

City of Keene
New Hampshire

MUNICIPAL SERVICES, FACILITIES & INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, May 24, 2023

6:00 PM

Council Chambers,
City Hall

Members Present:

Mitchell H. Greenwald, Chair
Randy L. Filiault, Vice Chair
Robert C. Williams
Catherine I. Workman
Kris E. Roberts

Staff Present:

Elizabeth A. Dragon, City Manager
Thomas P. Mullins, City Attorney
Amanda Palmeira, Assistant City Attorney
Kürt Blomquist, Public Works Director

Members Not Present:

All Present

Chair Greenwald called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM and explained the procedures of the meeting. He stated that in addition to the usual agenda, the purpose of this meeting is to discuss and make recommendations to the City Council about the Downtown Infrastructure Project. He continued that the Committee will get answers to some of the questions they asked at the last meeting, and after discussion, a motion will be introduced. He explained the procedures for public comment.

1) **John Sosnowski - Request for Water Abatement and Fee Waiver - 251 Park Avenue**
Staff Response: 251 Park Avenue Sewer/Water Abatement Request

Chair Greenwald stated that Mr. Sosnowski is not available this evening, and it would be appropriate to place this item on more time so he can address the Committee at the June meeting.

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

On a vote of 5-0, the request for the water abatement and fee waiver was placed on more time.

2) **Judy Rogers - Downtown Infrastructure and Reconstruction Project - Bike Infrastructure "Wants vs Needs" and a Potential Model to Handle Community Events on Central Square**

Chair Greenwald asked to hear from Judy Rogers.

Judy Rogers of Woodbury St. stated that her letter expands on points she made at last week's special meeting. She continued that the City's Comprehensive Master Plan (CMP) is the road map for community planning, and a key takeaway is that pedestrian and bicycle transportation and infrastructure should be a consideration. They heard people talk about infrastructure for bicycles in the main corridor being an economic boon and about funds available for bicycle infrastructure. They will be tearing the street apart, so this is the moment when they should be planning for what the community needs and what the community has said that they want.

Councilor Williams asked Ms. Rogers what she thinks about having the bike lanes behind Main St. Ms. Rogers replied that since the CMP says that pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure should have priority over vehicles, she thinks routing them around the main corridor is like saying, "We don't care." It is like saying they do not care about all the other work they have done in the community planning process. Main St. is very wide, and will be torn up, so why not make access for bicycles. They have talked about traffic calming measures to make it safer for pedestrians, cars, and bicycles. With planning, she thinks bike lanes are very important.

Chair Greenwald asked if there were any further questions for Ms. Rogers. Hearing none, he thanked her for her input and asked for a motion.

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

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee recommends the communication be accepted as informational.

3) Continued Discussion - Downtown Improvement and Reconstruction Project

Chair Greenwald asked to hear from Kürt Blomquist, Public Works Director, and Stantec representative Edward Roberge, to give the Committee answers to questions the Committee raised at the previous meeting.

Mr. Blomquist stated that one of the questions was about whether there could be a detour around downtown for bicycles. Mr. Roberge showed a map of downtown and stated that as they looked at the key connectors everything funnels into the Cheshire Rail Trail connection, which runs east and west downtown. He continued that when they looked at what a reasonable bypass route would be, and what that would look like, and how far from Main St. it would be, they determined that it would start on the east side. With bicyclists coming in from the north, such as Washington St. they determined there were two limitations in working with staff that are important. One, you would not be able to mark any private lanes, ways, or parking lots with signage. Knowing this, they tried to keep the bike route on the public ways, starting at Spring St. and diverting away with a zigzag approach to get to Roxbury St., then along the backside of Carpenter St. Carpenter St. would tie into Water St., which would then tie into the trail. This bicycle detour would encompass about 4,300 feet to get around the downtown and arrive at the Cheshire Rail Trail connector. Doing that same direction from the south, they thought the closest connection would

be any of those side streets that would connect to the Cheshire Rail Trail to the southeast. The next major component was Marlboro St. Marlboro St. to the Cheshire Trail connector is about 1,300 feet. That connection point is about 1,900 feet away from that Main St. connection. It is a bit of a circumvential corridor. They would assume that all of these travel ways would be a shared use, with no protected or dedicated bike lanes. Protected or dedicated bike lanes along those streets would affect either public rights-of-way or parking. Otherwise, they assume these would be shared streets, albeit side streets.

Mr. Roberge continued that conversely to the west side of Main St., they started at Court St. They looked at a potential connection on Winter St., but Winter St. is one-way westbound. A shared bike path would likely impact on-street parking, which he did not think they had a clear direction on. Thus, they diverted that and shifted further north along Summer St. Summer St. to essentially School St. would get people to the rail trail connection. That is about 2,000 feet. That strip from School St. to downtown to Main St. is about 1,100 feet. They thought it was important not only to recognize the Cheshire Rail Trail, but also the Ashuelot Rail Trail. Part of Appian Way through the Keene State College campus connects down to School St. and through Wilson St. That southerly connection from Winchester St. north, using Ralston St. into Gilbo Ave., into the Cheshire Rail Trail connection, is about 1,800 feet. This is the culmination of their efforts and identifying a bicycle detour around downtown, but it could be tuned up. A couple factors they carried into this were the detour would not have any impacts on parking lots, and it would not have any impacts on private ways or private spaces. Obviously, they could negotiate that, but this would be that circumvential route that could be considered.

Chair Greenwald replied that hearing about the difficulty of constructing directional signs on other people's property, he is catching on to what the problem is. He continued that the reality is that (people on) bikes go wherever they want to go. He biked around, going on places that are open to the public but not, as Mr. Blomquist just explained, available for signage for making a formal route. He can see this as a problem.

Councilor Williams stated that he takes those routes on the east side all the time. He continued that if they go with this, it is not an investment in infrastructure, it is just the existing streets, and bicyclists will continue to go where they want to go. Bicyclists will continue to go downtown, and without the infrastructure to support them, they will be in the streets, and not safe. It is not just bikes - he saw an elderly man on a scooter today. That is how people will be getting around, 20-40 years in the future. They need to be thinking today about having the infrastructure for that. This simply does not solve the problem, but he thanks Mr. Blomquist and Mr. Roberge for doing this work.

Mr. Blomquist stated that one of the questions was about the extent of the project, and where it ends on the side streets. Mr. Roberge showed the base survey of the existing conditions, and showed the graphic that is the scope and magnitude of the utility replacement. He stated that regarding the right-of-way line and building face along Court St. to the north and West St., the improvements to the infrastructure side is short, just beyond the Court St. right-of-way. Short of

any intersection improvements that would require additional geometric improvements, the utility scope was right around there at West St. They have the same thing with utilities being really constrained at the Winter St. intersection as well as Court St. at Winter St. Everything would be connecting in to existing infrastructure. It is fair to say that the northerly limits along the Court St. side, which he will call the northwest side, would be within the projected right-of-way line of Winter St. and Court St. on both of those sides. Mr. Blomquist stated that Councilors may or may not remember, they redid Court St. in about 2008, and replaced the utilities down to about that Winter St. point.

