

City of Keene
New Hampshire

MUNICIPAL SERVICES, FACILITIES & INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, September 27, 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:

Beth Fox, Assistant City Manager
Thomas P. Mullins, City Attorney
Amanda Palmeira, Assistant City Attorney
Kürt Blomquist, Public Works Director
Don Lussier, City Engineer

Members Not Present:

All Present

Chair Greenwald called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM and explained the procedures of the meeting. Roll call was conducted.

1) Councilor Lake – Requesting an Update on the Sidewalk Asset Management Program

Councilor Bryan Lake stated that he is here to ask for an update on the Sidewalk Asset Management Program, which is important to all constituents. He continued that given the rising costs of the past couple years, and this program being put together a couple years ago, he wants to see if the City is on schedule with the streets planned for this year, and on target with the budget. He wants to know if any potential changes are needed in coming years, regarding the number of sidewalks or how much to budget. It would be great to also have an overview of how the City decided which streets to (address the sidewalks on), because everyone probably has some street or sidewalk in mind that they would love to have done. He has some in Ward 3 he would love to see done, for example.

Don Lussier, City Engineer, stated that he will begin with an overview of what they talked about in 2021 for the Sidewalk Asset Management Plan, address the work that has been completed since then, talk about working coming up in 2024, and wrap up with discussion about cost trends. He continued that in 2021, staff presented the MSFI Committee with a Sidewalk Asset Management Plan. The City has about 52.8 miles of sidewalk. About 23 miles are asphalt, and about 30 miles are concrete. The overall condition of the network, when you take that weighted average of all of the sidewalks, is 67. He will call it a C-. There is a stark difference between the condition of the asphalt inventory and the concrete inventory. The graphic (on the screen)

shows that the vast majority of the City's sidewalks in "good" or "excellent" condition are concrete, and the vast majority of sidewalks in "poor" or "very poor" condition are asphalt.

Mr. Lussier continued that the goal they set was to raise the condition of the network by a letter grade. That would be from a C- to a B-, or from a 67 to a 77 or 80. To do that, staff suggested replacing all the asphalt sidewalks scoring below a 60, the concrete sidewalks scoring below a 40, and doing spot repairs on the concrete sidewalks scoring between 40 and 60. In 2021 dollars, staff estimated that all of that would cost about \$3.2 million.

Mr. Lussier continued that he frequently receives questions about how staff prioritizes and chooses the sidewalks. Staff came up with a rubric, as discussed with the Committee in 2021. They have a condition score, and they have done the inventory and the inspections, but if they just ranked them in terms of "worst" to "best" and went down the list, it would be disjointed and might not always make sense. Instead, they said the condition score would count for 60% of the weighting, and 40% of the weighting would be determined by how much pedestrian demand exists for a particular sidewalk. They do not have pedestrian counts for any sidewalks, due to lack of data collection tools. Sitting someone out there to count all day would be inefficient. (Determining the) demand was a GIS exercise. For each segment of sidewalk, staff looked for "pedestrian activity generators" within a quarter mile radius, which are: commercial zoning districts; vulnerable populations, such as the Hundred Nights shelter or Keene Housing facilities; anchor institutions such as churches; healthcare facilities; schools and daycares; public transit stops; and recreational facilities, such as trails or parks. Each pedestrian activity generator within a quarter mile of a sidewalk equals one point. All sidewalks scored in the range of 0 to 5 (for pedestrian activity generators), and that piece of the score counts as 5% of the weighting criteria. One last consideration for staff was that if inspections show a sidewalk has a tripping hazard/safety concern more imminently needed (to be addressed), they will give it a boost by adding 10% to the sidewalk's score, to move it slightly up the ranking.

Mr. Lussier stated that the slide on the screen shows all the sidewalk work that has been done since 2021. He continued that altogether, staff have completed 10,700 feet of sidewalk replacements since they had this conversation about the Sidewalk Asset Management Plan (in 2021). Winchester St. and Roxbury St. are a large portion of that total. The two miles of sidewalk that have been replaced includes sidewalks that were completed outside of the sidewalk program in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), using other project funds. The first year staff put the Sidewalk Asset Management Plan rationale into the work was 2022.

Mr. Lussier continued that the work planned for 2022 included 1,300 feet of Adams St., 1,125 ft. of Colby St., and a segment of 675 ft. of Winchester St. In 2022, they planned a total of 3,100 ft., and had a total budget that year that included the FY22 appropriations plus a program balance that had been accumulating over the years of an additional \$213,000. Thus, they had a total of about \$355,000 for that work and thought they would get that scope of work done for that budget. In actuality, the bids came in at \$403,000. They were not able to do everything they had planned to do. They cut Winchester St. from the scope and then got the contract done for the

\$355,000, and replaced Adams St. and Colby St. The final cost of the contract, when it was complete, was about \$295,000. Almost all of their contracts are unit price contracts, meaning the City pays per square yard of concrete, per cubic yard of gravel, per linear foot of pavement marking, and so on and so forth. They measure each of those items individually and pay accordingly. For some items, staff does not know the exact quantity and has to estimate, so it is typical for contracts to end up coming in a little less than the bid price. It will turn out that the City overestimated some items, like hours for flaggers. Sometimes the City underestimates certain items, but they try not to, and they have a little extra left at the end of the contract. In this case, the actual cost of the completed work was \$295,000. The price per linear foot, for the year of 2022, worked out to about \$122.

Mr. Lussier continued that in 2023, staff planned on a 1,300 ft. section of Main St., by the cemetery; about 1,000 ft. on North Lincoln St., both sides; and 420 ft. on School St., for a total of 2,740 ft. The CIP appropriation this year was \$272,000. The unspent program balance that was carried forward was about \$60,000, so that was \$332,000 total. They went into the bid with a budget of \$121 per linear foot. They thought that would be very tight, and thought they might not be able to afford School St. They pulled School St. out of the contract documents in advance of the bid, because they were concerned they would not receive bids within their budget. They reduced the scope to 2,320 ft. and received a bid price of \$294,000 and change. Once the contract was completed and it turned out there were some items that had been overestimated, the total cost was just under \$258,000. The cost per linear foot, over the project, was [\$111]. The good news is that it was less than the City spent per linear foot in 2022, but they still would not have been able to afford School St., so they were not able to add it back in.

Mr. Lussier stated that for 2024, the CIP program is for Belmont St., Jennison St., and River St. He continued that those three streets account for 2,150 linear feet. Now, based on an appropriation this year of \$290,000 plus about \$75,000 of the unspent program balance carried forward, they have about \$365,000 total for next summer's contract. That works out to \$175 per linear foot. He is optimistic that they will receive bids less than that. He thinks \$175 per linear foot is more than they need, and he would like to propose some changes tonight. He recommends they push Jennison St. out one year, and add back in the section of School St. and Winchester St. that they previously cut from the program when they were not able to get it done under the budget. That will give a budget for the (2024) scope of work of about \$135 per linear foot. He thinks that is a comfortable place to be, for bidding purposes. The CIP now shows Willow St. work scheduled for 2025, and Gardner St. in 2026. He would like to consolidate that, because those are all in the same neighborhood. To minimize the ongoing disruption to that neighborhood, staff wants to reschedule all of that work to 2025. That change will be made as part of the FY25 to FY31 CIP update, but tonight he is suggesting they push out Jennison St. and substitute the projects they had to push out in the past. He knows the MSFI Committee does not plan on acting on this tonight. He planned to submit an informational memo to the City Council with that proposal. He assumes that if the Council does not ask him to come explain himself, they will go forward with that plan.

