

City of Keene
New Hampshire

MUNICIPAL SERVICES, FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, May 27, 2020

5:30 PM

Remote Meeting via Zoom

Members Present:

Janis O. Manwaring, Chair
Michael Giacomo, Vice Chair
Randy L. Filiault
Bettina A. Chadbourne
Robert C. Williams

Staff Present:

Elizabeth Dragon, City Manager
Thomas Mullins, City Attorney
Patty Little, City Clerk
William Dow, Deputy City Clerk
Terri Hood, Assistant City Clerk
Rebecca Landry, IT Director/Assistant City
Manager
Kürt Blomquist, Public Works
Director/Emergency Management Director
Andy Bohannon, Director of Parks,
Recreation, & Facilities
Marti Fiske, Library Director

Members Not Present:

Chair Manwaring called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM, welcomed the public, and read the authority to hold a remote meeting: Emergency Order #12, issued by the Governor of the State of New Hampshire pursuant to Executive Order #2020-04. Pursuant to this order, all members reported that they were calling alone from their home addresses, minus Chair Manwaring, who was calling from City Hall with City staff present.

1) Update – Accessibility Access at City Facilities (Recreation Center)

Chair Manwaring welcomed Andy Bohannon, the Director of Parks, Recreation & Facilities. Mr. Bohannon thanked Councilor Williams for coming to the Committee in January 2020 to question accessibility at City facilities and specifically the sidewalks leading to the Recreation Center. Since that meeting, Mr. Bohannon and Councilor Williams toured the facility to address the various issues brought forward. Specifically, the sidewalks leading from the street to the Recreation Center parking lot stop abruptly without access into the parking lots. Similarly, the sidewalk from the back parking lot stops without access to the Recreation Center entrance. Mr. Bohannon explained that the Recreation Center was designed in 1986 and many building codes have changed in that time. In walking the property, Mr. Bohannon said he could see the perspective of someone needing the assistance of a curb cut into the parking lot or crossing between sidewalks.

Mr. Bohannon said that he worked with the Public Works Department to develop an estimate based on similar curb cut jobs around town, including recent work in front of Wheelock Park. He said that removing granite curbs and creating the proper American Disability Association (ADA) format would be expensive work and a larger project than possible without surpassing this fiscal year's operating budget, particularly with unanticipated Covid-19 responses. Therefore, he would like to begin addressing the Recreation Center issues individually, starting with the highest priorities, and then adding more projects to the next fiscal year's budget and the Capital Improvement Program (CIP). Mr. Bohannon said he is already working with various architects and design engineers on a Recreation Center project programmed in the CIP for fiscal year 2024 to determine whether some of this curb work can be accelerated as a part of those projects. Enhancing the sidewalks would improve the ADA scoring and accessibility of the Recreation Center campus.

With high projected election turnout in November 2020, Councilor Williams wanted to ensure the Recreation Center entrance is suitable. Mr. Bohannon said the curb at the Recreation Center entrance is short already and will be lowered for easy clearance in time for the election. Additionally in time for the election as part of a larger CIP project, he hopes to add ADA accessible automatic-open doors at the Recreation Center entrance, updated ADA bathroom features, and improved walkways in the driveway area. Mr. Bohannon thanked the Committee for their patience as this matter was delayed due to Covid-19 response. He welcomed questions.

Councilor Williams thanked Mr. Bohannon for meeting with him to tour the facility in January and for his work developing this plan of action. Councilor Williams said he was disappointed that the accessibility improvements cannot move forward in good time, but acknowledged that no one expected Covid-19. Still, Councilor Williams said this is an important project because it relates to people's ability to access a public place on an equal basis and he said we are really falling flat there. He was pleased that the specific issue of flattening the curb at the Recreation Center entrance and while he did not think it would be that expensive, he thought such a minor change would improve access. Still, he wanted to know a timeframe for the remaining improvements to the campus and he wanted ideas of how to get that work funded. The Councilor recalled the CIP requirement that when working on a public building that is not fully ADA accessible, then 25% of the project funds must be directed to ADA facilities. He suggested that perhaps part of the upcoming CIP work would meet that standard, particularly for the planned work to a very old floor in the building. Councilor Williams stated that he understood the problems and challenges, but he was frustrated at the delay, and wanted to move forward no matter how long it takes.

