

City of Keene
New Hampshire

MUNICIPAL SERVICES, FACILITIES & INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, June 26, 2024

6:00 PM

**Council Chamber,
City Hall**

Members Present:

Mitchell H. Greenwald, Chair
Randy L. Filiault, Vice Chair
Jacob R. Favolise
Catherine I. Workman
Laura E. Tobin

Members Not Present:

All Present

Jay V. Kahn, Mayor

Staff Present:

Elizabeth A. Dragon, City Manager
Don Lussier, Public Works Director
Andrew Bohannon, Deputy City Manager
Brett Rusnock, Infrastructure Project Manager
Amanda Palmeira, Assistant City Attorney
Mari Brunner, Senior Planner
Med Kopczynski, Economic Development
Director
Richard Wood, Fire Marshall
Jesse Rounds, Community Development
Director

Chair Greenwald called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM and explained the procedures of the meeting.

1) The Elm City Rotary, the Keene Rotary, and the Monadnock Interfaith Project - Requesting Permission to Erect a Peace Pole in Central Square

Chair Greenwald asked who was here to speak to the request from the Elm City Rotary, the Keene Rotary, and the Monadnock Interfaith Project (MIP).

Carl Jacobs of 81 Wyman Rd. stated that the three groups are interested in having a public monument dedicated to peace in Central Square. He continued that they have had conversations with a number of people, and people from the groups supporting it will briefly speak tonight. They understand that the process to get something put on Central Square is the public art process, so they have tried to put their proposal into that format. They chose a particular location on Central Square in their proposal. Part of the process is a consultation with City staff. Andy Bohannon worked with them. There might be some other options, which he would prefer Mr. Bohannon speak to. The groups' intent is to have a peace monument on Central Square. He knows that tonight the Committee will be talking about some other things and they understand their particular request might have to be folded into some longer projects, which the three groups think it can be.

Chair Greenwald asked to hear from Deputy City Manager Andrew Bohannon.

Mr. Bohannon thanked Mr. Jacobs for bringing this forward. He continued that he and (Mr. Jacobs) met and talked. Given the timeline of the construction of the downtown revitalization project including Central Square, there was some discussion about the fountain, and potentially the possibility of mixing these two proposals together and working through public art to create some type of peace fountain. Representatives from the three groups were open to that idea, and to working with some artists to continue that conversation. They are bringing the conversation back to the Committee in hopes that the Committee accepts this direction and that they can move forward.

Chair Greenwald stated that one of the points that came up during the design process for the downtown project was that the “pile of rocks” that currently exist as a fountain could be improved upon, in terms of the artistic value and historical value. He thought it was a great combination of solving two issues. They would like to have something more historic, as well as a representation of peace, as Mr. Jacobs and the groups have brought forward. He thinks this is likely to be a great solution. Designing art will be a process, but at least there is time for it.

Chair Greenwald asked if Mr. Bohannon had anything else to add. Mr. Bohannon replied no, Chair Greenwald summarized it well. Chair Greenwald asked if Mr. Jacobs wanted to respond.

Mr. Jacobs stated that he wants to make clear that whatever ultimately is put there (in Central Square), the Rotary Clubs’ and the MIP’s interest is in the peace monument part of it. He continued that if some renovation to the fountain is needed, the Rotary Clubs and MIP did not come in prepared to address that. They understand that someone else, maybe the City, would take that on. They need a little more discussion to find out what they are really talking about. The Rotary Clubs and the MIP are focused on the peace monument.

Chair Greenwald replied that he understands. He asked if anyone else from one of the three groups wants to speak.

Tom Julius of 3 Tannery Rd., Gilsum, stated that he chairs the MIP. He continued that it is an honor to be here with this team of civic leaders in support of placing a peace monument in Central Square. The MIP has Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, Bahá’í, and wholehearted individuals unaffiliated with a particular spiritual tradition, all with the common belief in caring for others and that through positive, collective action, they can make more good things happen. A peace monument in Central Square placed in proximity to the existing statue commemorating the bravery of the military will be a powerful symbol that ultimately, for all of us, (represents) peace as the outcome they strive for. Tonight, the MIP wants to convey that the clergy, faith leaders, and local citizens of MIP are ready to work with this team and the City to place a message of peace as a permanent part of the public landscape. He thanks them for taking this on in a serious way.

Cameron Tease of 21 Grant St. stated that he is a Rotary Club of Keene member and the immediate past president. He continued that the Rotary connection with this project proposal is strong. Also here tonight is Phil Wyzik, president of Elm City Rotary Club. The two clubs work in coordination on a number of things. Regarding local projects, the Elm City Rotary Club is the backbone of the Clarence DeMar Marathon, with the proceeds going to sneakers for kids, the Community Kitchen, and various things. The local projects of the Rotary Club of Keene include Jane's Kids, which provides clothing for elementary students before they start school each fall. The Keene and Elm City Rotary Clubs sponsor the Interact Clubs at Keene High School and Monadnock High School. Thirty students from the two clubs went to Puerto Rico in February and worked on a project refurbishing abandoned schools as community centers. The Rotary Club of Keene is involved internationally with the Rotary Club of Einbeck (Germany), regarding relief for Ukrainian refugees.

Mr. Tease continued that Rotary International, since its inception, has spent more than \$4 billion on life-changing, sustainable projects such as eradicating polio and providing scholarships to seven Rotary Peace Centers located around the world. Rotary has deep roots, locally and internationally, in terms of world peace. The proposal for the peace monument is very timely. They believe that peace poles are powerful catalysts that bring communities together. The monument displays the message, "*May peace prevail on Earth,*" and usually includes that phrase in additional languages meaningful to the host site. It is an international message of peace with over 250,000 peace monuments or poles found in every country in the world. The Rotary Club of Keene and Elm City Rotary support a peace monument on Central Square as an affirmation of peace by the people of Keene and as a way to inspire unity among people of all cultures, ethnicities, and backgrounds.

Phil Wyzik of 15 Base Hill Rd. stated that as he is listening to his colleagues, it strikes him that he hopes the idea of peace lands in the heart of everyone in the Keene community. He continued that he hopes it is a value they all share. He looks forward to the day when his grandson, in school here in Keene, can come with his class to Central Square and have the teacher talk about peace. Not only about international conflicts that result in war, but peace here at home, peace with each other, peace in our hearts, peace that makes the world go round. He supports this idea and hopes the Committee brings this to the Council for full consideration.

Chair Greenwald asked for public comment. Hearing none, he asked for comment from the Committee.

Councilor Workman thanked the petitioners for bringing this idea forward. She continued that as a member of the Human Rights Committee and chair of the Monadnock Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Coalition (MDEIB), she can definitely get behind and support this initiative. She looks forward to seeing the concept fleshed out with the fountain a little more. She thinks that might be a great idea.

Councilor Tobin stated that in addition to what Councilor Workman said, she wants to thank the individuals that brought this idea forward. She continued that when people come to the Committee with an idea saying it is something they want to support and are willing to invest in, it says a lot. She appreciates it.

Chair Greenwald stated that furthermore, he wants to thank the Deputy City Manager and the consultants for coming up with this great idea to make the fountain actually meaningful. He continued that the fountain (having meaning) instead of being just rocks spewing water is very important to him. He knows the installation of the existing fountain was meaningful to others.

Councilor Favolise made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Workman.

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee recommends the City Council direct the City Manager to work with the petitioners to incorporate elements of the proposed peace pole into a new fountain design for the common.

2) **PowerPoint Presentation - Neighborhood Parking Project – Walker Consultants**

Chair Greenwald asked to hear from Community Development Department staff.

Mari Brunner, Senior Planner, introduced Greg Strangeways from Walker Consultants. She continued that to give a quick recap of where this project came from, the Committee saw a presentation about this project back in January, but the genesis of it came out of the housing needs assessment report that was completed in June of 2023. One recommendation was to look at parking, which some of the conversations the parking consultants had with the community highlighted as a barrier. Thus, staff went after another Invest NH grant and received it for regulatory development. The grant that funded this project is specifically to develop regulations that will help increase housing supply. They will hear Mr. Strangeways talk about the results of this project and its key recommendations, but they should keep in mind that it is all geared toward the goal of increasing housing supply.

Mr. Strangeways stated that when they presented to the MSFI Committee in January, that was the beginning of the project, and now they are near the end of it. He continued that they have a draft report and draft recommendations. Given tonight's crowded agenda, he will not go through all of them, but will hit some of the highlights. The team is still finalizing the (report and recommendations), so there is still time for the Committee to give feedback tonight or within the next week to 10 days.