Mr. Lussier continued that lastly, he has a slide on cost escalation. In the fall of 2021 when they were looking at the Sidewalk Asset Management Plan and developing the FY23 CIP, they were using an estimated unit cost for combined sidewalks and curbing, with the weighted unit average price of \$92 per linear foot. In 2022 when they put that out to bid, the bid price worked out to \$110 per linear foot. As he mentioned, it came in a little under budget because of those items that ran under, so the total cost ended up being \$95 per linear foot. In 2023, they had budgeted \$122 per linear foot; that is what was in the CIP for 2022. The bid price was actually \$142, which was a shock, but because staff cut scope out and the contract came in a little under budget, they were able to get the actual project cost down to an average price of \$125 per linear foot. Nevertheless, that change from \$122 to \$125 in terms of the actual project cost was a 32% increase in one year. That is alarming. It is indicative of the overall construction trends, as seen in the chart on the screen. He found this chart online, showing the construction trends from 2021 to the end of 2022. The chart does not reflect the end of 2023 yet, but staff have seen prices increasing. Much of that is driven by labor shortages, and material prices, some more than others. He thinks the biggest cost driver is labor shortages.

Chair Greenwald asked for clarification on the matrix for how staff determines (sidewalk rankings and priorities). He asked if a committee makes those determinations. Mr. Lussier replied that once staff had gone through the process with the MSFI Committee and received buy-in on the rationale of weighting based on condition and demand and prioritizing sidewalks with higher likelihood of pedestrian need/use, the actual scoring and ranking was an exercise with GIS. He continued that Will Schoefmann, GIS Technician, was very helpful with this. They drew a circle around every sidewalk segment in the map and looked at the number of demand drivers within each circle, such as a commercial zone, church, or (other “pedestrian activity generators,” as previously discussed). Much of that was based on publicly available databases for things like healthcare facility locations, and the City’s own GIS database. He would love to say it was just that easy, ranking them and going right down the list, but there is also a bit of art that goes into it. For example, lower Main St. was on the list this summer, (the section) by the cemetery. That was not one of the top three highest ranking (sidewalks), but they planned to pave that section of Main St. It made sense to do the sidewalk at the same time, while they had traffic disrupted on that busy corridor. Thus, staff pulled that one forward. (That is an example of) how “a little bit of art” goes into this as well.

Chair Greenwald replied that one thing that is not in it (the sidewalk ranking system/planning), which he thinks is very good, is politics. He continued that it is a numeric (ranking system), done by staff. It becomes very difficult for the Councilors, trying to represent their constituents, because everyone thinks their (sidewalk) situation is unique and more important.

Chair Greenwald asked if the (ranking) is reevaluated yearly. Mr. Lussier replied that they update the CIP every two years. In fact, the changes staff suggests for 2024 were developed out of the exercise. He continued that they are going through that update process this week, with an October 6 deadline. There will be some changes because of cost increases and paving program changes.

Chair Greenwald replied that part of his question is (what happens if), say, a particular situation is, for example, fifth on the list this year and then it is reevaluated. He asked if it is correct that it does not mean it is moved up just because it has been on the list, it is the actual need. Mr. Lussier replied that there will always be a reason why things are moved. He continued that he prefers minimizing the amount of shuffling, because presumably, people are looking at this list and saying, *“Oh, I’m going to get a new sidewalk in two years.”* He does not want to disappoint people, so (does not want) many changes if they are not necessary. He is not sure if that answers Chair Greenwald’s question.

Kürt Blomquist, Public Works Director, stated that he thinks the (answer to the) question is that the condition does not get any better, so any shuffling is related to other work that staff has identified, such as water, sewer, or roadwork, which would cause a shuffle. Mr. Lussier replied yes, the ranking in terms of condition and demand generators will not change much. He continued that the condition gets worse over time, and demand generators could conceivably change, but very little. There are not many new hospitals going in, (for example). It is really the “art” part of the process, where staff is making it line up with other planned work in the city, that will shift things around.

Councilor Williams thanked Mr. Lussier for the information and for all of the work on the sidewalks. He continued that the new sidewalks on North Lincoln St. are quite lovely. He asked, regarding the granite curbing that is also put in when the City puts in sidewalks, what proportion of the cost that accounts for, as opposed to some other solution. Mr. Lussier replied yes, granite curbing is costly. He continued that they do not install curbing just for the sake of aesthetics. When they decide to put in curbing, it is to address a specific need, usually drainage. For example, they would apply curbing to direct runoff to a catch basin, or to address grade changes. The City’s standard, which has been City Council policy for quite some time, is the granite. He strongly endorses and recommends it. The City has done work with pre-cast concrete and some bituminous curbing, but they do not last and do not hold up to plowing the way granite does. Granite is very expensive but wears like iron.

Councilor Workman thanked Councilor Lake for bringing this forward. She continued that her question for staff is whether School St. and Winchester St., the streets they did not do, went through the proper metric and formula in being chosen. Mr. Lussier replied yes.

Chair Greenwald asked if there were any further questions from the Committee. Hearing none, he asked if members of the public had any questions.

Councilor Phil Jones stated that about six years ago, there was a policy proposed by then-Councilor Dave Richards to focus on the east side regarding infrastructure. The mindset was that if the City starts taking care of the infrastructure on the east side, the sidewalks and everything else, people would start respecting their properties more and start taking care of them. He asked if that is still in the backs of people’s minds.

Mr. Blomquist replied that that actually was about ten years ago. He continued that there were discussions about where the City does work, regarding the east, central, and west. They put all the projects in the different areas into the CIP book from about 2016 to 2018. Not surprising, the east side of Keene has and will probably continue to have a majority of the projects, because it is the oldest section of the city. As Mr. Lussier talks about the conditions, a heavily weighted factor, age and condition drive that. Here, a lot of the work is on the east side of Main St. Much of the asphalt sidewalks are on the east side of Keene. As you stay to those sort of priorities, that will continue to happen. No, currently staff do not specifically look at whether a certain amount of money is going to the east, north, south, or west side. Infrastructure is driven by condition, and condition is driven by age.

Councilor Williams stated that also driving the condition of sidewalks on the east side is the frequent flooding the area has been subjected to, which has a long-term effect on infrastructure. He continued that that is a reason the area needs additional attention.

Chair Greenwald stated that Councilor Richards was in the forefront of the importance of replacing sidewalks with concrete and the curbs with granite. He continued that there was a lot of analysis done, showing that long term, it does pay. It looks better, wears better, and is a good thing financially, even though it is more expensive going in.

Chair Greenwald asked if there were any further questions from the Committee or public. Hearing none, he 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 update on the Sidewalk Asset Management Plan be accepted as informational.

- 2) **Petition – Request for Urgent Appeal for the Installation of a Sidewalk on Arch Street Between Hurricane Road and Felt Road and Background Information - Public Works Director**

Chair Greenwald asked to hear from the Petitioner.

