

07/20/2023

A regular meeting of the Keene City Council was held on Thursday, July 20, 2023. The Honorable Mayor George S. Hansel called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Roll called: Bryan J. Lake, Michael J. Remy, Gladys Johnsen, Michael Giacomo, Randy L. Filiault, Robert C. Williams, Philip M. Jones, Andrew M. Madison, Kris E. Roberts, Raleigh C. Ormerod, Bettina A. Chadbourne, Catherine I. Workman, Mitchell H. Greenwald, Kate M. Bosley, and Thomas F. Powers were present. Councilor Williams led the Pledge of Allegiance.

MINUTES OF THE PRECEDING MEETING

A motion by Councilor Powers to approve the minutes of the July 6, 2023, regular meeting as printed was duly seconded by Councilor Bosley. The motion carried unanimously, with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mayor Hansel and the Council wished a Happy Birthday to Councilor Remy (July 17). Mayor Hansel also announced that the filing period for the fall Municipal Elections would begin August 16 at 8:00 AM. Candidates may either pay a filing fee and complete a declaration of candidacy or file by petition by collecting the signatures of 50 registered voters to get their name on the ballot. The filing period for declarations ends on September 5 at 5:00 PM. The filing period for petitions runs until September 8 at 5:00 PM. Anyone wishing to run for office must be a duly qualified registered voter in the ward or district they represent. Filings will be accepted at the City Clerk's Office for Mayor, Ward Councilor, Councilor-at-large, and the various Election Official positions. Lastly, Mayor Hansel announced that this was the last meeting before the Council's summer break. There would not be any more Standing Committee meetings before August 17. On August 17, there would be a site visit and public hearing. The Clerk would notify Councilors with a reminder of the site visit a few days before.

Mayor Hansel also recognized Councilor Jones for an announcement. Councilor Jones recalled that a couple of months ago, the Council voted to allow the Civil Air Patrol to put up equipment and a repeater on City property. During the floods over the past 2 weeks FEMA contacted the Civil Air Patrol to send airplanes out spotting the fragile areas all over VT and NH. They used 3 planes from New Hampshire, 3 from Vermont, and 6 from New Jersey to scour the area, all using the repeater that the City Council approved. As such, a lot of damage and injuries were prevented because FEMA was able to get to sites right away. Councilor Jones thanked the Council for their votes.

PRESENTATION – MONADNOCK ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION PROGRAM

Before introducing the presenter, Mayor Hansel noted that he was no longer Board Chair of the Monadnock Economic Development Corporation (MEDC). He was still a Board member. He

welcomed the presenter, Cody Morrison, Executive Director of MEDC and a Ward 2 Keene resident.

Mr. Morrison said the purpose of his visit was to inform the community of how MEDC can partner with the City of Keene, its businesses, and its residents to help the community's overall economic development. While MEDC is in regular contact with local officials, he thought it was appropriate to give this presentation. MEDC is one of 9 nonprofit regional development corporations in New Hampshire. MEDC represents 41 towns in southwestern New Hampshire. MEDC was founded in 1985. Over the last 25 years, MEDC expanded its scope to look beyond Keene. MEDC had worked with municipalities, nonprofits, entrepreneurs, and "everybody in between" to help achieve the mission of growing the regional economy. Throughout MEDC's history, they worked a lot in the real estate development business, and lending and programming aspects in pursuit of that mission. MEDC had helped over 80 different organizations on various transactions and built over 1,000,000 square feet in new construction. Its projects represent about 10% of Keene's property tax base. Many community residents would be familiar with MEDC's past projects such as Keene Ice, the Heberton Hall and Keene Public Library expansion. Mr. Morrison said MEDC has worked to provide lower costs and increased flexibility for some of those developments, whether providing direct financing, accessing tax credits or grants, or making the partnerships necessary to make these things happen. Mr. Morrison said MEDC had worked as a gap lender with many local banks to help businesses, nonprofits, and schools to access funding they needed for things like expansion.

Mr. Morrison explained that MEDC was in a time of transition, having adopted a new business plan and new way of fulfilling its mission. Part of the transition that Mr. Morrison was involved with in 2020–2021 was to hire a strategic planner to help craft a new business model and strategic plan. Approximately 1 year ago, Mr. Morrison began his new role and MEDC developed its strategic plan, which would be approved this fall. He said some of this work was starting to come to fruition. For example, in May 2023, MEDC received a \$1,000,000 award from the Environmental Protection Agency for a new Brownfields program. MEDC also received approximately \$500,000 in tax credits to advance childcare accessibility in the Monadnock Region. MEDC officials were in contact with City of Keene Staff about various new opportunities available through the federal government for things such as housing rehabilitation. With all of these new initiatives, MEDC was launching the Bringing it Home project, a home-based childcare start-up or expansion program. MEDC would be working with people who want to run childcare centers from their homes, providing them with training as well as business/licensure consulting and funding for housing rehabilitation. Childcare is a crisis throughout NH and the Monadnock Region. Mr. Morrison called this an innovative way to encourage new providers to open in different parts of the region, particularly in communities without access to commercial real estate. He said the goal is to create 60–120 new childcare openings by 2025. While this is more of a private, nonprofit provider aspect, he thought it was important for the community to know of MEDC's interests in municipalities and the Brownfields program.