Mr. Strangeways continued that as Ms. Brunner mentioned, this is grant funded, coming out of the housing needs assessment. The study area is not downtown, but the neighborhoods that are adjacent to downtown where it is already zoned for more density than exists today. These are the likely areas for more housing. They are not talking about sudden, explosive development, but about allowing more housing over time. Here and everywhere, providing off street parking can

be a barrier to that because it takes a lot of space and money, so if there is a way to reduce the need for off-street parking specifically. This project focused on enabling more on-street parking to reduce the need for off-street parking. The team did some outreach. There are a couple of Ordinances he will ask if the Committee has any feedback on. The team had an online survey and an open house early in the project. They were at the Community Night event last week, and at the ice rink and the Public Works Department area. Their technical advisory committee includes City staff from Police, Fire, Public Works, and Community Development.

Mr. Strangeways continued that the team heard that today, most people do not need on-street parking, so they did not give the team much feedback on what is out there today. Most houses have driveways that can hold multiple cars, even if people have visitors. However, for the few people who really do need to use on-street parking overnight due to not having parking where they live, the winter parking ban is a major inconvenience. One of the team's major recommendations is to switch the overnight winter parking ban to an emergency weather ban. There is a draft Ordinance for that, which City staff is reviewing, including the City Attorney's Office. He believes it will come to the MSFI Committee. The idea would be to (ban parking overnight) only when there is inclement weather and the City declares an emergency. It sounds like there is already momentum for the City to do this. This enables more use of on-street parking, especially if it becomes more formalized. Many neighborhoods have informal on-street parking, where people park half in the street and half on the grass just to keep out of the way. If the City is going to formalize more on-street parking, to be able to use it year round, except for the few days a year when there are real snow or ice events, it would help.

Mr. Strangeways stated that he wants to stop to get feedback on the Ordinance the team is drafting. He continued that they are balancing not being too prescriptive about it, but making sure there is enough in there that people would know who has the authority to declare this emergency, and how much notice would be given. They do not want to get into the details of how the City would tell people, but it would be multiple methods, which could change over time as the City finds out what works. In drafting this Ordinance, the team looked at peers that use this kind of system, such as Portsmouth, NH and some municipalities in Colorado. He asked what the Committee wants to see in this Ordinance and what their general recommendations are.

Chair Greenwald asked if there is an overnight parking ban downtown in the summer. Mr. Strangeways replied that he believes there is, but the team did not focus on that as much, since the study area was not in the downtown. Chair Greenwald replied that he would like to draw that into the conversation.

Councilor Favolise stated that he has a question. He asked, regarding when people are not able to park on the street due to the winter parking ban, if the team got a sense of which lots people are using or where they are parking instead. Mr. Strangeways replied that he remembers one person at one of the meetings who said they have to move their car three times in 24 hours to make it work, because there are alternating nights in the lots, and there were places they could park during the day, then overnight, and then they had to move the car again. It is a small

percentage of people at this point (who need overnight on-street parking), but that could grow again if there is more housing in these areas. For those few people, it is a major inconvenience. Again, the team focused on these specific neighborhoods, but he thinks Chair Greenwald is right that there may be many more people affected by the downtown parking ban.

Chair Greenwald stated that he thinks many of the regulations go back to when Keene State College (KSC) had over 5,000 students and they were parking anywhere they could park. Mr. Strangeways agreed and it could be like that again someday.

Mr. Strangeways stated that the team is working on another Ordinance to update the residential parking permit program. He continued that to the point about KSC, the residential parking permit program is essentially dormant. It has not really been needed, partially due to the reduced enrollment at KSC. The idea is that if there will be more on-street parking, there might be more of a need in the future for a residential parking permit program to make sure that residents can get parking near their house and not have to compete with others from outside the area. Typically, the competition happens more during the day from an institution like KSC or commuters coming into the area for work.

Mr. Strangeways continued that again, the team is looking at peers while drafting this Ordinance, which would be about how to establish the City's own zone triggers that might get the City to study it and decide if a zone is appropriate, what the boundaries would be, and how exactly the permit program would work. He asked if the Committee wants to give feedback on this. Chair Greenwald replied that he can continue with the presentation.

Mr. Strangeways stated that a couple weeks ago, the team presented to the Joint Planning Board/Planning, Licenses, and Development Committee about this. He continued that they have some zoning requirements. The team commends the City for reducing some of the parking requirements in the last three or four years. They know there are some statewide changes that could affect this, and it might work well with the team's recommendation to have specific reduced requirements for senior housing and affordable housing. The data shows those have lower parking demand than other types of housing, which makes sense, as fewer people or households would have cars. The team has some specific recommendations about adding that to the Zoning Ordinances.

Mr. Strangeways continued that something else Walker Consultants often recommends is to adjust the multifamily minimum parking requirements where the City feels they need them. He knows the City has eliminated them in the downtown core, but the team recommends they do it by bedroom. The size of the unit matters. It makes sense that the bigger the unit is, the more bedrooms there are, and the more people and cars there are. They have suggestions about further refinements to the minimum parking requirements.

Mr. Strangeways continued that part of the team's recommendations are about demand, to think about not only the parking supply, but to reduce demand as they can. The Planning Board

already has the capability to require certain things whenever there is new development, but the team wants to confirm that that is a good thing, whether it is infrastructure for bike lanes and bike racks or a transit stop. The team's recommendations include updating the transit service if possible. It has limited hours. It might be possible to shift the service to on demand. That type of service, called "micro transit," has come a long way and is easier. The report also has lighting recommendations. He knows it is not easy, but maybe when they are re-doing a road, they could install lighting as there are a few places that could use it. That could help make it possible for people to park further away or possibly walk or bike where they might not otherwise. They also recommend sidewalks and crosswalks, and they encourage employers to incentivize things that help manage the parking demand.

Mr. Strangeways continued that overall, they found that in the study area, all of the new parking for the new housing that is projected over the next 10 years could be on-street parking. That probably will not happen. Some streets would need to become one way. However, there is a significant supply there that could help at least reduce the need for off-street parking. The report has a recommended guide, based on the length and width of the street. In addition, if the City adds more on-street parking, they might need to extend the hours in the areas of enforcement of that. They would need to plan and budget for that. Parking should be self-sustaining, as it already is for the City. Even as they expand it, they want to keep in mind that the revenues should cover, at the very least, the added operating expense.

Mr. Strangeways continued that the Technical Advisory Committee is reviewing all of the recommendations. People can go to ([keenenh.gov/parking-services](https://www.keenenh.gov/parking-services)) to give feedback. Again, the team is still finalizing the recommendations, if the MSFI Committee members have feedback now or think of feedback soon after the meeting.

Councilor Favolise stated that he knows the team did not focus on the downtown core, but a recent City Council discussion resulted in a study moving forward about a downtown parking structure. He asked if a large parking structure, if built, could potentially absorb some of the demand.

Mr. Strangeways replied certainly in that area. He continued that he thinks that regarding the team's study area, a parking structure could help with parking when there are snow events and people need to move their cars off the streets. That is what many peer municipalities do, offer people parking in municipal garages and lots. For the neighborhoods the team was looking at, obviously the downtown garage would be a little far for people to walk to, but a parking structure certainly could help support housing close to the proposed structure.

Chair Greenwald asked if there was any further comment from the Committee or the public. Hearing none, he asked for a motion.

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

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee accepted the Neighborhood Parking Project presentation as informational.

3) PowerPoint Presentation – Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Plan - Public Works Director

Chair Greenwald asked to hear from Public Works Director Don Lussier.

Mr. Lussier introduced Steven Clarke from Anser Advisory, attending the meeting remotely. He continued that staff asked Anser Advisory to prepare an Electric Vehicle (EV) Infrastructure Plan. The reason why is because Public Works realized they needed some direction and guidance. There has been a lot of focus in the last year or two on electric vehicles and the coming electric fleet, and manufacturers declaring that they are not going to be making gas-powered vehicles at some point in the future. They realized Public Works would need to play a role in providing charging infrastructure for the public, and they wanted to look at what this meant for the City's own fleet of vehicles. They asked Mr. Clarke and his team to give the City some guidance on questions such as what type of chargers the City needs to provide for the public to support this electrification, how many, and where they should be. Again, also looking at the City's fleet and what makes sense for them to look at electric vehicle replacements for.

Mr. Lussier continued that his mantra to Mr. Clarke and his team has been, "This is really just focused on the near-term." This industry is changing so quickly that they did not want to try to project 20 years into the future. He asked Mr. Clarke to focus on what the City needs to do to get through the next three to five years. When Mr. Clarke was looking at the fleet, specifically, they asked him to base the analysis on what makes economic sense for the City. They did not ask him to advance climate adaptation goals, or be at the forefront of municipal fleet electrification. They wanted to know what made economic sense, for the City to convert to electric moving forward. If the Council wants the Public Works Department to be more aggressive in pursuing more aspirational goals with the fleet, they can look at that, but that is not the analysis and recommendations that Mr. Clarke will be giving them tonight.