Rebecca Lancaster of 10 Wildwood Rd. stated that the letter is signed by herself and on behalf of many people in the community she was easily able to reach out to. She continued that the neighborhood does not have any sidewalks. If you are driving down Arch St., shortly after you finish passing the high school on your right, there are no more sidewalks. Arch St. is heavily traveled by its residents, people coming in and out of Vermont, and high school students to and from all over the area. This area does not have many sidewalks to begin with, but the fact that the sidewalk ends where Hurricane Rd. meets Arch St. leaves a large population of residents without the ability to walk. She lives on Wildwood Rd., but the streets she highlighted for the

Committee also include Felt Rd., Blackberry Ln., Red Fox Run, Partridgeberry Ln., Arch St., and all of the residents of Willowbrook and Langdon Place. This is over 250 separate residences, and conservatively, about 500 residents in Keene who do not have the ability to walk around their neighborhood. Drainage is a big issue in the Arch St. neighborhood, which means that water in the road causes people to walk halfway into a lane. Felt Rd. where it meets Hurricane Rd. is a very dangerous corner. People drive very fast down Felt Rd., almost as fast as they do on Arch St. The City often has speed meters on Arch St., just past Hurricane Rd. She can confidently say that speeds are intermittently in the 40s. Many of the drivers are high school students in the mornings and afternoons.

Ms. Lancaster continued that she and her family have lived there 10 years. She does not allow her children to walk around the neighborhood by themselves. Her children should be able to ride their bikes to Symonds School 10 minutes away, but they cannot, and will not be able to until there is a sidewalk there. She frequently sees elderly residents walking. Countless times, she has experienced and witnessed people almost being hit by cars, driven primarily by teenagers coming and going from the high school. It is a significant safety issue. She understands that there is a priority to make sure the existing sidewalks are safe, but there are many residents without the ability to walk in this neighborhood. When her children were young, she did not feel comfortable pushing a stroller down that section, so she would drive them to another part of town to take them for a walk. She does not think she is the only one. She frequently sees Langdon Place residents walking on Arch St. or Whitcomb's Mill Rd., which she thinks is even more dangerous, and she always fears they will be hit by drivers speeding by.

Ms. Lancaster continued that one afternoon she went around to her neighbors' places, and could not find anyone who was against adding sidewalks or adding onto the length of sidewalk that exists on Arch St. They could do it in sections, (first) extending to Wildwood Rd., then Blackberry Ln., then Whitcomb's Mill Rd. and Felt Rd. She would like this to become a priority. She knows there are other residents, but the map of existing sidewalks in Keene, shows that this neighborhood represents a large geographic area and a (large) number of people who do not have any sidewalks or any way to connect to the rest of the neighborhoods. She would be happy to walk with any Committee member down any of those roads at any time of day, to give them a good idea of what it is like.

Chair Greenwald thanked Ms. Lancaster for her presentation. He continued that Mr. Lussier presented on sidewalk repair, but this is a request for new sidewalk. He asked Mr. Blomquist what the basis is for new sidewalk, and what the process is for acquisition of property to put the sidewalk on.

Mr. Blomquist replied that the Committee's agenda has a memo from his office about the New Sidewalk Program that several Councilors have asked questions about. He continued that when a new sidewalk goes in, depending on the road widths, property acquisition could be required. This particular property has not been looked at. Some sidewalks fit within the right-of-way, and

others have required property acquisition in order to fit a 5-foot grass belt and a 5-foot sidewalk. Most of the city's sidewalks sit on the edge of the public right-of-way.

Mr. Blomquist continued that the City had a New Sidewalk Program for about 20 years. It was a combination of the ones that the staff identified and the ones that came in through a petition process. In 2017 when the Council was reviewing the 2018-2020 sidewalk program, the new sidewalk issue came up as a discussion point. The Council had not been funding new sidewalks for at least 6 years. They previously had been funding new sidewalks at about \$200,000 per year. At that time, the City had almost \$4.5 million of new sidewalks identified. At \$200,000 per year, it would take 20 years to get through that list. There was also a timeframe. In looking at its fiscal policies and fiscal concerns, the Council decided during that 2017 CIP review to end the new sidewalk programs. When they reviewed the CIP in 2019 and adopted it, it did not have the new sidewalk program in it.

Mr. Blomquist continued that with that program, the Council had similar criteria for determining priorities for locations of new sidewalks. Similarly, they had a map product and looked at, for example, school walking zones. At the time, the school district said that anyone outside of a half-mile radius would be bussed and anyone within the half-mile had to walk. There was also the idea of community generators, such as parks, municipal centers, daycares, commercial clusters, and so on and so forth. They identified the locations of commercial plazas, and concentrations of housing developments, such as Maple Acres. That was one layer used to help identify where new sidewalks should go. Then, the Council had a series of factors they used to prioritize within that list, to determine what should be funded first. Again, (this was) based on factors such as pedestrian volume, based on community generators and attractors; vehicular traffic; and whether there was an existing sidewalk on one side, a partial sidewalk, or no sidewalk at all. Lastly, the criteria included the question of whether installing a sidewalk would increase safety. Locations scored points for these different factors. The important aspect to recognize is that the Council did vote and adopt (a decision to) take the new sidewalk program offline in 2018.

Chair Greenwald asked if Ms. Lancaster heard and understood all of that, and if she wanted to respond. Ms. Lancaster replied that she heard and understands, and she is asking the Council to reconsider their entire policy because the fact that this stretch of the street is less than a half mile from the high school is an accessibility issue. She continued that she met Arch St. residents who have high school students whom they do not allow to walk to school because even though it is a quarter mile down the road, it is not safe. This is an ADA issue, a safety issue, and a Safe Routes to School issue. She hopes the Council reconsiders this or looks at this as an exception to the rule because a large amount of the population does not have any sidewalk access. For this number of people, she does not think this is the case in the city on (any other) street as busy or as well-traveled as this part of Arch St. is. She asked what happens now.

Chair Greenwald stated that regardless of what happens, Ms. Lancaster has raised the issue. He continued that it is timely, because as the budget is being put together, staff is aware. He does

not expect there will be a sidewalk in this neighborhood immediately, but at least now it is in the process and the City will give it good consideration. Whether there is money for it is the other issue.

Councilor Filiault asked Mr. Blomquist if there are any funds becoming available from the Transportation Bill for sidewalks. Mr. Blomquist replied that that typically is connected to some type of project that is multimodal. He continued that the simple answer is that there could be, but there has to be some sort of connection. A sidewalk by itself would not necessarily score very high. Staff have talked with the Committee about scoring criteria, such as disadvantaged neighborhoods, and other factors. In February and March, the Council will be discussing the FY25 through FY31 CIP, which is an opportunity to decide as a Council whether they want to get back into the new sidewalk construction business, and if so, what they would like to see. There were 19 sidewalks identified when the Council stopped the program. They could evaluate whether/which of those are still valid, and determine how this request fits into those.

Councilor Workman stated that while the Committee will likely accept Ms. Lancaster's request as informational for now, it has not "fallen on deaf ears" as they sometimes hear. She continued that she personally travels Arch St. frequently for work and a big bend there creates a blind spot for drivers coming from Park Ave. down Arch St. Snow and inclement weather are additional factors, as Ms. Lancaster alluded to with the drainage issues. Snowbanks reduce the width of Arch St. and pedestrians are nearly in the road with very poor lighting in that area as well. These are factors to consider. She looks forward to learning more about what the Council can do to reinstate that (new sidewalk) project.

Councilor Roberts stated that it does not make sense to say they are doing away with the program because it costs too much. He continued that in his view, the program's purpose is to identify what needs to be done, and if there is only so much money available in a given year, only that much gets done, based on the priority list. Not having a program potentially causes many problems, because they could say that the group that comes in with the best lawyer or team gets a sidewalk, and other people would be upset at the unfairness. Not everyone can afford a high-powered lawyer. He believes they need the program back and they need to prioritize, and then the Council and the City Manager need to decide how much the City is willing to spend on it that year.

