

**City of Keene**  
**New Hampshire**

**CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP**  
**MEETING MINUTES**

**Wednesday, March 29, 2023**

**6:00 PM**

**Council Chambers,  
City Hall**

**Members Present:**

Bryan J. Lake  
Michael J. Remy  
Gladys Johnsen  
Michael Giacomo  
Robert C. Williams,  
Randy L. Filiault  
Philip M. Jones  
Kris E. Roberts  
Raleigh C. Ormerod  
Bettina A. Chadbourne  
Catherine I. Workman  
Mitchell H. Greenwald  
Kate M. Bosley  
Thomas F. Powers

**Staff Present:**

City Manager, Elizabeth Dragon  
City Attorney, Thomas Mullins  
City Clerk, Patty Little  
Deputy City Clerk, William Dow

**Members Not Present:**

Andrew M. Madison

**George S. Hansel, Mayor**

**I. Call to Order**

Mayor Hansel called the workshop to order at 6:00 PM and provided brief introductory comments about the agenda for this slightly less formal workshop format. The Mayor assured the Council and public that there would be several more opportunities for further public comments as the Council meets to consider this project over the coming months. He did note that it was important for the Council to make its recommendations for this project before the end of this fiscal year on June 30, which would provide City Staff enough time to prepare proposals for funding opportunities. He said that ultimately, the goal is to offset as much of the costs as possible so that the taxpayers are not too badly impacted. Mayor Hansel listed the other upcoming dates that the Council Chamber was reserved for further workshops: April 11, April 26, and May 13.

## **II. General Council Comments on the Infrastructure Project**

Councilor Johnsen spoke as a member of the Heritage Commission, who she said did not know about this project until recently. She said the Heritage Commission understood the need to replace the underground infrastructure. She added that a lot of people on that Commission were younger and very excited about expanding Central Square. She did say there were comments about why the Central Square expansion would not work. Councilor Johnsen noted what a great group the Heritage Commission is and that they are actively interested in this project.

Councilor Bosley said she wanted to hear specifics from the Public Works Department about the fragility of the underground infrastructure. What current issues have arisen? What are their suspicions? Is there prioritization of the work needed? Councilor Bosley also wanted to hear from the Public Works Department about the requirements for conducting this infrastructure work. How would the project flow? Does the work have to start at Central Square? Could the work start at the southern end of Main Street instead? Are there pipe sizes that would be necessary to replace before others? What data exists to demonstrate the necessity of this infrastructure project?

Councilor Williams recalled last year, when several Councilors were requesting public bathrooms downtown. He said one reason listed for why public bathrooms were not a possibility was that it would cost too much money to lay the sewer and water pipes. Now, he said there was an opportunity to lay the necessary infrastructure. Thus, Councilor Williams hoped that public bathrooms would be considered as the project moves forward.

Councilor Workman also expressed the need for more details from the Public Works Department. She wanted to know more about the specific locations of the pipes. She said that prior to and at the January meeting, whenever she asked specifically whether the infrastructure work is necessary within the timeline provided originally, she was told that the pipes absolutely had to be replaced and that delaying groundbreaking could lead to unplanned or unforeseen system failures. Councilor Workman said that at the March 22, 2023 Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee (MSFI) meeting, there was a great presentation that showed the Committee that there were many studies available, including some she had seen already. She said that contrary to what she was told leading up to January, she recently learned that the project could be postponed. Councilor Workman reiterated that she wanted more information on the condition of the pipes. She added her agreement with Councilor Williams that vandal proof public bathrooms are possible and should be considered.

Councilor Roberts identified his background as an engineer. He continued that he did not want to speak for the Public Works Department, but said that in almost every case with an unplanned pipe break, the signs leading to that break become clear in hindsight. He said there are clay and lead pipes, some of which are over 100 years old. He said that sometimes the Council puts pressure on the City Manager and Public Works Staff because those Staff do not have to answer to the public like the Council does. Councilor Roberts said that the longer this infrastructure

work is delayed, the higher the risk of a serious pipe break, which could be caused by a bad winter, for example. While a lot of people are concerned with the potential aboveground changes, he said that the underground infrastructure must be the first priority. He thought the Council would be doing a disservice by continuing to delay the underground work to the point of a catastrophic failure downtown. A failure would hurt a lot of businesses who would want to know why the Council did not fix these problems sooner. Councilor Roberts added that the City's engineers would also have to grapple with insuring that the new infrastructure would last for the next 50 years or more. He hoped that the Council would not get so far into the weeds that it does not address the more urgent needs.

Councilor Filiault agreed that the Council had not yet received a good breakdown of what infrastructure work is needed so Councilors can communicate that need to their constituents. Councilor Filiault thought it was common sense that infrastructure that is over 100 years old would need to be replaced. He agreed with Councilor Roberts that this project could not be delayed much longer. However, he said that what was looking like a \$7 million project, he now heard could be more like a \$10–\$12 million project. He said what continues to remain unknown is how the City is going to pay for this. He agreed that safe infrastructure was needed below ground and said the possibility of above ground changes was another question. Ultimately, Councilor Filiault asked again: how are we going to pay for this?

Councilor Jones said it sounded like most of the Council agreed that something needed to be done about the below ground infrastructure. Soon, he said he would need to hear how these projects would be paid for. He questioned if there would be grants, bonds, a TIF district, or 79-E? He said that in the past few years, the City had to raise its water, sewer, and parking rates to balance the budget. He asked how those rates would be affected by this project. Councilor Jones wanted to know the distinction between how much the infrastructure would cost independent of any proposals for above ground changes, which he also would want to know the detailed costs of.

Councilor Ormerod noted that there was a lack of data and metrics about the infrastructure presented to the Council. For example, he would want to know the percent leakage rate, which is how much water is leaking from the pipes and re-entering the water table, while still wastefully paying the energy costs to pump that water. He said it would be even worse if sewer pipes leaked. Thus, Councilor Ormerod awaited those leakage rates for the downtown and the whole City.

Councilor Greenwald heard the necessary questions about cost and time, but he said he needed more details besides the fact that the infrastructure is old, which he said could still be functional. He is downtown daily and did not recall seeing many water line breaks or other catastrophic issues. He wanted to know the history of the infrastructure and how urgent the replacement is. Councilor Greenwald imagined that the Council would be convinced if they learned all these details. Still, as Councilor Filiault said, the Councilors need these details so they can communicate with their constituents. Councilor Greenwald said that the sewer lines had been

relined and should not be leaking, for example. He also wanted to know how long this project would last. He noted that he has a building from 1893 that likely has a lot of old water lines that are cost prohibitive for him to replace. He said the Council is responsible to the taxpayers. Councilor Greenwald said he would be largely quiet at this workshop as this matter would be eventually going to the MSFI Committee and he did not want any of his comments to seem prejudiced.