Chair Greenwald asked about the sidewalk in front of Machina Arts, for example. He continued that he is looking for the extent of the project. Mr. Blomquist replied that they do not have the exact answer yet. He continued that they are looking at what the improvements are, depending on slope, and other factors, but right now, the intent is to not go up to Vernon St.

Chair Greenwald stated that he is catching onto what is being asked of this Committee. He continued that it has come to him that many of the smaller issues that he and others have been asking about are actually final design issues and they are looking for the big picture now. The details will be ongoing for the next “however many” years. Mr. Blomquist replied that that is correct.

Mr. Blomquist added that the utilities and roadway of Washington St. were redone in 2010, and they will do whatever is necessary up Washington St. to match, depending again on slopes and elevations, down around the corner. Mr. Roberge replied that there are sewer, storm drain, and water improvements being extended to that area about 50 feet from the crosswalk. He continued that it also encompasses the roadway segment in front of the church. An early consideration was to stay out of the Central Square green area. A connection would happen into the square. That would serve for irrigation/water source purposes; they heard about that, as well as replacing what is there today. Those improvements extend along, and at Roxbury St., some of the improvements in place today are rather new. They would be connecting into those facilities. Along the projected line of Washington St. the wrap-around, again, other than what might be required for geometry improvements to the roadway, would be limited to along that projected Washington St. right-of-way line. Mr. Blomquist added that they just completed Roxbury St. two summers ago.

Mr. Roberge stated that regarding the rest of Main St., starting with the north side, they are projecting building to building along most of those areas for water, sewer, and storm drain improvements. They are seeing improvements to tie into water and sewer along the Lamson St. corridor, that ties into the upper side street. Mr. Blomquist added that that would give an opportunity to upgrade Lamson St. Lamson Street was done as a brick walkway in 1988. Redoing Lamson St. from Main St. to Federal St. would be part of the project.

Mr. Roberge stated that for Gilbo Ave., they are showing substantial water, sewer, and storm water drain improvements. Gilbo Ave., to accomplish the utility improvements, would be going

out to St. James. Mr. Blomquist added that they would be replacing water, sewer, while increasing the capacity down to at least St. James. They would also be redoing Gilbo Ave.'s roadway from Main St. to St. James.

Mr. Roberge continued that moving further south, there is about half a block of work on Commercial St., contained within the public right-of-way and servicing some of the building ties as well as replacing the main along that section. It is about a half a block, short of St. James and short of Wilson St., as Commercial St. extends into the larger parking lot. Mr. Blomquist added that they will be redoing the paved surface up to the parking lot area. They will be redoing the area of the transformer that is there now, when you head down St. James. They redid the Commercial St. parking lot about 5 or 6 years ago.

Mr. Roberge stated that Emerald St. was also recently redone, and they are stopping very close to the existing Main St. right-of-way line. He continued that they do not anticipate this project needing to go down Emerald St. – again, unless there is some intersection geometry that would require them to move curb or do something different. Davis St. would be similar, as it does have a utility connection down the right-of-way, but it is minimal. The end of the work area is a little south of Water St., where those mains are connected, on the sewer, water, and storm drain side.

Mr. Roberge continued that projecting north, on the east side of the corridor, Dunbar St. has a limited stub. The two connections are connecting to existing utilities. On Eagle Ct. they will be building connections for a number of the utilities. Cypress St. is looking the same, again, projecting along the Main St. right-of-way. There is some work into Railroad Square, rerouting of pipe. Mr. Blomquist stated that Cypress St. and Eagle Ct. were redone when the Monadnock Food Coop was constructed, and that Railroad property was redeveloped, maybe 10 or 12 years ago. Railroad St. was also reconstructed about 10 years ago, upgrading the water, sewer, and storm water that runs down that street. Many of these side streets have had that upgrade work done, so now they are doing the upgrade work in Main St.

Mr. Roberge stated that knowing that there had not been any improvements in a while along the Church St. corridor, they will be seeing utility improvements and replacements along Church St. up to around Wells St. That would encompass a large portion, and based on that narrowness, it would essentially reconstruct that entire corridor. Mr. Blomquist replied that those are some of the city's oldest mains, going back to the 1890s, that were originally part of Church St. as it used to run through all the way over to 93rd and Norway Ave., prior to the construction of the senior housing complex in Roxbury Plaza.

Mr. Roberge continued that along the center of the corridor, they were looking to minimize any disturbance to the center median, which has a number of mature trees, but they know that based on some of these connections they did they may not have a lot of options. They will do their best to minimize, but they will have some impact on that center median island.

Chair Greenwald replied that that answers his question. He continued that he was trying to visualize the transition between this new work and what is remaining, and he thinks they covered it well.

Mr. Roberge stated that if you had a new section, and you were doing something and there was a 20-foot gap, in a final design detail, you would stretch that out to match in new pavement to new pavement, or new sidewalk to new sidewalk, so that you did not have any gap. Mr. Blomquist replied that on Roxbury St., they did go down a little further to replace sidewalk panels. He anticipates that they will probably see similar things with this project. He continued that probably they will do some work down Emerald St. in that immediate area, because the intersection area is in fairly rough shape.

Mr. Blomquist stated that the Committee had asked about right on red, if they want to talk about that. Chair Greenwald replied that that sounds like a final design issue. Mr. Blomquist replied yes. He continued that they had also asked about raised crosswalk areas. Some of the conversations they have had with the Fire Chief – and again, this is more of a final design issue – is that they certainly can use raised crosswalks across Main St. The issue is the frequency of them. That continues to be EMS’s concern – if there are too many, depending on the passenger being transported, that can sometimes create some issues. If they reduce the number of crosswalks, having a fewer number can work. The major tabletop at Gilbo Ave. and Railroad Square is about halfway down and a good point to see traffic having to slow down. Some of the details about raised crosswalks will come when they move into more formal final design.

Mr. Blomquist continued that they intend to look at EV infrastructure as well. They currently have an RFP for a preliminary EV plan, which will look at three areas – City operations, the City’s public spaces like parking lots, and on-street. There are different philosophies about types of chargers, locations of chargers, and depending on whom you are trying to serve. That is running parallel to this project. As these things are getting accomplished, they will be bringing these components into it.

Mr. Blomquist continued that the Committee asked about accessibility of grants. He continued that when staff talked to the Committee in April, they identified some of the typical requirements now for many of the Federal grants. The grantors are looking for multi-modal and looking at environmental impacts. For example, they look at designs that are reducing carbon. Green infrastructure is an area of interest for many of these grants. Diversity and equity are also things that they speak to.

Mr. Roberge stated that they have had RAISE grants successful for clients. He continued that one of those projects was Roxbury Resiliency, a \$25 million RAISE grant for the City of Boston to look at a multi-modal corridor with a social equity piece involved. They were trying to serve underserved communities and neighborhoods, like Roxbury. In particular, the reason that was so successful was its multi-modal corridor opportunity. It is a multi-lane boulevard/causeway on three major streets that all connect. It was to create a new, multi-modal hub, very similar to the

Cheshire Rail Trail. Keene has a good thing going here, in terms of how that piece can connect the inner city downtown with all of the outside neighborhoods. That (Roxbury Resiliency) won some great evaluation points, because of the example of how they addressed multi-modal connectivity. That is important. The Federal Highway recently came out with additional guidelines on future RAISE grants, and Safe Streets for All programs. They are looking at connectivity and equity, in terms of multi-modal opportunities and making sure that streets are inclusive of those who are multi-modal dependent, like on transit or bicycle, and that is part of the fabric of those grants. They talked about the eligibility of that and whether that is important, and yes, he would stress the importance of that, for those particular grants if they are going to pursue those.