Ken Bergman of 14 Blackberry Ln. stated that in the winter, snowbanks (in this neighborhood), cause people to have to walk in the road. It is dangerous. He continued that they often like to walk in the rail bed, which is close by, but when it rains they walk in the street, which means getting splashed and/or having to walk through water. At certain times of the year when the sunset coincides with the end of the workday, the sun blinds drivers going down West St., and it is dangerous. Pedestrians hope that drivers with sunglasses on and visors down see them walking down the street. He and (his family) have lived in Keene since 1979, including for 13 years on Pako Ave., which he saw was on the list. His children had the longest walk to Jonathan Daniels School. It was the safest street they had ever been on; Arch St. is vastly more

dangerous. Both of his children went to Keene High School, so for eight years, his family had children attending there. Not once did either of them ever walk to the high school, because it is “such a fearsome prospect” to walk down Arch St. This may or may not be politics, but is in the way in which they (the Committee) get information from the city(‘s residents) to inform their choices, and they have to consider in a balanced way the needs and resources of the entire city. He respects the Committee’s attempt to do this in a rational and well-reasoned way, but he asks them to listen to what Ms. Lancaster has brought forward. He endorses her call for the Committee to consider putting a sidewalk in west Keene where it is most needed, perhaps of all places in west Keene that do not have a sidewalk now.

Chair Greenwald asked if there were any further questions or comments from the public. Hearing none, he continued that the Committee and staff have heard this request and will consider it. He encourages people to be patient and remember that this is a balance between what is needed and what the City can afford.

Councilor Williams stated that his concern is that this is a street near a school. He continued that the major problem they are facing here is a lack of funding, and they need to figure out how to fund a new sidewalk program because many new sidewalks are needed. In this particular case, he wonders about Safe Routes to School (SRTS) funding.

Mr. Blomquist replied that unfortunately, the SRTS program no longer exists. He continued that it was eliminated/consolidated with a number of other programs. Those have very different criteria now for what they are looking to do. They (the NH Department of Transportation) are typically looking at a combination of things. That is not to say that none of these (projects) would fit (the criteria), but those specific programs like SRTS no longer exist. SRTS was great and the City did a number of projects with that, such as in the Maple Acres area. However, the State and Federal level eliminated the program.

Chuck Redfern of 9 Colby St. stated that Councilor Filiault said something that jogged his memory, which is that if you apply some of these sidewalks as connector points to the trails, then you can use the sidewalk’s connection to an existing trail as the reason that the sidewalk is needed. He continued that the City has been very good at doing that; it is called “connector points.” That would help the ranking, for grants. The Bicycle and Pedestrian Path Advisory Committee (BPPAC), if the Committee requests it, would look at this and see if there is a grant available. It is a little narrower than the group’s mission, which is to look at the multi-use trails. However, this is a pedestrian safety issue. He is sure that with the request coming from the MSFI Committee or the City Council, something could be done in that regard.

Ms. Lancaster asked when the MSFI Committee needs to see her again. She continued that she does not want this to be forgotten. Mr. Blomquist replied that he suggests she keep track of the City’s CIP. He continued that the first or second Thursday in January 2024, (staff) will place the proposed CIP program on the Council’s desk, and the review will begin. There will be several Finance, Organization, and Personnel Committee meetings in February, and then he thinks the

public hearing on the CIP will be at the first Council meeting in March. That would be an opportunity for Ms. Lancaster to come provide the Council with feedback on everything that was talked about tonight.

Chair Greenwald thanked Ms. Lancaster for bringing this forward, thanked Councilor Lake for being attentive to his constituents, and asked for a motion.

Councilor Workman stated that tonight they have generated some good discussion and good ideas, and they will be moving this forward behind the scenes for continued dialogue.

Councilor Workman 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 Petition for the Arch St. neighborhood, and the background information provided by the Public Work Director be accepted as informational.

3) PowerPoint Presentation – Ad-hoc Lower Winchester Street Project Steering Committee

City Engineer Don Lussier stated that they are here tonight regarding the lower Winchester St. reconstruction project. He continued that with him is Gene McCarthy from McFarland Johnson, the design consultant for the project. He will give an overview and talk about the process they need to go through for the Federal funds they are using. Mr. McCarthy will present on the engineering material, and then he (Mr. Lussier) will summarize the recommendations and the path forward.

Mr. Lussier continued that the project is intended to run from the south side of the Rt. 101 roundabout to the Swanzy/Keene town line and to the Market Basket intersection. The Swanzy section was added to the project at the request of the Southwest Regional Planning Commission (SWPRC) and the Town of Swanzy. The City has an agreement with the Town. The City is managing the project and the Town is paying its share of the associated costs. The project footprint includes the Winchester St. Bridge over Ash Swamp Brook, which is an important component. That project began in 2017 but at the time had insufficient funding, so the NHDOT dropped it and combined it with this project so they could have enough funding to cover the cost of the bridge.

Mr. Lussier continued that this is going through the local public agency (LPA) process, the recipe book the NHDOT prescribes the City follow when spending Federal funds as a subrecipient to a grant. The Federal government will fund 80% of the project costs, through the NHDOT, and the City is the subrecipient. That process includes many steps the City must follow, such as public engagement and outreach. About a year ago, the Mayor appointed a steering committee for this project. With five members from Keene and two from Swanzy, it was heavily weighted toward the business community representatives through this corridor. The

steering committee held several public meetings, including two listening sessions, intended for (staff) to ask the public questions such as what they thought the key problems, challenges, and opportunities were. Then, the development of a purpose and needs statement is required. It is a critical piece, defining the metrics used to judge the project outcomes. Then, Mr. McCarthy's team's work includes identifying natural and cultural resources, measuring traffic, and other engineering work in order to come up with an "engineeringly defensible" project.

Mr. Lussier continued that they are now at the end of that point, where the public body responsible for the project – the Swanzey Selectmen and the Keene City Council – has to choose a proposed action. That is what they are proposing to the Federal government and the NHDOT to build with these funds. At the end of this process, which might not be tonight, staff is looking for the MSFI Committee to make a recommendation to the Council, and for the Council to adopt a proposed action for the corridor.

Mr. Lussier continued that he wants to give a tip of the hat to the folks who served on the steering committee: Sarah Bollinger, Trevor Bonnette, Douglas Fish, Douglas Hamshaw, Jim Lamp, Christopher McCauley, and Jimmy Tempesta.

Gene McCarthy stated that one of the first things they did was have the two listening sessions. He continued that they asked attendees, in a breakout group setting, "What are the problems/challenges on Lower Winchester St.?" and "What are the opportunities on Lower Winchester St.?" They wanted attendees' perspectives as users, residents, and business owners. People were able to speak their minds. After everyone had given a report, they had a group discussion and listed all of the problems and issues people felt existed on the corridor. The question about opportunities was about what people wanted to see as a result of the project. The team used this feedback to determine the purpose and needs statement of the project, which becomes the cornerstone for the engineering work they do.

Mr. McCarthy showed a slide with the highlights that came out of the discussion. He stated that many of them related to congestion and safety. What really jumped out to the team, however, was the left turns. It is a two-lane road with a lot of development and many driveways and side roads, and the access to and from the corridor from land uses jumped out as a problem seen by people using the corridor. There were also many issues regarding pedestrian facilities, sidewalk crossings, and bicycle accommodation. There were discussions of congestion, speed, and the bridge, which everyone has an issue with. The opportunities are improving safety, improving the intersection operations, slowing/calming traffic, adding sidewalks, and adding bike lanes. The topic of roundabouts came up, and opportunities for aesthetic improvements.