Mr. Morrison said that MEDC was awarded \$1,000,000 in grants from the EPA for the Brownfields program to help clean hazardous waste or contaminated sites being prepared for development. The Kingsbury site is probably the most notable example in Keene. This funding is available to municipalities and nonprofits, and low-interest capital is available to private developers. While this would not single-handedly develop one property, it moves the needle in the right direction and is another tool to help the community. MEDC's direction forward is highlighted by onboarding these two programs and diversifying community and economic development in the region. They are looking at new ways to create new programs and form new partnerships with the childcare program. MEDC partnered with Hannah Grimes, the United Way, and Keene State College. Mr. Morrison said MEDC was excited for the community moving forward. He welcomed questions.

Councilor Ormerod was particularly interested in the childcare program and asked if there were 2 programs so far in Keene. Mr. Morrison was aware of 2 families in Keene working with the Childcare Resource Group, which creates a network. Councilor Ormerod asked if there is a minimum lot or house size to run a daycare. Mr. Morrison said those were some details that MEDC was working out. He thought something under 1,000 square feet could be worked out. Ultimately, MEDC defers to the NH Statute or any local regulations.

Mayor Hansel thanked Mr. Morrison for the presentation and MEDC for their essential work.

COMMUNICATION – RED KNIGHTS INTERNATIONAL MOTORCYCLE CLUB – MOTORCYCLE RALLY – PARKING VOUCHER SYSTEM FOR ATTENDEES

A communication was received from Robert Trudelle, asking for the City Council to work with their organization on a voucher system for parking that would allow those attending their rally at the Best Western to be able to park in City parking spaces downtown without paying the meter so they can visit and shop downtown. The organization would pay parking fees on their attendees' behalf. Mayor Hansel referred the communication to the Finance, Organization, and Personnel Committee.

COMMUNICATIONS – WALTER LACEY – RAISING A CONCERN OVER THE PLACEMENT OF BIKE LANES IN THE DOWNTOWN RECONSTRUCTION PLANS; KEN KOST – URGING INCLUSION OF "GREEN STREET" ELEMENTS IN THE DOWNTOWN RECONSTRUCTION PLANS; DIXIE GURIAN – REQUESTING TO LEAVE AS MANY OF THE TREES AS POSSIBLE INTACT WHEN DESIGNING THE RECONSTRUCTION OF DOWNTOWN; AND ROGER WEINREICH – JEFF SPECK'S PRESENTATION RESPONSE

A communication was received from Walter Lacey, expressing his concerns with the hazards of the bike lanes as currently depicted in the Downtown Reconstruction Plans. A second communication was received from Ken Kost, encouraging inclusion of green street elements in the final plans for the Downtown Infrastructure Improvement and Reconstruction Project including vegetation, soil, and permeable pavements to capture rainwater. A third

communication was received from Dixie Gurian, requesting that the City mitigate the amount of construction time and money needed to build, and to leave trees and above-ground additions as they are; she believes that the end result of more tax money needed to build the “new” above-ground and the disruptive access to Main Street could produce an unintended, unpleasant outcome. A fourth communication was received from Roger Weinreich, urging the City to hire Jeff Speck as a subcontractor to Stantec and to vote to approve the Hybrid Design with an amendment to further study the above-ground options; he also addressed the concern that Mr. Speck had used the presentation as a fundraising event and offered to reimburse the City the \$21.76 in royalties that Mr. Speck received through his book sales. Mayor Hansel accepted all four communications and informational.

MSFI REPORT – JOHN SOSNOWSKI – REQUEST FOR WATER ABATEMENT AND FEE WAIVER – 251 PARK AVENUE

A Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee report read, recommending that the request for abatement and the fee waiver from John Sosnowski be denied. A motion by Councilor Greenwald to carry out the intent of the Committee report was duly seconded by Councilor Filiault. The motion carried unanimously with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

MSFI REPORT – DOWNTOWN INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENT AND RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT

A Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee report read recommending that the City Council adopt Concept C – Multi-Lane Hybrid Option as the design option for the Downtown Infrastructure Improvement and Reconstruction Project. A motion by Councilor Greenwald to carry out the intent of the Committee report was duly seconded by Councilor Filiault. Discussion ensued.

