

City of Keene  
New Hampshire

**MUNICIPAL SERVICES, FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE**  
**MEETING MINUTES**

**Wednesday, January 9, 2019**

**6:00 PM**

**Council Chambers**

**Members Present:**

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

**Members Not Present:**

**Staff Present:**

Elizabeth A. Dragon, City Manager  
Thomas P. Mullins, City Attorney  
Kürt Blomquist, Public Works  
Director/Emergency Management Director  
Don Lussier, City Engineer  
Rhett Lamb, Community Development  
Director  
Brett Rusnock, Engineer  
Mari Brunner, Planning Technician

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

**1) Brett Amy Thelen – Harris Center for Conservation Education – Request to Temporarily Close a section of North Lincoln Street – Amphibian Crossing**

Ms. Thelen explained this request to temporarily close a portion of North Lincoln Street on various weather dependent days in March and April, which the Council also approved in spring 2018. In the spring of each year a natural phenomenon of amphibian species migration occurs during the first warm, rainy nights of spring after the snow pack melts. Thousands of the following species cross roads on these nights to move toward breeding wetlands: spotted salamanders, wood frogs, and spring peepers. The Harris Center organizes volunteers on many of these nights to counteract the growing conservation concern of roadkill. Volunteers carry the amphibians across the roadways.

The Harris Center worked with the Public Works Director and received Council approval in 2018 to close a portion of North Lincoln Street between George Street and the Woodland Cemetery; there are no homes impacted by the closure. Ms. Thelen noted it is challenging to predict the weather and if the conditions are not specific, the migration will not occur that night. The Public Works Director needs to be notified by 12:00 PM on the day of closure so staff can implement it before the end of business; sometimes however, the weather may appear conducive early in the day but is then unfavorable in the evening. In 2018, the road was closed four nights and one night was unsuccessful; the

other three nights, thousands of amphibians crossed the road. There were two additional nights the road was not closed and there was significant migration activity. On each of those two nights volunteers counted more than 2,000 amphibians crossing, which she suspects is a significant underestimate because volunteers only work from sundown until 11:00 PM. The amphibians will migrate all night if the conditions are appropriate. Additionally, there are usually more amphibians on the roadway than volunteers can count.

In addition to the conservation benefits, this has become a popular community event. Each night in 2018, there were 20-50 volunteers, including many families with small children. Volunteers also participate in this activity on Jordan Road and Eastern Avenue; those volunteers work despite continuous vehicle traffic because detours would be more significant at those locations. The road closure on North Lincoln Street allows community members of all ages to participate in this educational activity. Keene is the first municipality in NH to support this migration event, garnering positive press regionally; the Public Works social media posts about the event reached more people than any of their previous posts (more than 78,000 people). Eventually, Ms. Thelen hopes this can become a regular part of Public Works operations annually so Council does not have to revisit the request each year. This specific request is to close the portion of North Lincoln Street for up to six nights in March and April 2019.

The Public Works Director agreed this closure does not impede any homeowners' ability to access their homes. He only received a few complaints about the sudden detour in 2018; he uses all of his press and social media outlets to notify the public in advance of possible closures. He agreed that the arrangement worked well last year; staff was able to place the barricade before end of business and remove them by 7:00 AM the next day. The brevity of the closure was confusing to some who typically use North Lincoln as a major cross street to RT-9 and Eastern Ave. For that reason, staff developed a communications plan for 2019 so citizens know what to expect.

Councilor Sutherland thanked Ms. Thelen for explaining the project and asked if the six requested days are only a fraction of the total migration. Ms. Thelen said it depends how weather conditions align. In 2018, the first closure was on March 29 and the last was on May 6; as opposed to the six week migration season in 2018, some years it is concentrated to only two or three weeks. She also clarified that this is just adult and inbound migration; there are additional migration times for juveniles in the summer with smaller concentrations that are harder to predict and thus, receive less focus.

Councilor Lamoureux asked how successful this project was for the City in 2018 and if there could be improvements to make it easier in 2019. The Public Works Director said this event took place for 13 years before road closure. Drivers are surprised by unexpected nighttime pedestrian activity, and volunteers are surprised by the volume of traffic at this location. Public Works and Police Department staff agreed this closure arrangement was worth the brief and minor inconvenience to drivers. He is unaware of any specific problems in 2018 beyond calls from drivers who use that route commuting to and from work on Optical Avenue. Detours are marked in addition to press releases and

social media announcements, but there will always be some people who miss those announcements. Placing the barricades before the end of the workday might be minimally inconvenient to some during their evening commutes, but it saves the City overtime costs. He noted there is also a five-day salamander forecast tool on the Harris Center website that people can follow, which social media links to so people can look ahead. He suggested the Committee recommend that Council authorize staff to work with the Harris Center on road closures.