Mr. McCarthy continued that from the two lists they generated, the team developed the purpose statement, which talks about many things they heard, including the term "Complete Streets," a City policy. The term "side street queuing" was used, regarding accessing the corridor from the side streets, especially the difficulty of trying to make a left turn during the busy periods. Also, (it talks about) improving aesthetics and safety. Of course, safety is always the prime

consideration. The last sentence is about the bridge, which there are many issues with. It is in rough shape, and it will be replaced as part of this project. The needs statement talks about why this project is needed, and number one was the high volume of turning traffic. Much of the delays, and some of the safety issues, are (from) people trying to get on and off the corridor from the side streets. The issues are delays, pedestrian and bicycle (needs), the bridge, and speed. Many people are trying to get through the corridor to access Rt. 101.

Mr. McCarthy continued that the first thing (McFarland Johnson) did, from an engineering perspective, was conduct a robust traffic-counting program. Last October, they counted traffic at many locations, including 12 intersections at peak hours of (weekday) mornings and afternoons, and Saturday mornings, to make sure they saw the worst of the traffic. They also did 24-hour counts for several days, to get a good sense of traffic at different times of day. They did a count on Matthews Rd., which provides regional traffic. They used the counts to develop what the current condition of traffic is on the corridor. Then, they look to the future. A big piece of this study is predicting the corridor's future traffic. Typically, they predict it 20 years out, wanting whatever they propose to function well for 20 years. They projected traffic to 2045. They project an increase in traffic on Winchester St. of anywhere from 20-30%. All of the traffic analyses they do use those 2045 volumes, to make sure that whatever they propose will function well into the future.

Mr. McCarthy continued that they looked at the actual traffic on Winchester St. at two locations, during the peaks. The first, just north of Krif Rd., had a morning peak of about 857 vehicles per hour. Usually, morning and afternoon peaks are balanced, but for this corridor, the southbound traffic has a heavier volume in the afternoon than the northbound. For the other segment, just south of Matthews Rd. and approaching the boundary with Swanzey, the peak is, again, in the afternoon for southbound and in the morning for northbound. There is about a 200-vehicle decline as you go to the south. For the traffic projections, they look at it from a regional perspective and from the perspective of what is happening within this corridor. Along Rt. 10, Winchester St., and West Swanzey Rd., they applied a 1% per year growth factor. That percentage is based on regional trends, in consultation with the NHDOT, and it is a very common number being used in NH.

Mr. McCarthy continued that they look at each side road individually. Some of the minor roads, or already developed ones, have a much more modest percentage. For instance, they only show a .25% per year (increase) for Kit St., because that road is rather developed. It is similar for other side roads. They are not expecting a huge increase in traffic from the side roads. However, Bradco Rd. and Matthews Rd. are predicted to have 1% growth. They looked at Krif Rd. in a very specific manner. It has much more undeveloped land today than any other location within the corridor. They worked with the City's Planning and Code Enforcement Departments to look at the land there and its development potential, did a trip generation for that potential growth, and applied that to Krif Rd. as it then would access Winchester St. It drove more traffic than many other side roads, because of the expectation that in the future there could be more growth coming from Krif Rd. than from the other roads.

He continued that they applied all those factors to the volumes of 2023, to come up with these changes (shown on the screen as Peak Hour Traffic Volumes Projected 2045). Some numbers really jump out. The southbound afternoon peak that was coming from north of Krif Rd. went from 1,060 (vehicles per hour in 2023) up to 1,516. The area south of Matthews Rd. jumped a similar amount from 878 to 1,126 vehicles. Something interesting happened with the northbound traffic (projection). The Krif Rd. growth shifts the peak. Currently, the peak in the northbound is the morning, but the anticipated development at Krif Rd. shifts the northbound peak to the afternoon. The expectation is that in the future, the afternoon will be the peak for both north and south bound segments of Winchester St. With 1,200 or 1,500 vehicles, that puts it into another level of demand. They are trying to address the capacity. With the alternatives, you will see that the Krif Rd. development is driving some of what they are proposing today.

Chair Greenwald asked if it is correct that all of these numbers are based on a Saturday. Mr. McCarthy replied no, the graphic has three values – AM weekday, PM weekday, and Saturday mid-day. He continued that they accounted for every single one of those. The highlighted ones are the weekday morning and afternoon peaks. They counted Saturday, but in this particular case, the weekdays had the higher volumes, not Saturdays. On the other side of Winchester St., some of those peaks were Saturday peaks. The reason they counted (Saturday) was because of what had happened with other segments of Winchester St.

Mr. McCarthy stated that to get into the alternatives development, they are looking at the corridor as well as the intersections. The graphic indicates key intersections - Krif Rd., Matthews Rd., and the existing signalized intersection for the Market Basket. What really jumped out to them as they started looking at it from a capacity and safety perspective was the Kit St. access. The Kit St. intersection is very close to the roundabout, and access to and from Kit St. can be quite difficult. Through the process, from the listening sessions and the steering committee, they heard that during those peaks, it is very difficult to turn left out of Kit Rd. It becomes a safety issue, where people are starting to make that movement when they probably should not be. One of the established, geometric decisions that was made between everyone on the team is that that left turn really cannot continue, with the traffic and the growth, (to the point where) all of the concepts they developed for this location eliminated that left turn. That is to become a right-in, right-out. There would be a raised island/median to prohibit that left turn coming out of Kit St. That became a basis for the evaluation.

Mr. McCarthy continued that as they started looking at the other intersections, the realization that traffic coming out of Kit St. would have to make a U-turn at some place along the corridor started driving the discussion about what the appropriate intersection configurations would be at Krif Rd., Matthews Rd., and so forth. If they shut off the left turns, the next opportunity for people to make a U-turn to head north would be at Krif Rd. Currently, some people make a right turn out, go down the corridor, and turn left into businesses to reverse direction to go northbound. The team is trying to make that a more designed dynamic, so they can provide a place for people to make that turnaround. If they put a signal at Krif Rd., which is warranted

with the new volume, to accommodate a truck making a left turn they would have to provide a slip lane. That became something not advantageous. At the key intersections, they are (recommending) roundabouts. That is because in order to provide that type of a dynamic, the roundabouts were working better than the signals. All graphics from now forward will show roundabouts laid out for those intersections.

Mr. McCarthy continued that looking at this corridor, it became obvious that there were different contexts and unique areas. They thus broke the corridor into three segments. The north segment is from the existing roundabout at Rt. 101 to just south of Krif Rd. The middle segment goes south and includes the Bradco Rd. intersection and Matthews Rd. The south segment is the last one in Keene and includes the segment in Swanzey. He will show each segment, the cross sections the team considered and what those look like in plan view, and then what eventually came out of the steering committee as a recommendation.

He continued that the north segment has three lanes, one northbound, one southbound, and a center turn lane. Both of the proposed (options) would increase the lanes. The demand from Krif Rd. shows a need for additional capacity within this section. From Krif Rd. to the roundabout there would be two lanes in each direction. (One option) would provide a center turn lane, like what is there today, and the other (option) would have a raised, divided island. Also shown is the team's proposal for standard shoulder bike lanes, five feet wide, in each direction, adjacent to a new curb, and a sidewalk on the west side. The proposal is to have the sidewalk on one side only. One option for this north segment is a "hybrid roundabout" at Krif Rd., with four lanes, and a median from Krif Rd. all the way along Winchester St. to the existing roundabout. The two (options) are the same width. The only difference is how they handle the median. The turn lane (in one option) or the raised island (in the other option) are the same width, so the out to out width is identical for both options. The other option is the roundabout with the five lanes, with the island carried past Kit St., because that is what they said they would do with all of them, but then from there to the roundabout there would be a center turn lane if people wanted to access throughout there. The steering committee's recommendation for this north segment was the divided, four-lane road with the raised median, with the roundabout at Krif Rd. There would be no left turns from Winchester St. People would use the roundabouts to reverse direction.