After summarizing the Committee report, Councilor Greenwald shared his personal standpoint. He had never seen such interest and passion regarding a City project. He received so many emails from community members that he was unable to respond to them all. He said the MSFI Committee approved a recommended plan that essentially would replace the underground plumbing and would replace the surface near to as it exists today. He was unsure how that recommendation was lost in the Council workshop process. Councilor Greenwald had serious concerns about this multilane hybrid option, especially regarding bike lanes and pedestrian safety. Although the Council was told that trees and plantings are issues for the final design phase, he had serious concerns about the loss of trees, and he was not confident everything would be replaced. He had also heard that slip lanes were issues for the final design, but he had concerns about that and other Central Square issues.

A motion by Councilor Greenwald to amend the Committee report to recommend that the concept approved by the MSFI Committee on May 24, 2023, be approved as the recommended concept was duly seconded by Councilor Filiault.

Councilor Greenwald continued his comments, stating that he took this matter seriously. He noted that he was not up for re-election. He talked about the strengths of the current downtown design. He said the current downtown maximizes trees and green space as a part of the allure of downtown Keene. He said the Council heard that 61 trees would be removed with this hybrid design and that they might be replaced. He said another 10–15 trees had disappeared overnight. He cited many trees removed from the downtown peninsulas, which he called traffic calming safety zones for pedestrians that were not there accidentally. Professionals designed the downtown to work as it does today. Without some of these aspects, Councilor Greenwald feared that Main Street would look like any other shopping center or become a dragstrip from Marlboro Street to Central Square. He thought the current design was the right design. He reiterated that Main Street needs those traffic calming measures. He said the MSFI Committee’s plan would include minor modifications and shaping as opposed to the complete upheaval of this hybrid plan. He believed that traffic engineers and landscape consultants designed the current downtown configuration, which solved many issues. He was concerned that the hybrid concept would cause more issues. He said the bottom line was that the Council needed to do what most residents wanted, not the Council’s “glassy-eyed” view of the future. He thought the MSFI-approved plan was what many residents wanted. He did not recommend change for the sake of change or just to be progressive. Councilor Greenwald concluded his comments by quoting the singer Joni Mitchell, who said, “Don’t it always seem to go that you don’t know what you’ve got ‘til it’s gone.”

Councilor Johnsen appreciated the MSFI Committee’s work. Her understanding was that the trees to be removed would be replaced, just not necessarily in the same location. She also understood that 15 trees were removed because they were sick or diseased.

Councilor Giacomo said he appreciated what the City and designers did to redesign the downtown in the 1980s. He said it was good that there is little speeding or cutting over from the left lane on Main Street. He said it was also good that there had been few accidents on Main Street and that there were traffic calming measures. Still, he did not believe this was the best way for the future of Keene. He thought traffic engineering had advanced since the 1980s, giving the City more insight into how traffic works. He said the world had changed since the 1980s and would continue to change. He thought it would be bad to not design the downtown in anticipation of those advancements. He agreed with Councilor Greenwald that some of this is “glassy-eyed” thinking but said the Council had the difficult challenge of trying to foresee the future, which he said the Council owed to the community. Councilor Giacomo thought encouraging more multimodal transportation was a part of that future.

Councilor Filiault agreed with Councilor Greenwald. Councilor Filiault said this compromised hybrid plan was better than the original plan, which he said had wasted a year and had virtually

no City support. He supported the original MSFI recommendation because he thought it was what the constituents wanted. He agreed that the Council needed to look toward the future but said their job was listening to constituents now. He hoped that his fellow Councilors would listen to the constituents as the Councilors claim to during elections. He thought some Councilors believed that they knew better than the constituents. He thought this amendment would represent what the constituents wanted. Councilor Filiault thought some of his fellow Councilors would say that he could not prove that this is what the community overwhelmingly wanted; he said that was because the Council did not follow his recommendation to send this to the voters for their decision, which he said would have shown the truth. He said the truth was that an overwhelming majority of the community favored minimal changes to the downtown, which the MSFI Committee recommended. Councilor Filiault said many Councilors over age 50 had voted to make many changes in the City and were not afraid to make more. Still, he said change for the sake of change would be irresponsible. He said the current downtown is good and only needs tweaks (e.g., new traffic lights, new lane markings, and other minor modifications). He asked his fellow Councilors to listen to the majority of Keene as he and Councilor Greenwald were.

Councilor Ormerod disagreed with his fellow Councilors who claimed that the majority of the City wanted no changes whatsoever to the downtown. He agreed that the Council needed to think about the future, not for the past 40 years. He did not support this amendment. Many constituents came to Councilor Ormerod begging for progress, a solution that includes bike lanes, and a place to bring their families to enjoy downtown Keene safely. He said there was no scientific plan or proof that most of the community wanted no change. Councilor Ormerod had heard equal reasons on both sides of this argument. Ultimately, he said he would vote for the people who could not speak before the Council, for those who would be here for the next 50 years, and for the progress created with the hybrid plan. He did not want the City to go backward because the Council was afraid to do the right thing.