Councilor Sutherland asked if it would be too inconvenient to have the closure in place for two weeks. The Public Works Director said the area gets significant traffic and he is not ready to implement a long-term extension at this point.

Councilor Hooper recalled there is one salamander that has been seen crossing North Lincoln Street for the last five consecutive years, which is a good indication of this event's success. Ms. Thelen agreed this is exciting and explained the spot patterns are unique to each individual salamander; volunteers try to photograph as many salamanders as possible to track recurrences. She also noted that the majority of amphibians the volunteers encounter are actually frogs.

Chair Manwaring recognized Margaret Kasschau (40 N. Lincoln St.), whose home is adjacent to the road closure. She attended several times in 2018 and had great experiences; it was well-received in the neighborhood and the detour signs were a good reminder the event was taking place that evening. She hopes this becomes a regular part of spring operations.

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

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities & 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, 2019 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.

## **2) Roxbury Street Bridge Replacement – Aesthetic Options – Public Works Department**

The City Engineer and Josh Lund, McFarland Johnson Consultant, described aesthetic options for the Roxbury Street bridge replacement, for which the Committee has already heard about construction methods. Mr. Lund used a visual aid (diagrams and photo examples) to describe the three bridge rail options for the Committee's consideration, all of which were designed to be safe (crash tested for vehicles) and match the aesthetics of downtown. He noted all options include a pedestal with decorative light posts (to match light posts downtown) at all four corners of the bridge.

- Option A – Powder Coated Steel Barrier and Railing

- Steel bridge posts with rails and pedestrian balusters. (An opening no smaller than four inches)
- Option B – Combined Decorative Concrete Barrier and Steel Railing
  - A low decorative concrete barrier wall that can have a form liner stone veneer, with a steel pedestrian rail above it.
- Option C – Decorative Concrete Barrier
  - Entirely concrete barrier and pedestrian baluster using recessed decorative panels. There are many decorative concrete stamp options.

The City Engineer noted all options that include steel will be powder coated a specific color, as opposed to the more rustic, exposed steel on the pedestrian trails. He suggests painting decorative pedestrian steel railings (Option B) black to match the light fixtures. If there is more exposed steel (Option A), a lighter blue or green might look better. He hopes to have the Committee's input on this aspect. He added that all three options will be tested for vehicle safety.

Councilor Filiault said he is pleased with the light pedestals because there is not enough lighting in Keene. He asked the City Engineer what option he would choose in his professional opinion. The City Engineer said he prefers Option B because it would be an aesthetically pleasing complement to the industrial heritage of downtown Keene. Option C is modern and does not feel authentic to downtown. Councilor Filiault asked the cost of each option. The City Engineer said they do not have specific figures but all options should fall within the allotted budget; the project is still in the preliminary design phase. Mr. Lund said Option C is the least expensive and Option B is the most expensive.

Councilor Sutherland disagreed with Councilor Filiault; he thinks the lighting is excessive because there is another streetlight approximately 10' away on Google street view. He thinks this should be treated less like a bridge over a river and more like a bridge over a canal. He will be happy to see the bridge upgraded but thinks Council should consider what other important projects those funds could support if the bridge is modest. He suggested decorating the bridge could be an opportunity to collaborate with local artists and minimize costs. The City Engineer said the existing street lighting meets City code standards; if there is a light close to the bridge it will be removed. He said this is more aesthetic than utilitarian. Councilor Sutherland said a neighbor who does not want additional light may not share the same opinion.

Councilor Filiault asked if the proposed lighting will be LED or solar. The City Engineer said at minimum they will be LED and he needs to determine the solar shading in that area; solar may not be possible with the new adjacent residential development. Councilor Filiault would like to know if solar is possible before making a final decision about lighting.

Councilor Lamoureux asked which option has the least long-term maintenance costs. The City Engineer replied Option C, with no exposed steel. Steel will have to be repainted every five years. The concrete will have to be sealed, which is a much easier process. He said it is hard to imagine a vehicle impacting the bridge at a high enough speed to warrant

concrete replacement. However, in the event of a collision of that magnitude, concrete would be more expensive to replace.