Mr. McCarthy continued that the middle segment's current condition is a single lane in each direction. That is it. The two (options), again, would have the same footprint. In one option, they propose the addition of a center turn lane. The other option would again be the median-separated (configuration) with a single lane in each direction. What is different about this (the options for the middle segment, compared to the options for the north segment) is they are not proposing extra capacity. Even with the increase in traffic, they do not need the extra lane south of Krif Rd. It is only north of Krif Rd. that the demand is driving that additional capacity. They still have the shoulder bicycle lanes and the sidewalk along the west side of the corridor. The image of the first (option) with the three lanes shows the roundabout that would be placed at Matthews Rd. and the one at Krif Rd. This would be a two-lane with the same situation with no left turns. (The second option has) the same footprint, but if they were to allow the center turn

lanes, the center would allow left turns in both directions. For this middle segment, the steering committee again preferred the median, no left turns, and using the roundabouts to change direction. Regarding the current dynamic at Bradco Rd., they know there is a lot of development and business, and that left turn has caused issues. In the afternoon, many people are coming out of Bradco Rd. trying to make that left turn, which is very difficult. They (the team) added an additional lane, southbound, so people coming out of Bradco Rd. would turn right, go to the roundabout at Matthews Rd., and be able to turn around and head north.

Mr. McCarthy continued that regarding the south segment, the existing corridor is narrower, and there are residential homes along the segment in Keene. As you get into Swanzey, there are apartment complexes and Market Basket. The two (options) here are quite different. One is essentially to retain the two lanes, still provide the shoulder bike lanes, and also continue the sidewalk, but still have a fairly narrow corridor. The other option was to add a center turn lane to provide some of the homes with the ability to get into the left turn lane. The plan views are a little different, because the three-lane section actually is wider, as it has that additional capacity. It retains the signal at the Market Basket entrance. The two-lane option is narrower, and everything else would function the same; it just would not have the center turn lane for the left turn pockets.

Mr. McCarthy continued that it was not clear during the listening sessions or even with the steering committee how the people in this area might feel about the roundabout or about having a center turn lane. (The question was whether) the issues with turning traffic are as significant here as (in other segments). Mr. Lussier had the good idea of conducting a survey, and put it together and sent it to the neighborhoods. They received 24 responses, which really helped the team understand what the residents feel are the issues and how comfortable the residents were with some of the solutions. The survey's first question was whether speed was an issue. No respondent said it was "no problem," and it was a "big problem" for many people in this segment of the corridor. The second question was whether congestion was an issue. The graph shows that respondents said it was a bigger problem, although not as big of a problem as speed. The third question was whether left turns were an issue, and again, a high number of respondents said it was a big problem. Safety and speed were tied as the respondents' most concerning/urgent problems, and congestion and "other," with a variety of responses, were (lesser concerns).

Mr. McCarthy continued that a high number of respondents were in favor of the center turn lane option, and they felt comfortable with widening the road. People were not very in favor of the left turn restriction. Mr. Lussier replied that he wants to believe it was because he worded the question poorly. He continued that he should have asked, "Would you be in favor of left turn restrictions if there was a roundabout nearby to turn around?", but the survey did not say that. Mr. McCarthy continued that the solution came down to the three-lane (option). People saw safety and left turns were an issue, so the recommendation was to do the three-lane option for this segment of the project. What came from the steering committee discussions was whether they would consider a roundabout at the Market Basket intersection. Mr. Lussier asked the NHDOT if that was something to consider, and the NHDOT agreed, and the team studied it. In

the end, part of the recommendation from the steering committee was to consider the roundabout solution at the Market Basket rather than the current signal. Mr. Lussier stated that the Swanzeey Selectboard is considering that question right now. He continued that if they decide to move forward with that, they will have to pay 20% of the cost of building a roundabout. This is not something (the City) has to think about, but that was the recommendation from the steering committee.

Mr. McCarthy stated that regarding pedestrian accommodation, throughout the corridor, they kept the sidewalk on the west side. He continued that it would connect to the sidewalks at the existing roundabout and extend all the way to the Market Basket intersection. The sidewalk would go all the way around the roundabouts and would be wider, because they are multi-use paths. If a cyclist does not feel comfortable riding through a roundabout, there will be a ramp allowing the cyclist to ride around, on what will be a multi-use path. Similarly, on the middle segment, the sidewalk will be carried across the bridge. There would be the same multi-use path at the roundabout at Matthews Rd. With the south segment, it was clear there were more land uses on the east side, such as apartment complexes at Lucinda Terrace. It is mostly in Swanzeey, but they will carry the sidewalk on both sides to serve all of those uses and homes, up to Lucinda Terrace. That is the only segment that would have the sidewalk carried along the corridor.

Mr. Lussier stated that what Mr. McCarthy just presented are the recommendations that came out of the steering committee process. He continued that he would love to say they were all unanimous recommendations of the committee, but as they were debating the different alternatives, it became clear that there would not be unanimity. They then broke it down to smaller elements and asked the committee to vote on each of those individually. They asked the committee about adding capacity to travel lanes on the north segment. As Mr. McCarthy presented, the expected volumes go up to 1300-1500 vehicles in an hour in the future. The team strongly suggests the need for an additional lane in each direction to handle that. The steering committee agreed with a vote of 3-2. Regarding the center of the corridor, for the north segment, the committee voted 4-1 in favor of a raised median in lieu of a center turn lane. For the middle section between Krif Rd. and Matthews Rd., the committee voted 3-2 for a raised median. The roundabouts received a little more support; the committee voted 4-1 in favor of roundabouts for the corridor instead of signalized intersections. Finally, the committee deferred to the residents that the team polled for the south segment. They voted unanimously for a shared use turn lane between Matthews Rd. and Market Basket. Mr. Hamshaw is here tonight and he hopes he expresses (his thoughts). Mr. McCauley was here earlier. He was concerned about restricting left turns in and out of his business, which is understandable. As Mr. McCarthy mentioned, the number one thing they heard during listening sessions was (the difficulty of) left turns in and out. The best fix, from an engineering perspective, is a raised median that restricts that movement. The raised median and roundabouts go together “like peanut butter and jelly.” The recommendation that was presented is very good, but not unanimously supported. Not everyone in the community is going to love the recommended option.

Mr. Lussier continued that finally, there is the topic of property impacts. Because this is a State highway and the NHDOT owns the corridor, the NHDOT will be managing all of the right-of-way acquisitions, which will be rather extensive. There are 50 parcels along this project that will be touched in one way or another. To construct a sidewalk right up against the property line, they will need to grade and smooth out a lawn, for instance, so for those properties they will only need temporary easements. Approximately 18 properties will be “limited strip acquisitions,” meaning they might need one to three feet along the front of a property in order to squeeze everything in. Only two of the properties had substantially sized acquisitions, both at the roundabout where they need more land to put the roundabout in. Addressing stormwater management is a requirement of the project, and they might need additional room for that. They have not yet determined where the stormwater treatment will go.