Mr. Bohannon thanked Councilor Williams for his comments, which he appreciated. Mr. Bohannon said the floor replacement is out to bid for the third time and would get a bid back this time after changing the project specifications. He said the floor would be replaced in time for the election. Mr. Bohannon would look at funding sources in the upcoming CIP with the Facilities Manager to begin planning how to address immediate needs for the November election.

Vice Chair Giacomo moved to accept the presentation as informational, which Councilor Filiault seconded, and the motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

2) Recreation Summer Programs – Parks, Recreation & Facilities Director

Chair Manwaring welcomed the Director of Parks, Recreation & Facilities, Andy Bohannon, to describe the plan for summer recreation programs in response to Covid-19. While still awaiting the Governor's guidance on when to open summer camps, Mr. Bohannon said all the plans he presented were in line with what that guidance would be. Mr. Bohannon said that people keep the Department of Parks & Recreation in business and he read the department's mission to, "provide the citizens of Keene with quality community services and amenities including a park and cemetery system, balanced environmental stewardship and diverse programming to inspire and support active lifestyles for all ages." He said that meeting Keene's Live-Work-Play mission has been challenging due to Covid-19, but his department has managed to keep trails and general park spaces open throughout the quarantine to provide opportunities for active lifestyles.

Mr. Bohannon provided an overview of the events that the Department of Parks & Recreation provides in a typical summer, which draw large crowds. Summer concerts, the Peanut Carnival, and the Keene International Festival are canceled for 2020 due to typical crowds of 75-200, 200-300, and near 1,000, respectively. All of these events exceed the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines for gatherings because of the inability to social distance.

Mr. Bohannon stated that it was a very difficult decision to close the Robin Hood and Wheelock pools for the 2020 season, but he and the City Manager decided it was necessary due to:

1. Staff recruitment challenges – despite \$325 incentives the City offered to pay for lifeguard certification, which can be a hurdle for high school students, no one local applied. All applications were from residents of Concord, Nashua, and Peterborough.
2. Inability to maintain clean facilities – Mr. Bohannon said that due to insufficient staff, it would be impossible to keep the bathrooms, handrails, and the rest of the facility clean enough to prevent the spread of Covid-19.
3. Inability to social distance – both in and out of the pools, Mr. Bohannon said it would be challenging to enforce social distancing without sufficient staff, especially because kids like to gather and socialize. Even though chlorine would kill any virus that enters the water, he said that spit or droplets from a cough/sneeze could travel between people in the pool before reaching the water.

Because the pools will be closed for the summer, Mr. Bohannon said there is an opportunity to advance some CIP projects needed at the various pools programmed for later years.

Mr. Bohannon described revised operations at the skate park and the pickle ball, horseshoe, and tennis courts. He showed photos of courts with nets removed to limit the number of people using the court at once. The City has posted notices encouraging singles-only play unless they are a family member or living in the same household, limiting no more than 10 people in the fenced areas, encouraging keeping equipment clean/sanitized, and suggesting the use of masks and

gloves. The posted notices also prohibit using the facilities if an individual exhibits any symptoms identified by the CDC or has been in contact with anyone exhibiting symptoms in the last 14 days, and discourage use by vulnerable individuals.

Mr. Bohannon explained new operations for the ball fields. All men and women's adult softball leagues have been canceled. The Governor cleared youth baseball to begin practice on June 1 with certain guidelines. Because the fields are not ready, the City is not allowing practices until June 15. Mr. Bohannon also did not think those leagues were ready mentally to begin enforcing State guidelines. As such, Mr. Bohannon will require written guidelines from each baseball league detailing how they will enforce State guidelines, such as no more than 10 people on the field. Additionally, the Governor has prohibited spectators at these practices, including parents, as well as formal games until July 6. Mr. Bohannon said that there are three leagues wanting to use the fields. The Greater Keene Youth Baseball and Softball Association, which includes participants from 12 surrounding towns and not just Keene. The Rebels Baseball is a defected group of the Cal Ripkin league. The Legion Post 4 Baseball is an alternate league of the Legion's canceled season based out of Nashua but wanting to practice for three weeks on Keene fields; they need a 90' diamond for play but could use Keene's 60' diamonds for practices.