Councilor Lamoureux agreed he would like to know the options for solar lighting before a final vote but said he supports more lighting in the area. Councilor Hooper agreed and said he supports Option B. Even though Option C is the simplest, it does not fit downtown.

Chair Manwaring asked if any of the options are better to minimize flooding onto neighboring properties. The City Engineer replied no; the bridge opening will be enlarged and the sewer main removed as a part of the project. For all options, the area below the railing is already outside the flood zone and the river would have left the impoundment before the water is above the street. Once the water is that high these materials will make no difference.

Councilor Sutherland asked if there are options to customize the concrete panels in Option C. The City Engineer said there are many decorative options to stamp the concrete panels, but they are not customizable; Option C is most conducive to public art. The City Engineer noted bridge construction is anticipated to begin July 1, so it would be more logical to implement any fixed art on the bridge after project completion.

Chair Manwaring recognized Councilor Carl Jacobs, who asked if any of the options better facilitate snow and ice melt off the bridge; he also supports any conversations about public art. Mr. Lund replied the sidewalks slope toward the road in all options and melt toward the road and not the channel.

Chair Manwaring recognized Pablo Fleischman (37-39 Roxbury St.), who offered his help to the City Engineer to determine solar shading in the area. He agreed with Councilor Sutherland about lighting and thinks the proposed lights (12'-14' high; shorter than current) should be shielded the way others in town must be. The City Engineer said this bridge is designed as a part of the Roxbury Street Rehabilitation Project and all lighting will be shielded per City standards.

Chair Manwaring recognized Betsy Zimmerli (Mayflower Dr.), who asked if any options are more amenable to graffiti removal. The City Engineer said steel can be repainted to cover graffiti. There are sealants to facilitate removing graffiti from concrete but they are imperfect and fallible over time.

Councilor Filiault said he thinks he prefers Option B but, if there is no strict timeframe, asked if staff can return with a cost breakdown and an answer to the solar question. He needs that information before making a recommendation. The City Engineer and Mr. Lund agreed that will be possible in the next two week committee cycle. In addition, Councilor Sutherland requested a cost differential with and without lighting.

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

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities & Infrastructure Committee placed this item on more time for one cycle for staff to return with answers to the Committee's questions.

**3) Relating to Loding Zones and Parking – Ordinance O-2018-22**

The City Engineer said this is a follow-up to the Gilbo Avenue parking lot rehabilitation project and he was happy to report the lighting and kiosks are essentially finished. Ordinance O-2018-22 is proposed to correct ambiguity in the City Code that resulted from parking changes in this project. Parallel parking on the west side of St. James Street was eliminated and replaced with angled parking on the east side of the street. This left a gap between the loading zone for Syd's Carpet & Snooze Room and the no parking zone; that gap now has no legal use. This ordinance will extend the loading zone across the front of Syd's to the no parking zone.

Councilor Hooper made the following motion, which Councilor Filiault seconded.

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities & Infrastructure Committee recommends that the City Council adopt Ordinance O-2018-22.

**4) Relating to Sustainable Energy Goals – Resolution R-2018-36**

The City Manager recalled a request came before this Committee to create a resolution related to sustainable energy goals. Staff presented the Committee with the proposed resolution that is ready to move forward for Council consideration. She noted slight changes to wording since the Committee saw it last, which Ms. Brunner summarized.

1. The end of the resolution previously said this is "a policy and plan" of the City, which now reads as, "a goal" of the City. She said a goal is more aspirational and can be applied to the whole community as opposed to something focused only on the municipal government.
2. The original proposed resolution listed a deadline of April 2020, which staff changed to December 2020 after evaluating staff availability to support the best possible public engagement process.

Ms. Brunner added that the draft resolution mistakenly includes a statement that it will take effect upon 60 days, which she does not think is logical for this resolution. The City Attorney agreed it is a Scribner error and has no substantive effect on the resolution.

Councilor Sutherland asked if this goal applies to the entire Keene community and not just municipal operations, what the implications are for the community; the City does not have purview over how an individual acts. The City Manager said a large part of this conversation has been reaching out to the broader community; the City has done well reducing its carbon footprint but has not engaged the community. One charge of the Energy and Climate Committee (ECC) is public education, so this resolution was written to support community wide initiatives.

Councilor Sutherland said he is voting against this resolution because he thinks the City already has renewable energy goals outlined clearly in the Master Plan. He does not think it is appropriate to say this goal applies to the entire community, when some in the community might not share this goal. The City Manager said staff did not want to be too specific because they will discuss implementation when developing the strategic plan. Councilor Sutherland asked then, if this is just a resolution saying we will have a plan; he said there is already a Master Plan and strategic plan approved by the Joint Committee. He said it is inappropriate to pass this and find out what happens later.