Councilor Workman said she respectfully disagreed with Councilors Greenwald and Filiault, and their assertion that disagreeing with the MSFI recommendation meant that Councilors were not listening to constituents. She called it a misrepresentation of facts. Councilor Workman said she had listened to countless constituents and met with anyone who asked. She had listened to all the differing opinions and voices. She thought the assertion that those who disagreed with the MSFI recommendation were not listening to most of the community was false; she thought those suggesting this must have been living in an echo chamber. She did not perceive that there was a majority opinion in the community. Councilor Workman believed that the multi-lane hybrid model would give everyone some of what they want while planning for future needs. She opposed this amendment.

Councilor Jones referred to Keene's 2010 Comprehensive Master Plan and specifically, page 47, where the American Planning Association called Central Square one of the top 10 great public spaces in its Great Places in America program. He encouraged everyone to read that page of the Master Plan. He also cited Keene's 2017 Economic Development Action Plan's section on the downtown's economic vitality: "Keene's downtown is an important community asset that has

become part of the community's national identity." It explains how important Central Square is to that national identity. Councilor Jones wondered why the Council would want to change the downtown area that had received all those accolades. He supported Councilor Greenwald's amendment. He said the last few meetings on this issue felt like everyone was trying to add a little of what they wanted; he compared it to choosing side dishes at a restaurant. He recalled that there was approximately \$7.5 million in the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) for this project and that it was unclear whether the City would receive any grants. He added that there was a lot unknown about Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts and the rates for borrowing. Councilor Jones thought there were many unknowns. He thought listening to the constituents and piecemealing a plan together was a better, safer approach for the Council to discuss the options one at a time with clear pricing.

Councilor Roberts said he would not support this amendment for a few reasons. First, he believed that 90%–95% of Keene residents did not care about what happened downtown because nothing is attracting them to the downtown. He recalled that it was essential to some for Keene and the downtown to be walkable. He noted that in some parts of downtown, groups of people can walk down the sidewalk together while other parts of downtown are less walkable. He said the expansion of sidewalk dining opposed the primary objective of being a walkable City. He said the downtown needs plantings and trees to make it attractive and walkable. Doing nothing would not make downtown Keene more walkable. Councilor Roberts said the Council needed to lead the community by combining their advice and expert knowledge to make the best decision with available information. He said it is not always a nice process. He said there is ineffective government nationwide because people in leadership positions do not want to be offended. He said it was the Council's job to do its research to inform their decisions. Councilor Roberts recalled going to school in Keene in the 1970s when it was possible to drag race down Main Street. In the 1980s, the City worked to change that and selected a downtown that worked for 40 years; it was not a wholesale change, but there were modifications. He said there was another opportunity now to modify (not wholesale change) the downtown to make it safer. The downtown must be attractive to users, otherwise, it would be the same people eating their bagels or drinking their beers downtown every day. Councilor Roberts thought it was essential to attract a younger crowd downtown, saying that demographic will replace the older generation in Keene.

Councilor Bosley addressed some of the comments she heard from her fellow Councilors. First, she said she did not support this amendment. She thought that the hybrid model with expanded sidewalk space would satisfy most of what she heard the Council wants. She heard the Council say that this hybrid option would provide important things like American Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance while keeping sidewalk cafés. Councilor Bosley noted that she had received a lot of letters from constituents complaining about the passable width on the downtown sidewalks and she thought the Council should address that. She thought the public's concern with the MSFI recommendation was over bike lanes. She understood that there were a lot of questions about how the City could manage those bike lanes and what they would look like. Councilor Bosley thought that reverting to the original MSFI recommendation would eliminate the small modifications that the Council had agreed are most important to the community.

Councilor Filiault said he respectfully disagreed with Councilor Roberts. Councilor Filiault felt that 95% of Keene residents care about and love the downtown, which is why Councilors had been so inundated with constituent communications over the last year. He thought all Councilors would agree that they were tired of this process. Still, he said he supported this amendment because he wanted to do the right thing. He said the Council might not always make the right decision because they are tired and ready to move on. Without this amendment, Councilor Filiault thought the Council would be making the wrong recommendation. He reiterated that his idea to place this decision on the election ballot for the voters to decide would have been best to learn the true feelings of the community.

Councilor Johnsen valued the comments she was hearing and respected her fellow Councilors' opinions. She could not support this amendment because she listened to younger constituents who care about the future. She said she had cautioned herself against listening to so many naysayers, who in her experience, could pull things back versus pushing them forward. She did not think the hybrid option would change the downtown that much and she believed that the trees would be replaced. Councilor Johnsen recalled how much money the City had spent to develop these concept designs, which she said were easy for her to understand despite all the Council interaction.