Mr. Lussier continued that the motion in front of the Committee is really just a check of the City Council's temperature. He continued that it does not obligate any funds. Staff just wants to know if they are heading in the right direction, and if so, they will go out and start looking for grant opportunities. There is a lot of money available right now for electric vehicles and charging infrastructure. They want feedback from the Council before they start putting staff resources into trying to chase those grants. Currently, one is open for applications, due in August. That would likely fit well with the recommendations from Mr. Clarke.

Steven Clarke stated that he is Vice President of Clean Mobility at Anser Advisory. He continued that he is excited to walk the Committee through the work Anser Advisory has recently completed with the City with regard to an Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Plan. It has been great to work with the City staff to help prepare Keene for the coming surge in electric

vehicles, as well as providing direction for the City's near-term investment in fleet electrification and public charging.

Mr. Clarke continued that Anser Advisory is nationwide and provides advisory services to clients as they head down the pathway of decarbonization, energy efficiency, sustainability, and electric vehicles. The purpose of the Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Plan was to first understand Keene's previous directives related to electric vehicles, what has been said before, and how they can continue the work within the plan. It also provides direction for Keene's investment in fleet electrification and public charging in the next 3 to 5 years. As Mr. Lussier mentioned, it is important to focus on the near-term actions that Keene can take to help advance the City's EV readiness and prepare for the surge in EV ownership and use amongst those who live, work, and travel through Keene. Probably most importantly, the plan provides the City with EV charging project concepts, with layouts and pricing, which are crucial to applying for the funding currently available related to EV charging. With those project concepts in hand, Keene can better position itself to apply for available grant funding.

Mr. Clarke continued that in looking at the project background and in reviewing the material, it became evident that Keene is a leader in planning for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Keene has been thinking about this for a long time and taking considerable steps to plan a decarbonized future. From this review, the team found direct support for the projects proposed by the Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Plan, from the desire to transition the fleet of gas and diesel vehicles to low or no emission vehicles, to a desire to evaluate converting the police fleet to electric. Keene has already thought long and hard about how to meet greenhouse gas emission reduction targets. The Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Plan, therefore, is set up well to help Keene realize some of those goals.

Mr. Clarke continued that tonight's presentation will talk about stakeholder and community engagement, municipal fleet electrification, public charging on City-owned property, public parking facilities, potential funding sources to reduce the City's capital expenditures, best practices for the City to implement, and recommended next steps.

Mr. Clarke continued that they designed stakeholder and public engagement strategies to gauge public sentiment with regard to EV chargers. While the team was in town evaluating potential charger sites, they held a listening session breakfast for Keene's Energy and Climate Committee and the Monadnock Sustainability Hub to provide initial feedback on EV ownership in Keene. The team was happy to hear about a number of EV-related activities happening, but all agreed that further public education was needed to overcome some of the not-so-glamorous notions about EVs. There was also conversation about improving the permitting process to make it easier for private developers to install public facing EV chargers and more clarity was sought regarding parking regulations when EV charging.

Mr. Clarke continued that using Keene's existing Flashvote survey platform, the team reached out to residents to gauge their willingness to see Keene invest in EV infrastructure and where they would like to see chargers around town. As examples of responses, 41% of respondents were in favor of converting City vehicles to EVs, but only if there was a lower total cost of ownership. Seventy-five percent of respondents said the best place for public charging would be in downtown parking lots, and 61% said that in order to reduce barriers to EV charging, the City should make it easy or easier for private entities to install EV charging to meet public needs. This is an important distinction he wants to make sure is clear. The public charging network can be owned by public or private entities who provide charging for EV drivers. Knowing Keene's EV charging needs will be met by a mix of public and private investment, this points to a strategic role for Keene to invest in EV charging to fill gaps where privately owned public charging network providers want to install.

Mr. Clarke continued that the last survey they conducted was designed to capture feedback from out-of-town folks as well as Keene residents to see if those who might consider using an EV to commute to Keene had different opinions. Those results were similar to results they collected before, in that 47% of respondents said they would like to see more EV chargers in Keene before considering purchasing an EV. They also ranked the downtown lots and Parks & Rec as the best spots for charging.

Mr. Clarke stated that Anser Advisory analyzed Keene's own fleet of vehicles and how electrification over time might look. It is important to note that Anser Advisory followed the guidance and public opinion on how to plan for fleet electrification and that it should be based primarily on economics. The conversion plan was designed to maximize savings to the City by purchasing and operating EVs where it made financial sense, and continuing to purchase and operate combustion engine vehicles where an EV conversion did not make financial sense. This means that in the short term, the City should predominantly purchase hybrids, and some EVs were possible for vehicles in need of replacement, trying to find full EVs for police vehicles as soon as suitable replacements are found. Medium-term, Keene should look at converting light duty trucks and vans to full battery electric vehicles, and in the long-term, convert the remaining sedans, SUVs, and heavy-duty pickups to the lowest emission vehicle that exists. Following a plan like this, Anser Advisory predicts significant savings, versus the business as usual case, estimating about \$2.5 million in operational savings over 20 years. He knows that is longer than the timeframe of their recommendations, but it says that Keene's investments now in EVs and EV infrastructure will pay off over time as they convert their fleet. Just as important, by converting their vehicles, they reduce their greenhouse gas emissions over those 20 years by almost 10,500 tons of CO₂. Thus, there is an environmental benefit to this as well.

Mr. Clarke continued that based on this conversion strategy, they then looked at how many EV chargers would be needed at City facilities to support a conversion to an EV fleet. Public Works and Parks & Rec will need the first chargers, followed by City Hall and Fleet Services. He

showed mock-ups that are part of their larger deliverable. He continued that they show different kinds of chargers at each of the different services and where they might go.

Mr. Clarke continued that going back to public EV charging infrastructure, they used the work the City had done to find how many total chargers would be needed across Keene in the near- to mid-term future. On the low end of that estimate, assuming there is a high level of EV charging done at people's residences, Keene would need about 60 level two and five DC fast chargers by the end of 2028. On the high end, which assumes there a low level of EV charging at people's residences, that number grows to 185 level two and 23 DC fast chargers. It is important to note that the City of Keene does not, and probably should not own all these chargers, but it is the City's role to fill those gaps in public charging infrastructure with the chargers on the City's own land. To that end, the team evaluated 16 potential public charging sites, scoring them according to criteria they developed in conjunction with Mr. Lussier and his team. The top scoring sites were the Commercial St. lot and Parks & Rec, followed by Gilbo St. and Wheelock Park. For the top two sites, they performed a preliminary site layout and cost estimate to assist Keene in applying for grant funding. It is important to note that the Commercial St. charging hub is an expansion of the chargers that are there now. The Parks & Rec layout has four spots for public charging and one spot dedicated for Fleet charging.

Mr. Clarke continued that they looked at potential funding sources that Keene could consider to help offset or defer the upfront costs of EV charging around the city. These include federal grants and tax credits, as well as "Charging-as-a-service" agreements, whereby upfront project costs are paid back over time on a per kilowatt hour basis to the ultimate owner of the stations. It is similar to how a solar PPA works, but for EV charging. Keene is not eligible as a public entity to apply for National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) funding, but it is important nevertheless, because private developers will probably be leveraging this federal funding to bring additional public DC fast chargers to the alternative fuel corridors in the Keene area. He does not know if they have already done that. It is something to keep an eye on.

Mr. Clarke continued that regarding best practices, through Anser Advisory's public outreach and research as part of this project, they recommended things that could help Keene better facilitate private development of public EV charging infrastructure. These are everything from developing a scoring rubric to help developers understand how the City is evaluating EV charging locations; to working with the local electric utility, Eversource, to develop a guide to EV charging installation; to standardizing the permit and review process; and more. Many of these actions can easily be completed and advertised to the private sector to pique their interest in helping install public EV charging infrastructure in Keene.

Mr. Clarke continued that the team has learned from all of this that Keene has public support to offer public charging and to electrify their City fleet if done in a fiscally responsible way. There are cost and CO2 emission savings to be had by strategically converting the City's fleet of vehicles to hybrids and fully electric vehicles over the next 20 years. Together with the private sector, Keene should play a role in offering public charging on City land, especially to fill gaps

where private developers may not necessarily install EV charging, such as near multi-family homes. Regarding priority sites for EV charging, for the fleet they are looking at Public Works and Fleet Services, City Hall, and Parks & Rec. For public charging, they recommend an expansion of the Commercial St. lot's charging hub, and Parks & Rec. External funding is available to help offset costs and there are a number of low to medium effort best practices the City can implement to support the private development of public chargers.

Mr. Clarke continued that finally, the next steps. Keene should use Anser Advisory's layouts and budgetary estimates to apply for grant funding. It sounds like Mr. Lussier is already doing that, which is excellent. Other next steps include using local champions and partners, such as the utility, to educate the public about EVs, and looking at the current permitting process for EV chargers and folding in best practices possible. From the City perspective, the next steps are monitoring current EV product offerings and looking for those suitable vehicle replacements, especially for first responder vehicles, then conducting a pilot by buying one or two vehicles, letting City staff drive them, and collecting feedback on the vehicles and charging to inform future purchases.

