City of Keene
New Hampshire

MUNICIPAL SERVICES, FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, February 10, 2021 **5:30 PM** **Remote Meeting via Zoom**

Members Present:
Janis O. Manwaring, Chair
Michael Giacomo, Vice Chair
Randy L. Filiault (Arrived Late)
Bettina A. Chadbourne
Robert C. Williams

Members Not Present:

Staff Present:
Elizabeth A. Dragon, City Manager
Thomas P. Mullins, City Attorney
Rebecca Landry, IT Director/Assistant City Manager
Don Lussier, City Engineer
Kürt Blomquist, Director of Public Works/Emergency Management Director
Lee Dexter, Civil Engineer

Chair Manwaring read the executive order authorizing a remote meeting: Emergency Order #12, issued by the Governor of the State of New Hampshire pursuant to Executive Order #2020-04. Pursuant to this Order, Chair Manwaring called the meeting to order at 5:33 PM and Committee members stated their locations and whether alone.

1) Roxbury Street Flood Improvement Project – Project Update

Chair Manwaring welcomed the City Engineer, Don Lussier, and Public Works Department Civil Engineer, Lee Dexter, to present an update on this project that would occur during summer 2021.

The City Engineer began with some background for the project that was driven by the need to correct repetitive localized flooding in the neighborhood of Elm and Vernon Streets. This is one in a series of flood improvement projects that resulted from a comprehensive City study in 2012 to determine how to fix these flooding issues. Other projects in this series included work to Ralston and Winchester Streets and before that work on Rule and Sullivan Streets. The primary purpose of the project is flood management, but the opportunity would be used to address any other infrastructure needs simultaneously, as with all City projects.

The City Engineer continued describing the scope of work. In total, this approximately $1.8 million project is funded in Fiscal Years (FY) 2020 and 2021 in the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) through several sources for work on road rehabilitation, curbing, sidewalk replacement, drainage improvements, water distribution, and water main replacements. Sewer main replacements are still pending Council approval as funds were not included originally for

this work; Staff would recommend allocating the additional $215,000 in the CIP during the budget process. Councilors would notice in the current FY20-21 CIP that road rehabilitation was allocated approximately $472,000 and all project work west of the Roxbury Street Bridge would be funded through this source. Work east of the Roxbury Street bridge would be funded as a normal road rehabilitation project and pooled with other paving work this summer. The City Engineer showed a photo of what this summer disruption might look like.

Mr. Dexter provided more details on the scope of work. A 60-inch drain pipe would be continued from Beaver Brook up Roxbury Street to tie into an existing 48-inch pipe coming from the exit of the City Hall parking garage, where Town Brook was relocated previously. This would add significant capacity to the drain system. A 30-inch pipe would be installed through Town Brook that would connect to the 36-inch pipe at the former location of Town Brook, and finally a 24-inch pipe would continue to Central Square, which Mr. Dexter thought would alleviate many backwater problems in the areas. The original brick storm water line from Central Square to Beaver Brook was constructed in 1891/1899 and the proposed upgrade of the existing main from 36-inch hand-built brick to 60-inch plastic pipe would increase local capacity greatly. Approximately 700 feet of 60-inch drain pipe would be installed, with five eight-foot diameter structures to set in Roxbury Street that would require large excavations. All other drain structures in the roadway would also be upgraded – approximately 18 drain inlets and 15-inch pipe in a number of locations to improve conditions during rain events. The cast iron water mains to be replaced were installed in 1928. The nature of this work, size of pipes, and trying to minimize disruption of services all require replacing the water mains. Ideally at the end of this project, water, sewer, and drainage would be located conveniently to avoid conflicts. During construction, businesses and residents would be provided temporary water. Fire hydrants in the corridor are stuck into curb lines and are therefore prone to being hit by vehicles. Those hydrants would be relocated more optimally to protect them. Valves would also be relocated to allow easier flushing of the water system to improve water quality. Approximately 1,000 feet 12-inch water main would be installed. Mr. Dexter said there are two lines of sewer main, one from Roxbury Plaza to Central Square, and the other from the Washington Park building going east to Harrison Street. Replacing the sewer mains also ties into recent work at Beaver Brook. The existing 6-inch clay tile sewer mains were placed in 1903/1928 and recent video inspection showed cracks, sags, and abandoned services. Sags in the mains make them prone to grease build-up and working in close proximity to these clay tiles makes them apt to shatter during construction. In total, 760 feet of eight-inch PVC sewer pipe was proposed in addition to five manholes, including one on Central Square. This concluded work planned for underground utilities.