Mr. Bohannon said that playgrounds remain closed per CDC guidelines because popular destinations can lead to large groups of people playing. He said it is important for people to realize that it is challenging to maintain a healthy environment on plastic playground structures and there are no guarantees of others' personal hygiene. There are posted notices of closure at all structures with CDC guidelines. Mr. Bohannon was appreciative that the public have largely abided, minus a few people using facilities at Robin Hood and Wheelock Parks on nice days, who left respectfully when asked. Playgrounds will remain closed until CDC guidelines change.

Mr. Bohannon explained how summer camps have been reprogrammed to accommodate social distancing. He said that over the last two months, he has worked with Recreation Programmer, Brienne Rafford-Varley, who he said did a wonderful job deciphering all guidelines to develop a program he think is very safe for attendees. Mr. Bohannon recalled that the Governor had not yet authorized opening summer camps. Still, Mr. Bohannon was involved with providing information to the Governor through the State association and he was confident that the program developed would meet any guidelines handed down by the Governor, the NH Department of Health & Human Services, CDC, National Recreation & Park Association, and the American Camp Association. Thus, by following all of these guidelines to a tee, Mr. Bohannon described Keene Parks & Recreation Summer Camp Covid-19 Style:

- Camp will only occur at Wheelock Park, not Robin Hood Park
- Small "pods" of 10 led by the same counselor will stay together the entire eight weeks
 - Siblings will be grouped together
 - No intermingling between groups
 - Each pod has its own set of materials and games, which will be sanitized daily
 - High priced materials shared between groups will be disinfected
- A specific cleaning staff will work nightly to ensure sanitation and there will be a lot of hand sanitizing

- Increased staffing levels, including otherwise lifeguard and playground staff, who have proven to be good employees and know many of the kids already
 - A significant increase from 15 to 25 staff to account for cleaning needs
 - All leadership will be at one location to avoid traveling between facilities
 - Trainings online and in-person for protocols such as daily drop-off/pick-up
- The department is already fully equipped with personal protective equipment for all summer camp staff and participants and there is an isolation location if anyone exhibits symptoms.

Mr. Bohannon said that the Recreation Center must meet State Guidelines for Activity before reopening, including no groups of 10 or more. Mr. Bohannon's target date to reopen is July 6. While closed, there has been ongoing maintenance including refinishing the gym floor earlier than planned and replacing the multipurpose room floor. He said that while closed, most Recreation Center custodians have been working in other City facilities and those staff would need to return on a regular basis upon reopening. The Recreation Center will not be available for additional rentals until September, when Project Share and current programs/rentals—taekwondo, exercise programs, morning gym rentals, and others—will restart.

Mr. Bohannon reminded Council and the public that the Department of Park & Recreation social media provides a lot of information about various programs. He said that social distancing is challenging for children and so the summer camp staff will have a tall task but he thinks everything is in order for a successful year. He added that Ms. Rafford-Varley did a great job recruiting older camp staff, like tutors in the school system.

Chair Manwaring asked how many kids would be served at summer camp this year. Mr. Bohannon said that camp registration opened before Covid-19 and as always, it sold out quickly, with 150 registrants and a waiting list within three days. There have been some cancellations and refunds due to financial strain or a parent now working from home, for example. Still, the camp plans to serve 150 kids at three outdoor stations, with five groups of 10 kids at each station, for which Mr. Bohannon thinks a solid program was developed. Chair Manwaring asked how many participants are Keene residents. Mr. Bohannon said that 98% are Keene residents and he added that the first week of registration for any Parks & Recreation program is open only to Keene residents before opening to others.