Councilor Chadbourne commented on the contentiousness over this topic. She was initially in favor of keeping downtown mostly the same, but a lot of people had written to her or talked to her about it. She heard a lot of opinions from both sides. Through those interactions, she realized she needed to be open to all options. She felt like at this meeting, the Council was choosing a base plan, from which it could build and fight for things that are essential to the heart and soul of downtown Keene. For her, that meant trees, plantings, and being able to feel safe walking on the sidewalk. For others, she knew bike lanes were essential. As a cyclist, she has no problem parking her bike and walking two blocks downtown to her destination. However, she urged thinking about bikes as a mode of transportation that people use to go to work, run errands, etc. She acknowledged that not many bikes are seen downtown right now, which she thought was likely because people do not feel comfortable riding downtown. While the Council could eventually decide to eliminate the bike lanes, she knew the Council needed to choose a base plan so the project could move forward celebrating and honoring the past, while looking toward the future. Councilor Chadbourne also noted that designing a downtown for the future must include the reality of climate change, which can be hard for some to wrap their minds around, but she said it is affecting us now and would continue to in bigger ways. Once this base concept is decided, Councilor Chadbourne said she would fight for the important things, like the aesthetic of downtown under all the trees and that quality of life.

Councilor Greenwald said he could see where this amendment was heading. He hoped that in the next stage of the final design that there would be more successful Council input. He expressed his concern that this was a City Staff-driven project, and he thought the Council would have to speak loudly about what they want. Councilor Greenwald called the question.

On a roll call vote of 3–12, the amendment failed. Councilors Filiault, Jones, and Greenwald voted in the minority.

Councilor Jones wanted to talk about the bike path. He said that sometimes constituents come to Councilors about sidewalks, such as the 4 blocks of sidewalks requested on Jordan Road. He said that in that instance, the sidewalk was denied because there was nothing for it to connect to. He said the same would be true for bike lanes. Where are they going? He said that 27 years ago, a group came to the City about building a trail system throughout the City, but they had to raise the funds themselves. That group raised \$1.5 million to build Keene's current beautiful trail system. He said the situation was similar for the dog park and skate park. He said the community was not being asked to fundraise in the same way for these bike lanes. When the trail system was built, cyclists knew there were trails to all parts of the City, including downtown, where they can park their bikes and walk two blocks. Councilor Jones did not understand why additional bike lanes were needed downtown when there is already a path to the center of the City. He said that in other cities, bike lanes look great when they are first implemented but that they look poor (e.g., skid marks and cracks) after a few years. He cited Madison, WI, where road salt degraded the bike lanes, so they had to switch to a more expensive salt. He said bike lanes cannot simply be repainted, but they must be rerolled and recompressed. He also said that in Brattleboro, VT, motorcycles have been using their bike lanes. In Springfield, MA, he said that motorbikes swarmed the bike lanes and they had to create an ordinance so that gas stations no longer sell fuel to motorbikes within their city. These were the sorts of problems that Councilor Jones believed that Keene should anticipate when implementing bike lanes.

A motion by Councilor Jones to amend the Committee report to remove bike lanes from the hybrid model was duly seconded by Councilor Filiault.

Councilor Madison wanted to correct Councilor Jones' statements about Springfield, MA, banning the sale of fuel to motorbike drivers. Councilor Madison said their ordinance prohibited the sale of fuel for non-roadworthy dirt bikes.

Councilor Ormerod wanted to be clear about what the hybrid plan would enable. He did not understand some of what he heard about vehicles driving in bike lanes and the need to re-pave bike lanes. The Councilor wanted to be clear that the bike lanes in question would be raised and not in the street. They would not be painted on the street to be run over and sand blasted. These would be raised to sidewalk level. He said the proposal was for an extra 5 feet on the sidewalk to accommodate the bike lanes. He said that the City would lose nothing by trying to make bike lanes work. If they do not work, there would be more space for planters or anything else that makes the downtown vibrant. He said the City would lose nothing by adopting the hybrid plan, which would allow the most variability for what the community wants.

On a vote of 4–11, the amendment failed. Councilors Filiault, Jones, Greenwald, and Powers voted in the minority.

Councilor Giacomo was unsure what this multilane hybrid option was hybridizing. As Councilor Filiault mentioned, it seemed to Councilor Giacomo that the Council was getting tired. He said this option was proclaimed as a compromise, but he could not identify the compromise, especially with some trying to remove the bike lanes. It seemed to him like what one side had wanted this whole time. He appreciated Councilor Chadbourne's comments about climate change, because Councilor Giacomo had been considering the environmental impact of all these options. He said the Council was arguing about 60 trees, when idling at the Central Square intersection causes much more environmental damage. He said the difference between a signalized Central Square and one with a roundabout (he was not arguing for the mini roundabout option) is 69.7 tons of carbon dioxide per year; a difference of 2,800 trees per year. Councilor Giacomo thought the multilane hybrid option was really just a lot of asphalt, with no meaningful expansion of Central Square or greenspace. He thought the only compromise from this hybrid option was the compromising of Keene's future.

