concept plan drawn out for Wheelock Park and in working with the contractor the question was if these various elements could be fit into Wheelock Park. He said the answer was, "Yes" because there is enough space. Mr. Bohannon said there was no hard decision to say the skate park was going to Wheelock Park and that it was more to acknowledge there was space available and what it would look like.

Councilor Hooper stated that he supported the project whole heartedly and that it is great the skate park was targeted for downtown in order to create more energy and action. He asked if the park would be safe for the upcoming summer season and if the City was comfortable with the park as it stands at this point. Mr. Bohannon replied that he would have all of these options available to the Committee at the next meeting cycle.

Councilor Sutherland referred to a company called Rye Airfield located on the seacoast that is a profit making skate park and bike park. He wondered if charging fees or

developing another source of income from the skate park would help offset the maintenance fees. Councilor Sutherland said that he was thinking about a business model to help build, maintain, improve and serve the community.

Chair Manwaring recognized Kathy Burke, 29 Grant Street. Ms. Burke said she has lived in Keene for 6 years and is the mother of a son who is an avid BMX bike rider. She became involved with this project because she watched her son become confident and athletic due to the sport and wanted to help support her son, who is spearheading the campaign. Ms. Burke noted the park is in bad condition and was concerned that her son was going to injure himself due to deteriorating conditions. The idea to help get a new skate park came forward and they decided to contact Mr. Bohannon. Ms. Burke explained to Mr. Bohannon this is a great park and the kids want to keep the park downtown due to the access to the bike path, restaurants and retail shops.

Ms. Burke referred to Councilor Sutherland's comment in regard to charging a fee to use the skate park. She said most cities that run their municipal parks are free and noted that parks of this nature bring economic benefits to the community. In addition, she said skateboarders and BMX riders visit parks all over the country and would come to Keene. Chair Manwaring asked how one would donate to the park. Ms. Burke replied they are in process of creating all of this information and wanted to have the City's approval before launching the campaign.

Chair Manwaring welcomed public comment. With no comment, Chair Manwaring asked if there was a motion.

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

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee recommends the Director of Parks, Recreation and Facilities return at the next meeting cycle with an update on the condition of the existing skate park.

The Future of the Wheelock Park Campground-Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department

Chair Manwaring recognized the Director of Parks, Recreation and Facilities, Andy Bohannon. He informed the Committee that the Wheelock Park Campground was one of the original recreational facilities of the City. He said it was important to understand why the campground was created. In 1959, the Monadnock Chapter 66, NAFCA (North American Family Campers Association) built a small campground in the back of Wheelock Park. The purpose of the chapter was to open and close the campground and make improvements as the summers passed. The local chapter is still in existence but is no longer involved in the campground. Over the years no additional improvements have been made to the campground.

As the park grew, world championship softball tournaments, horseshoe tournaments and dog shows were held at the park during the 1980's. This model worked for the campground at that time. The dog show has gone away and the softball tournaments have lessened. The staple at the park is the New England Horseshoe Tournament held on Labor Day weekend. During that time, over 300 pitchers come in from around the region. The campground is full and generates an income of \$6,000-\$7,000 off that one weekend. In addition, softball tournaments and two other horseshoe tournaments are still held at the park.

Today, Mr. Bohannon said camping is now an extension of one's home in order to make camping a comfortable experience. The RV's passing through, frustrated with the services available, leave the campground or many times only stay for a day or two. He said the conversation about the campground started a couple years ago when the campground manager retired after 15 years of service. Mr. Bohannon described how difficult it was to find someone willing to fill the position when the position requires 24 hours a day, 7 days a week attention. The position entails check in for campers, monitoring payments and the daily duties of running a campground. Last year the campground transitioned away from the cash model and only accepted credit cards. The temporary manager was able to track who is using the campground and took good notes. If there was an incident it was documented and if the police were called it was documented. Mr. Bohannon said the campground manager position has been advertised but the right person has just not come along.

Mr. Bohannon reiterated the infrastructure that is currently in place does not attract today's RV's and noted how this has never been addressed. He stated there was a need to put together a CIP that addresses the options. Mr. Bohannon said he does not want to close in total because the campground is important for tournaments and is a benefit. In addition, demographics have completely changed of who uses the campgrounds. The City of Keene and the Town of Ashland are the only two municipalities in NH that continue to operate a campground.

Mr. Bohannon stated the considerations for providing a campground should be as follows:

- a.** Continue to operate the campground as is.
- b.** Create an infrastructure plan and bring forward to the next CIP cycle and operate the campground for the 2018 season.
- c.** Close the campground for public use for the 2018 season, but allow tournaments to use the campground for their specific purpose.
- d.** Create an infrastructure plan to bring forward during next CIP cycle, close the campground for public use during the 2018 season, but allow tournaments to use the campground for the specific purposes.
- e.** Close the campground and consider it for repurposing the portion of the park.

Chair Manwaring asked if Mr. Bohannon had a basic cost level that it would take to fix the campground and make it attractive. Mr. Bohannon stated last year prior to opening

an internal committee put together a project plan where the status of the campground was examined. The committee put together an RFP to do just that and to make an estimate on electric for each site. He said the RFP was sent to firms and they received a wide range to prices from \$15,000 to \$30,000. Mr. Bohannon said another option would be to bring someone in to evaluate the park in order to provide him with the right specifications for a cost estimate.

Councilor Filiault asked if there have been any problems with illegal campers during the warmer months. Mr. Bohannon replied on occasion people do try to camp prior to opening. City staff does inspect the campground as part of park operations and work has been done with the trees to help with visibility. In addition, Eversource in cleaning the power lines have worked on replanting and introduced a different feel to the park.