Councilor Filiault said his biggest concern was enforcing a 10-person only and no parent attendance at the baseball fields. He asked who would enforce the State and CDC guidelines. Mr. Bohannon said that all baseball practices are in the evening and would be harder for City staff to enforce, which is why written guidelines from each league are required in advance, to which they can be held accountable. If the leagues do not enforce State and CDC guidelines, they will be shut down, so they are all trying to develop their own new practices. Councilor Filiault asked if Parks & Recreation staff would be driving through the fields nightly to ensure adherence to guidelines and Mr. Bohannon said he had no other choice in the immediate timeframe once opened.

Councilor Chadbourne noted that pools are one of the most popular and valued summer activities. She asked whether staff recruitment is a general issue or due to the extra cleaning needs. Mr. Bohannon said that six lifeguards responded to recruitment, a normal season has seven, and this year he wanted eight lifeguards due to extra duties. Mr. Bohannon said that lifeguard wages were increased over the last two years, with entry level earning \$9.50 and the opportunity to advance to \$11.25. Still, he said there is a nationwide challenge recruiting young people as lifeguards when they can make more money with perhaps easier positions in grocery stores, for example. Councilor Chadbourne asked if there is national discussion of long-term planning to help remedy this challenge. Mr. Bohannon said that a trend is rising in the south where retirees who were lifeguards as teens have returned to the physical condition to pass the test and have the time to do so again. He said it is important for young adults to recognize that once certified, lifeguarding is a job you can do for life. Councilor Chadbourne suggested collaborating with the Keene State College (KSC) Athletic Department to offer an incentive to students who work the municipal pools, even if the City must increase the wage. She said pools are important and many families rely on them for their summer plans. Mr. Bohannon agreed that KSC is ripe with opportunities and Ms. Rafford-Varley has begun building a relationship with their swim team. Ms. Rafford-Varley replaced a 30-year employee; longevity is common for City employees, which is why Councilor Chadbourne said it is important to have transition plans for when many long-term City employees retire simultaneously.

Vice Chair Giacomo asked what pool projects are being moved up in the CIP. Mr. Bohannon said all the minor projects possible based on the budget. Annually, the Department of Parks, Recreation & Facilities allocates \$50,000 to park maintenance, which in 2020 was allotted to replacing the irrigation systems at Durling and O'Neil Fields. By pushing those irrigation projects, \$85,000 is now allotted to cement work around pool edges and painting buildings.

Vice Chair Giacomo moved to accept the presentation as informational, which Councilor Filiault seconded, and the motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

3) Phased Restoration of Services – Keene Public Library – Library Director

Chair Manwaring welcomed the Library Director, Marti Fiske, to describe the phased restoration of library services. The Library closed on March 14 and curbside service continued until March 27, when all in-person services ended and 10,000 items remained checked-out. During closure, staff worked from home and in the building to inventory and organize for pristine conditions when the public return. Online services have increased and the Library has purchased a lot of ebooks and audio books. The Library also added the Acorn online video service, through which more than 300 TV shows have streamed in the first month. All Library programming has been virtual via Zoom and will continue that way through the summer, from yoga classes, to book clubs, to film viewings, and more. The book drops are now reopen for returning materials, all of which are quarantined for four days before being checked back in, and there could be a lag on accounts due to this abundance of caution. The majority of furloughed staff returned and curbside service restarted the week of this meeting. Curbside services include staff-created educational kits, which are also quarantined upon return. Curbside services run Monday,

Wednesday, Friday 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM and Tuesday, Thursday 12:00 PM – 7:00 PM. Service will continue until the State and City recommendations advise that groups of 50 or more are safe, because at least 20 staff are needed to serve the public when open. The Library Director will work with Code Enforcement Officers to determine how many people to allow in small spaces. She does not envision public inside the Library before July and she will consider curbside services long-term for the vulnerable population served, for whom the Library will continue working to enhance distance services. Remote printing services, for example, were installed the week of this meeting.