A motion by Councilor Giacomo to amend the Committee report to be a multilane option with a non-signalized Central Square intersection was duly seconded by Councilor Remy.

Councilor Giacomo continued explaining that this amendment would not tie the City to the mini roundabout proposed by Stantec, but would allow for some of the interesting ideas proposed by constituents with backgrounds in traffic engineering. He said that the Central Square traffic signals could be removed in favor of a smooth flow that does not connect Central Square to the head of the square, which many opposed. He said there are ways to do this by improving the traffic flow and eliminating idling, which he called an environmental nightmare. He thought this would leave the City open to exploring different options.

Councilor Lake said he supported this amendment. He was opposed to the original mini roundabout proposed by Stantec. He favored a large roundabout that goes around the current Central Square footprint. He thought it was a good option for better traffic flow downtown.

Councilor Williams supported this amendment. He thought the traffic signal would be redundant with a large roundabout. While the Council could ultimately decide to have traffic signals, he thought it was good to keep in mind that a roundabout would resolve some traffic issues.

Councilor Greenwald expressed concern about Councilors acting like traffic engineers and designing something new. He said there were not even plans for Councilor Giacomo's suggestion for the Council to review and criticize. While Councilor Greenwald thought it was a great idea, he said this was just another one added to a long list of options the Council had reviewed. He thought this effort to redesign would just lead to another year of wasted progress. Councilor Greenwald stated that he would vote for anything at this point because, "I really think that we're all just getting so sick of the whole thing that we just want to vote something." He could not support this concept that had no accompanying analysis.

Councilor Jones questioned whether this amendment would lead to minimizing or enlarging the current Central Square.

Councilor Giacomo admitted that he is not a traffic engineer, and said he was not proposing or dictating any design. Councilor Giacomo said he was proposing that any design the Council moves forward with should not have a traffic signal at the Central Square intersection. He said there had been traffic analyses for the various concepts that showed the delay times, but he noted that this multilane hybrid option came out of left field at the last meeting and did not have that analysis.

For the public's benefit, Mayor Hansel wanted to clarify that the Council was voting on a *concept* plan, which would allow City Staff to seek funding. With a concept, the Council could start getting down to the details at grass-level that kept coming up through this concept phase.

Councilor Bosley posed some questions about this amendment. She recalled the Council talking ad nauseum about a mini roundabout versus a lighted intersection. Part of that discussion was about how emergency vehicles currently use the lights on Central Square. She asked if this amendment would be to keep the essence of traffic around Central Square but with the traffic lights disabled. She recalled an earlier concept that would have kept signals only to stop traffic for emergency vehicles, which she thought was an interesting idea. Mayor Hansel thought the Councilor was getting into final design details that could not be decided at this point. Councilor Bosley asked if Councilor Giacomo's amendment would mean no traffic lights even for emergency vehicles. Mayor Hansel thought the amendment was to have a non-signalized Central Square intersection.

Councilor Workman said her greatest criticism of Councilor Giacomo's amendment was regarding pedestrian safety in crosswalks around Central Square with no traffic lights. She said that would, in essence, be building a dragstrip for people to whip around Central Square. Even with lighted crosswalks, she did not think that pedestrians would have the sense of safety that she heard so many members of the public say they wanted. Councilor Workman said that the multilane hybrid model would have smart, intuitive traffic lights in an effort to reduce idling and emissions when possible; she cited evenings, noting that Main Street shuts down pretty early. She said that pedestrian safety was possible with an intuitive lighting system.

Councilor Lake said that a few meetings ago, he mentioned the idea that Councilor Bosley described to keep emergency lights but otherwise let the circle function without regular traffic lights. Regarding crosswalks, Councilor Lake said there were already unlighted crosswalks on Central Square, such as in front of the church, which seemed to be functioning even if not the best. He added that this multilane hybrid model would have the sidewalk move into the Square, so the crosswalks would be shorter. Councilor Lake supported the amendment with the retention of some emergency lighting.

Councilor Ormerod was intrigued by the idea of a true traffic circle around Central Square with minimal or no traffic lights; he said most GPS devices already think it is a traffic circle. From a pedestrian point of view, he said that there are currently 7 different roads coming into Central Square and when a pedestrian pushes the cross button, they must wait for the traffic lights to shut down the whole Square. This increases the carbon footprint of the intersection, while also agitating drivers. Councilor Ormerod supported a Central Square without traffic lights, with the exception of flashing beacons at crosswalks.

Councilor Williams spoke in support of elevated crosswalks, which slow cars and provide greater visibility to pedestrians. He thought the judicious use of elevated crosswalks would deter Central Square from becoming a speedway.