Chair Greenwald asked Mr. Lussier who the point of contact is in the City. Mr. Lussier asked if he means for this specific plan, or going forward. Chair Greenwald replied for going forward, if a property owner wants to get involved with this. Mr. Lussier replied that it would depend on what the specifics of the project are. He continued that if a property owner is looking to install EV charging on their property, the point of contact would be the Community Development Department. They would go through a building permit process for that installation.

Chair Greenwald asked if the Community Development Department is the point of contact for information. Mr. Lussier replied yes, if the project is on private property. He continued that if an EV charging company wanted to propose putting in a couple of DC fast chargers in a City parking lot, they could contact the Public Works Department. It depends on who and what the project is.

Councilor Favolise stated that he is always happy to look at the City's regulation and permitting processes to see if they can cut some red tape and support private development of anything, but in this case, EV chargers. He continued that he has bit of concern with two pieces of this. First, the installation of chargers potentially downtown. His question is to what extent the existing chargers downtown are being used, because one of the commitments they have been making through the Downtown Infrastructure Project conversations is to not lose any parking downtown. In his view, tying up spots for EV charging if the demand is not there has the effect of taking away parking. The other piece is that he does not dispute the 20-year cost savings estimate, but his support for investing in the electrification of the City's fleet would be 100% contingent on almost 100% grant funding for that. They are asking the taxpayers to support many investments up front right now. They just passed a budget that increased property taxes. The Committee will vote tonight on moving the Downtown Infrastructure Project forward, which is an investment for the taxpayers. Thus, a cost savings over 20 years with an increased investment up front seems

like a harder sell. If grant funding is available, which he knows City staff will go after, that is great, but if this will result in an increased burden on the taxpayer, then he is more skeptical.

Chair Greenwald asked if Committee members had more questions. Hearing none, he asked if members of the public had any questions.

Mayor Jay Kahn of 135 Darling Rd. stated that the State has interest in this as well. He continued that placing an EV charging idea beyond just the City, so that it reaches highways and allows for interstate travel is a good idea. He is not sure if that will be with the Southwest Regional Planning Commission, but the City's efforts need to pair up with some larger vision that allows for that interstate travel.

Chair Greenwald asked if there were further comments. Hearing none, he thanked Mr. Clarke for the report, and encouraged everyone to read it in full. He asked for a motion.

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

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee recommends accepting the report as informational, and that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to identify and apply for grants to help the City implement the report's recommendations.

4) PowerPoint Presentation – Project Update – Roadway Safety Action Plan - Public Works Director

Chair Greenwald asked to hear from the Public Works Director. Mr. Lussier stated that he will turn it over to the Infrastructure Project Manager and his consultant.

Brett Rusnock, Infrastructure Project Manager, introduced Frank Koczalka, Project Manager from VHB. He continued that they are happy to be here tonight to provide an update about the City's progress on the Roadway Safety Action Plan. In 2022, the City applied for a federal grant through the Safe Streets for All (SS4A) program. This new, five-year program from 2022 to 2026 was developed through the bipartisan infrastructure law. Its goal is to eliminate or seriously reduce fatalities and serious injuries on roadway networks. The City's grant application was successful. They have a total of \$350,000 from the federal government for this work, and the City is providing a 20% match for a total grant amount of \$437,000. Tonight, he will give the Committee a brief update on the progress so far, and Mr. Koczalka will go into the details of how they have done that so far.

Mr. Koczalka stated that this exciting program puts safety at the forefront for the community. He continued that with the SS4A program, when they talk about streets, they do not mean just the roadway itself. Rather, it is from right-of-way to right-of-way. They are talking about the roadway itself with the vehicles and bike lanes, but also the sidewalks, pedestrians, and all

vulnerable users. They want to be inclusive and look out for everyone; this is not just about vehicles, as it was in the past. The SS4A's foundation is safe road users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and safe vehicles. They look at it from a holistic standpoint, meaning to have safe vehicles, safe speeds on the road, and safe roads. That means looking at whether there are roads that are promoting speed or promoting dangerous situations, and looking at post-crash care. There will always be accidents. The federal government used to always say the goal was to have zero accidents, but they realize people make mistakes and there is no way to have zero accidents. They changed it so the goal now is to make everything safer. For example, roundabouts slow people down at intersections, to reduce fatalities and serious injuries.

Mr. Koczalka continued that the graphic in the PowerPoint shows the different components of the program. The inner circle is the "safe system approach," and then there are five components on the outside. On the exterior are what is "unacceptable" – any deaths or serious injuries. It talks about how humans make mistakes. This is the framework and all of the components work together. It is not about any one piece. He will go through each component of the SS4A program to give the Committee an overview of where in the action plan it is and how it will be developed.

Mr. Koczalka stated that VHB gets crash data from the Department of Safety and the NH Department of Transportation (NHDOT). He continued that they know where accidents happen. They have a graphic called a "heat map." Areas shown in yellow are where most of the accidents are, and areas in which accidents are sparser are shown in purple or blue. One would think that downtown, where there is a lot of traffic, would be where some crashes are. It is every type of crash, not just motor vehicle to motor vehicle, but also pedestrians and bicyclists. That is the framework for what they know; it is reactive. Now, they need to take a proactive approach and see where the locations are in the city that have similar characteristics to where the accidents are occurring, and whether they can make those locations safer, and whether they can make the locations that they know have accidents safer.

He continued that the next thing they did with the data analysis is what they call a "high injury network." They look at all the roads in the city, municipally owned and State owned. They identified 15 segments of roadway that have a higher percentage of accidents than the rest of the roads. Main St., as one would assume, and there are some outliers toward the north and to the west. It does not mean the team only looks at those. They are looking at everything, but these stand out because of the number of accidents that occurred. The program has to have equity and look for everyone. Thus, they also need to focus on Keene's disadvantaged communities, shown on the graphic in gray. This program is for everyone, regardless of who you are, where you are going, or where you are from. They look to see where in Keene there are people or families with lower incomes, families with no cars, and older populations. Those types of communities usually have a higher percentage of accidents. The team looks at and analyzes that. When they collect all this data, they focus on making sure they are focusing on disadvantaged communities and these types of situations, to make it better for everyone.

Mr. Koczalka stated that regarding the project's goal and objectives, they worked with a steering committee that the City pulled together, a diverse group. The steering committee came up with the project's goal. VHB did not propose it, but they helped facilitate. The goal is to reduce the number of fatalities and serious injuries by 50% by 2035, working towards zero by 2045. The plan will have objectives of addressing the fatalities and serious injuries, using the Safe System Approach to transportation in Keene, focusing on that and showing how that works, but also engaging with partners and the community itself. It is not just the City; everyone is in this together. It is about fostering a culture of safety.

Mr. Koczalka stated that regarding the crashes, they have a ton of comprehensive data, but the data only tells certain things. It tells what has happened. They need to do a stakeholder engagement. The team worked with the City to develop a website to give information about the SS4A program, and they included a 14-question survey for the public. He gives Keene a lot of credit, because the team had 532 responses to the survey, and generally, they are lucky if they get 200 responses. People (in Keene) really engaged with the questions. On maps people could put pins on for certain things, there were over 1,100 pins. The team had a substantial amount of information from the public to use, but they did not stop there. The steering committee met monthly, as did the technical advisory committee with City staff. It is important for them to get information, because consultants, even if they live in the area, do not know everything. They need the feedback. They listened to stakeholders through seven meetings, including neighborhood meetings on the east and west side, meetings (with) the BPPAC, SAU 29, folks from higher education, and major employers. Tonight is the first time they are in front of the MSFI Committee, and they will return when they are farther along with the plan.

Mr. Koczalka stated that now that they have all of this information from stakeholders and the crash data, they need to look at strategies and countermeasures. He continued that the question is what they can do out there. The Federal Highway Administration has a toolbox of what they can do, and the team will look at other sources and develop strategies. They will determine which locations to look at, and develop recommendations based on these strategies.

He continued that a graphic shows the map with 528 dots, each representing a survey response. Many responses were from people downtown, but the survey reached people outside of downtown. The team asked each committee member to tell them their location, without first telling the committees about what the survey showed. The committee members closely matched with the survey.

Mr. Koczalka continued that the team will take all the information and come up with project recommendations. The recommendations in the plan will address the question of what they can do, and specify whether it is a recommendation for the short term, mid term, or long term; and whether the recommendation is low cost, mid cost, or high cost; and finally who is responsible. To do that, the team needs to prioritize all of this information. They will look at the locations using the evaluation criteria the team created, to determine the priority locations. This is where they are in the process. They just worked with the City on some initial evaluation criteria. The

team will now take the 100+ projects they can potentially see and prioritize them based on the draft evaluation criteria. From that, they will be able to do a scoring and identify where those go.