Ann Shed, Chair of the ECC, said Keene set a precedent by joining the Cities for Climate Protection in 2000 and worked to reduce the City's Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions 20% municipally and 10% community-wide between 1995-2015. She said the City has set a precedent of adopting goals for the community. At that time a plan had not been formulated and it took the City four additional years to adopt the Climate Action Plan, in which there were goals for each community sector (commercial, residential, transportation, etc.). She hopes it will not take four years to develop the Strategic Energy Plan, which is essentially an update to the Climate Action Plan developed 15 years ago. She was pleased to hear the Committee making solar power a priority for earlier agenda items and the municipality should be commended for its efforts to date. Still, the context has changed and we are aware of new threats and the urgency of action. The energy market is also evolving toward renewables. With new technology emerging, the ECC is researching models to make energy efficiency accessible across the income spectrum. In addition to the municipality, the commercial/industrial sector also made significant progress reducing GHG emissions between 1995-2015 because they realized the economic benefits. She is enthusiastic to work on the plan with the ECC and stakeholders throughout the community; the December 2020 deadline coincides with the end of her tenure on the ECC.

Chair Manwaring recognized Nancy Gillard (72 Reservoir St.), who spoke on behalf of herself and Suzanne Butcher (41 Felt Rd.). As a long-time resident, Ms. Gillard said she is proud this is before the Committee in addition to the other great efforts the City has made to reduce GHG emissions, saving the municipality and taxpayer's money. She believes this resolution is a logical next step for the City to join the more than 100 cities nationwide (5<sup>th</sup> in NH) to adopt this resolution; Keene can learn effective strategies from the cities that have already done this. She encouraged the City to recognize the scope of this work and that Ms. Brunner developed the timeline carefully with the ECC. She does not think people will stop adopting energy efficient strategies during the next two years working on the plan. She said the Clean Energy Team will continue supporting community outreach and working with stakeholders that have submitted letters of support. She and Ms. Butcher are proud of Keene and think this is a great way to move ahead implementing one element of the Master Plan.

Chair Manwaring continued recognizing members of the public.

Peter Wadowick (Langdon), who works for Bensonwood Manufacturing, thinks 15 months is plenty of time to develop a plan, as opposed to the 23 months proposed. Concord has already adopted this resolution and is in the process of developing a Strategic Energy Plan. He read a statement from the Concord ECC advisory report in support of 100% renewable energy: *The City should develop and adopt an initial plan within one year of making its commitment to achieve the goal of 100% renewable electricity. City staff will draft the plan with the Energy Committee providing oversight and assistance, and a stakeholder group providing community input. The plan might include a conceptual approach to achieving the long-term renewable energy goals as well as more specific steps that might be achieved in short-term timeframes. This plan would be updated periodically over the course of the period until 2050.* Mr. Wadowick thinks Concord recognizes their sustainable energy plan should be written expeditiously; the plan should be a living and working document added to and fine-tuned over time as technology and practices change. Renewables are good for the economy, environment, and community health. He understands that resources and staff are limited but he thinks 23 months to create a plan implies a certain reticence and undue bureaucracy that the City might regret. He hopes there will be an amendment to change the deadline back to April 2020.

Abigail Walton (40 Avon St.): Environmental Studies Professor at Antioch University New England (AUNE), former Keene Master Plan Steering Committee member, and former Planning Board member. She is familiar with the planning process and resonated with the theme of citizen pride expressed regarding this resolution. She just returned from the National Conference on Science & the Environment in Washington, DC and found NH icy instead of snowy, as it should be. There is a sense of urgency about the impacts of climate change. Still, she was proud because Keene was featured again in the US Government's Fourth National Climate Assessment for its innovative approach to climate adaptation planning. That plan was created through stakeholder engagement as a part of the Master Plan goals; it continues to be recognized internationally. She said it is easy to forget Keene is looked to as a leader in this space but we should be proud and recognize the opportunity to continue elevating and making this a place that attracts people. On the theme of pride, she noted how happy she was as an educator to see Ms. Brunner and Ms. Thelen, who are alumni of AUNE, doing good things in the world. She looks forward to AUNE students' involvement in this planning process as well. She said the Master Plan was not created to collect dust on a shelf; it is a living document with language stating we recognize there is always a need to take actions of leadership, like with this resolution. She quoted the section of the Master Plan on renewable energy: *The City should actively pursue the integration of renewable large and small-scale energy sources. City government should continue to pursue federal and state funding for renewable energy projects as well as working with local groups to create renewable energy incentives for residential and commercial landowners.* She said that if the City moves forward with a robust plan there is an opportunity for shovel-ready projects that attract investment and increases Keene's competition in the state. This is one of the top implementation strategies in the Master Plan. She understands staff is busy with another top implementation strategy—the Land Use Code Update—but she agreed that April 2020 is a better goal and hopes the resolution will be amended in that way.