Councilor Giacomo said he did not have the detailed answers that many were seeking. He was not suggesting just ripping all the lights out. Still, he said constituents had submitted some detailed plans (some submitted to the Council 2–3 times) for a non-signalized Central Square design. Councilor Giacomo added that fire trucks traverse roundabouts without traffic lights safely every day. He also said that the data showed that roundabouts are safer for pedestrians (with fewer fatalities) than signalized intersections because the speeds are slower, and people are more alert. Councilor Giacomo still favored the original mini roundabout design and Central Square expansion. However, he was only proposing a non-signalized Central Square intersection.

Councilor Greenwald said the multilane hybrid model would include a whole new system of smart traffic signals. He said whatever we get would be better than what we have. He was concerned about a non-signalized intersection with hundreds of bicycles circling downtown. He said the cyclists need signals or they might get squashed in a roundabout.

On a vote of 7–8, the amendment failed. Councilors Johnsen, Lake, Remy, Giacomo, Williams, Madison, and Ormerod voted in the minority.

On a vote of 11–4, the motion to carry out the original intent of the Committee report carried, Councilors Giacomo, Filiault, Jones, and Greenwald voted in the minority.

FOP REPORT – FY23 DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE – JUSTICE ASSISTANCE GRANT

A Finance, Organization, and Personnel Committee report read, recommending that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to co-apply with the County of Cheshire, and to accept and expend the U.S. Department of Justice FY23 JAG in the amount allocated to the City of \$5,525. A motion by Councilor Powers to carry out the intent of the Committee report was duly seconded by Councilor Remy. The motion carried unanimously with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

FOP REPORT – ACCEPTANCE OF DONATION – DOG PARK

A Finance, Organization, and Personnel Committee report read, recommending that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to accept a donation of \$40,000.00 for the purpose of building a dog park in Wheelock Park. A motion by Councilor Powers to carry out the intent of the Committee report was duly seconded by Councilor Remy. The motion carried unanimously with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

FOP REPORT – CDFA GRANT ACCEPTANCE – BRIAN A. MATTSON RECREATION CENTER PROJECT

A Finance, Organization, and Personnel Committee report read, recommending that the City Manager be authorized to accept, execute and expend a Community Development Finance Authority Grant award for \$801,250.00 for the Brian A. Mattson Recreation Center project. A motion by Councilor Powers to carry out the intent of the Committee report was duly seconded by Councilor Remy. The motion carried unanimously with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

FOP REPORT – INVEST NH GRANT ACCEPTANCE – DEMOLITION – 160 WATER STREET

A Finance, Organization, and Personnel Committee report read, recommending that the City Manager be authorized to accept, execute and expend an Invest NH Municipal Demolition Grant award for \$130,000.00 for the property located at 160 Water Street. A motion by Councilor Powers to carry out the intent of the Committee report was duly seconded by Councilor Remy. The Clerk noted that there was a Scribner error in the amount of the grant. A motion by Councilor Powers to amend the Committee report to read \$117,895.00 was duly seconded by Councilor Filiault and the motion carried unanimously. The motion to carry out the intent of the amended report carried with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

FOP REPORT – KEVIN WATTERSON/KEENE SWAMPBATS – REQUEST TO USE PREVIOUSLY APPROVED COMMUNITY FUNDING

A Finance, Organization, and Personnel Committee report read, recommending that the communication submitted by the Keene Swampbats on June 15, 2023, requesting an additional fireworks discharge in July be reported out as informational. The Keene Swampbats are further authorized to reschedule their Independence Eve community-funded event to occur on Friday, July 28 on Alumni Field subject to the same conditions as the previous authorization. The petitioner agrees to absorb the cost of any City services over and above any amount of City funding allocated in the FY 24 Community Events Budget for the display. Said payments shall be made within 30 days of the date of invoicing. A motion by Councilor Powers to carry out the intent of the Committee report was duly seconded by Councilor Remy. The motion carried unanimously with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

FOP REPORT – COUNCILOR FILIAULT – REIMBURSEMENT FOR SPEAKING FEE – JEFF SPECK VISIT

A Finance, Organization, and Personnel Committee report read, recommending accepting the item as informational. Mayor Hansel filed the report as informational.

FOP REPORT – AIRPORT LAND LEASES FOR HANGAR DEVELOPMENT

A Finance, Organization, and Personnel Committee report read, recommending that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to negotiate Keene Airport land leases with potential hangar developers consistent with the Airport Land Leasing Policy. A motion by Councilor Powers to carry out the intent of the Committee report was duly seconded by Councilor Remy. The motion carried unanimously with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

FOP REPORT – CHANGE ORDER: WELLS STREET PARKING STRUCTURE

A Finance, Organization, and Personnel Committee report read, recommending that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to negotiate and execute Change Order #1 with Pierce Property Services to add tee-joint sealant replacements to the Wells Street Parking Structure Repair Project for an amount not to exceed \$44,550, with a revised contract total of \$431,514. A motion by Councilor Powers to carry out the intent of the Committee report was duly seconded by Councilor Remy. The motion carried unanimously with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