Mr. Koczalka continued that lastly, the PowerPoint graphic shows all the crashes to understand. They will take the scoring and look at it from a quantitative and qualitative perspective, to figure out how this all comes together in the report to identify the safety that is needed out there. The report currently being drafted will have an introduction, talk in depth about the summary provided here, and provide funding sources the team knows of. The grant program the City received funding from, the bipartisan infrastructure law, has a second part. By doing a Roadway Safety Action Plan, you can go after infrastructure money. It is not the only way, but in order to go after the funds, you have to have an Action Plan. This is kind of the first step of this grant. The second part would be a demonstration or implementation of the infrastructure plan. There are other grants out there, too, and every day, the federal government puts more out there. The team will provide the City with that information.

He continued that when this Action Plan is developed, it is not a check box, or at least, that is not how the team is looking at it. It is a living document. The City will have all the information, and the projects, but it will sit on a desk and it gives the City means. Say, in a year they are repaving a project and might want to upgrade the curb ramps or put a sidewalk in. They can go to the Action Plan and look at it. The team will provide a mechanism for the City to update the Action Plan, so that when VHB's contract is done, the City can keep going with it and keep updating it. It is a thorough, comprehensive, data-driven plan that can be built on.

Chair Greenwald thanked Mr. Koczalka for the presentation. He continued that he has a question for the City Manager. He is hearing that the Roadway Safety Action Plan is developing. The City Manager replied that she thinks the motion should be to accept the report as informational. Chair Greenwald replied that was the feedback he was looking for from her.

Chair Greenwald asked for public comment.

Vicky Morton of 275 Water St. asked if Mr. Koczalka could further explain the "disadvantaged community" section and the implications of such a label.

Mr. Koczalka replied that "disadvantaged community" is established by the federal government. He continued that it refers to a tract of land that the federal government has identified as "disadvantaged." It is not a classification the City or VHB uses. The program's purpose all along has been to make sure that this is equal for everyone. By establishing and knowing where the tracts are, they are able to make sure the improvements are inclusive of all. There is no negative tone there. The goal is ensuring equality.

Chair Greenwald stated that he thinks he understands. He continued that the term did kind of set him back a bit. There may be more problematic areas, but he does not think they identify any area of the city as "disadvantaged." He takes offense to the phrase.

Mr. Koczalka replied that the team will make sure to explain that in the report.

Jennifer Sizoo of 10 Fairfield Court stated that some people are not familiar with that term, and some people here tonight live in the area in question. She asked for an explanation of what “disadvantaged community” means.

Mr. Lussier stated that he sympathized with the raised cockles on this phrase. He continued that it is a federal government term, applied on a Census tract by Census tract basis. It looks at elements such as the average median income of the households within that Census tract versus statewide averages, and age of the population within that tract versus the statewide averages. It is about broad-brush statistics. It is not a reflection of people who live in the neighborhood, and it is not a negative connotation about the neighborhood or the people who live in it. One can even say there is an advantage to being labeled as “disadvantaged,” regarding the implementation grants that Mr. Koczalka mentioned. Those grant applications are awarded extra points if your project lies within a disadvantaged Census tract. The advantage is that the City is more likely to get funding to do improvements in the neighborhood because it is a “disadvantaged” Census tract. Again, it is not a reflection of the neighborhood; it is a reflection of statistics.

Councilor Tobin stated that when she was doing research on the City, this Census tract actually came up. She continued that she thought about it, and there are many Keene Housing properties in this area. Thus, there are many pedestrians, which could impact it. She has been hearing about safety challenges in this area, and now knowing that they could have more of an opportunity to address some of those challenges is exciting. As a pedestrian, it was exciting to be part of this process and to hear the kind of shift to multimodal transportation and the focus on that.

Chair Greenwald asked if there was any further comment. Hearing none, he asked for a motion.

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

On a vote of 5 – 0, the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee recommends accepting the presentation on the Roadway Safety Action Plan project as informational.

Mr. Rusnock stated that he wants to acknowledge that Councilor Tobin has been serving as a member of the Roadway Safety Planning Committee, and she has been very active and engaged. He continued that the committee also included the City Manager. This great, diverse group of safety advocates is providing a lot of great feedback and input to the plan. To set some expectations about the schedule, they plan to meet with that committee in August, and likely in September. The team wants to give that committee a good chance to review and approve the plan, and then they would likely be coming back to the MSFI Committee in October to seek a recommendation.

5) Verbal Presentation – Customer Service Opportunities for Community Development and Fire Prevention

Chair Greenwald asked to hear from staff.

Med Kopczynski, Director of Economic Development and Special Projects stated that several months ago, the City Manager asked him to look at the business practices of the Community Development Department and how they can be improved. He continued that to conduct a review, he began with recommendations that originated from two separate economic development plans that were chaired by Chair Greenwald. In the reports, there was a sense of the committee that Code Enforcement and the Planning Department should merge into the Community Development Department to provide better, faster services to citizens. Comparing that idea with the reality of where we are and what we can do to improve and central to this review was recognition that the goals set for the department by the City Manager and the City Council would frame the results of the report. More importantly, upon analysis of operations, the question is where the City should change to meet the overarching goals of providing superior customer service to the citizens and clients. That is the central theme of this presentation. This report creates a strategic plan that, if followed, he believes will actually do that. The report has utility as a blueprint or plan that could be used to change the paradigm of operations to achieve a high level of competence as well as customer service.

Mr. Kopczynski continued that the subject areas covered are building safety and fire prevention, code enforcement, planning, software, and housing developer training and support. Staff feels a great need to begin integrating what the City does with the general public so there is less friction and more understanding, both from the standpoint of staff understanding what happens when you are trying to do a project, and for the people doing projects to have a better understanding of processes to make things smoother. Most important is community communication and outreach. The City definitely needs to step up to the plate in this process.

Mr. Kopczynski continued that the basic idea is to cultivate a customer service oriented culture. They are already making progress on this report, which was just turned in. Fire Marshall Richard (Rick) Wood is here tonight. He is a participant in this process, as well as Jesse Rounds, Community Development Director.

Rick Wood, Fire Marshall and building official, stated that he has been with the City for almost 12 weeks. He continued that things are moving fast, and it is productive and rewarding. One of the primary focuses of him coming on board was to look at and evaluate the whole permitting, inspection, and enforcement system, with the goal of creating a continuously improving customer experience through engagement, transparency, efficiency, collaboration, and communication, ultimately leading to a citywide approach instead of a departmental approach. To go along with what Mr. Kopczynski said, first is the customer-centric culture, and getting that

to permeate the department. Along those lines, they have worked to simplify the permit and inspection process where possible, with things like online permitting. They are very close to having some of the gas and oil permitting going online. The goal is to have that in a week or so. They are also working on eliminating the duplication of services. Some things that were being duplicated between Fire and Building have already ceased, such as smoke detector inspections in single-family homes. They are also working on efficient utilization of personnel and resources. For example, they found some duplication while investigating Code Enforcement actions, so they have centralized that a bit and assigned resources more efficiently.

Mr. Wood stated that the bigger picture is for people to see them as facilitators, not regulators. He thinks that is one of the cultural pieces of what they are trying to accomplish. Along with that, they have some ideas around staff training and mentorship, community engagement, and contractor engagement and training. They hope that that will lead to people viewing them differently. Proactive delivery of services is the last pillar in that group. One of the things they have envisioned is voluntary project review during design. Some of the uncertainty that happens at the end of a project creates a lot of financial anxiety and developer anxiety. Thus, just as they do with Planning projects, they want to give people an opportunity to come before the City before they have finalized the design, to get feedback. This will do two things – first, it will help the City enhance the permitting rapidity process, reducing time there because staff will have a greater familiarity with the project, and it will develop a partnership between the people doing the project and the Community Development staff.

Mr. Wood continued that the Community Development Department has initiated a self-evaluation through the International Accreditation Services Building Department Review Program. That means looking at their organization through the lens of an accreditation agency. This recognition is short of accreditation, but it forces the Department to evaluate themselves and it has the accreditation agency evaluate the Department under a list of approximately 84 metrics. They submitted a first round on that and received some feedback and guidance on where to head. Lastly, they are working on enhancing the review and management of enforcement in complex cases. There are many moving pieces when they start looking at how to create an enforcement environment that works, both internally and externally. They are starting to utilize the existing systems a little better. For example, there is an online complaint portal where people can not only enter complaints or concerns, but also go and view the activity with those complaints and concerns. Staff is trying to increase the visibility of that online portal so people have a more direct pathway to engage.