Councilor Workman stated that she would like to hear about what they would be looking at, as far as losing access to grants, if the City does not do bike lanes directly on Main St. She continued that she hears that having multi-modal projects opens the door to more grants.

Mr. Blomquist replied that none of the programs would say, “You can’t apply.” He continued that they could still apply. What Mr. Roberge is talking about is the scoring. If you do not have an element, you do not receive a score for that. Thus, when they total everything up, you go lower down on the list. As these programs continue to be rolled out, as each year goes by, there is more and more competition. There is more and more demand for that limited amount of funding in that particular grant program. Again, no one will say they cannot apply, but as they are grading the City’s application, it just will not receive points for the sorts of activities (the grantors) are looking for. It is the same thing on the environmental side. Roundabouts and other types of intersections have already been determined over the years as being better, environmentally, than signalized intersections. Thus, a signalized intersection will score lower than a roundabout.

Mr. Roberge added that also, for these grants, a project’s benefit/cost analysis is required to be competitive. He continued that that is what Mr. Blomquist was just talking about, the points system that these grants are evaluated on. They are quite competitive, so it is important to understand what the grantors are looking for – connectivity and a multi-modal presence. For example, whether the introduction of bike lanes reduces greenhouse gas emissions, or whether there are opportunities for green infrastructure, such as putting storm water back into a space. All of those things add up in a benefit/cost analysis. The more they have, obviously, the more competitive their application would be.

Mr. Blomquist stated that one of the larger questions was about the challenges of an accelerated work schedule. He continued that they looked at that, and an accelerated work schedule is always possible. Right now, they are looking at a three-year program. They have been talking about starting at Central Square, completing that in a season, and moving down to Main St. to about the Gilbo Ave. area, completing that component, then finishing up the south of Gilbo Ave. down. They looked at the capacity of the local contracting. The Public Works Department has great concern about that. This very large project will require significant bond capacity and

require access to resources. As everyone is probably aware, resources right now in the construction industry are short. Right now, they have contractors who cannot find flaggers, or laborers, or pipe fitters. That will be a limiting factor, who can come in and perform the work. The Winchester St. project was estimated at \$7.4 million, which is a good-sized project, and they only had two bidders. Thus, he is not anticipating a whole bunch of contractors coming in from other places here. One of the challenges in the Monadnock region is that they are the Monadnock region. Bringing crews and supervisors in probably means having to put them up overnight. Now they start talking about the cost impacts. They will probably see a 15-20% increase in costs as they try to accelerate it. The only way to accelerate this project would be to split into two seasons. He does not believe they would be able to get it done in one. Splitting into two seasons would require a significant amount of resources in the area.

Mr. Blomquist continued that the other impact is the amount of frontage they will be taking offline. When they looked at this project they identified that they wanted to minimize, as much as possible, the amount of buildings they are going to be working in front of. If they accelerate it to two seasons, they will have Central Square and probably Main St. down to Gilbo Ave. in one season, potentially. That is a significant amount of construction going on in front of many, many building fronts, which will impact those others. The question is whether that would be better than having impact over in one area, opening that up, then moving down, then having impact in another area. Yes, there would be impacts all the way around in that scenario, but it would be a lesser impact because at least the area that gets completed can be put back. Certainly, they could do six-days-a-week work, but from working in this area, he knows that people need a break, and working six days a week would not give people a break, particularly when they are emphasizing the downtown area as a “live/work/play.” People who live here would be under constant construction activity for six days a week. This time of year, he and the City Engineer spend a lot of time going around and trying to help residents who get tired of even just the regular, five-days-a-week construction work. Certainly, they could do longer days, such as 7 AM to 5 PM or 7 AM to 7 PM. That would restrict downtown events. There are still a lot of details to work out, but right now, part of their planning has been that they will want to have the major events, like Pumpkin Fest. They would thus be putting into the contract documents that certain spaces would need to be in a condition in which they could have those events. Not perfect, but in a condition in which they could have those events. They could say no, and be looking at two years without any kind of major event in the city’s downtown area, which is an impact. There are ways they could accelerate the project, but they would have to weigh the impacts of that acceleration versus the potential for a three-year schedule.

Chair Greenwald replied that this is not something they need to deal with tonight. Mr. Blomquist agreed. He continued that he expects 2024 to be the year they would get the answers to all those questions. He assumes this calendar year or early 2024 they will get through the next level of design. That is when they would begin talking about these things, such as how to minimize impact, how to adjust the design to do those sorts of things. Then they would be ready, by the end of 2024, to put it out in the street and start construction in 2025.

Chair Greenwald stated that the downtown community needs to weigh in on the work schedule question. Mr. Blomquist replied absolutely, and as he said, there are choices that can be made. He continued that they have done preliminary work about understanding deliveries because those are all things they will want to work into the contract. Doing that extends time, because they will not be able to work in those particular periods or be able to do certain things. This is why he is emphasizing this. This will be a trade off, and the question is what their pain threshold is on how to manage all this. This is not uncommon for projects of this size. They went through this when they did the Main/Marlboro/Winchester St. project, and Chair Greenwald and Councilor Filiault might remember the discussions about how to do that project.

Chair Greenwald asked if the Committee had any further questions for Mr. Blomquist or Mr. Roberge. Hearing none, he thanked Mr. Blomquist and Mr. Roberge for so quickly doing the work to get the Committee answers to their questions.

Chair Greenwald stated that to move this process along, he will put forth a motion, which will spark discussion. He continued that the Committee and public will be able to speak on it, and potential amendments would be acceptable.

Councilor Filiault made the following motion.

The Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee recommends to the City Council with respect to the proposed Downtown Infrastructure Project, the following:

- That Central Square remains in the existing configuration, but with improvements to lane markings, lengths of crosswalks, and traffic lighting systems.
- That the improvements to Main St. maximize sidewalk widths while also keeping parking in the center median.
- That the raised crossing table crossing Main St. to Gilbo Ave. and Railroad Square be installed as proposed.
- That the remaining crosswalks on Main St. be evaluated for potential elimination of mid-block crossings and/or the installation of pedestrian lighting systems where appropriate.
- That the project include infrastructure, water and sewer, for the installation of public bathrooms at a later date.
- That protected bike lanes not be included in the final design.
- That during the final design an evaluation be done of all turning movements to connected side streets for a possible alteration or improvement.”

Councilor Williams seconded the motion.

City Manager Elizabeth Dragon stated that she thinks one thing was missed – that Gilbo Ave. remain two-way. She continued that that was one of the elements they wanted to include in the motion. Chair Greenwald agreed.

Councilor Filiault added to the motion: “That Gilbo Ave. remains two-way traffic.” Chair Greenwald asked Councilor Williams if he is okay seconding that. Councilor Williams replied yes. Chair Greenwald asked the Committee to discuss the motion.