Regarding the scope of work for sidewalks, Mr. Dexter explained that there are unserviceable sidewalks, which are uneven and unattractive, and utility work in these locations would leave no choice but to remove those sidewalks. Concrete sidewalks with granite curbs in good condition would be retained throughout the corridor, like the new crosswalks at MoCo Arts and City Hall. The minimum work required would occur to ensure the corridor blends aesthetically with the bridge replacement.

On the road layout scope of work, Mr. Dexter said that Staff was looking at opportunities to maximize parking where possible, but in reality there is insufficient space to add new parking. A loading zone would be added in front of Green Energy Options because it is an area already used by many surrounding businesses. Mr. Dexter said that road paving would occur from Central Square to the Roxbury Street bridge funded through Roxbury Street Flood Mitigation project that the City Engineer mentioned. From Beaver Brook moving east to Water Street, the rehabilitation project would fund milling, shimming, and the overlay of the road and reshaping any uneven spots, as well as raising the center of the road to enhance drainage performance so water reaches catch basins more readily during heavy storm events. Finally, Mr. Dexter returned to the topic of utilities replacement and explained the process to "box-out." The existing concrete roadway's base would be removed in chunks to replace the underground utilities. The road base would be reconstructed with 22 inches of crushed gravel, which helps prevent the asphalt overlay from cracking and therefore lasts longer.

Chair Manwaring asked if there would be space in the corridor for bike lanes or other amenities. The Chair's question allowed the City Engineer to segue to the next topic – what is not included in the project. The City Engineer began saying that some sidewalks throughout the corridor must be replaced due to adjacent work and that replacing other deteriorated sidewalks is a priority where the budget allows; he anticipated being about to replace all sidewalks that need work in that area but he could not guarantee complete replacement throughout. Next, he said that bike lanes and other goals of complete streets improvements were not included with this project due to both the budget and physical constraints of the roadway, especially in the right-of-way of the western project area. Next, the City Engineer explained that where possible, existing parking would be retained and there would be a few other incremental improvements like the loading zone Mr. Dexter mentioned. Finally, he said that aesthetic improvements that the City tries to include in such projects, like street trees and rain gardens, would also not be possible due to the budget and physical constraints.

Next, the City Engineer described challenges of this project. This project would occur in a busy, high-density commercial and residential area, where there are limited detour options. Roxbury Street is one of the primary access points between eastern neighborhoods and downtown, and therefore cutting off the access would cause some traffic disruptions. Additionally, the underground utilities in this corridor are very crowded and Staff would put measures in place to minimize disruption of customers' utility services. Finally, removing the concrete roadway would be particularly expensive due to the need to limit vibrations that could damage surrounding brick buildings, dust, and other disruptions that would inevitably create some extra inconvenience for the surrounding neighborhoods.

The City Engineer described how Staff would take proactive steps to hold the contractor responsible for managing the project's inherent risks. First, traffic control is the greatest issue for the surrounding neighborhoods and the City Engineer assured that while it would not always be convenient, access would be maintained at all times. The detour pattern would be similar to that

used during the bridge replacement, though a pedestrian detour is unneeded for this project. While regular users of the area would inevitably find alternate routes, the official designated detour that would be particularly important for commercial truck traffic use – posted on signs approaching the corridor from all directions – would direct drivers to Washington, Beaver, and Franklin Streets. Users should be aware that the location of access would change throughout the project phases. The City Engineer said that staff would communicate with some users directly through email communications as well as issuing press releases and posting to messages boards around town. Property owners with multiple driveways have been notified to expect times during the project when they would be limited to only one driveway access. Additionally, the City Engineer described significant impacts to on-street parking, which would be closed essentially in total through the area for the project duration because there is insufficient City land available nearby where the contractor could store equipment and materials, which would be instead stockpiled in the on-street parking areas. He noted that school busses and the Friendly Bus would be impacted and their routes need to be adjusted; both operators have already been contacted about the project.