Regarding the timeline, the City Manager noted the Community Development Department is very short staffed. While she knows everyone faces these staffing challenges, the City is in the middle of a large project that takes great time. A senior planner is on leave and two others have retired recently. She added that Keene is not as big and does not have the same resources as Concord. So, when staff is on leave, it takes time to recruit. The Community Development Director reflected carefully on the current projects and the timeline Ms. Brunner drafted and determined December 2020 is the most realistic deadline to achieve this goal successfully.

Chair Manwaring spoke in favor of the December 2020 deadline because it gives Council more time to understand the issues and prepare to vote. She thinks community buy-in seems important and meeting the 100% renewable energy goals by 2030/2050 will require time spent showing the community how they can do their part. She is pleased to see the ECC and Clean Energy Team's hard work and she knows they will do great outreach.

Chair Manwaring recognized Councilor Terry Clark, who was grateful to see the participation around this issue. He said December 2020 might be reasonable if starting from scratch, but the ECC is already working on it and wants to keep moving forward. It is increasingly important to start implementing this goal. He said the level of support for the ECC was evident by the public participation in the meeting and thus this plan will not likely need as much staff support. He thinks it can be completed in one year. He asked the members of this Committee to amend the resolution with a deadline of April 2020. He said putting it off tells the community it is not important when it is.

Connor Hill (Winchester) recalled a recent news report that carbon dioxide emissions increased last year and there is no time to procrastinate. When he was here last he presented a letter from Keene High School students and it is an issue that will define his generation, the future of Keene, and the planet. As a young person, he urged the Committee to act as quickly as possible.

Mr. Wadowick noted he is also on the Clean Energy Team. While he understands the staffing concern he thinks it is a barrier we should overcome and the Clean Energy Team is willing to do what they can to help. He still thinks April 2020 is a better, more urgent deadline to show we take this seriously.

Councilor Hooper asked Ms. Shedd her feelings about the deadline. She said she could not speak for the ECC because the deadline changed since their last meeting. Personally, she felt relieved when she saw the December deadline because she thinks the plan will be deeper with that additional time for community engagement. Beyond drafting the plan, sharing it will take time in addition to the Council process, which is also lengthy. She stated that action will not halt while this plan is developing. She is also a member of the Monadnock Energy Hub, a coalition of local energy committees, initiating solarized and weatherized campaigns throughout the region. She would be happy to complete the plan sooner than December 2020, but thinks it is a reasonable and realistic deadline.

Councilor Lamoureux said this resolution is important for the community and thinks this is a good balance of urgency and realities of staff availability and Council proceedings. He commended the Community Development Director and Ms. Brunner for working as hard as they have, and will continue to, make that deadline possible. He supports the December 2020 deadline because the ECC and staff want to do a good job.

The Community Development Director noted one important element of the December 2020 date is that City and stakeholders will not stop working on GHG reductions and energy efficiency in the meantime. They are looking for new opportunities every day and the plan will help the community develop better options and alternatives.

Councilor Filiault said he supports the December 2020 deadline because the plan can be completed earlier. When things are rushed they take longer to get through the Council process. He said it is better to take staff advice and change something later if necessary.

Mr. Wadowick asked if the deadline means the plan must be adopted by December 2020 or just complete and starting the Council process. Ms. Brunner said the word *adopt* was not included because we cannot assume the Council will adopt something that has not been developed yet. The ECC and staff timeline builds in time for the adoption process but that is not guaranteed.

Councilor Sutherland made the following motion, which Councilor Lamoureux seconded.

On a vote of 4-1, the Municipal Services, Facilities & Infrastructure Committee recommends that the City Council adopt Resolution R-2018-36. Councilor Sutherland opposed.

**5) Adjournment**

Hearing no further business, Chair Manwaring adjourned the meeting at 7:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Katriona Kibler, Minute Taker

Additional Edits by,  
Terri M. Hood, Assistant City Clerk