Mr. Lussier continued that he should mention something that affects Fairfields specifically. The land in front of Fairfields that has many cars on display is City-owned land. The City gave Fairfields an easement to use it until such time as it is needed for the widening of Winchester St. The easement will be rescinded once the City needs it for this project. Although it is not an actual taking, given that it is land the City already has, it is still an impact to that property.

Mr. Lussier continued that regarding where they go from here, eventually they need the Council to select a proposed alternative. He and Mr. McCarthy showed the MSFI Committee what elements the steering committee selected and recommended, but the Committee can choose any combination of the options they have seen tonight, or ask the team to look at others and come back. They hope that by December, the Council will get through that process and select a proposed action. That will allow Mr. McCarthy and his team to finish the engineering study report, which bundles all of this information together for the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to tell the FHWA what the team wants to build. The FHWA takes a month or two to review it and gives the team comments, and then Mr. McCarthy and his team take it further into the detailed design process. That process has a couple iterations along the way, going back to the NHDOT for review and comment. For that process, along with the right-of-way acquisition, December 2025 to January 2026 is the expected timeframe. They expect to begin construction in the summer of 2026.

Councilor Williams stated that Monday night, they heard from the NHDOT that there was a project going on in Swanzey along that road. He asked if it is directly south of this. Mr. McCarthy replied yes, they are doing sidewalk improvements and corridor improvements on Winchester St. He continued that he thinks it will be in 2031. It is a little further out. Mr. Lussier stated that the Ten Year Plan that is now being reviewed covers from 2025 to 2034.

Chair Greenwald stated that he is particularly interested in hearing from the affected abutters. He asked if the Committee had further questions for Mr. McCarthy and Mr. Lussier. Hearing none, he asked for public comment.

Steve Silverstein of 3 Krif Court stated that he is an abutter off Krif Rd. He continued that he thought the whole process sounded great, and the roundabouts seem like a great idea. It is a real problem for side road backup for UPS trucks and things like that on Krif Rd. Getting everyone to turn right and go around the roundabout, it will be disruptive, and it seems a little odd to have so many roundabouts stacked in a row on that road, but he is fully in support.

Doug Hamshaw, owner of Hamshaw Lumber, stated that this project predates all of the people currently involved with it. He continued that it went back ten years before the current project got underway. At that time, he approached the City about the extreme amount of traffic in front of (Hamshaw Lumber's) entrance to Bradco St. They graciously did a traffic count and said there was no budget for a traffic light there or other solutions they looked at. After their study, they said that not only is it an urgent project, but they already classified it as a "failed intersection." Since then, the problems have only gotten worse. They (Mr. McCarthy and his team) did a very good job looking at wait times for every left turn along that corridor, and wait times during rush hour were "pretty amazing." At Bradco St. it was an average of seven minutes, which is a long time to just sit there. There were equally bad wait times by Tempesta's. Nearly everyone by Tempesta's gave up turning left and turned right, and then turned around in businesses and sometimes in unsafe situations, such as driving into the south exit of Fairfields and coming out the north one. Hamshaw Lumber had a steady stream of traffic going through their parking lot. They eventually set up stanchions to block that access during rush hour. It is a safety issue and a huge inconvenience. (Mr. McCarthy and his team) estimate that with the roundabouts, the wait time at Hamshaw Lumber will be 45 seconds. It is inconvenient to go down to a roundabout and turn around, but a wait time of 45 seconds is much better than seven minutes. Traffic approaching from the south is definitely a problem and all of the business owners here were looking at the problems and possible solutions, and there is no easy answer. However, coming from the south to Hamshaw Lumber, you have to go past the lumber yard up to Krif Rd., go around the roundabout, and come back. Initially, that will absolutely cause a loss of business. Each business along the way will be impacted differently, but they all will suffer from this; they will suffer from the construction phase, obviously. It is a huge impact they are looking at, for the businesses along that road. Fairfields is looking at one of the worst impacts. He (Fairfields' owner) expressed all of those (concerns), and they (the steering committee) did not disagree with him, but that does not mean they came to a unanimous solution. There was no one involved with the steering committee process who did not recognize and understand all the problems and try to come up with a recommendation. Bradco Rd. is one of the worst spots for left turns, and there are already customers saying they do not want to do it, and they do not come to Hamshaw Lumber during the hours of 4:00 to 5:30 PM. He does not know if that coincides exactly with the timeframes in the team's study. It is only the evening traffic, currently, that is terrible. According to the study, now it will turn into a morning problem as well. Currently, during the morning, the cars tend to come at different times from different places and it breaks it up a little. That will not happen in the future when there is more traffic. Thus, like it or not, this corridor has to be dealt with. The recommendation the committee came to was not easy. They had many meetings and discussions, and the best they could come up with was an almost unanimous recommendation. The project has to happen. The bridge is beyond bad, as are other spots.

Regarding pedestrian safety, it is unbelievable. Most people walk on the west side, for whatever reason. Walking over the bridge puts you in “extreme danger.” Another (dangerous) spot is toward the Market Basket when the land juts out in such a way that the easiest solution is to walk in the road. Many people do that, with shopping carts, too. These issues have to be solved. He does not know what process the (MSFI Committee) goes through to determine the best solution, but a solution is mandatory.

John Toepfer, owner of Brick House Tile, stated that his business is just south of Krif Rd. and will be heavily impacted by this. He continued that he does not disagree with this project and thinks it is a great idea. His only concern is the ability for trucks that his business gets on a daily basis to get in and out of his parking lot. He does not know if a raised median would allow trucks the ability to do that. The turning lane would, because trucks would have enough room to get in and out. Some trucks come in from the left and turn in, because they are big, but (with the changes) they would be forced to go down to the roundabout and come back and try to turn right into the parking lot, which would be difficult for a tractor trailer or 32-foot box truck. Even if they get in, he is not sure how they would get out, if there were a raised median. If they did not do a raised median all the way to the roundabout, and ended it past Kit St. and before his lot, that would be great.

Drew Brynten of 30 Nelson St., chair of the BPPAC, stated that sidewalks are included in the BPPAC's project list. He continued that often they hinge on the CIP budget, but the BPPAC always welcomes specific requests from the public or other committees. Regarding lower Winchester St., he commends the steering committee for their recommendation to include multi-modal infrastructure. He asks people to remember the comment from Jeff Speck that if they make bigger roads they will just have more traffic. It seems like the impetus is to improve the flow and he thinks roundabouts do a great job of improving the flow and not just the speed. He asked what the speed limit is for this section of road. Mr. Lussier replied 30 miles per hour. Mr. Brynten continued that they are not trying to zip people through; they are trying to move them through in a manageable way. He thinks the accommodations from between the sidewalk and the bike lane are a great addition to the project and he supports that. The engineer leaned on the Complete Streets guidelines, which this committee has adopted. When they look at how to design a project, using the Complete Streets guideline is a great baseline to have. Upper Winchester St. is a gateway street, per Keene’s Complete Streets guidelines. Being able to maintain that connectivity to upper Winchester St. is important. Finally, allowing for that connectivity to upper Winchester St., the project as a whole allows for connectivity to existing infrastructure. They talked a lot about Krif Rd., where there is a connection to the existing rail trail. The fact that Swanzy has already signed off on their end of the project to move forward with the multi-modal transportation is a good sign that there is willingness on both sides of the border to make this project multimodal-friendly.