Councilor Giacomo agreed with Councilor Ormerod about wanting to know the leakage rates. Councilor Giacomo knew that some cities like New York, for example, have as much as a 70% leakage rate of water coming from the Catskills down to the City. Thus, such leakage can be significant. He said that beyond water leakage being expensive, it can also lead to sinkholes, which are very expensive to remedy with reactionary funding. Councilor Giacomo felt that the Council had already received a lot of the information other Councilors were asking for, such as the age of most of the pipes, including pictures of their conditions and maps of the infrastructure. He said that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, and that cure could be much more expensive if there was a catastrophic failure. He recalled the instance of Avon Street and imagined if that incident happened on a busier street like Main Street.

Councilor Chadbourne agreed that the Council had received quite a bit of information but said that there were still questions. She thought the Council could mostly agree that the infrastructure needs replacing. As for the above ground changes proposed, she said the Council could not make that decision in a vacuum. She recalled a lot of high-cost projects discussed during these last few years' Capital Improvement Project (CIP) reviews, like a \$7 million fire station in west Keene. She added that every time there is a project like this, more and more parking is removed, which would force the need for a \$5-\$7 million parking garage on Gilbo Avenue. Councilor Chadbourne said the Council should be thinking less about what is wanted and more about what is needed and how meeting those needs would create a tax burden. While planning for grant applications is good and the City secures them most of the time, she said those funds are not guaranteed. She said this project needed to be considered carefully. She said everyone loves the quality of life in Keene; it is what attracts new residents and visitors. Still, she said that if the tax burden becomes too high it will start limiting the ability of people to live in Keene. She cited the lot gifted to the City on Ashuelot Street that would most likely become a park, for which she said the City would need to buy playground equipment and might have to hire additional Staff for maintenance, for example. She continued giving examples of the land traded on Water Street and the enlargement of the Russell Park. She said those examples would improve their neighborhoods, just like the new disc golf area would for Wheelock Park. All of those things would require equipment and maintenance and would also be less land on the tax roll. Councilor Chadbourne thought the Council needed to look at the bigger picture. She said that infrastructure was a bigger picture concern that she supported 100% but she was concerned about how much would be spent on the downtown, which she said was already nice. She noted that the City has and continues increasing the trails system, which she said attracts people to Keene for quality of life but must be balanced with the taxes.

Mayor Hansel summarized what he heard from the Council so far: details on the funding and details on the infrastructure and any potential liabilities.

Councilor Powers said he felt like the Council was going around in circles and coming up with different thought processes. He said there was a concept, and it was not possible to tell how much it would cost at this point because the concept had not been decided. He thought this needed to be broken down into segments so. He said there was general agreement that the infrastructure is an issue, so he suggested keeping the focus there. He said he looked back and it was his understanding that in 1980, there had been some major underground work, and in 1988 there was the major above ground project. He said there was another instance that established the little island lower than Emerald Street, and then the roundabout work. He said those were all major projects but in none of them were the underground water and sewer improved. He said he had heard many responses to this issue, such as not wanting to spend the money. So now, Councilor Powers said this Council was faced with trying to make this decision. He hoped this Council would not repeat the mistakes of those past Councils by just completing part of the necessary work. He said that if the Council needed to spend a few weeks concentrating on the infrastructure so everyone could be comfortable with it, he thought that was what they should do. He believed the infrastructure work needed to be done because of its age. His biggest concern was that the project area was stopping at Water Street and he thought it would be smart to continue it the short distance to Winchester/Marlboro Streets so that a future Council is not tasked with it. He was concerned the Council was already getting off track on the first agenda item.

Councilor Lake thought it would be helpful to have a better understanding of the full project timeline and what is possible within that period. He said it sounded at this point like this would possibly be delayed until 2025 and the plan was for a three-year project. Knowing that inflation was a factor, he asked if there was a way to condense the project into two years.

Mayor Hansel recognized the request for more details on the timeline. He added that he did not think Staff would be able to provide the Council with a detailed budget of all of these options. However, he thought a high-level model could be possible, so that Councilors would have some figures when talking to constituents. For example, comparisons could be made to how Concord, NH, funded their downtown. He thought a better understanding of the possible costs would be good for everyone. He said the same was true of needing more information on a possible timeline.

Councilor Johnsen questioned what technology might exist to help provide a visual of the underground infrastructure.

Councilor Greenwald said he wanted some details, not a number from the CIP five years ago. He said the costs had changed. He said it was possible, probable, and definitely expected that a budget estimate could be developed for the infrastructure without having to make decisions on the final design details. Councilor Greenwald also agreed with Councilor Lake that projects can

be—and in this case should be—accelerated in less than three years. Councilor Greenwald said he was not in such a rush that the Council could not spend an extra month waiting for the Public Works or Purchasing Departments to prepare some of these estimates.

Councilor Bosley said that as the Council was making these decisions, she wanted to have the whole picture. She said the importance of this workshop was that the Council was able to have this dialogue and someone's comment could trigger an essential idea that helps everyone think about the project differently. She said the Council had heard a lot from the downtown business owners about how they would stay open through a project like this. She questioned what the above ground interruptions would look like with an accelerated timeline; she said every business might be lost if everything was shut down for that timeline with no parking. She did not want to accept an accelerated timeline if it would come at the cost of businesses being unable to operate.

Councilor Giacomo agreed with Councilor Greenwald that the below ground work replacing pipes could be estimated in addition to the construction costs of actually ripping-up the whole street and the disruptions. Councilor Giacomo said it would obviously be more complicated in a downtown setting than on Winchester Street, for example. Still, the City had been through below ground infrastructure work before and should be able to obtain an estimate within a scale; obviously it would not happen down to the penny, but at least a range in the millions should be possible. He worried about simplifying this down to “money, details, and timeline” when there is a complex relationship between those things, such as an accelerated timeline possibly costing more.

### **III. Gilbo Avenue Traffic Flow**

Mayor Hansel said that the proposal to change a portion of Gilbo Avenue to one-way was something the Ad Hoc Steering Committee had discussed, but he did not think a preferred option was recommended.

Councilor Lake expressed concern for changing a portion of Gilbo Avenue to one-way because of what the volume of traffic flow could be in 15–20 years, especially if Gilbo Avenue is developed further. He wondered if it made sense to hinder the traffic flow and parking there if increasing the demand to be there. He was interested in what the grander scope of going to one-way is.