The City Engineer continued explaining risk management for sensitive surrounding architecture. As mentioned previously, vibrations from modifications to the concrete roadway pose concerns for older buildings with sensitive bricks and so Staff has built-in controls to dissipate the damage. As a result, no jack hammering would be allowed during the project and instead the concrete would be cut in pieces, lifted, and placed on a truck; this is a more expensive alternative. Additionally, Staff sent pre-construction surveys to property owners in the corridor, requesting building access for a specific third-party firm to enter and document conditions, which would result in a maximum allowable vibration recommendation issued to the contractor, and so if construction vibrations cause damage, then the contractor could be held accountable. The City Engineer said that another third-party firm would install vibration detectors at fixed points in the corridor to record amplitude of the construction vibrations throughout the project. Vibrations would only be limited to those that could damage buildings, not all vibrations are felt by the human body and so residents would still experience some disruptions.

Mr. Dexter continued on the topic of risk management during utility disruption. Staff would ensure that the contractor proceeds with construction in three main phases to minimize disturbance. The first phase would be from Beaver Brook to Washington Park/Jake's Five Star Market. The roadway would be removed to complete the underground utility work, then the road would be graded and graveled, including at least an initial asphalt binding, which would allow vehicle passage through this area during construction of the other phases. There could still be equipment and materials stockpiled in this area when phase one completes but the intent is to only have construction occur during one phase at a time, which also keeps the contractor more accountable to clean-up and dust control. As mentioned, temporary water would be provided in each phase and so if there are service issues during the work, there are fewer connections to address because of the smaller disruption areas, meaning less risk. Mr. Dexter said that phase two would continue from Washington Park/Jake's Five Star Market to approximately the location of Hanna Grimes and the Elm City Barber Shop; the work would progress as in phase one. As

the project moves west with the same process for phase three, Mr. Dexter said the work area is tighter but that this would be the shortest phase. Mr. Dexter concluded that final project work such as curb setting, top paving, sidewalk construction, pavement marking, and new crossings with flashing beacons would be completed simultaneously across all phases to be more practical. The goal is to contain activities in each phase to limit disturbance.

Councilor Chadbourne asked how many on-street parking spots would be unavailable during the project and what efforts were underway to offset those loses. Mr. Dexter said that the Public Works Department had been working with the Parking Operations Manager, Beth Wood, to coordinate with businesses. From surveying the area, Mr. Dexter was aware of unique situations such as for deliveries and accessible access for pick-ups. Generally, on-street parking would be closed for the duration, but he would like to permit parking anywhere safe to do so as the phases continue. The City Engineer agreed that loss of parking would be mitigated during construction for each phase as much as possible, but he said that neighborhoods should expect significant parking impacts up to and including all on-street parking during project phases. He said that many displaced parkers would likely find less convenient places like Norway Avenue or further down Roxbury Street. The City Engineer said he could not assert that parking would not be a hassle, but he thought it would be tolerable. Councilor Chadbourne asked whether users would be advised with signage as to where else to park. The City Engineer thought the Councilor's point about informing the community was a good one because to this point there was no advice to users on where else to park; he would include this information with other community updates throughout the project.

Councilor Filiault noted that there are Housing Authority apartments on Roxbury Street for those needing assistance and he wondered how fire and ambulance services would be able to access residents in need during construction. The City Engineer said he had some preliminary communications with the Fire Department and staff would need to communicate daily on traffic patterns and advise the best routes for access for both emergency services and busses. During the majority of the project, services would be able to access Central Square Terrace as normal, but at some points access would need to utilize Beaver Street to Franklin Street.

Councilor Williams expressed concern about inevitable overflow traffic onto Beaver Street. Constituents complain to him often about vehicle speeds on Beaver Street and residents have brought this concern to Council in the past, but there was insufficient data to warrant lowering the speed and no permanent traffic calming actions were taken. The Councilor was also concerned about the ability of this overflow traffic to turn from Beaver Street onto Washington Street, which is already challenging due to limited visibility around Washington Street parking. During this construction, he suggested placing the City's temporary radar signs that remind drivers of their speeds and to be more courteous to the neighborhood. In general outside this project, Councilor Williams hoped for future traffic calming measures on Beaver Street – such as a speed hump at the bottom of the hill –in response to residents' expressed concerns. The City Engineer thought it was a good idea to place flashing speed signs during construction. The City Engineer shared the Councilor's underlying concern about volume and speed of traffic pushed to

Beaver Street but the only thing the City Engineer said he could offer was that this same detour pattern was used in summer 2020 for the Roxbury Street Bridge replacement and there were very few complaints. Councilor Williams agreed that the detour worked well, but reminded the City Engineer that the bridge was replaced during the height of Covid-19 shut-downs and there would be likely more traffic during this project.