FOP REPORT – AGREEMENT FOR CONTRACTED AMBULANCE SERVICE WITH THE TOWN OF SULLIVAN

A Finance, Organization, and Personnel Committee report read, recommending that the City Council authorize the City Manager to do all things necessary to execute an agreement for Contract Ambulance service with the Town of Sullivan. A motion by Councilor Powers to carry out the intent of the Committee report was duly seconded by Councilor Remy. The motion carried unanimously with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

CITY MANAGER COMMENTS

The Assistant City Manager/Communications and Marketing Director, Rebecca Landry, provided one update. The Parks, Recreation, and Facilities Director, Andy Bohannon, and his team began the process of considering design options for Robin Hood Park. Ms. Landry noted that this was not something that would happen overnight as the project is still a few years out. Still, she encouraged members of the public to participate in the process, sharing concerns and ideas. The City was grateful for good public turnout at the first event and looked forward to further public involvement in this project.

ACCEPTANCE OF DONATIONS – JUNETEENTH AND INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL –
FINANCE DIRECTOR

A memorandum from Merri Howe, Finance Director, recommended accepting the following donations in the amount of \$5,900.00 and authorizing the City Manager to use each donation in the manner specified by the donor:

- Keene Parks and Recreation received multiple donations used for the Human Rights Committee events for Juneteenth and the International Festival. Local Burger pledged \$5.00 for every burger sold during the Juneteenth event to help support the celebration. In the end, the Local Burger donation amounted to \$500 toward the Juneteenth holiday. Badger Balm Inc. was a sponsor for the Juneteenth event. Two Badger Balm employees donated \$200 each to support the travel expenses related to Zaron Burnet of the Black Cowboys podcast. This was a sold-out performance with additional shared stories during the event the next day. The Human Rights Committee is actively seeking corporate funding sources for their International Festival on Saturday, September 23 to help showcase and celebrate the rich cultural diversity of the City of Keene. Cersosimo Lumber Company has donated \$500 and C&S Wholesale Grocers and Savings Bank of Walpole have donated \$1,000 each for the Human Rights Committee International Festival event. The International Festival is also the recipient of a generous anonymous donation in the amount of \$2,500.

A motion by Councilor Powers to carry out the intent of the report was duly seconded by Councilor Remy. Councilor Workman is a member of the Human Rights Committee and contributor to the Juneteenth planning. She extended her personal thanks to all the donors for supporting these important educational holiday events. The motion carried unanimously with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

PB-PLD REPORT – RELATING TO AN AMENDMENT TO THE ZONING MAP – OLD
WALPOLE ROAD – RURAL TO LOW DENSITY – ORDINANCE O-2023-12

A Planning Board/Planning, Licenses, and Development Committee report read, with the Planning Board unanimously finding Ordinance O-2023-12 consistent with the 2010 Comprehensive Master Plan and the Planning, Licenses, and Development Committee unanimously recommending that the Mayor set a public hearing on this item. Mayor Hansel scheduled a public hearing on September 7, 2023, at 7:00 PM.

MORE TIME – PAMELA RUSSELL SLACK – REQUESTING AN AMENDMENT TO THE
CITY COUNCIL’S RULES OF ORDER – WORKSHOPS

07/20/2023

A Finance, Organization, and Personnel Committee report read, recommending that the request from Pamela Russell Slack in regards to an amendment to the City Council's Rules of Order regarding Workshops be placed on more time. Mayor Hansel granted more time.

REPORT – RELATING TO AN AMENDMENT TO THE ZONING MAP – 0 ASHUELOT STREET – HIGH DENSITY TO COMMERCE ORDINANCE O-2023-13

An application was received from Attorney Thomas R. Hanna, relating to an amendment to the Zoning Map. JRR Properties LLC and the Monadnock Conservancy propose to rezone a 3.35-acre parcel of property located at 0 Ashuelot Street from High Density to Commerce for mixed used development. Mayor Hansel referred Ordinance O-2023-12 to the Planning Board and Planning, Licenses, and Development Committee.

RESOLUTION – RELATING TO THE APPROPRIATION OF FUNDS – SEWER FUND UNASSIGNED FUND BALANCE FOR THE MARTELL COURT PUMP STATION BYPASS – RESOLUTION R-2023-31

A memorandum read from the Public Works Director, Kurt Blomquist, recommending that the City Council refer Resolution R-2023-31 relating to the appropriation of funds from the Sewer Fund Unassigned Fund Balance for the Martell Court Pump Station Bypass to the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee for consideration. Mayor Hansel referred Resolution R-2023-31 to the Finance, Organization, and Personnel Committee.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Mayor Hansel adjourned the meeting at 8:36 PM.

A true record, attest:



City Clerk