Councilor Remy was also not in favor of limiting Gilbo Avenue to one way. He noted that Emerald Street is excluded from this project. He wondered what the impact on Emerald Street might be by diverting traffic off Gilbo Avenue and he did not think that had been studied sufficiently. Councilor Remy liked the idea of the raised roadway at Gilbo Avenue; he thought it would allow safer passage across Main Street for the bike path.

Councilor Powers said to leave the two-way traffic flow as is on Gilbo Avenue. He guaranteed that a reduction to one-way would not work.

Councilor Bosley was also in favor of maintaining two-way traffic on Gilbo Avenue. She said that if going to one way, it would have to be for traffic heading away from Main Street because traffic just pouring onto Main Street, it would be too much for the daily use of that intersection, especially if a future parking garage was constructed on the Gilbo Avenue parking lot. She thought the reduction to one-way would be an ultimate disadvantage.

Councilor Williams said he did not have strong feelings about the number of lanes in each direction but was in support of the raised tabletop crosswalk across Main Street. He said this was a great way to make pedestrians more visible to cars and to slow cars. He was against the idea of a parking garage and he stated his belief that there is a lot of parking in Keene, though not all might be as close to destinations as people prefer. Instead, he thought that the City could have a parking shuttle to the many available spaces that a lower cost than financing a parking garage.

Councilor Filiault said there would be a lot more conversations to come about above ground improvements to downtown. He said it sounded like most Councilors were in favor of the raised crosswalks as a traffic calming measure that worked well on Winchester Street. He thought the option should be considered at crosswalks throughout downtown to deal with speed concerns. Councilor Filiault said it would behoove the Council to determine what they agree on so the necessary time could be dedicated to make decisions about what there is not agreement on. He agreed with the needed underground work and said it was clear the rest of the Council agreed with needing more details on the time structure, money, and how downtown businesses would be inconvenienced. He suggested starting to move forward issues for which there is consensus.

Councilor Remy said he saw a visual of the raised sidewalk concept and it looked like it would extend across Main Street and down Gilbo Avenue and Railroad Street. He said he was interested in a raised crosswalk across Main Street, but not having Gilbo Avenue and Railroad Street raised to sidewalk level. Mayor Hansel said he was thinking about Main Street raised like a platform between Gilbo Avenue and Railroad Street. Councilor Remy said he was not aligned with raising the street level. Mayor Hansel thought that was a detail that could be worked out in the design.

Councilor Workman thought there was a difference between a raised tabletop crosswalk and a raised speed hump like those on Winchester Street and Community Way. She said a raised tabletop is wider and extends all the way out.

Councilor Jones said the consultants did what the City asked of them for Main Street and Central Square. He said that Gilbo Avenue is one of the western expansions out of downtown. He thought the Council needed to see a bigger picture of the whole area between Pat Russell Park and Island Street, all of which affects the downtown. He said that depending on what is planned for west of downtown, it could make sense to make Gilbo Avenue one way. He recalled plans to make Gilbo Avenue like Church Street in Burlington, VT, which he said would be a natural attraction to Keene; he said one way would make sense in this instance and Emerald Street

would have to be considered in that plan. He recalled when there was a temporary plan for several streets to be one way when the fire station and courthouse were built. He said the community was outraged by that temporary change but the Council knew it was necessary to complete that construction. He said that after that construction, the community wanted to keep those roads one way. He said sometimes you do not know what you have until you try it.

Councilor Giacomo said that he participated in the online survey and was a proponent of changing a portion of Gilbo Avenue to one way with the rationale of it becoming an arts corridor or something of the like. That said, Councilor Giacomo said he took Councilor Lake's comments seriously. Councilor Giacomo said the consultants provided the number of cars on Gilbo Avenue and he said there were not many cars coming off Gilbo Avenue onto Main Street; it is one of the least used turns downtown. In thinking of the future, though, he said it would be easier to change a two way to one way down the line than it would be to revert a one way back to two ways. With these considerations, Councilor Giacomo said he was now supporting two ways, though there would need to be thought about better accommodating the Farmer's Market.

Mayor Hansel said he heard support for maintaining two-way traffic and a raised tabletop crosswalk at least across Main Street at Gilbo Avenue.

Councilor Giacomo asked and it was confirmed that the tabletop concept would encompass both the Rail Trail on one side and Gilbo Avenue on the other side.

Councilor Greenwald said that after hearing Councilor Giacomo's comments, it sounded like the Council needed more information before making this decision. Mayor Hansel reminded the Council that nothing discussed at this meeting was a final decision or vote, but he heard support for raised crosswalks.

#### **IV. Main Street**

Mayor Hansel initiated discussion about bike lanes, parking, and other proposed concepts for Main Street.

Councilor Williams thought that bike lanes were hugely important. The Councilor said a bike is one of his primary modes of transportation and he does not feel safe riding down Main Street, nor does he feel comfortable with his child riding there. He said there are a lot of good biking alternatives to Main Street, especially on the east side of town. Councilor Williams said Keene has the widest Main Street in the east, which is why there should be protected bike lanes.

Councilor Bosley said she mentioned an issue at one of the project workshops and had not yet received an answer. When presented with a cross section of Main Street, she said the engineers talked about widening the sidewalks on Main Street and adding bike lanes to those expanded sidewalks. Councilor Bosley said she was not necessarily opposed to this idea, but she wanted to understand how this would impact restaurants with sidewalk café licenses and how that



Ordinance might evolve in the future. She thought this was an opportunity for the Council to put some thoughtful planning into how sidewalk cafés would be incorporated into this new downtown. She said Keene's downtown had become known for its entertainment and dining. She added that in New England, there is a limited amount of time each year for outdoor activities. Since her time on the Planning, Licenses, and Development (PLD) Committee, she had never heard a complaint about the downtown having too many sidewalk cafés. Councilor Bosley wondered if altering the sidewalk plan would preclude businesses that currently have sidewalk café licenses from continuing. She also wondered if there would still be arrangements for businesses that do not currently have the ability for outdoor dining to have that option in the future. Councilor Bosley understood that the project could not plan for businesses into perpetuity but said it should be clear where there is infrastructure for restaurants currently.

Councilor Workman said she was not satisfied. She supported protected bike lanes but she was unsatisfied with all of the design concepts she saw at the various workshops, and she expected the City to do better.

