

City of Keene
New Hampshire

MUNICIPAL SERVICES, FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday May 26, 2021

5:30 PM

Hybrid Meeting
Council Chambers B/Zoom

Members Present:

Janis O. Manwaring, Chair
Michael Giacomo, Vice Chair
Randy L. Filiault
Robert C. Williams
Andrew M. Madison

Staff Present:

Rebecca Landry, IT Director/ACM
Kürt Blomquist, Director of Public
Works/Emergency Management Director
Elizabeth A. Dragon, City Manager
Thomas P. Mullins, City Attorney
Andy Bohannon, Director of Parks,
Recreation & Facilities
Don Lussier, City Engineer
Patty Little, City Clerk

Members Not Present:

Chair Manwaring read a prepared statement explaining how the Emergency Order #12, pursuant to Executive Order #2020-04 issued by the Governor of New Hampshire, waives certain provisions of RSA 91-A (which regulates the operation of public body meetings) during the declared COVID-19 State of Emergency.

Chair Manwaring called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM. Roll call was taken.

1) Acceptance of Public Art – Parks, Recreation and Facilities Director

Andy Bohannon, Parks, Recreation and Facilities Director presented Katie Schwerin's third installment at this location, which also includes the Monadnock Labyrinth by Katie Schwerin and the dynamic sculpture by Adam Schepker. He explained that the piece, which is set to be installed at the Dillant-Hopkins Airport, is called Lift, by Martina Muller. He referred to the packet where there was an example of the piece, mentioning that he reviewed the resolution criteria and all were met, as well as reviewed the location with the Airport Director.

Mr. Bohannon went on to state that this would be the third and final installment in a process that began several years ago with the Friends of Public Art. He expressed that Ms. Schwerin did a great job creating synergy throughout the labyrinth and airport components and kicking off their Public Arts Policy. He felt the piece was beautiful and encouraged the City to accept it.

Mr. Bohannon then reviewed the resolution criteria:

- 1) *Whether the Public Art reflect aspects of the City's history, unique environment, cultural identity, or community at-large* - Mr. Bohannon stated the piece has synergy between the airport and labyrinth. He further explained that it is called Lift and has wings, fitting right into the area and simulating airplanes lifting off and people experiencing that spiritual connectivity in the labyrinth area.
- 2) *Whether the Public Art aesthetically enhances public spaces or environments to which it relates or interacts* – The piece will sit up above the Mount Monadnock labyrinth and act almost like a bird already lifted in the air so you can look up and see it.
- 3) *Whether the Public Art is commensurate in scale with its surroundings* – The piece is to scale with everything there and will fit nicely.
- 4) *Whether the Public Art is technically feasible to produce and to display* - Ms. Muller is a professional sculptor and has several pieces in Massachusetts, which Mr. Bohannon viewed online and noted as exceptional, mentioning that the City of Keene was lucky to acquire such a piece of art.
- 5) *Whether the Public Art is unique and original and not mass produced or standardized* - Ms. Muller is a professional and the piece is definitely unique.
- 6) *Whether the Public Art is durable, constructed of materials that will survive in the environment in which it will be placed, and reasonable to maintain in terms of time and expense* – The piece was sculpted out of metal and will last. The finish may change slightly over time.
- 7) *Whether the artist(s) and/or organization(s) submitting a proposal for Public Art can demonstrate that the artist(s) and/or organization(s) is (are) recognized by critics and peers as one who produces works of art* - Ms. Muller is well acclaimed and nationally recognized as a sculptor, with her own displays throughout the New England area.
- 8) *Whether the Public Art is in a location that allows for necessary maintenance* – The piece is in a location up above the labyrinth at the edge of the woods, near a trail with picnic tables and peace pole nearby.
- 9) *Whether the Public Art is designed to be reasonable protected from environmental degradation, damage, vandalism, or theft* - The piece is well constructed and will be in place long-term.
- 10) *Whether the Public Art is affixed to a structure or building and whether the structure or building is expected to remain in good condition for twenty (20) years* – The piece will be self-standing and is expected to remain in good condition.
- 11) *Whether the Public Art creates a public safety, health, or security concern* – The piece does not create a health or safety concern.

Rebecca Landry showed a photo of the sculpture to the committee.

Chair Manwaring invited Ms. Schwerin to speak.

Katie Schwerin expressed her excitement for the project coming together and noted that Ms. Muller had been working on the design for quite some time, as original ideas for it came even before the labyrinth installment.

Vice Chair Giacomo asked about the depth in the ground which was listed as 2.5ft, noting that would not be below frost line. He wondered if they were worried about heaving. Ms. Schwerin stated that the installer, Peter Barrett from Great Barrington, has worked 30 years in steel and felt it would be adequate. She added that she could ask for further details if necessary.