Jesse Rounds, Community Development Director, stated that he appreciates the time that Mr. Kopczyński has spent on this report and the ideas that Mr. Wood has been able to implement. He continued that they are looking at department-wide visioning as well as division visioning, to determine the Department's goals. A large part of that is asking the public what they want the Department's goals to be. Staff will be back here talking to the MSFI Committee about what they want the Department to be able to do. It builds on the committees that have met before, and

Mr. Kopczynski's report is a huge part of that. He thanks staff and the Committee for the opportunity to carry this forward.

Chair Greenwald stated that he loves everything they are saying. He continued that it is a positive attitude, with a focus on solutions, not problems or obstacles. The object of the game is to get to "yes." Working in partnership with the homeowner or business owner, they all want a safe environment. There is a good attitude coming forth. He is glad to have Mr. Wood in Keene.

Mr. Kopczynski stated that the Department is intent on cultivating a customer service-oriented Department, and all of the work they will see will be in that regard. He continued that of course, they will also increase staff's technical abilities and do a lot of training. One of the key concepts is continual review and continual improvement. If they were an industry or a factory, they would be talking about lean processes. This is very similar to a lean process. He thinks they have the tools, the people, and the will. He hopes that Mr. Rounds and Mr. Wood will come back to the MSFI Committee from time to time to fill the Committee in on where they are, because it is important to have that dialogue. It is important to have that dialogue with the public, the people who use the system, and allow them to participate in how the City makes this work the way it should.

Vicky Morton of 275 Water St. stated that she might be the most enthusiastic public member about a redesign of the Code Enforcement Office. She continued that she certainly hopes that the Code Enforcement Office gets more proactive and less reactive, because if you have to tattle on your neighbors in order to improve a situation, you can get personally threatened. She welcomes the changes staff are speaking of, and she looks forward to the next steps and the next report.

Mr. Kopczynski stated that on that subject, the report does identify this discussion on reactivity and proactivity. He continued that the City has had that discussion through the years. He thinks they will have to have that discussion, with the public and the City Council, about how proactive Code Enforcement can be and how proactive they want them to be. That is a discussion to come. It is clearly articulated in the plan as an item that needs to be examined.

Councilor Tobin stated that she wants to thank Mr. Kopczynski, Mr. Rounds, and Mr. Wood for this, which she is excited about. She continued that she gets excited whenever she hears the word "communication." She went to the Community Development Department several years ago asking for information about tenant rights and not being able to find that information. It is exciting to see these changes happening.

Chair Greenwald stated that as Mr. Kopczynski is moving on to other adventures, he wants to thank Mr. Kopczynski for all that he has done and all of the different hats he has worn during his time with the City. Mr. Kopczynski thanked Chair Greenwald and replied that it has been a pleasure.

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

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee recommends accepting the presentation on Customer Service Opportunities for Community Development and Fire as informational.

6) **An Ordinance Relating to the Installation of Stop Signs on Water St.**
Ordinance O-2024-11

Chair Greenwald stated that they will take the agenda out of order and address the Ordinance Relating to the Installation of Stop Signs on Water St. before the Downtown Infrastructure Project. He asked to hear from staff.

Mr. Lussier stated that the Ordinance for consideration tonight is to install stop signs on Water St. at Grove/Community Way. He continued that this recommendation came out of a recent neighborhood-wide effort. Last month, staff presented a speed study the neighborhood had requested, which found there was not a huge speed issue. At the same time, they looked at a couple of intersections that staff had received requests to look at. Two were in the east side of Keene, and one was at the intersection of Emerald St. and Ralston St. The requests were to evaluate those for potential all-way stop control. Staff looked at those, and of the three intersections, the Water St./Grove St. Location met the criteria of the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) both for the number of vehicles passing through the intersection and, more importantly, for the accident history. That intersection had seven accidents over a 42-month period before they did the analysis in February. That is more than enough to justify the application of a stop sign.

Mr. Lussier stated that during last month's traffic-calming presentation, a neighborhood resident mentioned that she thought that intersection originally had a four-way stop sign. Staff looked through the City's records and City Code, and the project documents from the reconstruction of Grove St., the reconstruction of Water St. west of that intersection, and the railroad land development project where Community Way was built. Throughout those, and through the analysis of the Code, and his conversations with people who had been working at Public Works for over 20 years, he became fairly well convinced that that was never an all-stop condition. He thinks maybe there was just confusion about the history of that intersection.

Mr. Lussier continued that staff's recommendation stands. They recommend converting this intersection to an all-way stop. If the Council approves it on July 18, staff will schedule a time for installation. At the same time, staff will put out message boards in advance of the intersection to let people know to pay attention to the new stop sign. That may not appear directly on July 19. They will have to figure out when the message boards are available to be deployed there. They will schedule a time when it can be done in a way that will give people fair warning that traffic laws have changed at that intersection.

Chair Greenwald thanked Mr. Lussier, and continued that he supports this and likes it very much. He continued that he would also like them to give consideration in the future to South Lincoln St. and Roxbury St. at North and South Lincoln St. Mr. Lussier stated that Roxbury St. at Lincoln St. was one of the other intersections that staff evaluated. He continued that that one did not meet the MUTCD criteria now. Chair Greenwald asked if an intersection has to meet the criteria to get a stop sign. Mr. Lussier replied that it does not have to. He continued that the MUTCD is a guideline, not the law, which the State of NH has adopted as its design guide and the rules that the State follows. The City, in turn, has written into its Code that the City follows the NH DOT Traffic Control Guidelines, which references the MUTCD. They agree to follow those guidelines, but even within the guidelines, it clearly says that meeting the criteria for an all-way stop condition does not mean you are obligated to install a stop sign. Conversely, failing to meet any of the criteria by themselves does not mean you cannot install a stop sign. This is what the City Attorney's Office would consider a "discretionary function" of the legislative body. If the City Council wants to change the Ordinance and install a stop sign there, they have that authority. However, from an engineering analysis perspective, it is not recommended. Chair Greenwald replied that is a conversation for another night.

Vicky Morton of 275 Water St. stated that she understands the reasons for this recommendation but has a great deal of difficulty supporting it. She continued that it is actually five cars coming to an intersection, because there are two lanes on Grove St. Thus, there are five people coming to an intersection when it is difficult even for four people to decide who is going first. You cannot change human nature overnight. She thinks stop signs at this intersection will create a greater hazard, rather than what they currently have with a direct line through and stop signs on the other sides. As much as she does not like traffic lights, and she understands the costs thereof, she would prefer a traffic light in this location to tell drivers whose turn it is. Having five cars there, all trying to decide who goes next, will not be a safe situation.

Councilor Favolise stated that this intersection is in his ward. He continued that he drove out there today before this meeting, and the intersection did not seem to him like an inherently dangerous one. It is two main thoroughfares connecting. Community Way is a road through a parking lot, and Grove St. is largely residential as well, not really a thoroughfare. His question is what causes this intersection the accident level that now, in the Public Works Director's mind, necessitates a stop sign.

Mr. Lussier replied that unfortunately, he does not know what caused each of the seven accidents over the three and a half year period, as he is not privy to the traffic accidents. There are many rules regarding the release of accident reports to anyone not in law enforcement. It frustrates him that people in charge of the safety of the road network do not have access to the information that would help them do that work.

Councilor Favorise asked if there is an engineering element in that intersection, in Mr. Lussier's expertise. Mr. Lussier replied that there is nothing obvious or intuitively wrong with the design

of the intersection that should lead to that level of crash history. He continued that the sightlines are clear and long. There is no visibility issue or objectionable curvature.

Councilor Favorise replied that his comment is, recognizing that this agenda item will probably move out of Committee, he thinks that the concerns of east Keene residents about traffic enforcement in neighborhoods continues to stand. He continued that regardless of whether this item moves forward, he thinks that traffic enforcement in addition to any signage changes is something that needs to continue to be a part of the conversation.

Chair Greenwald stated that he is surprised, because he thought Ms. Morton would be in total support of this. He asked whose idea this four-way stop was. Mr. Lussier replied that he does not recall who submitted the original request to look at that intersection. He continued that it was submitted through the resident reporting engine. Chair Greenwald replied that he thought it was something from staff or a consultant. Mr. Lussier replied no, it was a resident. Chair Greenwald stated that seven accidents in 42 months does not sound so serious, and they do not know the severity of the accidents. Mr. Lussier replied that after a significant accident, the Police Department calls the City Engineer's Office out to do an accident survey, so he knows that one of the accidents involved a man on a motorcycle who lost a leg because of the impact.

Councilor Favolise stated that he will probably vote against this in Committee tonight, because he thinks the overarching issue is enforcement. He continued that he might change his mind and he is open to additional conversations in the next month before the Council meeting.

Councilor Filiault stated that stop signs seem to be controversial no matter where they put them. He continued that he will support this, because of the traffic studies and the accidents. Sometimes, data does not support a request, but with this particular intersection, as far as accidents go, in this case the data supports it. Sometimes emotion gets in the way of votes the Council makes, but sometimes you have to go with the information the Public Works Director brings them. He thinks this particular intersection needs a stop sign and he will support the Public Works Director's recommendation.