Councilor Powers said Main Street would be dug up for the pipes and the City would have to deal with it, taking into consideration the size of cars, trucks, and other factors. He said there had been a lot of discussion about the safety and lighting—or lack thereof—of downtown crosswalks. He said that ultimately the drivers on Main Street are the problem. He did not think that limiting the crosswalks downtown would work and he thought the same number of crosswalks should be maintained and built under the new, better downtown conditions. He said the roadway beyond and above Central Square was another discussion. Still, he said the Council was again thinking about this project in pieces, meaning the roadway would be fixed, then the sidewalks, then the bike paths, and then sidewalk cafés. Councilor Powers warned again that there are only so many feet between the buildings on Main Street and something would have to give in order to fit all these things.

Councilor Filiault said one thing the Council should be focusing on is no parking loss downtown. He said that at the past public listening sessions, the Council heard from 40–50 downtown merchants about their parking concerns. So, he said it is imperative that the final design has no net loss of parking. He recalled the past when there was free parking in a dirt lot on Railroad Street; once developed, that parking was lost. He said the same was true for the Fire Station, where most of that is parking for employees. He said a lot of parking was also lost when the Roxbury Street apartments were constructed; those apartments have 1.5 dedicated parking spaces for each of the several hundred apartment units, and the extra cars now park along Spring Street. He cited a potential commercial project where the skate park was on Gilbo Avenue that would take up more parking when the Colonial has shows, with 900 people coming downtown at least once weekly. Councilor Filiault said he was not arguing against any options presented, but he was demonstrating that there should be no net parking loss. He said there should actually be a search for additional parking. He said that no matter what the Council thinks, people are going to drive to Keene. He said people would not be riding their bikes to come to the Colonial, but they would be driving and seeking a place to park. So, no matter what the Council's final decision is,

he said there simply cannot be a loss of parking. Councilor Filiault said the City had been talking about a parking deck for 20 years and he said that would not happen anytime soon, so there should be no parking loss—the downtown businesses cannot afford it.

Councilor Jones talked about bike lanes, which he said many cities have tried. He recalled a developer/planner who specialized in bike lane planning and worked with many cities. Councilor Jones said that ultimately, most of those cities eventually removed the bike lanes. He did not think Keene wanted to make the same mistake. The Councilor recalled the public listening session at the high school on February 21, when a member of the public suggested putting the bike lanes one block east and west of Main Street instead. He said this had worked for other cities like Brattleboro, VT. Councilor Jones said he rarely saw bikes using bike lanes, but often saw motorcycles passing traffic in bike lanes. He was concerned that the bike lanes would be abused for other reasons too. He suggested that bike lanes deteriorate over time; he said to look at the conditions of downtown crosswalks currently due to harsh winter conditions. So, he thought it was a good idea to move the bike lanes one block from Main Street, where there is less traffic, and it is safer for bikes.

Councilor Giacomo thought the Council had been discussing the issue of downtown infrastructure since 2017, including the concept of having bike lanes one block off Main Street. He thought there might be an opportunity for a hybrid model for a compromise with the sidewalks. He understood that the concept was to protect cyclists from cars and pedestrians from cyclists. Still, he agreed that too much space was being taken from the limited width of Main Street and a lot of the sidewalk width would be taken by bike lanes. He also said that parking was being compressed. He recalled that all of the proposed designs maintained angled parking but that the angle would be steeper to gain a few parking spots. He said the parking spaces would be narrower at 11' wide, and therefore backing out of those spaces would disrupt both lanes of traffic instead of one. Councilor Giacomo said he favored a hybrid model, with bike lanes at sidewalk level, but instead of a massive, dedicated bike lanes, to have ground level reflector bumps down the sidewalk so that pedestrians can cross in and out of the bike lanes, without fully closing off a part of the sidewalk. He thought it was important to keep cyclists on Main Street because it is the main north-south throughfare. He reiterated that he thought a compromise could be reached.

Councilor Roberts said that Cambridge, MA, has bike lanes but very few bikes are seen using them. He said cyclists have the right to use the roadway like any other vehicle. He asked how to ensure that cyclists would use this dedicated bike lane instead of the roadway. He said it could be frustrating being behind a cyclist in the roadway when the bikes have dedicated lanes.

Mayor Hansel wondered if it was fair to say there was a consensus in favor of Staff taking another look at bike lanes on Main Street, keeping in mind safety and reducing the amount of space they would take.

Councilor Williams said there were good ways to accommodate bike lanes and bad ways. He

agreed with Councilor Jones about disliking bike lanes that are just painted green. Councilor Williams said those are not safe; paint does not prevent a car from driving in a bike lane. He said the current bicycles with arrows painted white are even worse. He said those painted options are really the least that could be done to accommodate cyclists and most cyclists do not use those options. He said that if bike lanes are separated from traffic more people—i.e., kids and those afraid to ride in vehicle traffic—could use them. Councilor Williams said a lot depends on how well bike lanes are implemented.

Councilor Filiault agreed that having bike lanes behind the Main Street buildings was worth consideration. He said Keene is very bike friendly. He asked how much the City wanted to spend on something over two City blocks that would be used minimally for 7–8 months of the year. He thought Keene would be equally bike friendly if cyclists simply have to detour 1–2 blocks around Main Street. He said the City Council is bike friendly and he did not want to hear anything to the contrary. He thought the detour around Main Street would be a simple, cost-effective solution.

Councilor Remy was aligned with not losing any parking. He said he did not have strong opinions about bike lanes but that if they are chosen, they should be at sidewalk level so they could be eliminated if not used and the sidewalk could be regained. He wanted to ensure that there is space on Main Street for vehicles to pass delivery trucks that often block the right lane of traffic. Councilor Remy said something needed to be done about the Church Street crosswalk northbound because it is hard to see the pedestrians entering the street.

Mayor Hansel said he heard the Council wanting Staff to reconsider bike lanes on Main Street as well as what it would look like to divert bikes a few blocks around Main Street.

Councilor Workman agreed with not wanting to lose any parking. She said there was a lot of focus on accommodating bicycles and pedestrians, and she wanted to ensure there was a focus on having more handicapped parking downtown. She noted that NH has one of the oldest/aging populations in the nation. She thought more handicapped spaces downtown would force able-bodied people to walk longer distances from their parking spots and would provide essential parking for those who need it.

Councilor Greenwald said he favored bike routes behind the Main Street buildings. He added that cyclists would go wherever they want to. He cited a recent visit to Florida, where he said cyclists were on the streets, sidewalks, and bike lanes. Councilor Greenwald said his concern was the loss of parking. He recalled that the Ad Hoc Committee's proposed idea was for a net loss of 14 parking spaces, but the Councilor said he counted more than 35 if the parking was removed from the center island. Thus, Councilor Greenwald wanted to see a timeline for a parking garage, where it would go, and where the necessary money would come from.