Councilor Sutherland said it seemed there are two questions and the first is if the City should continue operating the campground and the estimated cost to continue operations. He asked if the cost would include the cost of the campground manager. Mr. Bohannon replied in the affirmative and the stipend for the campground manager is \$7,600 for the summer.

Chair Manwaring welcomed public comment.

Councilor Hansel asked if there was a reason why the campground caters to RV camping as opposed to tents. He noted tents use less utilities compared to RV's. Mr. Bohannon replied that tent camping reaches a different demographic and often times there have been various issues. He noted the use of tents tend to be used as transitional living as opposed to being used for a vacation or used during a tournament. The campground does have a rule in the campground that allows a stay up to three weeks and then the camper must leave for two weeks. The first week is paid up front, and second and third are based on the recommendation of the campground manager or the Director of Parks, Recreation and Facilities. If there are any problems the campers are asked to leave.

Councilor Hansel asked if the tents were being used by families in Keene for vacation or people in transition. Mr. Bohannon replied the tents were not being used by families in Keene and more for transitional living.

Chair Manwaring suggested placing this on more time and would like to have a tour of the campground. The Committee agreed to meet at the campground on Wednesday, April 25, 2018, at 5:15 PM. Chair Manwaring welcomed all City Councilors because this is not a decision to make quickly due to the campground being a fixture of Keene for quite some time.

The City Attorney stated Mr. Bohannon would need to notify the City Clerk's Office in order to have the tour publicly noticed.

With no further public comment, Chair Manwaring requested a motion.

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

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee recommends The Future of the Wheelock Park Campground be put on more time for the next meeting cycle.

3.) Update-Public Arts Guidelines and Procedure-Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department

Chair Manwaring recognized the Director of Parks, Recreation and Facilities, Andy Bohannon. Mr. Bohannon said on February 21, 2018, Councilor Carl Jacobs brought forward a conversation to the Committee regarding a policy and guidelines for individuals who want to gift public art to the City. He reported he met with Councilor Jacobs and Kurt Blomquist a few times and reviewed other communities that had arts ordinances, policies, or guidelines and tried to craft a starting point and determine how to proceed. Mr. Bohannon said there is still a broader conversation needed in order to create a set of guidelines and policies that will connect an Administrative Directive to a process that would be adopted by City Council through a Resolution. The next step is to engage the art community.

Councilor Carl Jacobs, said this is an exciting process that began from the arts community wanting to bring forth art to the world and the City of Keene. He shared a quote from a Finnish composer, "Art is the signature of civilization". Councilor Jacobs said there are three comments regarding the draft he provided; purpose, opportunities and the procedure. He referred to the draft, stating that what they are dealing with in the document was public property, and art that is visible to the public on a private building. Councilor Jacobs said the proposal for public art will be submitted to the City Council for review and acceptance. He explained that the Parks, Recreation, Cemetery and Facilities Director will be the project manager for all public art proposals for locations that involve City Parks, City owned buildings, and any property under the oversight of the Department. The Public Works Director will be the project manager for all public art proposals for locations within public right-of-ways, intersections, public parking surface lots and facilities, as well as any property under the oversight of the Department. Councilor Jacobs said there would be consultation before a proposal is submitted but wanted to have some understanding of which department would be logical to oversee the art project.

Councilor Jacobs said the last part of the document lists some of the issues that need to be addressed as follows:

- Does the project create a public safety or security concern?
- Does the art require maintenance?
- How is the project funded?
- Is the art donated or is the City expected to pay for the art?

- General Property & Liability in the amounts of \$1,000,000.00 listing the City as an additional insured?
- Is the art owned by the City or loaned to the City?

Councilor Jacobs said that he was looking forward to meeting on April 16, 2017 at 4:30 PM at Hannah Grimes with the arts community. He said that he welcomed any feedback from the Councilors and hoped to have a final draft of the policy and guidelines before the Council in May.

The Public Works Director, Kürt Blomquist said this is a start and a lot of the research they have been doing talks about when getting into a public art program there needs to be a thought of a separate commission to manage the program. He referenced all of the questions that had to be answered in the draft. Mr. Blomquist noted answering these questions would take some time.

Councilor Sutherland stated this program was great and the group was addressing a lot of the complexities of these issues. He said the group was going about the project the right way by looking at other cities. Councilor Sutherland said the one thing that stands out to him is if someone is looking to display their art temporarily or permanently. He was concerned about art being displayed permanently and suggested the group think about artists applying for a term for which an end would come and then reapply for a renewal. Councilor Sutherland explained how this would give the City more flexibility to consider other artists that would like to display their art in that same location. Mr. Bohannon and Councilor Jacobs liked the idea of having a set term.

Mr. Bohannon referred to the pinwheel that will be erected on May 9, 2018 and dedicated on May 12, 2018 that will be displayed for one year. He explained after the year term there will be a conversation to determine if the pinwheel is something the City would like to keep.

Councilor Lamoureux stated that he likes the idea of having a set term because other artists could lose interest and it would help the project years from now by allowing other artists to donate their art. In addition, he stated that he would like to see the art constantly changing because having the same art would become a part of the landscape.

Councilor Lamoureux thanked Councilor Jacob's for bringing this forward and was glad to see the momentum and excitement from the City staff.

Councilor Hooper said bringing the art energy to the City is a great welcome to the City. In addition, he said that it has been proven art of this nature brings in revenue and an appreciation of the culture. Councilor Hooper commended the group for their efforts.

Chair Manwaring welcomed public comment. With no comment, Chair Manwaring asked for a motion.

MSFI Meeting Minutes
April 11, 2018

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

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee recommends accepting the Public Arts Guidelines and Procedure Update as informational.

7) **Adjournment**

Hearing no further business, Chair Manwaring adjourned the meeting at 7:08 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Jennifer Clark, Minute Taker