Councilor Workman stated that after reflection from their last meeting, she does feel that they owe it to the community to have a differently framed conversation around bike lanes. She continued that the conversation last week devolved from where it needed to be. It went into a “do we or don’t we” versus, as a devil’s advocate, “if we were to do this...” The Councilor continued that Stantec had provided them with several different options for that multi-modal use on Main St., and they did not really look at the plans and discuss the particulars of them. She would like to have a deeper conversation around the bike lanes. She would like to hear more from Stantec, the City, and the cyclists about, if they were to do bike lanes, how they should be designed. Stantec and the City did a great job with the presentation, but she did not get to hear from the community about, if the City built the bike lanes as Stantec is proposing in options 2A, 2B, and 2C, whether they would be used and whether cyclists would feel safe.

Chair Greenwald stated that he wants to hear from Stantec about whether it is possible to have bike lanes without losing any parking or sidewalk space. He cannot imagine how they could satisfy everyone with everything.

Mr. Blomquist replied that he thinks he is correct. He continued that there are approximately 134 feet, and the bike lanes would be 10 feet of that. The question is where they would take those 10 feet from. If they maintain (vehicle) lanes in both directions, that is about 24 feet, so they are at 34 feet depending on sidewalk width, 12 to 14 feet on both sides, which is another 24 feet, and with 18-foot parking bays on both sides, that is 36 feet, and if they are trying to maintain 18-foot parking bays in the center, it does not add up. They would have to reduce something, to be able to do 5-foot bike lanes on each side. Chair Greenwald replied that is the problem he is having. Mr. Blomquist replied that that is the challenge; they have limited space, and multiusers.

Councilor Workman asked if they could go slide by slide with these options. Mr. Roberge stated that the slide he will start with is the roundabout alternative. He continued that regarding Councilor Workman’s reference to 2A, 2B, and 2C, Stantec focused on 2A and 2B at the Mayor’s ad hoc committee level. 2C was an alternative to put the bike lane/multi-use path in the center median, and he has a couple graphics of how that looks. They talk a lot about parking, and he knows parking is very important to the entire community. Fifteen parking spaces would be impacted by the roundabout solution. With the traffic signal design, only one space was removed from the original 167. There would be 166 parking spaces provided. Thus, to answer Chair Greenwald’s question about parking impact, yes, there is an impact, but they tried to mitigate that. The dimensions of many spaces along the corridor are not really to standard. They also looked at the frequency of crosswalks. As Mr. Blomquist said before, it is a balancing act, trying to balance all of these different things within the corridor.

Mr. Roberge continued that they looked at an arrangement with the bike lanes at the sidewalk grade, as opposed to the street grade. They went to the BPPAC twice and got their feedback on what they thought was important, wanting to know if it was, for example, bike lanes behind the parking, or bike lanes in front of the parking, adjacent to the sidewalk. Mr. Blomquist is right that there is only so much room from building to building. Building to building in the area of, say, Eagle Ct. to Emerald St., is quite different than the building to building width between Gilbo Ave. and Central Square. There are two sets of dimensions. They tried to hold that original, but you can only fit so much in that 134-foot range. The question is how to balance and maximize that. There needs to be give and take. What is most important to this community was part of the conversation that he appreciates them having now, and any bicycle advocates in the room today can comment. The configuration Stantec sees most in other communities is either sidewalk grade or street grade, but with bike lanes in front of vehicles and creating its own space.

Mr. Blomquist asked Mr. Roberge to show the cross sections. Mr. Roberge showed a graphic for “Option 1, Minimal” and stated that this would mimic what the traffic signal would look like. He continued that Option 1 was minimal, maintaining angled parking, no bike lanes, and two-way traffic on Main St. Option 2 looked at the two-lane, multi-modal perspective. Further north, the sidewalks are not impacted. Further south, there would be some dimensional change. The space where the bike lane would be has angled parking. In this case, it would not really affect the parking, but the tradeoff would be that the internal landscaping that is on the sidewalk panel today might be repositioned. That would be a final design detail. However, they would have the multi-modal corridor. The same is true with Option 3, Single Lane + Multi-Modal. Again, it is a balanced tradeoff. With single lanes, in saving a lane width, they can maximize the sidewalks and have the bike path and all the on-street parking. They also included a parking bay with 18-foot depth, which would be improving the parking, because right now, some of those areas are quite narrow and longer trucks overhang that. They also tried to maximize the center median’s size. With Option 4, Roundabout + Multi-Modal, they would be able to carry the same geometry, but there is a space where there would be parking impacts. Parking along Washington St., parking along Court St., would not be impacted. There has been a lot of conversation about the top of the square.

Councilor Workman stated that she is looking at option 2B, for example. She continued that on the left-hand side near Gilbo Ave. they are doing parallel parking. Mr. Blomquist replied no. Mr. Roberge stated that she might be looking at an older generation of a plan. He continued that when they first looked at alternatives, one of the ad hoc committee’s goals was to maintain angled parking. Stantec showed some options with parallel parking, and once they heard that from the ad hoc committee, the options were revised. The most recent alternatives all show angled parking along the main corridor. Mr. Blomquist stated that those went out in January and April. He continued that everything from the middle of the ad hoc committee has shown angled parking, because that was something clearly desired.

Councilor Workman thanked them and replied that this is important, because there is a lot of information on the City’s website, and she thinks the community is confused about what options

are really on the table now. Obviously, all options are on the table, but when they are looking at it as a committee and as a Council, they need to know what they are looking at. They should be looking at the most recent designs. Mr. Roberge replied that these are from the April 26 workshop. He continued that on the City's website, the last recommendation that came from Keene as a group was the Mayor's ad hoc committee recommendation to the Council. That is the set of goals they are seeing today, with the angled parking, the raised table at the Gilbo Ave. intersection, and the roundabout option.

Mr. Blomquist stated that he knows there is a lot of information on the project website. He continued that part of that was in response to people wanting to know/see the iterations, to see how the ad hoc committee got to its final recommendation. Thus, there are some older concepts on there, but they were showing "Here's where we were," and then the committee's recommendations, which is what the Council has been considering.

Chair Greenwald asked how wide a bike lane has to be. He asked if there are regulations preventing it from being, say, two feet. Mr. Roberge replied yes, it is a minimum of five feet. Chair Greenwald asked if that is a regulation. Mr. Blomquist replied yes. Chair Greenwald asked what happens if they want it to be three feet. Mr. Blomquist replied that then it is not a bike lane. He continued that they could certainly mark it, to show 'bicyclists go here,' but five feet is the Federal Highway's design requirement. Chair Greenwald stated that they are trying to accommodate tables, merchants, pedestrians, and bike lanes, and it has to add up.

Councilor Williams stated that one of the ways they could save width on the bike lane is by not having curbs. He continued that it is the same height as the sidewalk, so if someone on the sidewalk accidentally strolls into the bike lane, they will not fall down. It does make that space available. It also leaves a possibility open that if he is completely wrong and nobody ever uses that bike lane, the Council can choose to make it a sidewalk again and it will not cost anything.