Councilor Chadbourne said she used to bike or walk seven miles every morning. She considers herself an avid cyclist. However, she had serious accidents both on trails and on streets when

cars got too close. She used the example of the different downtown businesses she visits when cycling to demonstrate that cyclists also contribute to the downtown economy. She said she heard a lot of focus on moving parking away from Main Street and prioritizing pedestrians and cyclists. She said there needed to be room for everyone. She said the City was adding trails and expensive bridges over highways consistently, so she did not want to hear that the City Council was not pro-pedestrian or pro-bicycles. So, she did not have a problem asking cyclists to get off their bikes and walk four blocks down Main Street, which is what Councilor Chadbourne said she does already because it is safer. She did not think the City should invest extra millions of dollars for four blocks of biking. She said there had to be some give and take between cars and bikes. She liked the idea of routing bikes around Main Street.

Councilor Williams said that in terms of a give and take, he thought very little had actually been given to bikes and a lot given to cars. He thought it was important to better balance these options, especially with the rise of e-bikes and smaller electric vehicles. Councilor Williams did not think Keene was as much of a friendly town as people say, noting that he had been run off the road when cycling in town. He agreed that Keene has recreational trails but said there was not a transportation system that could help people get to work, for example, in which case they would not need a parking space. He suggested that accommodating more cyclists downtown could allow there to be fewer parking spaces and it would be easier for people to park.

Councilor Bosley wanted to support Councilor Williams. Though not an avid cyclist and not completely in favor of bike lanes on Main Street, Councilor Bosley said she had been seeing a lot of electric scooter use downtown. She said these electric options are increasing. She also said it was worth considering bike lanes on just one side of Main Street, as well as other potential compromises.

## **V. Central Square**

Mayor Hansel said the concepts were for a mini roundabout and expanded recreational space around Central Square.

Councilor Lake said he liked the general idea proposed and called it interesting. He said the question he kept going back to was whether the proposed concept would be better than what exists as Central Square today. He thought there might be some other ways to change the Central Square traffic flow to accommodate some of the concerns about the length of crosswalks. He questioned the possibility of yellow flashing lights that turn red during an emergency.

Councilor Powers said there is a place for roundabouts and in his experience, Central Square is not one of those places. He said the traffic lights on Central Square had been there for 34 years and that the road had not been improved to catch up with the technology of the traffic lights. He thought there could be improvements to make the traffic flow smoother and better for drivers and walkers. Councilor Powers did not want a mini roundabout, but an improved traffic system that is engineered for the future number of cars, trucks, and bicycles.

Councilor Workman said she kept questioning whether an expansion of Central Square would be to include more gathering space and if the answer was yes, she wondered if that meant the abandonment of the arts and culture corridor on Gilbo Avenue. She asked if the Pat Russell Park would also be abandoned. She said there were a lot of different irons in the fire for meeting and event spaces. Councilor Workman questioned whether Central Square was the best place for those activities. She understood that event organizers liked Central Square because it has high visibility. However, she said that if the City's plan is to build-up Gilbo Avenue, she did not think it was wise to diverge down this other path.

Councilor Filiault said he did not want to see any net loss of parking. He also did not want to see parking spaces removed downtown and replaced a quarter mile down the road; he said people going to restaurants would not park that far away. To Councilor Workman's point, Councilor Filiault said that Gilbo Avenue was being considered for more green space and that the City just invested in Pat Russell Park. In the future, he imagines Gilbo Avenue connecting Main Street all the way down to the Colony Mill. He said there had been a lot of talk about a parking deck, but it was unclear when that could happen. He envisioned Gilbo Avenue as an extension of Main Street all the way down to the Colony Mill. As a member of the Ad Hoc Steering Committee, Councilor Filiault said there was not enough discussion about traffic lights downtown. He continued stating that there was a lot of mention of traffic moving too quickly and he said one way to slow that traffic is with lights. He understood that no one likes stopping for red lights, but he thought they were appropriate in a downtown to slow traffic. He noted that traffic freezes temporarily for emergency vehicles. He agreed with Councilor Powers that the current traffic lights at Central Square are antiquated and if someone hits the button at a crosswalk, the whole downtown shuts down. He agreed that the traffic pattern could be improved and said a new, modernized system is needed, and that the option had not been explored enough yet.

Councilor Remy responded to the suggestions to move the event space to Gilbo Avenue, stating that Gilbo Avenue has no soul. He said that Gilbo Avenue has Lindy's Diner but then has nothing but parking lots after that. He said that people have tried to compare Gilbo Avenue to Church Street in Burlington, VT, which he said is only vibrant because of the businesses lining that street. As someone involved with large events, Councilor Remy said those organizers would continue pushing for events on Main Street and Central Square for that ambiance. He said he did not have strong opinions about the proposals for Central Square but he did not think the current traffic pattern worked. He commented on the confusion with the current lights at Central Square, especially for visitors. Councilor Remy was also aligned with not losing any parking. He liked the idea of a parking lot at the top of Central Square that is easy to shut down during events. He was not concerned about the form and flow of a mini roundabout but understood the concerns from businesses.

Councilor Johnsen spoke off microphone. She supported new traffic lights.

Mayor Hansel thought he heard consensus about investing more in better understanding the

options for traffic light improvements.

Councilor Giacomo said there were some incredibly complex calculations that highway engineers have used to present the Council with the traffic queues for the modern lighting system other Councilors were citing. He said they had presented traffic queues for multiple blocks up Main Street northbound. He said roundabouts are traffic calming measures and traffic lights are accelerating measures. He said that just the day of this meeting he saw a pedestrian almost clipped by a vehicle while trying to cross Central Square because the vehicle sped up to beat the red light. He said that a roundabout would be a continuous flow system, which lessens speed because people are not trying to race to catch the light. Councilor Giacomo said he understood that everyone had feelings about this, but he said that feeling paled in comparison to actual science and data, which is available. He appreciated that there would be some nuance because this is a unique intersection at Central Square. He also understood that there was some nostalgia for the existing Central Square. Still, he thought expanding Central Square would accomplish more use of a criminally underutilized space, which he said everyone could agree is an amazing asset to the City. He still said Central Square could do without a 70-foot crosswalk. He said that Central Square is not used today unless it is for protests or if the road is shut down for events. So, Councilor Giacomo supported expanding Central Square, making it a part of the pedestrian system, and making it an attraction that people can access.