The Library will reopen to reduced hours, which have yet to be determined. When the library reopens, all furniture will be removed to limit congregation and unnecessary contact with surfaces. Single chairs and small tables might remain for short-term needs. All meeting rooms will remain closed until groups of at least 125 or more are considered safe. Staff wears masks in all public spaces and maintains social distance. Staff will clean service desks at least hourly. Disinfecting wipes will be available for computers, which will have sneeze guards and will be spaced appropriately, limited to four stations per adult computer room. All public materials such as headphones and toys will remain unavailable. Ropes and other markers will be used for proper spacing in lines. The Library is working on a public policy for wearing masks in the building and a request to have disposable masks available to Library patrons would be presented to Finance, Organization & Personnel Committee on ... Patrons would be discouraged from staying in the building longer than one hour.

Councilor Chadbourne recalled that more than one year ago, the City worked with Amanda Littleton and the Cheshire County Conservation District to establish a space at the Library for access to seeds and garden tools. She asked if those materials are available for curbside checkout. Ms. Fiske said yes and more than 350 households have requested and received seed packets by mail during the quarantine and tools would be available to checkout on May 28.

Councilor Williams was pleased with the curbside options but expressed concern that many vulnerable patrons might not yet be ready to come pick things up. He asked if there is any delivery program available. Ms. Fiske said that the Library has continued trying to provide outreach delivery to some homebound individuals. Councilor Chadbourne added that there are some volunteer groups, like the Cheshire Village Volunteers, that help the elderly with errands and might be available for this task. Ms. Fiske added that the Keene Young Professionals provide a similar service. Vice Chair Giacomo said that he helped to start the delivery group, whose service slowed with the Governor's stay-at-home orders. He said service would be increasing again and that Maggie Rice is coordinating deliveries, though grocery services are not available at this time.

Vice Chair Giacomo moved to accept the presentation as informational, which Councilor Filiault seconded, and the motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

**4) Relating to No Parking Specific Streets – Summit Ridge Drive
Ordinance O-2020-08**

Chair Manwaring welcomed the Public Works Director, Kürt Blomquist, who followed-up on this matter presented to the Committee on May 13. Mr. Blomquist said that The Ammi Brown Road is a Class VI Road that is located in West Keene with an entrance off Summit Ridge Drive. Walkers, runners, and bicyclists have used this road for recreational activities for many years. Users of the road and associated trails park their vehicles around the entrance to the road resulting in vehicles turning around in private driveways, blocking lanes of Summit Ridge Drive, and other conflicts with the adjoining property owners. As part of the Cheshire Rail Trail Phase III multi-use trail construction project, Mr. Blomquist said that the Ammi Brown Road would be improved and reclassified as a Class A Trail. Along with the improvements to the Ammi Brown Road, a trailhead and parking area will be constructed within the City owned right-of-way at the intersection of Summit Ridge Drive and Summit Road. Signage will also be placed directing users of the trail system to this parking area. The Summit Ridge Condo Association and several property owners in the immediate area of the Ammi Brown Road access have requested that the City Council consider placing “No Parking” restrictions on both sides of Summit Ridge Road from the intersection of Skyline Drive to Summit Road. Mr. Blomquist said that they believe this restriction would reduce the parking related issues and encourage use of the new trailhead/parking area. Staff had anticipated requesting this No Parking restriction when the project was completed. At the May 13 meeting, the MSFI Committee heard the request from the Summit Ridge Condo Association and from several property owners and concurred with establishing the “No Parking” restriction.

Ordinance O-2020-08 establishes “No Parking” on Summit Ridge Drive from Skyline Drive to Summit Road. The Ordinance was first read at City Council on May 21 and was before this Committee for review and recommendation for final adoption.

Vice Chair Giacomo moved to adopt Ordinance O-2020-08, which Councilor Filiault seconded, and the motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

There being no further business, Chair Manwaring adjourned the meeting at 6:48 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Katie Kibler, Minute Taker
May 31, 2020