There were no further questions from the committee or the public.

The following motion by Vice Chair Giacomo was duly seconded by Councilor Filiault:

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee recommends the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to accept and install the proposed public art piece by Martina Muller, to be placed at the Dillant-Hopkins Airport in accordance with Resolution R2018-22.

Chair Manwaring stated they are grateful to Ms. Schwerin and hopeful that Council will take their recommendation.

2) Eugenia Snyder/Eversource Energy – Request to Access Old Gilsum Road – Transmission Pole Replacement in Power Line Right of Way

Eugenia Snyder, a Right-of-Way agent with Eversource, requested access to power lines via Old Gilsum Road to upgrade 4 wooden structures. She introduced their project manager Alfred Maki, Jennifer Codispoti from their outreach group, and Connor Jennings from Community Relations.

Chair Manwaring asked how long the project will last. Ms. Snyder replied that the idea is to complete it by the end of November 2021, noting that it will take place in phases.

Jennifer Codispoti explained that they are replacing structures from Keene to Antrim and the project will occur in multiple stages, starting with site work and followed by crews who prepare the holes and then install the new poles, transfer the wire to the new poles and then remove the old poles. She added that they also have an optical ground wire, a communications cable, which will be installed along the line afterwards, and this is why their request to access the road is for such a long duration. Ms. Codispoti reiterated that they won't be working on site and accessing the road every single day.

Councilor Williams asked if the fiber optic communication wire would be for public internet communications or for private use. Ms. Codispoti replied that its purpose is for communication between substations, which enhances reliability. It will not be for internet use.

Director of Public Works/Emergency Management Director, Kürt Blomquist, stated that Old Gilsum Road is a Class 6 road which was closed by Council in approximately 1954. Restrictions were later placed on the road and include no use of motorized vehicles unless permission is requested and granted by Council. He recommended that the committee

grant permission for the use of motorized vehicles on the roadway out through November 30, 2021. Mr. Blomquist reiterated that the project will not require continuous access of the road. Additionally, if any work on Old Gilsum Road is needed, such as the need for gravel to be put down, Eversource would be required to receive an excavation permit from the Public Works Department. He mentioned that Mr. Bohannon would work with them as well because a lot of surrounding areas are recreational trails, which he stated Eversource is aware of and has worked around in the past.

Vice Chair Giacomo reminded everyone of a recent request they covered from a private citizen asking to utilize the aforementioned road, noting the resulting questions would be applicable for the present request as well. He asked what type of vehicles would be used and if there should be a concern for degradation to the road. He recognized telecommunications and power lines as critical for the City but noted his concern with regards to the vehicles potentially damaging the road.

Mr. Blomquist stated there had been property owners who had done logging along the Old Gilsum Road in years past, noting that the road has seen large vehicles proceeding up and down it. He reiterated that the excavation permitting process is in place for situations where improvements on the road are needed and certain conditions can be set.

Ms. Codispoti stated they will be bringing in different types of equipment, including bucket trucks and trailers, and don't intend to have any improvements made to the road. She added that they will work with Mr. Blomquist and Mr. Bohannon throughout the entire process and have a pre and post review of the road to make sure any damage is monitored and repaired. She noted that they typically video the road before work begins as well.

There were no further questions or comments from the committee or the public.

The following motion by Vice Chair Giacomo was duly seconded by Councilor Filiault.

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee recommends per Section 94-238 of the City Code of Ordinances that Eversource Energy be permitted to use motorized vehicles on the Class 6 portion of the Old Gilsum Road from the date of approval through November 30, 2021, for the purpose of transporting in and out equipment needed to replace existing wood transmission poles in the power line Right of Way. This access is to be coordinated with City staff and subject to compliance with any conditions set by staff.

Councilor Williams added that he was in support but felt it was unfortunate that they have a right-of-way going through the forest that's dedicated for the transmission of electricity and is not also providing broadband to the people of Keene.

3) Eric George/National Grid – Request to Access Old Gilsum Road for Tree and Brush Clearing of Power Line Right of Way

Eric George was not present. Chair Manwaring tabled the item to the end of the meeting. Chair Manwaring moved to item number 4.

At 6:09 pm Eric George was present; however, technical difficulties occurred and Chair Manwaring again tabled the item until later in the meeting and directed the committee to item number 5.

The City Clerk advised that the item was a time sensitive issue and requested that the Chair and committee consider making the motion to have the item go before council next week, perhaps reading the letter into the record.