Councilor Roberts stated that he went through a lot of data, from many sources, looking at where the City of Keene came from and where the City of Keene is going. He looked into age, socio-economics, how many non-Keene residents came driving into Keene to work, and more. He continued that 22% of people in Keene right now are 60 years old or over. People age 30-39 and 40-49 only make up 11%. Families are not coming to Keene. Keene's population is going down, and the Census and other resources predict it will keep going down, at least until 2029. He liked what Dan Mitchell was saying this morning on the radio. People in Keene just do not like to exercise. There is a small population of people who will ride their bikes. With all this talk about the city being "walkable," people in Keene just do not walk. Regarding Keene's socio-economics, if 10 people were walking down the street, one is below the poverty level. Yes, they have a great rail trail, and if they are going to have bikes, it should be tied into the rail trail. If he is coming in from either way on the rail trail, there is no reason he cannot stop right before the intersection somewhere on either side going into Main St., and get off his bike and walk north or south. He could visit any shop on Main St. Yes, some people said they do not ride their bikes downtown and they are afraid to take their children downtown because of traffic. He

walks a lot, and on Saturday and Sunday mornings when there is hardly any traffic there, he hardly sees anyone walking or riding bikes. He does not care if there is not a bike lane. He would not be riding his bike at 5:00 or 6:00 PM, because he would not be able to anticipate what any driver was going to do. As they have seen around the country, people have this feeling that if they are in a bike lane, they are safe. There is no protective cone over a bike lane that will protect you from irresponsible drivers. Based on the numbers and where Keene is going, demographics and the other data, he cannot support bike lanes because he does not think they will be used very much. They are nice to have, but they will not be used very much, and people will not walk, and the biggest demand for downtown will be “parking for lazy people.” To him, the parking spaces are the priority.

Councilor Williams replied that if they build their infrastructure “for lazy people,” then they will have lazy people. He continued that they have seen the result of this. The city does not have good bicycle infrastructure, which is one reason people do not bike very much. People say, “Oh, we have the rail trails,” but there are no rail trails in Ward 2, which is large, populous, and right next to downtown. Many people could bike there. He himself moved there so he could walk downtown, because he wants to be in a walkable city. If Keene was not that, he would be living somewhere else today. People from Ward 2 come down Washington St. to go downtown, and on a bike, it is a nightmare once you hit Central Square. With one of these design options you get a lane that is separated from traffic, you are protected, elevated, safe, and not in traffic because the cars are parked in front of you. He thinks it would be used. The Committee had quite a few representatives at the last meeting saying how it would be used. On the official survey asking Keene residents what they wanted in downtown infrastructure, 75% of respondents said they wanted bicycle infrastructure. Thus, they have a responsibility to build bicycle infrastructure.

Councilor Roberts stated that one of the individuals that came to the last meeting and spoke about wanting to have bike lanes. He continued that she had her daughter with her, and she spoke about how most people cannot come to these meetings because they have a life, have to go to work, have to help with homework and put the kids to bed, and so on and so forth. Yes, the Committee has all of the public seats occupied, but it is still a miniscule percentage of the people in Keene. Councilor Williams mentioned that 75% of survey respondents want bike lanes, but survey respondents are a small percentage of the 22,000 Keene residents. If they only had 300 surveys completed, that is less than 1% of the population.

Dave Morrill of Mechanic St. stated that the last meeting there was a lot of talk about costs. He continued that today he is hearing this motion suggesting that they not include bike lanes, which is essentially leaving money on the table. He thinks they should revisit the conversation about costs, if they are going to leave that money on the table by not including bike lanes.

Rowland Russell of High St. stated that he is a member of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Path Advisory Committee (BPPAC), and they have discussed this extensively. He continued that the consensus of that committee and the constituents they talked to is that the safest option is having bike lanes at sidewalk level inside the cars, so bikes are not in the footprint of the roadway. His

email to all Councilors included research he and the committee did on the economic benefits of protected bike lanes and the grants funding. One of the economic benefits is the people who are drawn to cities that have this kind of infrastructure, particularly regarding workforce development. Younger folks who prefer to bike to their jobs are attentive to carbon footprint and want that option. Putting on his other hat as an Antioch alum and current employee, he reminds everyone that the university plans to move toward KSC on the Winchester St. corridor. That is a younger population, and is not as large as KSC, but a significant percentage of students and employees bike to the university's current location, which is further out. Many Antioch students live in Ward 3. Protected bike lanes would be important for commuting for those students, and for KSC students who live in off-campus housing.

Connie Joyce stated that she moved to Keene in 1964 and has worked professionally here for almost 60 years. She continued that she graduated from Antioch in 1985. She mentioned that she had previously asked about when the bike survey was done and what the written results were, but she has never received an answer. Continuing, she noted there are enormous safety issue to creating bike lanes. Both the bicyclists and drivers are at risk. Drivers are preoccupied. Our local population is greying. Some drivers have slow reaction time due to age, poor driving ability, and medications that shorten their reaction time. Other people use drugs or alcohol. Some are driving above the speed limit. The law considers cars as "deadly weapons." In the past few months, several well-known cyclists have been killed or lost limbs. Recently, a cyclist in NYC was killed when a truck hit her, and her family is suing the city for \$100 million for not properly constructing safe bike lanes. We cannot risk killing people. Bikers need to pay strict attention at all times.

Ms. Joyce continued that in the past few days, she has seen five bikers. Four were riding on the sidewalk, and one was in the bike lane, traveling toward her. Those bikers do not know the rules of the road and do not use the existing bike lanes. If she still rode a bike, she would never feel safe riding down Main St. and she would feel like she was risking her life riding on West St. The sidewalks are safer. Many bikers fear parked cars more than moving cars. With a moving car, you assume the driver knows what he/she is doing, but you never know what a parked car is doing. You do not know when a person will back out or open a door, throwing the biker into traffic. Mixing pedestrian sidewalks with bike lanes adds another hazard.

She continued that the disadvantages of designing the project with bike lanes downtown is that there will be less space for cars, less space for handicapped drivers, and increasing lack of good judgment from bikers. Bike lanes can be costly and unnecessary for many cities, and improper design may do more harm than good. Other disadvantages include creating a liability to the drivers for an accident, creating great financial burden, and the harm it does forever to the drivers who accidentally harm a bicyclist. Ms. Joyce added there is also liability to the City for injuries to the bikers. She asks the Committee to not put bike lanes downtown, and to not bend to a small minority of bikers who have adequate and safe access to millions of dollars' worth of Keene bike paths. Route them around the city. In Keene, weather prevents biking for many months. They

can allow bikes downtown on the sidewalks that exist, if the bikers get off their seats and walk their bikes.

Ms. Joyce continued that from those other comments, she wonders how many Committee members have read Fred Parsells' letter in the Keene Sentinel on May 27. If needed, she has additional copies for anyone who would like to read his comments as a former Police Officer, about accidents.

Nancy Ancharski of 60 School St. stated that it seems like they are spending a lot of time on bike lanes and multi-modal lanes. She continued that she wants to know if the design calls for these dedicated, multi-modal lanes to extend from Emerald St. to West St. or if they go along the sidewalks beyond West St., and on the other side from Eagle Ct. to Roxbury St. She asked if there is a bike lane that goes, say, in front of Luca's. Chair Greenwald replied yes. Ms. Ancharski asked if it would be the same on the other side of Central Square. Chair Greenwald replied presumably, yes. Ms. Ancharski asked if it is correct that the bicyclists would not be funneled into Central Square.

