

City of Keene  
New Hampshire

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

**Wednesday, January 23, 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

**Staff Present:**

Elizabeth A. Dragon, City Manager  
Thomas P. Mullins, City Attorney  
Don Lussier, City Engineer  
Kürt Blomquist, Public Works  
Director/Emergency Management Director

**Members Not Present:**

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

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

The City Engineer recalled this is a follow-up on the aesthetic options for the Roxbury Street bridge replacement; he thanked the Committee for keeping this on schedule. He recalled that the Roxbury Street bridge, built in 1950, is one of 11 municipal bridges red listed by NH Department of Transportation (DOT) and is scheduled for replacement in summer 2019. Previously, this Committee approved the structure design (precast concrete rigid frame) and the accelerated bridge construction option (full road closure up to two months). This project is funded through the NH Bridge Aid Program through which NH DOT pays for 80% of the project, leaving the City responsible for 20% of the cost. At the last meeting, the City Engineer and project consultant from McFarland Johnson presented three aesthetic options for the bridge:

- Option A: decorative concrete columns at each of the bridge corners with steel vehicle protection and pedestrian railing in between.
- Option B: decorative concrete columns at each of the bridge corners, with a low concrete wall (vehicle protection) between them and more decorative steel railing above for pedestrians.
- Option C: entirely concrete.

All options are designed currently with decorative lighting on each of the four bridge corners, which he hopes will be included less for function and more so as a decorative

enhancement for the bridge. At the last meeting the Committee asked his preferred aesthetic option, which he is asked rarely as an engineer, and upon reflection he knows all three options meet the design needs but aesthetically he first prefers Option B, followed by Option A. He recommended the Committee consider lighting carefully; he feels this bridge is a gateway between the industrial City center and residential neighborhoods. He thinks more aesthetic railing and lighting will create a greater focal point to notice that transition. He also likes a visual connection to the river; even though Beaver Brook is channelized, he thinks it is a disservice to pretend it does not exist and hide it behind a concrete wall.

The City Engineer continued by responding to the three questions the Committee asked at the last meeting:

- The possibility of solar power for the decorative lighting:
  - The City Engineer showed a photo demonstrating the arc of the sun throughout the day at the southeast corner of the bridge closest to the adjacent two-story residence on December 21, the shortest day of the year. During the winter months, there will not be enough solar exposure to power the lights. During the rest of the year, however, there will be sufficient exposure to power the lights all day. If Council still feels strongly about solar options for the other nine months of the year, it is possible to install a remote solar panel down the street, where there is better light. This will require an easement from the property owner and will be considerably more expensive (an additional \$20,000 approximately). While the City Engineer will always advocate for renewable energy options when they are the best option, but he does not recommend solar for this project because of the reasons listed.
- Cost estimates for each option including decorative lighting (all of which are within the \$70,000 budget Council approved for this project):
  - Option A: \$49,200 (City cost: \$9,840)
  - Option B: \$64,200 (City cost: \$12,840)
  - Option C: \$34,200 (City cost: \$6,840)
- Cost estimates for each without decorative lighting (\$14,200):
  - Option A: \$35,000 (City cost: \$7,000)
  - Option B: \$50,000 (City cost: \$10,000)
  - Option C: \$20,000 (City cost: \$4,000)

Councilor Filiault asked if the existing City street lights will light the bridge to City standards if no decorative lighting is installed. The City Engineer replied yes, the existing utility pole light meets current City standards, which were converted to LEDs recently and will remain as such. If decorative lighting is installed on the bridge, the existing adjacent utility pole light will be removed to eliminate redundancy.

Councilor Sutherland said he spoke with people in the neighborhood and some could not recall that there is a bridge; additionally, when asked, most neighbors said they

would vote in favor of the least expensive option over aesthetics. In looking at the roadway and bridge size, he noticed how much the railings will be exposed to snow and salt from the roadway and therefore will require more maintenance because of winter corrosion. He also said he visited the bridge at night and there is already sufficient light to read. While Options A and B would be nice in a park environment, he favors Option C because it is the least expensive and most conducive to public art.

Councilor Hooper asked if the decorative lights in the designs must be solar. The City Engineer replied no, the fixtures will be the same regardless of solar power. Councilor Hooper said he agrees with the City Engineer that this bridge should be a gateway and that passersby should know they are going over a bridge. He favors Option A.

Councilor Lamoureux recalled that solar would be effective nine months of the year. He asked if there is a switch mechanism to use solar during those nine months and change to grid electricity during the remaining months. The Public Works Director said that technology exists and the City considered it for the pedestrian crossings on West Street. Unfortunately however, the City would still pay the meter fee during those nine months and therefore save little because usage cost is low compared to the meter fee.

Councilor Lamoureux recalled being involved with the Wells Street concrete parking structure, where the City learned that regular rock salt deteriorates concrete; he asked if the concrete would deteriorate similarly on this bridge. The City Engineer said salt is a problem and concern with all three options because they all have concrete structures. The industry has learned more about what causes salt deterioration and found that better concrete sealing slows the degradation. Staff seals garage surfaces regularly now, which will occur with this bridge as well regardless of these aesthetic options.