Councilor Williams said he thought that the current downtown traffic pattern was particularly bad because it combines the worst aspects of a traffic circle and light. He said the Council could choose one option or the other, but he thought there should be both. He cited the problem of traffic backed-up Main Street because of the current traffic light. He said the Council talks about sidewalk cafés but asked if those cafés are enjoyable while inhaling exhaust. He understood that people were pretty nervous about the mini roundabout idea. Councilor Williams personally thought it would work well. He agreed with Councilor Giacomo that professionals had studied this intersection but Councilor Williams thought that information needed to be better presented to the public so they could be comfortable with it. So, Councilor Williams said he wanted to see a computer model of these options to help ease people's minds. The Councilor also posited that if a mini roundabout was implemented, and for whatever reason proved to not be a good solution and the City decided to get rid of it; he questioned the cost of trying it and failing. If that cost was low, then he said it might be worth giving it a shot.

Councilor Bosley talked about downtown events. She said she agreed that Gilbo Avenue has no soul and she had wanted to come up with a City template to incentivize event organizers moving their events down there. She said no one wants to have events on Gilbo Avenue. She recalled growing up in Keene and attending the street fair and first night. She said being on Main Street is magical, which is why people want to have events there and want to move to Keene after experiencing events there. Councilor Bosley noted that there are many methods of blocking-off downtown and in her opinion, they are really unattractive. She thought this project could solve a lot of those issues to be more convenient and attractive by installing retractable balusters, for example, or creating a way to segregate different intersections in a way that is less expensive for

event organizers. While such closures are inconvenient for people coming downtown, she said that ultimately, it would serve to keep providing the experiences that people associate with downtown Keene. While she originally aligned with the idea of a mini roundabout she was no longer in favor of that after considering the history of Central Square. She thinks that the traffic patterns with emergency vehicles there would be less than ideal. She recently saw traffic not move for a Diluzio Ambulance that could not shut down that intersection the way Keene Fire can. She has often seen cars drive up Main Street and turn left through Central Square directly onto West Street. She said the whole intersection needed reconsideration. She provided the example of the slip lane to reverse direction on Main Street, noting that cars rarely will go in that center lane because they think it does not go around the Square. She said there was room to improve traffic, signage, and lines.

Councilor Greenwald said he did not see enough police enforcement when people run yellow and red lights at Central Square. Regarding having to wait through two cycles of the Central Square traffic lights, he urged to breathe a little and said it was not worth all the conversation. Councilor Greenwald did agree that there could be better signage indicating what lanes go in what directions. He also agreed that modernized traffic signals are needed. He suggested stop signs at Roxbury, Court, and Washington Streets because he said people do not seem to understand yield signs. He said that Central Square is already a roundabout, it just could be shaped and signed better. Ultimately, Councilor Greenwald thought the Council should listen to the public, which he said had loudly expressed the desire to keep the basic configuration of Central Square. So, he said to shape Central Square better and enhance the traffic enforcement.

Mayor Hansel said it sounded like the Council needed more time to understand how the modern traffic lights could improve traffic flow.

Councilor Workman pointed out that accidents do occur in roundabouts. Based on her experience as a professional in human behavior with a master's in psychology, she said that cars race into roundabouts and race to beat emergency vehicles entering roundabouts. She said the public would not want to wait while pedestrians cross at a roundabout like this. Councilor Workman noted that for the Wednesday concerts in the summer, people bring their lawn chairs and pack Central Square. She said people had been figuring out how to safely cross onto Central Square for a long time. She said that if some adjustments are really desired, she thought there could be very minor changes; she mentioned her dislike of the slip lane Councilor Bosley discussed. She said there was a similar issue with people making left turns onto Eagle Court and that if those left turns were eliminated, people would be forced to use the roundabouts at Winchester Street and Central Square. She said she had tracked it and it does not take that much longer. She said that while against the law, it would be possible to safely go through a red light at Central Square because no cars are driving in other directions that all have green lights. Thus, she said there could be a smarter design there with very minor changes.

Councilor Chadbourne agreed with Councilor Remy calling Gilbo Avenue "soulless." Councilor Chadbourne knew that other Councilors and members of the public had a vision for the corridor

but said that concept had resurfaced and been abandoned multiple times. She recalled multiple designs from a former City Manager, John McClain, that could give Gilbo Avenue soul. She said the Council needed to preserve the history and charm of downtown Keene that she said is the soul of the City. Councilor Chadbourne was not in favor of a mini roundabout or closing the top of the Square. She said she did not care what traffic studies said, shorter crossing distances would not convince her. She did not see how there could be a roundabout there with no lights. She agreed with Councilor Bosley about seeing when the traffic did not move for an emergency vehicle. Councilor Chadbourne wondered if there was a way to get Diluzio on the City's system so they can get through as safely as the City's emergency services. Councilor Chadbourne thought there could be tweaks to enhance the existing downtown without spending millions of dollars on things that detract from Keene's historic downtown and "soul."

Councilor Ormerod said he did not hear anyone speaking in support of closing the top of Central Square. He said he had not seen any proposal to make Central Square a large roundabout. Despite it having many entrance points, he thought it was worth exploring and he wanted to see that data. He wanted to see more simulations of these different options for Central Square in general.

Mayor Hansel thanked the Councilors for their valuable feedback and noted that no consensus would be reached at this meeting. As such, the Mayor called a break before public comment.

## **VI. Public Comment**

Katie Folts of Edwards Street is a part of the Arts Core Committee and in the past, she worked at the Colonial. She encouraged the Council to not only think of Main Street as a thoroughfare but as a destination for the future of Keene. She said there needs to be plans for safety, for a Central Square that does not require crossing multiple lanes of traffic, and for a raised roadway on Gilbo Avenue, which she said would make events there, like the Farmer's Market, more successful. She added that bike safety and walkability are what the residents have requested both in the last master plan and in the planning for this process. She said that public art, green space, gathering space, dining options, and walkability all lead to a vibrant downtown attract residents to live here. These qualities would also encourage visitors to spend time and money on Main Street. In addition to walkability, Ms. Folts said bike lanes increase the number of people who can readily access downtown without increasing the need for parking. To Councilor Chadbourne's point, Ms. Folts said this project would increase quality of life while also directly increasing potential spending at local businesses in the downtown core. She said Keene has a vibrant downtown and this project would allow for the planning needed to maintain that vibrancy. She said it would be a bigger lost opportunity and cost to not make these changes now.