Mr. Blomquist stated that the plan is to have, starting down toward Emerald St. and Eagle Ct., bringing the bicycle facilities from the Water St. area all the way up through Central Square, ultimately to West St., ultimately to Washington St., and Court St. Certainly, those outer streets, like West St., need work. West St. is a \$32 million project in the CIP, starting in about 2028. Those pieces will be coming together over the next decade.

Ms. Ancharski stated that she is still not completely clear on it, but it seems like they are arguing about a block beyond the current rail trail, a block south of the current rail trail on both sides, and a block north of the current rail trail on both sides. Chair Greenwald replied yes. Ms. Ancharski replied that the bikers will end up somewhere else. She continued that that zigzag path that was shown will still have to be used. They are spending a lot of time and money on a very short distance, and the people who will be biking to work will be on the street after these dedicated bike lanes, so she does not see the benefit of the dedicated bike lanes. She asked if all businesses will have bicycle racks in front of their businesses, taking up more sidewalk space, so that people can get off their bikes for those two blocks. Chair Greenwald replied that the locations of the bike racks are not specified; that is a final design detail. Ms. Ancharski continued that she is part of the older population and does ride her bike, but she parks it near Yolo and walks. She continued that coming down Washington St., it would be nice to have a bike rack; she knows there is a small bike rack near City Hall. She thinks they are spending a lot of time on this because "some people are being rather noisy" about multi-modal transportation.

Jim Sterling stated that he is one of those "noisy multi-modal people," and he will fight for the bike lanes. He continued that some people do not understand is that it is not just about traveling through Keene. People want access to the downtown, not just to park at Railroad Square and have to walk. They do not say that to people who have cars, and they do not say to pedestrians. Bikers want the same opportunity as everyone else. Listening to the previous speaker, he

thought she made some very good points *for* having protected bike lanes. Whether they vote for bike lanes or not, there will still be perils on the road. They are just trying to remove the perils that are here downtown. The reason so many business owners do not recognize bikers as shoppers is because bikers have been cut out from that. He appreciates Councilor Roberts for doing research, and he appreciates Councilor Workman for being so thoughtful about what she heard last week. Regarding their conversations about an “older demographic” electric bikes are being sold at twice the rate of regular bikes. In addition, he wishes young children could be here to voice their thoughts, because the Council is voting on something that will affect the next 40 to 50 years. He would like to see if they have actually done a cost/benefit analysis of bikers versus 10 or 15 parking spaces. Trying to keep downtown the same is absurd, and he would like the Councilors to have some vision.

Chair Greenwald stated that he has a question for staff or Stantec. If they say that they want to maximize the sidewalk width, and he is not saying bikes or no bikes, is it correct that a bike lane would be a strip of paint going down the sidewalk, five feet off the curb? Mr. Blomquist replied yes, there would be some type of marker that would indicate the bike lane. He continued that of course, they want that from a safety standpoint. Someone on the other side, such as a pedestrian or someone using a mobility device, would be aware that they were crossing into an area in which they need to pay more attention.

Chair Greenwald replied that maybe he is thinking of this a little differently. He continued that he keeps saying he wants a maximum sidewalk. Whether there is the marking there now or not, that seems like a final design issue. Mr. Blomquist replied yes, but when Chair Greenwald says “maximize sidewalk width,” he can say right now, the one lane option north/south gives the maximum sidewalk width. But if they want to keep the median the size that it is, and keep two lanes north south, and keep 18-foot parking bays, that tells them how much space they now have left from the front of the parking bay to the face of the building, which basically is what they have there today. If they want a bike lane in that, now they will be taking five feet away from the sidewalk width.

Chair Greenwald stated that if he is not prepared to give up a lane of traffic, and he not prepared to give up center parking. The sidewalk is where it is, and they are doing a lot of talking about something that does not make any difference. Mr. Blomquist replied that if they keep Main St. essentially the way it is, they are not changing any lines. He continued that they would be keeping the sidewalk widths the same as what they are today. Chair Greenwald replied that if some Council in the future decides they want to take five feet of that sidewalk and put a stripe down and call it a bike lane, they could. Mr. Blomquist replied that that would be reducing the sidewalk width. Chair Greenwald replied yes, but that is not something they have to decide now. Mr. Blomquist replied that Chair Greenwald is right, certainly a future Council could do that. However, this is part of the design process, determining what they are going to be putting in and around that. They have talked about green infrastructure. Certainly, there will be green spaces, like there are today, because that is part of why people come downtown; they can sit under trees, and enjoy the beauty. The question is how to lay that out. The decisions the Committee is

making today, which he thinks they have been emphasizing, are decisions that will affect downtown for the next 30 years. Historically, downtown has been addressed approximately every 30 years when there has been some change in society, such as moving to the automobile, rail going out, or commercial activity no longer being the main focus in the downtown. What happens in 30 years? It seems like movement towards electric vehicles, autonomous vehicles, will change the demand, and probably at that time, the downtown will be adjusting to meet those particular needs. What Chair Greenwald is proposing is basically the lines that exist out there today. In the future, yes, someone could talk about taking the five feet for bike lanes, but that means that they have to make sure as they are doing the design that they are not putting anything in that five-foot area that would need to be removed.

Chair Greenwald thanked Mr. Blomquist for being his sounding board on this. He continued that if he is saying he does not want the parking in the middle to be removed or reduced, as much as he might want the bike path, it does not fit. Mr. Blomquist replied that it does not fit based on what Chair Greenwald has identified as being the priorities. He continued that they talk about not losing parking spaces, and right now they have a conceptual design. They have not sat down and done the next level. For example, if they were to choose the roundabout option, probably eight or ten parking spaces could be fit onto West St. that are not there today. There are probably other things that they could do, if they are looking at pure numbers, to get the parking spaces back up to what they have, and maybe more. However, again, part of the challenge is they do not know what configuration, other than, they know what they have today. Chair Greenwald replied that it is clarified in his mind, and he will find his way around the perimeter, as he has done for years.

Councilor Filiault stated that he has heard comments throughout the week that if the bike lanes do not happen, the City is “anti-bike.” He continued that that is a complete misstatement. This City has spent more time and money on bicycle infrastructure than probably any community in the state has. He challenges any city to rival what Keene has spent. They are talking about two city blocks here. Councilor Williams said there are no bike trails in Ward 2, and there still will not be, because they are only talking about two city blocks. Regarding college students getting to Winchester St., it does not matter – they will not be using these two city blocks to get there. Councilor Filiault noted that he grew up in Keene, and rode a bike, and he made it everywhere downtown. That was before the bike trails even came in. Anyone from the area who comes into downtown Keene knows how to circumvent and get anywhere they want to go, and now, they have multi-million dollar bike trails to do it. Railroad Square and Gilbo Ave. hopefully will have many bike racks. They talk about exercise. If you are biking into Keene and are going to stay in Keene, you can walk one block north and one block south. You can get to anywhere in Keene on a bike with a little bit of creativity. You know where the alleyways are, you know where the streets are, and you do not need signs. For those bike paths in Keene, you do not need to go down Main St., just go around it and go. He takes offense to those who say the Council is anti-bike. He appreciates the multiple calls he got this morning from people on the BPPAC who disagreed with designing protected bike lanes downtown, but who did not want their names out there.