Mr. Blomquist agreed and stated the request was similar to previous requests and noted that they have a specific timeframe, between June 4 and June 18, 2021, within which they must have the work completed. He added that the work is not on the Old Gilsum Road but off on their Right of Ways and lines, and they will primarily be focusing on vegetation control. The motion will allow them to utilize the Old Gilsum Road to move their equipment and, again, they will have to comply with staff requirements.

At 6:14pm Eric George was present via phone. He stated that the work they are doing is IVM, Integrated Vegetation Management, and they will not be clearing or widening the Right of Way. He further explained they will be controlling the brush and trees that grow on the floor of the Right of Way, which is a low impact approach and mostly done by hand. The only trucks used would be pick up style trucks and possibly a crew cab style van. He stated no bucket trucks or chippers would be used since the work will be done using chainsaws and by hand. Lastly, he mentioned that they won't be in there doing work for the entire two weeks but wanted to give a window of time because they are doing the entire line from the MA state line up to Walpole.

Councilor Williams asked which species they'd be clearing.

Mr. George replied that typical target species are most hardwoods, maples, birches, oaks, white pines, sugar maples, and any typical tall growing trees in New England that they need to avoid growing on the floor of the Right of Way. He added that they don't touch native low growing brush.

Councilor Williams asked about Autumn Auburn or species that could spread invasively through the forest.

Mr. George stated invasive species are a huge nuisance but most of the time they are "compatible" and don't cause line interruptions; however, they will clear those types of species along access roads and structures. He added that they would like to control more invasive species but they would have to apply for a permit to do so and be very specific about what would occur.

Vice Chair Giacomo stated he had past experience with the work they do and could attest that it is low impact. He thanked Mr. George for his presentation.

There were no further questions or comments.

The following motion by Vice Chair Giacomo was duly seconded by Councilor Filiault.

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee recommends per Section 94-238 of the City Code of Ordinances, the National Grid be permitted to use motorized vehicles on the Class 6 portion of the Old Gilsum Road from June 4 through June 18, 2021, for the purpose of transporting in and out the equipment needed to perform maintenance to control trees and brush on the power line Right of Way. This access is to be coordinated with City staff and subject to compliance with any conditions set by staff.

4) Acceptance of a Drainage Easement – Old Walpole Road – City Engineer –

City Engineer, Don Lussier, reported on a small section of enclosed drainage system that the City owns and maintains on Old Walpole Road. He stated the system is isolated but accepts drainage from Hilltop Drive and a small portion of Old Walpole Road. It directs the drainage northwest, crossing under Old Walpole Road and into Black Brook. Mr. Lussier went on to state that they don't have good records about when it was initially installed, but at some point the City installed a 12 inch corrugated metal pipe diagonally across a private parcel in the aforementioned area. He stated that the pipe appears to have been designed for overflow during extremely heavy rain events to take the overflow and discharge it in the rear of the parcel. He further explained that in 1990 better records show that the property owner asked the City to relocate the drain in order to build a two-car garage. Mr. Lussier stated a proposed drainage easement plan was prepared but it appears it was never followed up on or executed.

In the last few years the property owner has expressed concerns that the flow from the pipe is causing the back lawn area and ground underneath and around a tool shed to stay wet. Mr. Lussier reported that they came up with a short-term plan to extend the existing drainage pipe approximately 110 feet so it goes past the owner's shed and towards the wooded area, allowing the flow to dissipate naturally through the wooded portion of the parcel. They have asked the property owner to grant them a drainage easement to install and maintain the system. He added that the easement will be written so that if, in the future, the drainage pipe is no longer needed to serve the public right-of-way, the drainage easement will automatically extinguish and requirements for the City to properly terminate and restore the owner's property will be provided.

Councilor Filiault stated the property owner asked him to walk his property with him and provided him with the long-standing history. He mentioned that the owner alerted him to major flooding caused by recent heavy rain and requested that the approval go through as soon as possible.

There were no further comments or questions from the committee or public.

The following motion by Vice Chair Giacomo was duly seconded by Councilor Filiault.

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee recommends the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to negotiate and accept a drainage easement over portions of parcel #506-065.

5) Presentation – Sidewalk Asset Management Plan – Public Works Director

Mr. Blomquist stated the City Engineer had lost power and internet access, and asked the Committee if they could place the item on more time and have the opportunity to present at the next meeting. He briefly explained that over the years the department has maintained surveys and condition reviews of City sidewalks. The difference with the Asset Management process would be the reaching out and discussions about the expected level of service. He noted there are many demands in a community and it is not always reasonable to expect all infrastructure to be at a Grade A.

The following motion by Vice Chair Giacomo was duly seconded by Councilor Filiault.

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee placed the presentation on Sidewalk Asset Management on more time.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Manwaring adjourned the meeting at 6:23 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Nicole Cullinane, Minute Taker