Todd Horner is the Vice Chair of the City's Bicycle/Pedestrian Path Advisory Committee (BPPAC), which generally supports allocating space in the public sphere for people on foot and bicycle. He said the comments at this meeting made him want to discuss the need for protected bike lanes, which he said his Committee had discussed a lot. He said BPPAC thinks it is



incredibly important to allocate space for cyclists on Main Street separate from vehicular traffic. Until that separation, he said there would not be a diversity of cyclists using the system because they are uncomfortable traveling with vehicles. He said more families and younger people could be downtown more. On the idea to route bicycles behind the downtown buildings, Mr. Horner said that as someone who bikes downtown frequently, she was skeptical that the off Main Street network would support that north-south travel without forcing people to weave in and out of parking lots. Mr. Horner said one key reason for allocating space for bike lanes on Main Street is for those individuals using them utilitarianly for transportation versus recreation. He heard comments about motorists not wanting to walk four blocks from a parking lot. He said cyclists are humans too and could also contribute to downtown business if they could access Main Street equitably with proper cycling infrastructure. He said different modes of transportation work in concert and the more people who bike downtown allow parking spaces for motorists traveling from farther away.

Mark Rebillard of Blackberry Lane owns a business downtown and is chair of the Keene downtown group, but he was speaking as a citizen. He began by commending the Council for some real debate at this workshop, which he said is the Council's job. He wanted to speak to the comments he heard about the "soul" of Keene. He said that soul is not a traffic pattern but rather a community gathering space, like Central Square has been throughout history. He said that when looking back at the history of Central Square before it was overtaken by cars, there used to be a lot of activity there. He shared some examples of how cars have overtaken Central Square over the past 50–60 years. Mr. Rebillard also thought about 2010, when the community was asked what they wanted for the future of downtown during the Master Plan process, the community was in favor of multimodal transportation. He was encouraged to see Councilor Jones referring to the Master Plan. He said Central Square would still be a gem if it were turned into a park. He also wanted to talk about the idea of circuits, which was introduced during an Arts Alive meeting. He provided the example of Portsmouth, NH, where he said people park in one place and walk all over the City because there are many businesses to visit. He said that by creating a park that extends up to Washington and Court Streets, it would create a circuit that would encourage people to keep walking, working, and visiting. Mr. Rebillard said that there is a threefold difference between business on Main Street and just off Main Street. He thought that this proposal would expand needed traffic to businesses just off Main Street.

Roger Weinreich talked about how critical it is to continue developing downtown to be pedestrian friendly. He has a building and likes it when the water flows and the infrastructure works. As a Keene taxpayer, he said he had great respect for City Staff and totally trusted them to fund and manage this project carefully. He said it was important to have faith in City Staff, who he called incredible. He was glad to see the Council addressing this project, stating that active participation was necessary from each Councilor. He recalled meeting a roundabout designer from the United Kingdom when they visited Keene in the 1990s; the designer said that Central Square was not a roundabout, but a beautiful island in the middle of a sea of swarming cars. Mr. Weinreich said he did not get that idea back then but did now. He said that the City's vibrancy is affected by the businesses, and he said that more restaurants increase vitality. He said

that cities across the nation have realized that their towns were steadily enriched by growing downtown resident populations. He cited the increase in residential units downtown. He said this project would benefit future residents. He recalled that the Council's job is to decide what is best for the future of Keene, not the present.

Pam Slack said her mother would be proud of this meeting. First, Ms. Slack addressed biking. She said her father never drove a car and used his bike to get to work on Main Street every day. However, she said he did not bike on Main Street, but behind it where it was less dangerous. Ms. Slack also addressed the "soul" of Keene, which she said are the small businesses downtown. She grew-up with a family business downtown and recalled going through many downtown disruptions. She said those small businesses were why people come downtown. Ms. Slack wanted the Council and City Manager to look at this project through some type of cost analysis. She said everyone knew there were needed improvements downtown, such as the water and sewer pipes. She said expanding Central Square might be a nice thing to do, but in her opinion it was not needed. She thought there needed to be a cost analysis to determine the need and how much it would cost the taxpayers. She knew the City was looking at grants, loans, and bonds, but said that there needed to be the least impact on taxpayers coming out of Covid-19.

Debbie Bowie thanked the City Council for considering her March 18 letter. It was clear to Ms. Bowie that water and sewer were a priority, but she said there were still many unanswered questions, such as what the costs would be for the taxpayers. She said there also needed to be consideration of the costs and implications for businesses and what would happen to them during construction. She said safety concerns should be a primary priority. She said that bicycles, pedestrians, and cars all needed consideration. Ms. Bowie said that in her letter, she requested a clear report on the proposed changes so businesses and residents could have the necessary transparency about the project. She questioned where the grant money is for these extra costs, noting that those funds are not guaranteed, so she did not think the City should rely on that.

Ed Haas said he cycles all over Main Street and around Central Square. He said that cyclists riding properly should be in the traffic lanes downtown obeying the rules. He recalled another speaker talking about e-bikes and electric scooters that can travel up to 28 mph. He asked everyone to imagine these bike lanes—no matter how protected they are—where cyclists are not protected from these electronic options. He noted that if bike lanes are raised, they could be a tripping hazard, for example. As others mentioned, Mr. Haas thought that people uncomfortable biking in the traffic could walk their bikes the four blocks downtown. He said a lot could be done to create a biking perimeter around Main Street. He thought bike lanes on Main Street would be a disaster. Mr. Haas also wanted to talk about roundabouts, which he called great when they work on busy streets. He said a mini roundabout at Central Square would not work because of the pedestrian flow that would try to cross it. He said the current traffic lights shut down so pedestrians can cross. He thought it was better to have traffic lights and said a roundabout would create a pedestrian hazard. At the February public meeting with the Stantec consultants, Mr. Haas asked if there was a model of pedestrian flow and he did not receive a clear answer. He said those models of pedestrian and traffic flow were essential considerations.

Peter Hartz of Brook Street lived downtown for 30 years and worked there most of that time. He said he traveled through downtown four times daily since 1987. First, Mr. Hartz commented on the proposed roundabout, which he said five busy streets would be entering, including tractor trailers and delivery trucks. He could not imagine how that would work. He said to also consider that the Central Square flag pole might have to be moved. He asked what would happen to the gazebo and where the Christmas tree would go. On bicycles, Mr. Hartz reiterated that bike racks at both ends of Main Street and one in the middle would allow cyclists to walk through downtown. He said this City is supposed to be walkable. Next, Mr. Hartz talked about downtown events, recalling upward of 40,000 people attending the pumpkin festivals annually. He said he had been to many special events downtown when streets were closed, and people worked around it. He said there was another special event space behind the Monadnock Food Co-Op but he never sees it used. He thought the City needed to get its priorities right. He agreed with others that small businesses downtown should be the priority, noting how little activity there was downtown in the 1990s.