Councilor Lamoureux noted the City street lights used to turn off at times; he asked if that still occurs now that they are LED. The Public Works Director said there have not been issues with the lights turning off intermittently. The lights run on a power cell with a sensor that causes the lights to turn off when there is a certain level of daylight. There have been problems in the past when the sensor fails and the light operates incorrectly. There have also been problems in the past with the lights power recycling inconsistently; that is no longer a problem with the new technology.

Councilor Sutherland asked if this is the only bridge crossing Beaver Brook that will be replaced in the foreseeable future. The City Engineer replied no, the George Street bridge is also red listed and will be replaced in 2022. The Spring Street bridge is red listed as well but is not scheduled for replacement yet; the bridge is 23 years-old and designed currently like Option C in the Roxbury project. The Church Street bridge is also red listed but not yet scheduled for replacement. The Public Works Director said the Water Street bridge, which was replaced approximately 10 years ago, has more utilitarian, open cast aluminum railings that are NH DOT standard.

Councilor Lamoureux said he thinks the cost difference is minimal enough to provide the tax payer a more aesthetic bridge and lighting.

Councilor Filiault said he visited the bridge and believes Option C is a better fit for the neighborhood aesthetics; he thinks the railing would look out of place. Instead, he favors Option C without decorative lighting. If solar power was more feasible he would favor the decorative lighting; without a fiscally responsible solar option, the lights are merely aesthetic and unnecessary. Price excluded, he likes the aesthetics of Option C.

The Public Works Director recalled that if decorative lighting were installed, the adjacent existing street light would be removed so there would be no redundant lighting.

Chair Manwaring asked the bridge length. The City Engineer replied the bridge will have a 22' opening with 24'-26' railings to include the concrete endcap pillars, which are designed as 2.5'. Chair Manwaring said the bridge seems small and she does not think the decorative lighting is necessary. She favors Option A, without decorative lighting.

Councilor Filiault moved for the Municipal Services, Facilities & Infrastructure Committee to recommend that the City Council select Option C, without the lighting package, for the Roxbury Street Bridge railings. Councilor Sutherland seconded the motion.

Councilor Lamoureux said he will vote against the motion. He said Council has spent significant time discussing investments in the community. Parts of the City might not be aesthetically pleasing currently but Council should invest in those parts of the community, which will promote economic development. An aesthetic difference might not mean much to the Council right now, but it might mean a lot to someone considering moving to this City. He prefers the decorative lighting in that corridor as will be a nicer gateway into the City. He favors Option A, with the decorative lighting.

Councilor Hooper agreed and said he dislikes that it is unclear you are crossing a bridge, which will be worse with Option C. For the minimal cost difference, even though he is usually frugal, he thinks it will be money well spent to add architectural quality to that part of town. He was surprised at the low cost of the project in the grand scope of City projects. He favors Option A, with decorative lighting.

Councilor Filiault agreed that the City needs improvements but said beauty is subjective. He does not think Beaver Brook is a luxurious river and Option C will look better in that area. There is already adequate lighting at the bridge and he does

not think decorative lighting is necessary. With option C, the City can do an improvement that looks good and saves money.

Councilor Sutherland said light pollution in the City is already excessive; he said the Commercial Street parking lot is a good example. He said Council's job is to focus on a quality City environment as well as a sustainable environment. Adding four lights to this concentrated area increases monitoring and repair time and thus costs. In terms of this being a gateway into the City, he thinks there are other ways to enhance the bridge and per Councilor Carl Jacobs, Option C best facilitates public art.

Councilor Hooper said he likes Option A because it adds architectural interest. He suggested Option A, without lighting, as a compromise.

Councilor Lamoureux asked the cost difference between running the one adjacent street light and the four proposed decorative lights. The City Engineer did not know, but the decorative lights use a smaller bulb than the streetlights; it would not be four times the cost but he could not say the difference exactly.

On a vote of 2-3 the motion to recommend that the City Council select Option C, without the lighting package, for the Roxbury Street Bridge railings failed. Chair Manwaring and Councilors Hooper and Lamoureux opposed.

Councilor Sutherland made the following motion, which Councilor Filiault seconded. On a vote of 3-2, the Municipal Services, Facilities & Infrastructure Committee eliminated lighting as an option in the Roxbury Street bridge designs. Chair Manwaring and Councilor Lamoureux opposed.

Councilor Lamoureux made the following motion, which Councilor Hooper seconded. On a vote of 3-2, the Municipal Services, Facilities & Infrastructure Committee recommend that the City Council select Option A for the Roxbury Street bridge railings. Councilors Filiault and Sutherland opposed.

Councilor Lamoureux asked if it is possible to add a conduit for future lighting while the bridge is being constructed. The City Engineer replied yes, it should be easy.

## 2) **Adjournment**

Hearing no further business, Chair Manwaring adjourned the meeting at 6:37 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Katie Kibler, Minute Taker

Additional Edits by,  
Heather Fitz-Simon, Administrative Assistant