Vice Chair Giacomo asked whether there was a rough timeline for the phases. The City Engineer said he anticipated advertising construction at the beginning of March, which is open for 30 days, and then bids open at beginning of April also lasting nearly one month to contract. He anticipated construction beginning at the beginning of May. The City Engineer could not comment yet on the anticipated duration of each phase, which would be driven by the contractor.

The City Engineer concluded by explaining public engagement efforts that would include:

- Letters to property owners
- Beth Wood to serve as the liaison to businesses
- A presentation like this one was made to the general public in January, which was well attended with good feedback
- Project mailing list established to communicate weekly with property owners
- Direct mail to residents/tenants
- Project management during construction by Mr. Dexter
- Signage and message boards

Due to meeting time constraints, the Chair was unable to accept public questions or comments. She advised members of the public to submit comments to the Clerk's Office or to contact the City Engineer directly.

Vice Chair Giacomo made the following motion which was seconded by Councilor Filiault.

On a roll call vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee recommends accepting the Roxbury Street Flood Improvement Project update as informational.

2) Relating to "Bee City USA" – Resolution R-2021-06

Chair Manwaring welcomed Community Development Director/Assistant City Manager, Rhett Lamb, who recalled presenting this matter to the Council last year, which has since gone through the Conservation Commission process to determine how the Bee City USA program could work in Keene. The organization that oversees this program, the Xerces Society, has recommended resolution language for uniformity and that language was adapted to Keene by Staff and with the help of John Therriault, who first brought this idea to the City and now serves as an alternate member of the Conservation Commission to aid this effort. The Xerces Society has approved the draft resolution, which now only awaits Council adoption, which the Council recommended in 2020 pending review of the draft resolution. Mr. Therriault was present, he concurred with the

Community Development Director's summary, and stated that he was ready to complete the final step and submit the application and fee once the Council approves.

The Chair asked for a summary of what it means for Keene to be a Bee City. Mr. Therriault explained that a $200 application fee would be due to the Xerces Society upon submission of the resolution signed by City Council; Mr. Therriault recalled that he offered to donate this fee. As a Bee City, the City of Keene commits to exploring ways to improve the amount of pollinator habitat in the City, to consider ways to reduce and improve use of pesticides and other chemicals to have the minimum impact possible on pollinators, to lead educational events like walks through pollinator meadows or school presentations, and finally (in response to a question from Councilor Chadbourne) to submit an annual summary of the City's efforts to the Xerces Society along with a renewal fee, which is referenced at the end of the Resolution.

Chair Manwaring recalled that City Council already recommended moving forward to create this resolution and this was the concluding step. The Chair asked whether the Conservation Commission would be in charge of these activities. The Community Development Department replied in the affirmative, noting that the Conservation Commission was listed in the resolution as the Bee City USA sponsor, with the Community Development Department responsible for its administration as the Commission's Staff Liaison. The Conservation Commission does have a budget to cover the annual renewal fee. Mr. Therriault had offered to help with the annual reporting through his role on the Commission. Chair Manwaring thanked the Conservation Commission for taking charge of this initiative.

As a representative of the Conservation Commission, Councilor Williams thanked Mr. Therriault for his work to make this happen and for answering tough questions along the way as the Commission worked to determine how this program could work in the City.

Vice Chair Giacomo made the following motion which was seconded by Councilor Filiault.

On a roll call vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee recommends the adoption of Resolution R-2021-06.

Due to meeting time constraints, the Chair was unable to accept public questions or comments. She advised members of the public to submit comments to the Clerk's Office or the Community Development Department.

There being no further business, Chair Manwaring adjourned the meeting at 6:33 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Katryna Kibler, Minute Taker

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