Councilor Tobin stated that she agrees with Councilor Filiault. She continued that someone brought this intersection to their attention as a problem. She cannot be sure that this stop sign is the best solution, but this is the recommendation that has been supported. This intersection was brought to their attention, so they looked at. It is good to try something different, and this is what the recommendation is at this time.

Councilor Workman stated that she agrees with Councilor Filiault that the information and data supports this. She continued that anecdotally, this intersection makes her think of the three-way stops on School St. and Castle St. The other day, she was coming out of Castle St. and someone blew through the stop sign from West St. down to School St. Had she not been stopped and aware, she would have gotten T-boned by that car. She sees this all-stop intersection functioning quite like that, creating that hard stop for people. Thus, if someone ignores the stop sign, it will

mitigate someone else from getting seriously injured. It will at least reduce the velocity of an impact.

City Councilor Ed Haas of 114 Jordan Rd. stated that no one likes having to negotiate a four-way stop and dealing with everyone coming from different directions, but he thinks this came out of the traffic study that found the 85th percentile was about 30 mph with outliers. He continued that he thinks the outliers drive everyone's perception of how unsafe Water St. is. It is a through street with a great view as you go down the hill, which can (tempt drivers to speed). That is the hazard. The four-way stop was an easy way to try to slow people down. The real answer here is traffic-calming arrangements, a better design of the intersection, but that is a bigger capital project than a four-way stop.

Mr. Lussier stated that he will respectfully disagree with Councilor Haas, so it is clear for the record, because he is sure other requests will come forward and he will be arguing the other way. He continued that staff is not recommending this four-way stop in order to address speed. As Councilor Haas mentioned, they looked at the speeds on Water St. and he thinks the 85th percentile just to the east of this site was about 34 mph. That is a little bit over the speed limit but still within the expected range of normal behavior. They are specifically recommending the stop sign here because of the accident history. He agrees with Councilor Filiault in that he would prefer to not have more stringent traffic control than is warranted and needed, but because of the accident history, he thinks there needs to be a little bit more control at this intersection. They are not trying to address speed.

Chair Greenwald stated that he does not like "more time," but given what he has heard tonight, he wants to look at the intersection again.

Chair Greenwald made a motion to place the item on more time until the next MSFI Committee meeting. Councilor Favolise seconded the motion, which failed with a vote of 2-3. Councilor Workman, Councilor Filiault, and Councilor Tobin were opposed.

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

On a vote of 4-1, the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee recommended the adoption of Ordinance O-2024-11. Councilor Favolise was opposed.

7) PowerPoint Presentation - Downtown Infrastructure Project

Chair Greenwald stated that they have been working on the downtown plan for about four or five years. He continued that in this most recent iteration, the MSFI Committee made a commitment to come forth with a plan by this meeting. Chair Greenwald stated that to give a bit of history, he wants to show this historical photo of Central Square. He continued that you will notice there are no monuments, no cars, and hardly any buildings. Change is what happens. He thinks the plan they are about to see in Stantec's slides marries change with common sense. It is not

extravagant, and there has been a lot of compromise. He hopes that members of the public agree and that his fellow Councilors agree. Everyone has worked hard. They will hear the phrase “final design,” but there are many issues still to discuss. They will not get into the shape of benches, color of sidewalks, or types of trees. This is the big picture. It is well refined and has many details in it in terms of traffic flow. The consultants have done a lot of work and they have really listened. They listened to the workshops, took notes, and went back and forth. He hopes everyone enjoys this design presentation.

Ed Roberge from Stantec stated that this is a design follow-up. He continued that today the team only has several minor items to share as a follow-up to the full Council’s review that was referred back. What they have to show tonight is the preliminary design plan, which the team is asking the MSFI Committee for direction on tonight. As a reminder, this is what they call the “roll plan,” and they will eventually call this the preliminary design plan. Chair Greenwald is right that there are many design details that need to be developed from here into a more final design package.

Mr. Roberge continued that regarding parking, as a reminder, the project area shown on the screen started with 239 spaces. There are 240 spaces today, so it is net one by accomplishing where we are. Trees were very important. Even at yesterday’s construction planning workshops, comments about trees came up again. Where it sits right now within this project area, there are 157 existing trees, and 76 of those will remain. That is nearly half of the trees. For various reasons, such as construction of utilities, other improvements, or conditions of trees, 63 trees will be removed. However, an additional set of 145 new trees will be brought in. In the end, there will be 221 trees in this project. They have heard comments from the public and the MSFI Committee on the quality of the trees. It is true that the new trees, on day one, will not be as large as the current trees, but the team will look for and specify trees that are three or four inches in caliper so Keene can get a good start on the trees.

Mr. Roberge stated that the Council had three areas of discussion that they requested the MSFI Committee follow-up with, which were some detailing along Railroad Square, some detailing on traffic signal operations, and the Central Square roadway circulations. He showed a slide of the intersection at Railroad Square and Main St., and the large tabled intersection crosswalk, and continued that the question was about the transition along the bike path. The question was whether bikers, when crossing on the bike path along the edge of pavement along Railroad St., are able to transition into the Railroad St. street section at any point. Thus, the team added a small ramp. That is an added detail and they will continue to detail that through final design. A bicyclist would also have the opportunity, when crossing the larger, multi-use crosswalk, to just traverse and go down Railroad St. right from there. As a reminder, the last two parking spaces on the angled spaces here on Railroad St. are both accessible spaces, so those corners will be tipped down. Again, it is more opportunity for transition between pedestrians and bikes, in and along Railroad St. in the Railroad Square area.

Mr. Roberge continued that the second piece that came up at Council relates to the traffic signalization operations, and they had a follow-up with MSFI Committee conversations. He showed a graphic with different colors representing the different signal phases, and continued that substantially green is the north/south movement through the intersection from and to Main St., from Central Square. The blue phasing is essentially eastbound West St., either southbound on Main St. or straight through to Roxbury St., or a left on Washington St. to Court St. The orange is the left turn movement coming out of Central Square to Roxbury St., or a U-turn movement to return into Central Square. That is how the signals are phased today. The right turn from Roxbury St. into Central Square is a different color here. The team proposes traffic signals that would allow for either guided movement or a yield movement.

Mr. Roberge stated that using Roxbury St. as an example, there is currently a full signal phased traffic signal, red, yellow, and green. It operates generally in conflict with the existing U-turn, because both of those are free at the same time, which should be avoided in the new signal. The team proposes a flashing yellow beacon. It would be a red signal head and a yellow flashing signal head, which would sit on flashing yellow so that the vehicles that would be taking the right turn would yield to traffic. It is a full traffic signal because of fire pre-emption and the exclusive pedestrian phase. When a pedestrian presses the button, the signal goes to all-stop. They need an all-stop capability at that intersection to protect the crosswalk at Roxbury St. and the crosswalk into the Central Square common. The same thing happens on the opposite side, but it is slightly different because there is no conflicting movement if you are taking a right turn onto West St. That will have a green light. It will be a full traffic signal, with red, yellow, and green. It will likely sit on green most of the time, until there is a pedestrian phase or fire preemption.

Mr. Roberge summarized that those are the two traffic signal operations he wanted to make clear, and he can answer any questions about them. He thinks the operation will be consistent. It is a new signal, with a new computer system, and it will have a lot of new functionality that does not exist there today.

Mr. Roberge stated that the next piece is at the top of the square, which is the conversation they had about whether to have a one-lane or two-lane solution. He continued that a one-lane condition is what came out of the City Council, wide enough to support traffic. From the back of the parking to the top of the common is 22 feet, essentially the width of a single lane operation with a bypass capability, which is what they are looking at. They added white hatching to continue to narrow the lane and promote a safer single-file operation. It works well, but if a large truck is delivering or emergency vehicles need to get by, there is plenty of room in that lane to do so. The dimensions went from 25 to 22 feet. The team applied the three feet of extra space to the sidewalk panel as well as the flexible space. The flexible space where sidewalk commerce could occur is now at 10 feet, and the open sidewalk path is at seven feet. Those operate very well. The rest of the intersection remains the same. Someone suggested tick lines to better promote the left turn lane coming out of Central Square south, which the team added.

Mr. Roberge continued that there will be many more conversations as they get into final design. From the conversation they had at Council, and from a follow-up with the design team and the TRC, the material of the bike lane will be just a consistent material of the sidewalk space. If the sidewalk spaces are all concrete, that would be extended, and they need to find a way to differentiate the bike lane, such as stamps, some sort of painted color, or even colored concrete. They will make sure they identify that as they go through the final design process. The team understands and respects that concern, and they will find a solution that is equitable and fits into what Keene's direction is.

Mr. Roberge concluded that that wraps up two years of work. He is happy to answer questions.