Councilor Filiault continued that if they did a bike lane, if there was all the space in the world, fine. But they do not have all the space in the world. Instead of talking about reducing sidewalks to accommodate bike lanes, they should be talking about widening them. Downtowns are now social downtowns, and they see that in Keene. People who grew up in Keene know that they have gone from retail to social. They will need wider sidewalks if some of these retail buildings become restaurants. They will need more room for tables. When the Colonial Theater has a show, 900 people come in to those shows at night. There is not a parking space to be found anywhere, or an outdoor table. They will need more of that. They can live without two blocks of bike lanes. If someone cannot manage to get into Keene on a bike without that, they probably should not be pedaling. He rides a bike, knows how to get anywhere downtown, and has not been hit yet.

Pam Slack of Beaver St. asked for clarification on the motion on the table. She continued that it seems like part of this conversation is not part of the motion. She requested that the Chair read the motion so that everyone understands it. Tonight is probably one of the first times she has heard that there are four projects on the table. However, those four projects are not the projects that were promoted by the City. The City promoted one project, the project that came out of the Mayor's ad hoc committee. Tonight is the first time she understood that all four projects are on the table. When they make the motion tonight, she would like it to be made clear to the public what is actually being recommended to the City Council.

Chair Greenwald replied the motion will not reference a plan letter or number, but rather his intent is to identify the design scope in words. Ms. Slack replied that she understands that, but the public might not be able to follow that. It is not clear, and that has been a problem with this project all along, in her opinion.

Ms. Slack continued that regarding the RAISE grant Mr. Roberge spoke about that Boston got for \$25 million, the chances of Keene getting that type of grant are slim. She does not want people to think that the City can get a \$25 million grant to help with the project downtown. Also, she is very concerned that they are going to change the entire downtown to accommodate bicycles. They will lose something, somewhere, if they do that. She does not want to see any businesses lost. She wants to continue to see the restaurant grow and see people outside. She is a walker, and rode her bike all around Keene when she was a child. The law at the time was that you could not ride your bike downtown on the sidewalk, and there was a \$50 fine.

She appreciates that this has finally come to the MSFI Committee, which is where it belonged in the first place, and she appreciates the hard work that the Councilors have put into this. This is a very important project to the entire city, and everyone should have a voice, and because they did it this way, she feels like everyone *has* had a voice.

Chair Greenwald stated that he will re-read the motion. He continued that intentionally, he did not try to figure out which one of these numbered/lettered plans should be incorporated.

He read the motion as:

- “That Central Square remains in the existing configuration, but with improvements to lane markings, lengths of crosswalks, and traffic lighting systems.
- That the improvements to Main St. maximize sidewalk widths while also keeping parking in the center median.
- That the raised crossing table crossing Main St. to Gilbo Ave. and Railroad Square be installed as proposed.
- That the remaining crosswalks on Main St. be evaluated for potential elimination of mid-block crossings and/or the installation of pedestrian lighting systems where appropriate.
- That the project include infrastructure, water and sewer, for the installation of public bathrooms at a later date.
- That protected bike lanes not be included in the final design.
- That during the final design an evaluation be done of all turning movements to connected side streets for a possible alteration or improvement.”
- That Gilbo Ave. remains two-way traffic

Chair Greenwald stated that he is expecting an attempt for an amendment, and that is the process. He continued that right before they vote, for the record, he wants to run down some of these final design considerations that will come up later. He also wants to note that this is not the end for the MSFI Committee. Once it goes into final design in the next stages, it will come back to the Committee periodically for informational review and input.

Roger Weinreich of 51 Railroad St. stated that he does not know if bike lanes downtown are the thing, either around the town or down the middle, because he does not have enough information to make that decision. He continued that one thing he knows is that Keene is in transition. He is sure it was in transition when they went from horses to cars; at some point, cars took over. They are now in transition in that bicycles and alternative means of transportation, which have not even come yet, are coming. He saw an older man come through the square on a scooter, and thought to himself that that is how he would get around if he could do so safely. They are not even at the cusp of what it is going to look like, but the bike lanes are at least a way to segregate some space, and if they have to give up part of the sidewalk, he is in favor of that. He does not see crowds in front of the Main St. stores anymore as he used to, so he thinks there might be space for five feet of sidewalk for bikes, with six or eight feet for pedestrians, he is not sure. He has been in business for 30 years and can count the accidents involving pedestrians hit by bikes in front of the store and not blame anyone but know that if anything, that is a reason why they have to protect their citizens. They are getting more bikes on the sidewalks whether they like it or not. They are getting in the way of cars and vice versa, so there is a need for some segregation or integration they have to play around with and explore. To that end, he wants to thank the Council for offering to contribute to Jeff Speck’s visit on June 12. Mr. Speck is the foremost infrastructure designer in America right now, and he is coming to Keene not as a consultant – all he will do is show examples of other towns. He would like to see if his book of tricks has another town like Keene with bike lanes, and see what they did and how that looks.

He thinks they just have not compared enough of what has actually been done, so they do not have to reinvent the wheel. Mr. Speck's visit is unbiased. He goes to some towns and says "Nope, no bike path, don't do it." But it is good to have this discussion.

Mr. Weinreich continued that regarding the finances, in some of the cities he looked at around the country where they got grants for the above multi-modality work, it cost the taxpayers less money. He is beginning to believe that if they do that extra work and pull in some grants, it might have less burden on the taxpayer. He is not sure if that is true. To remind everyone, Mr. Speck's visit will be at Heberton Hall, 6:00 PM, on Monday, June 12. The following morning a workshop is open to 30-50 people who want to come do more Q&A. He is only coming to Keene to share his experience. He encourages people to attend and listen to what he has to say.

Hilda Demoya of Pine Ave. stated that she lives near the first bike trail. She continued that she rode her bicycle for 20 years, in seasonable weather, back and forth to work. She also rode it from her home to lower Main St. at a different job. She would be riding it still, perhaps, except she does not feel safe riding a bicycle in Keene. It is not a dedicated trail, and it is not sidewalks, it is the whole, general infrastructure in Keene where West St. has a finite width, as does Main St. They cannot add or subtract real estate. If they start to put in bicycles, fine. Dedicated lanes on West St. that are three feet wide and painted with a white stripe just do not cut it, because the sewer drains have to be avoided on a bicycle otherwise you would stop dead. Vehicles are getting bigger and faster, and trucks are wider. There are people riding motorcycles, from motorized wheelchairs to Harleys. There are people getting drivers licenses without much experience. There are elderly people who should not be driving anymore. It is the responsibility of the City and the State, and of the individual, to make sure that the operator is competent. She sees a lot of discourtesy on the part of every motorized vehicle. She has seen motorized scooters driven by children who look to be eight years old. She recalls the ATV accident where the driver was 6 years old and killed on the rail trail crossing routes 9, 10, and 12. She does not want to have to argue with the sidewalk or the pothole in the road, and does not want to have to argue with bicycle riders who do not even ding their bell to let you know they are behind you on the rail trail. She would like to have bicycle access, but personally does not feel that she needs it on Main St. Yes, it would be nice to have a place where you could securely lock your bicycle in a bike rack, like at the Library. She will not ride her bike on West St. or Main St. She is 100% in favor of requiring people to walk their bicycles on Main St.