Jim Sterling was born and raised in Keene. He said he was a proponent of bike lanes, calling bikes the fastest growing mode of transportation. He said it would be a terrible idea to not include protected bike lanes. He found it strange that every business owner wants parking spaces in front of their businesses but they do not want cyclists passing their storefronts. He said cyclists also shop and he asked why that should be so hard for them. He heard the comments about electric bikes and scooters, noting that for some demographics, e-bikes outsold regular bikes 2:1. He said that last year, the main age demographics for e-bikes was for 40–70 year olds. He noted that developers could start building along the Rail Trails because of the increased modes of transportation using those trails. Mr. Sterling said there was virtually no additional cost to include bike lanes. Including multimodal transportation would help the City obtain grant money.

Rowland Russell of High Street said he is an enthusiast about Cheshire County history and has read most books about Keene. He said he loves the history of this place and has worked to help celebrate that history through the Walldogs Festival and he continues collaborating with the Historical Society. He said there was one common element across all of the changes to Keene over time: innovation. While there had been and continue to be great businesses in Keene, he said that the focus on innovation would always mean change. He said that Central Square is the place in Keene that has changed most over time. He said that the proposed expansion of Central Square would actually make the Square more like it was in 1847, before the trees were planted and pavement added. He said the City had a chance to rebuild Central Square in that historical image but with changes included that would benefit future generations. Mr. Russell said that countless studies indicated the benefits of the arts, downtown dining, protected bike lanes, recreation trails, multimodal transportation, and dedicated gathering spaces. He said it is too difficult for people to safely access Central Square. He said the Council needed to think about how this infrastructure work could help the City address pressing problems he had not heard mentioned, like climate change, which could be addressed by looking at how water flows and is channeled. He said there was a great opportunity to accommodate the needs of future

generations.

Tom Savastano of Winchester Street had lived in Keene for eight years. He thanked the City Council for the work they were putting into this matter and their careful deliberation. Mr. Savastano said he tried to consider the proposals from a neutral perspective as he reviewed the Stantec plans and attended the public information sessions. He recalled seeing the proposed design concepts of what Main Street could look like compared to today. He noticed that the central focus of the plans was the mini roundabout as opposed to the large space that currently exists to drive around Central Square. He recalled before he moved to Keene, when others throughout New England would tell him that Keene was famous for the “keyhole,” which is the famous view of Central Square with the church that is visible when driving around Main Street. Mr. Savastano encouraged keeping Central Square largely as it exists today after making the necessary infrastructure improvements.

Dorrie Masten stated that the City’s grant application stated that it was a third party approach to come up with an idea to change Keene’s downtown. Once that was heard, she said that a Steering Committee was formed and the members were hand picked by the Mayor. She asked everyone to think about that and said that what came out of this Steering Committee was a plan to change downtown. She heard a Councilor state that the new system would last 50 years, when the current downtown design was only 25–40 years old, which meant there was still 10 years to come up with a good plan. She said that Councilor Ormerod mentioned pipe leakage, which Ms. Masten said she had never heard about that, and she was concerned now and imagined the 1,500 members of Save the Square would also be concerned. She asked for a study so residents can be more aware. She questioned how many lawsuits and closed businesses resulted from the Concord, NH, project. She said the City could apply for grants for the infrastructure work, but she asked that nothing be done until those funds are acquired because the City cannot promise the taxpayers one thing and then do another. She said all Keene residents deserve to know where their money is going. She said the business interruptions and impacts would be huge and she asked why the City should risk it. She asked where the economic study was justifying this potential damage to businesses. Ms. Masten said the MSFI Committee should demand a study on the safety, history, and functionality of Central Square, which she said is beautiful and works currently with few complaints until this project was introduced. On the topic of green spaces for events, she asked whether there would be a safety study for pedestrians, traffic deferment, and emergency management. She said the City deserves more in terms of safety. She said no one would know what is best for downtown until there are studies. She said the project could not be done in one or two years, unless there is an inside contract, which she said would lead to disaster. She asked the plan for contractors and where they are getting their employees. She said the City—like many employers—has had open employee positions with no results for years. Ms. Masten agreed with Councilor Greenwald that this project is not urgent. She said [you] need to tell the public why this is urgent. She said that the Mayor was incorrect when he told the public about the wooden pipes; she said that information came from the City Engineer and Assistant City Manager. She expressed concern about Stantec, asking who runs the consulting firm and why they approached the City. She asked if the City had done their homework, noting that a simple

Google search would make the City consider other companies. She said that our citizens should be more of a priority than a Canadian company that approached the City to change the beloved downtown.

Peter Espiefs of Middle Street said he loves downtown Keene, which he called an iconic and historic site. He acknowledged that the Council was grappling with some problems downtown and listed some suggestions. He said there needs to be a better traffic light arrangement and an increased police presence, the latter of which he said is needed with so many out-of-town visitors, who might take advantage of a roundabout with no police. Mr. Espiefs said that bike lanes might work somewhere else, but he saw them as a liability for the City of Keene. He said the bike lanes would have to be safe and the City would have to maintain them. He did not think the bike industry was educating people about safe cycling practices that do not endanger pedestrians. He hoped the Council would do what is right for Keene.

Ted McGreer of Forest View Road is a downtown business and property owner. He thought this was a great, cordial workshop. He said he heard a lot of comments about Keene's downtown retail sector being less important today because people shop online; they say Keene is now an arts, entertainment, and dining downtown. He took offense to those notions because there are still retailers downtown who are fighting hard against Amazon and other online retailers. Mr. McGreer spoke in favor of retractable balusters for events, noting how expensive jersey barriers are. He said the downtown merchants are the soul of the downtown. He hoped that this project would be completed during a shorter time period because the longer it lasts, the more damage will be done to those businesses.

James Huntly said there were certain things he thought should not change because they are better off the way they are. He asked if people would change the green monster at Fenway Park. He thought the idea of this project was doing something just for the sake of doing it, which he thought would be awful. He thought downtown Keene and Central Square should be treated as the icons that they are. He noted how memorable the downtown is, comparing it to Marblehead, MA. He said he had been driving around Central Square since he was 16 years old and never had any problem, it just might take a little getting used to. Mr. Huntly noted how the iconic image of Keene is worth a lot and impresses parents bringing their children here for college. He did not want to see this iconic downtown destroyed.

Mayor Hansel thanked the members of the public who spoke and listened.

## **VII. Adjournment**

The Council agreed that the next workshop should be Wednesday, April 26 at 6:00 PM. There being no further business, Mayor adjourned the meeting at 8:35 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Katryna Kibler, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,  
Terri M. Hood, Assistant City Clerk