

City of Keene
New Hampshire

MUNICIPAL SERVICES, FACILITIES & INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, September 22, 2021

6:00 PM

Council Chambers

Members Present:

Janis O. Manwaring, Chair
Randy L. Filiault, Vice Chair
Robert C. Williams
Andrew M. Madison
Bryan J. Lake

Staff Present:

Thomas P. Mullins, City Attorney
Rebecca Landry, IT Director/Assistant City
Manager

Councilor Manwaring called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM and explained the procedures of the meeting. She declared a quorum present.

1) Petition – Concerns Regarding Drainage – Barrett Ave./Ingalls St.

Councilor Manwaring asked to hear from Don Lussier, City Engineer.

Mr. Lussier stated that he begins by offering an apology to the neighborhood and the MSFI Committee. He continued that this should not have had to come to the Committee. The Public Works Department (PWD) made a couple mistakes in this case. First, they dropped the ball last year after the neighborhood contacted the PWD, which the constituents spelled out in their letter. He and Assistant Public Works Director Duncan Watson met with the neighborhood last summer. After that meeting, he and Mr. Watson devised a plan and shared it with the Highway team, and then he put it out of his mind. Somewhere along the way, it fell off the PWD's radar. The second mistake was in not communicating with the neighborhood this summer when they again contacted the PWD to find out what was happening. The PWD was actually working on the issue and trying to plan how to address it, but they never got that information back to the neighborhood. He understands the neighborhood's concern that nothing was happening.

Mr. Lussier continued that to give an update on what has been done: after the initial meeting with the neighborhood in 2020, the PWD came up with a plan, although not a great one. The constituents identified the crux of the problem in their letter, in that when this neighborhood was built, there was simply no drainage considered or built into the streets. There are no street drains in this area. The closest one is at the intersection of Barrett Ave. and Marshall Ct., which is a couple hundred feet away. The PWD's initial plan was going to be to reshape the roadway and cut a roadside ditch along the western side of Barrett Ave. in order to get the water to flow to that drain a couple hundred feet away. It would have meant tearing up people's yards and would

have been somewhat unsightly, and he is not sure how effectively it would work. No one was ever in love with that plan. When the topic came back up again and the PWD realized that it had not been addressed last summer, staff looked at it again, brainstormed more, and came up with a different approach.

Mr. Lussier continued that over the last couple of weeks, the Highway crew has installed two dry wells, which are catch basins but not connected to the rest of the City's drainage pipe system. They are intended to absorb and store the water and allow it to slowly infiltrate into the ground after the storm subsides. The calculations show that these two basins, which are connected so that they will equalize, combined with the stone envelope around them, will be able to accommodate something between a 5-year storm event and a 10-year storm event. If Keene gets another 100-year storm like we get twice a summer these days, he admits and acknowledges that these basins will be overwhelmed and water will run off into the surrounding yards. That said, the basins should take care of these routine storms. The bigger concern, as he recalls, was more to do with the water collecting on the side of the road and icing in the winter. He thinks the solution they came up with will be effective in addressing that problem.

Mr. Lussier continued that the work is nearly done now. Staff have gotten both basins in. The trench has been patched. The patch is about an inch and a half lower than the rest of the pavement, because they put the pavement in in two lifts and they try to let it sit for a bit in between lifts, so if there are any soft spots in the gravel underneath it will settle out and get compacted. When they put the final wearing surface on it will be flush. That last step needs to be done, and they still need to seed the areas/lawns that were disturbed. Other than that, the system is up and operational and should be working.

Skye Stevenson of 14 Barrett Ave. stated that on behalf of the residents on the eastern side of Barrett Ave., up to Marshall Ct., she wants to thank Mr. Lussier. She continued that they were surprised to see that work beginning unexpectedly before this meeting. It is correct that it is almost completed. They hope this work will help remediate and work with the water issues. The other members could not come tonight but they are all in coordination and they asked her to speak on their behalf as well. At the time, she and her neighbors had asked for a berm, thinking that would be the most cost-effective. It was nice to see something a little bit more, which does not often happen. They appreciate it.

Councilor Filiault made a motion to accept the communication as informational, which was seconded by Councilor Madison.

Councilor Williams stated that on the general issue of flooding, when he visited this area where the work was done, he noticed that there are many lawns and pavement areas and flat, grassy areas. He would love to see more rain gardens in that area and see some more green solutions to the run-off issue. This was a good solution that the City came up with and he thinks it will do the job, but ultimately, when we have cement solutions, it is not quite as cost-effective as green solutions, and not quite as clean or good for the environment.

The motion passed with a unanimous vote of 5-0.

2) Adjournment

There being no further business, Councilor Manwaring adjourned the meeting at 6:12 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

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