Ms. Demoya continued that she is glad to hear that Central Square will be on timed lights and about other things like that that will make it safer. She recognizes that Keene has changed. She may not like speeding tables on Main St. sidewalks, but she puts up with them. She does not like walking down the west side of the square when someone is riding a bicycle and three families are eating at tables outside and there are two dogs on leashes and you can barely fit through. They have finite real estate, and have to figure out how to coexist. She does love to ride a bicycle and understands why they want to commute to and from work on a bicycle. She thanks the Council for doing this. She is delighted to hear that Central Square will stay the same and will have safety improvements.

Jodi Newell of 32 Leveret St. stated that she has not yet contributed to these conversations but she appreciates the way they are going about it and getting input from everyone. Regarding bike lanes, she can speak from the perspective of someone who tries to leave her car at home during the week and ride her bike instead. She continued that when her children were young, she used to ride around with them in a trailer behind her, and can say how mortifying it is to ride around the streets if there is not a bike lane in place. It makes it safer. She understands the idea of going around the downtown, and she is perfectly fine with the way it is set up now and walking her bike through the downtown. That is what she does. Regarding the conversation about taking the roads around Main St., she wants to know if the Committee members have done that themselves, because the sidewalks are not good and riding in the street is not good, either. She knows and appreciates that Keene is bike-friendly, but bike lanes are helpful in keeping people safe. Her children now ride their bikes downtown with their friends, to go to Local Burger and so on and so forth, and it would be safer for them to go downtown if there were a bike lane. She understands that there are considerations to be made. If the bike lanes do not end up being on Main St. she would appreciate it if they could fix up the streets around it, so that going around it is a little safer for people, especially children.

Dorrie Masten stated that she wants to clarify one of the biggest problems with this conversation. She continued that not putting in bike lanes on Main St. does not eliminate the RAISE grant funding in any way. Putting it a block away will not affect the RAISE grant. She called the Federal government's office and spoke with a RAISE grant representative, who assured her that the scoring process is not about bike lanes. It is about making the downtown easier to get through, the environment, and all of that. It has nothing to do with riding down Main St. on your e-bike. You can be a block away. Stantec knows how to figure that out; they could put a bike path on Summer St. It does not have to be in downtown. They are talking about two blocks. If anyone on a bike cannot get off and walk for those two blocks, they should not be on a bike, they should be in a wheelchair. She thought the whole point was that they are riding their bikes to be outside in the fresh air. The RAISE grant will not be shut off, nor will the City's score be lowered, for not having bike lanes on these two blocks. However, while saying that, she is not against the bike path. She does not mind it at all. She just thinks that altering the entire downtown for two blocks is ridiculous. They need to be fiscally responsible. She asks the Council to remember that their job is to consider what would benefit the majority of Keene, not the few people who may or may not live in Keene.

Councilor Williams stated that it is interesting when people say, "You can walk your bike for two blocks," because nobody says, "Push your car for two blocks." He continued that there is inequality here, regarding how drivers are treated versus how people who are not driving are treated. He finds that attitude extends to the streets, where he does not feel safe. It is concerning to him to be hearing what he will call an anti-bike vibe. He does not think the City supports bicyclists particularly well. They certainly make a lot of noise about it, but if you think about the City's budget, the funding for bike lanes comes from a non-profit that raises money to give to the City for bicycle infrastructure. That is not how it works for roads; roads are paid for through

taxes. They would not dream of having a non-profit do it. But the cars get the special privileges, and somehow that 167th parking space is considered a “need,” not a “want,” but a bike lane that will keep people safe – and keep his child out of traffic – is considered a “want.”

Councilor Williams made a motion to amend, so that the 6th item in the motion reads: “That protected bike lanes be included in the final design.” Councilor Workman seconded the motion.

Chair Greenwald stated that his thoughts are that if they could make the street wider, he would be all about this. However, when it comes down to taking away sidewalk for pedestrians and merchants, to make the bike lanes, he loses it. Otherwise, he would be in favor. He continued that once this is finally down, all they would have to do is get some paint, and they would have a bike lane. In the future, if there were that many bikers and the future Council sees it in their wisdom to want to do it, this is a very easy change. He will be opposing the amendment but understands Councilor Williams’s points.

Chair Greenwald asked if other Committee members had thoughts on the amendment. Hearing none, he called for a vote. The motion to amend failed with a vote of 2-3. Chair Greenwald, Councilor Roberts, and Councilor Filiault were opposed.

Chair Greenwald stated that they return to the motion on the floor, as presented. He asked if anyone from the public wanted to speak on the motion.

Councilor Williams stated that he has another amendment to propose, regarding the part that says, “Central Square is to remain in the existing configuration but with improvements to lane markings, lengths of crosswalks, and traffic lighting systems.” He continued that as he said before, he does not think this will be effective. He thinks they will continue to have a downtown that is overwhelmed by traffic. (People are familiar with the experience of having a good time on Central Square and then suddenly some guys with big engines start circling around the square. They want to not have that anymore; they want Central Square to be an accessible place where people can go. Someone was saying you cannot find downtown space anymore because there is only so much real estate, but there is a configuration here that has figured out how to get more real estate out of downtown. That is gold and they should not give that up. He proposes that the motion say, “That Central Square be upgraded to a configuration that includes traffic lights and a one-way section at the north end of the square.”

Chair Greenwald asked if there was a second. There was no response. He asked if there were any more amendments to propose. Hearing none, he asked for a vote on the motion.

Councilor Roberts asked to speak first. He stated that one of the most prevailing things he has heard over all these meetings is how they are going to improve the downtown, make the downtown the center point, and attract more people downtown, like the crowds they had before. He continued that it is more than bike lanes, more than a roundabout. It is about changing their perspective. The reason they do not have a lot of people downtown is, for example, the high

school has 500 less students. They do not have people coming back to Keene to produce families to shop downtown. They do not have income equality for women. The majority of workers in Keene are women. Even a woman with a bachelor's degree gets \$15,000 a year less than men. With a graduate degree, \$25,000 a year less. If they are not working as a City to improve that, no woman is going to want to come back to Keene to raise a family if they will get so shortchanged on their income. The City of Keene has to wake up and understand many of the economic discrepancies Keene has that are preventing women graduating, going to college, getting a job, coming back to Keene, buying homes, putting children into Keene's schools, and spending money at Keene businesses. Bike lanes will not put more people downtown. It is a much bigger picture.

Chair Greenwald asked for any last public comment. Hearing none, he asked for a vote on the motion. The motion passed with a vote of 3-2. Councilor Workman and Councilor Williams were opposed.

Chair Greenwald stated that for the background notes, there has been talk about final design considerations. He continued that in his notes, he listed the following: street lights, traffic signals, stop signs, lane markings, planting beds, trees, crosswalk lighting, bike racks, electric vehicle charging, event protection, and the work schedule.

Chair Greenwald stated that whatever project makes it through Council, it will come back to the MSFI Committee for periodic review and input.

4) Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Greenwald adjourned the meeting at 8:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

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