Mr. Lussier stated that he wants to talk about the next steps in the process. He continued that he hopes the Committee will come to a consensus tonight and vote to recommend this project to the City Council. In the fall, staff will be back with a negotiated contract with Stantec for the final design phase. The next phase will start in early September. The final design phase will go through the fall and winter. The goal and focus is getting this ready for bid in the spring of 2025. He thinks that is achievable and they are working toward that.

Mr. Lussier stated that he has disappointing news. The US DOT announced their 2024 RAISE grant awardees today and the City of Keene was not selected. That leaves the City with the funding profile that was presented in the FY25 CIP. There is a \$16.9 million budget. The funding profile that is in the CIP did not assume any federal or grant funding. It is all funded and paid for without that assumption. That said, they have received some different funding opportunities already. Through the drinking water state revolving fund, they are eligible for about \$2 million worth of principal forgiveness, so that is a loan, initially, and then after the project is completed and the loan proceeds are used, they qualify for principal forgiveness and they reduce the amount of debt the City has to pay back. They also received some principal forgiveness for the sewer and stormwater portions of the project, about \$137,000. Finally, they received an American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) grant that right now is being used to offset the cost of the stormwater design portion. That all adds up and it is a good chunk of money. It is just not the \$13.7 million federal grant they had hoped for.

The City Manager stated that she will confirm what the Public Works Director said; in the CIP, they did not count on any grant funds, neither the grant funds they have received so far nor the RAISE grant. She continued that obviously, it would have been nice to receive the RAISE grant, because then they could have then allocated more money to other projects elsewhere in the budget and offset the capital plan cost. However, she does think it is important that they use the money the City has been given and important that they meet the timelines of those grants and of that principal forgiveness. Two million dollars is not anything to turn away. In addition, the City is currently in the running for the stormwater/sewer funding, which is up to \$4 million, which is a congressionally-directed ask. They could potentially get about \$3.6 million of the \$4 million. While it is disappointing to not receive the RAISE grant, it was not part of the financial plan. They are ready to move forward and continue to do so.

Councilor Workman asked if there was a reason given why Keene did not receive the funds. Mr. Lussier replied not today. He continued that in the past, the US DOT has offered the opportunity for applicants to request a one-on-one debrief with US DOT staff. He continued that City staff will request that and get feedback on why the City's application was not selected.

Councilor Workman asked if the City is eligible to reapply next year, and if any part of the project would qualify for that. Mr. Lussier replied that this is breaking news that they are still digesting. He continued that he wants to talk with the City Manager about the strategy going forward. They had been working towards and assuming this would be put out to bid as a single contract with three annual phases. They would have to change that approach, if they were saying they wanted to reapply for the 2026 and 2027 years of the project. It would mean putting out a construction project for 2025 using City funds and then applying for a smaller RAISE grant. They could look at that. He does not know how their competitiveness looks as they shrink the size of the project and eliminate some of the things that were attractive about the project in the first place.

The City Manager stated that she would add that every year, it gets more expensive. She continued that by not locking in the contract in the first year, they take a risk, by then seeing if they can get additional grant funds in year two and three. They would be inflating the cost if the grant applications were not successful.

Councilor Filiault stated that obviously, the infrastructure work still has to be done. He continued that it is disappointing to hear they did not get the RAISE grant, but the reality is that the pipes and infrastructure are still 100 years old and that will not change. They hope there are more grants down the road, but they cannot just pack their bags and say no, because they have crumbling infrastructure.

Councilor Favolise stated that regarding the overall project, he thinks they have arrived at a place, particularly after the productive workshop, where there is compromise for all parties. He continued that no one will get everything they want, but hopefully everyone gets something they wanted. Something he wants to emphasize about this project and the proposal is the increase in pedestrian safety. He hears about that a lot from his constituents. He thinks that right behind the replacement of the 100+-year-old water and sewer lines, the biggest point of consensus is the increased pedestrian safety. The raised crosswalks, and improved crosswalk signaling adjacent to Central Square on Washington St. and Court St., are all great. He thinks there continues to be some misunderstanding and misinformation about what they are actually doing with this project. From downtown business owners and customers, he has heard loud and clear that the overall character and spirit of the square is working for the downtown commerce district. Yes, green spaces and pedestrian spaces, but for the commerce district, this works. They are actually expanding sidewalk space and one side of the common. He thinks this proposal makes necessary infrastructure improvements and appropriate surface-level tweaks for increased pedestrian safety, and he knows some Committee members disagree, but he thinks this proposal improves traffic

flow. In addition, the proposal retains the charm and character of Central Square. He looks forward to supporting this, and he thinks there is broad support for this from the Council and the community, because of the work this Committee and others did long before he was elected to the Council. Thus, he gives thanks to this Committee, Chair Greenwald, City staff, the Stantec consultants, and the public that continues to weigh in. They have arrived at a really good spot.

Councilor Tobin stated that she agrees. She continued that while it is disappointing to not get the RAISE grant, she remembers that when she lived on Elm St. and they had to dig up Court St., she had to walk through those pipes, and “they are not pretty under there.” She knows there has been a lot of discussion and negotiating around this project. She was at one of the first brainstorming sessions, pre-pandemic, and it was exciting. This proposal now looks a lot like the Central Square and the Main St. she knows and loves, except it has a lot more green. It could be a tough couple of years, which she understands after having lived downtown through three of these infrastructure projects, but she is excited to see this project come to life.

Chair Greenwald asked for public comment.

Sue Egan of 5 Central Square stated that she wants to share something that she and her brother experienced, which was scary and unexpected. She continued that they saw a fire truck come down Washington St. with its lights on, going the wrong way. Probably everyone in this room knows that happens, but she had not seen it until then. Her brother asked her about it, and she explained that this is the way the Fire Department travels when there is a fire, and she will not say the Fire truck cannot go that way. She hopes the MSFI Committee understands what she is trying to say.

Chair Greenwald stated that it is very unusual. He continued that the Fire Department has determined that going the wrong way around the common is actually safer and more efficient (in an emergency), even though it seems crazy and it is not intuitive. Fortunately, the traffic signals stop the traffic and accommodate the emergency vehicles. That is part of the new design, too, so they can continue to do that. Someone from the Fire Department, or the City Manager, would be better than he would at fully explaining it, if Ms. Egan wants to talk with someone.

Councilor Filiault stated that people have probably heard the saying that “politics is the art of compromise,” and this project is the poster child of that quote. He, Chair Greenwald, and others have “lived and breathed” this project for two and a half years. He continued that in all his years on the Council, he cannot think of any other time when he has so often been awake at 2:00 in the morning, staring at the ceiling, thinking about this project. Keene has 23,000 residents, which means 23,000 opinions, 23,000 people who could find something wrong with this project. That is the way it is. There are a couple of things they he and other Committee members do not like about the project, but overall, he thinks the city can embrace this project. For two and a half years, they have worked hard on this. He knows some people say, especially on social media, that City Hall does not listen. But this Committee did. The original project that was proposed had the “egg” roundabout, traffic going all over, and the front of the square closed. A Save the

Square group formed. The MSFI Committee did save the square. There will be some changes, but most are modern changes for the good. To the people who say the Committee did not look at traffic studies, the Committee did look at all the traffic studies. There are improvements. You will be able to go down Roxbury St. now without stopping for a red light all the time; it will be a yellow flashing light. They tried to improve traffic flow, also, to keep things moving instead of getting held up.

Councilor Filiault stated that what this Committee did for two and a half years, listening to the public, is preserved history with the addition of modern infrastructure. They did not wipe out downtown's history, but they realized they needed modern infrastructure to go along with it. They have done that. To those watching this meeting and saying that City Hall does not listen, he encourages them to look at the original project and then look at the project they are presenting tonight. This two and a half year process has been personal, and emotional, and he is glad to be where they are tonight. It is not over, but he is glad to be at this point. He thinks the majority of the Committee will vote in favor of this, and a majority of the City Council. The MSFI Committee listened to the Council's concerns at the workshop. They worked them out and compromised.

He continued that in sum, for all the changes that were made, this design is from the people here tonight and all the people who reached out to the Committee members through thousands of emails, texts, and phone calls. His phone rang off the hook in a way it never had before. He and other Committee members could barely go grocery shopping because they could not get out of the store. He thanks the community for being involved, because if the community does not speak, the Committee does not hear them. When the community speaks, the Committee listens. He especially gives kudos to the residents of the east side, who really show up.

Councilor Filiault continued that the Council will get a month off for summer vacation then be right back to work with this. Chair Greenwald replied yes, on to final design, and he thanks Stantec very much for seeing them through this process and for listening.

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

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee recommends the City Council approve the Preliminary Design for the Downtown Infrastructure Project as depicted on a drawing entitled "City of Keene, Downtown Infrastructure Project, Preliminary Design Plan" dated June 26, 2024, by Stantec Consulting Services, Inc.

8) Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Greenwald adjourned the meeting at 8:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

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