Councilor Jones stated that he has three brief comments. He continued that regarding roundabouts, he remembers them discussing this with Barry Crown, who came over from the UK. The City had Mr. Crown look at that section of the road because there were many problems

with left turns, and he did say, at the time, that roundabouts can help fix that. People would continuously be able to make the right turns and go around the roundabouts. For example, sometimes he has people come into town for work and stay at the Best Western. When they check out in the morning, they ask the front desk staff how to get to Keene, and the staff always says that the safest way is to make a right going out into one of the car dealerships and then come back up the street, because it is too dangerous to make that left turn. He is glad they are addressing that. Finally, they keep talking about housing, and he remembers that when Bobby Williams first came on the City Council, he asked why they were not developing Magnolia Way. One reason was the lack of market value, because coming out of Magnolia Way was a failed left turn. This would fix that. The City Council already did a site visit. They know there will be about five more buildings on Magnolia Way. This makes it safer, brings up the value of those homes, and they need to keep looking forward for things like this. He thanks the steering committee and the MSFI Committee for taking a careful look at this.

Chair Greenwald stated that he does not think they will make a decision tonight, but this was a very good, educational start to the process. He continued that the good news is that the MSFI Committee swapped dates with the PLD Committee and meets October 11. Mr. Blomquist replied that he thinks on October 11 the Committee will primarily be dealing with one issue, which seems to be the recommendation from the City Manager's Office. He continued that the next meeting would be the Wednesday before Thanksgiving. Staff has recommended moving that meeting to the Tuesday of that week, and this (lower Winchester St. project) would probably be the only agenda item. If there is anything the Committee members now, after hearing everything tonight, would like staff or the consultant to bring back at the next meeting, they can let him know. Or if any Committee member comes up with a question or additional information, they can pass it along to the chair and the chair can pass it along to the City Engineer and the City Engineer can bring the information back for the next meeting.

Chair Greenwald replied that he would ask for some kind of menu for these different options, and a decision tree they could move through. Whether it is October 11 or a different date, seeing the date of the actual construction. Mr. Blomquist replied that the City Engineer says he is anticipating 2026, because it will probably take a year to go through the property acquisition process, and they will have the information for those in late 2024.

Councilor Workman stated that she would ask City staff if they could present some statistics and numbers on the impact that no left turns would have on businesses on that street, if there is a way to get that information. Mr. Blomquist replied that they will look. He continued that they do have numbers on how many left turns are currently occurring. Councilor Workman replied that she wants to know more about how the left turn numbers would be impacted by having that center lane versus the median. Mr. Blomquist replied that he will take a wild guess and say that currently, the idea of a median at least down to Kit St. seems to be favorable. He continued that they would be looking at the left turns south of where that would end there, sort of where the Brick House Tile property is.

Councilor Filiault stated that this past year he has seen some serious accidents, due to left-hand turns going across. He asked if they could have the accident report (data) for the past year or two for lower Winchester St.

Chair Greenwald stated that he would like to hear the (answer to the) engineering question that Mr. Toepfer raised, regarding truck turning.

Chair Greenwald asked if there were any further questions from the Committee. Hearing none, he asked if members of the public had any questions. Hearing none, he stated that this will come back, either at the October 11 meeting or the November meeting.

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

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

4) PowerPoint Presentation – Reconstruction of NH Route 101 from East of Optical Avenue to Branch Road

Mr. Lussier stated that the NHDOT approached him and Mr. Blomquist and asked to be able to do a public officials' orientation meeting on this project. He continued that this project came through the State's Ten Year Plan. It has been on the books for a while. The City has some work it will be doing in conjunction with (it). He asked Dave Smith, the project manager from the NHDOT, to speak.

Dave Smith introduced himself and stated that this project is "Keene 41590." He introduced Rob Faulkner from Clough, Harbour, and Associates (CHA). He continued that in the audience is Kris Kozlowski from the NHDOT and Ellen Moshier from CHA.

Mr. Faulkner stated that tonight is an introductory meeting; CHA plans to be in front of the Committee several times between now and the project's conclusion. He gave an overview of what he will present tonight. He continued that this is for improvements to a segment of Rt. 101 that begins east of Optical Ave. and heads east approximately one mile to Branch Rd. The purpose of the project is to improve the pavement, drainage, and bicycle and pedestrian accommodations. The existing bridge over the Branch River is on the State's red list, so they will be addressing that as well. They will look at the safety issues at the current Swanzey Factory Rd. and Rt. 101 intersection. The segment begins east of Optical Ave. near the Stone Arch Bridge trail terminus and continues one mile east to Branch Rd. and Swanzey Factory Rd. The Branch River parallels a lot of the Rt. 101 corridor, especially toward the eastern end of the project approaching Branch Rd. Otter Brook comes down and joins a confluence of the Minnewawa Brook, which forms the Branch River, which flows into the Ashuelot River. The Rt. 101 Bridge over the Branch River was built in 1933, with a cast-in-place concrete rigid frame. As part of this project, they will evaluate whether the bridge can be rehabilitated or

widened, or if it needs to be fully replaced. There are narrow shoulders on the bridge. The image shows staining on the underside, the delamination that occurred over the years, and significant deterioration on the outside of the fascia portions.

Mr. Faulkner continued that regarding the project need, Rt. 101 is a major east/west route in the state. It is one of two in southern NH and is vital to the commerce community and tourism. It is also one of the gateways to the city of Keene. The pavement is in poor condition. As part of the original construction back in 1933, a concrete slab was built, about 20 feet wide. Over the last 90 years, that has deteriorated, which is reflected up through the bituminous concrete, resulting in potholes. That is a constant maintenance concern. There is also poor drainage through much of the corridor, and the roadway runoff discharges directly into the Branch River, untreated. The Swanzey Factory Rd. intersection safety is a concern. He showed the picture of the existing sight distance from Swanzey Factory Rd., looking west toward the city of Keene. He continued that the bridge railing and the roadway geometry impedes the ability to look for oncoming traffic. Lastly, the corridor is challenging for bicyclists and pedestrians, due to the narrow shoulders and high volume of traffic.

Mr. Faulkner continued that they are not looking to make significant changes to the Rt. 101 alignment. The existing travel way is about 24 feet wide, and the shoulders vary from about two to four feet. In some instances, there is no shoulder. In certain segments of the roadway, the Branch River comes in very close proximity. He showed an image of the proposed Rt. 101 typical section. He continued that they will maintain the 24-foot wide travel lane, but formalize the shoulders to five feet wide, providing better bicycle and pedestrian accommodations. They are looking to minimize or eliminate any impacts to the Branch River as they do that widening.

Mr. Faulkner continued that they have initial ideas for improving safety on Swanzey Factory Rd. He showed an image of the area and indicated the four alternatives, highlighted in blue, going from left to right. He continued that starting on the left-hand side (of the image), on either side, there are two potential alignments that parallel the Stone Arch Bridge. They are looking at these because there is a very wide right-of-way in that vicinity, so the proposed roadway alignment could parallel the Stone Arch Bridge and the rail trail. Moving a little to the right, in the center (of the image) is another offline alternative that would require a bridge crossing at the Branch River, and the relocation of the intersection about 700 feet to the west of the existing Swanzey Factory Rd. intersection. Moving to the right is the existing intersection, and (this alternative is to) see if there is anything they can do at that location to improve the sight distance, whether that is a combination of widening or rehabilitating the bridge, or doing something with the roadway approaches. The alternative furthest to the right looks at the old, abandoned railroad corridor that goes behind the fastener mill building, and the possibility of relocating Swanzey Factory Rd. behind that facility and squaring up a new intersection opposite the industrial area. A Swanzey Factory Rd. typical section would be 11-foot lanes with 5-foot shoulders. That would provide, again, enhanced pedestrian and bicycle accommodations in that vicinity.

Mr. Faulkner continued that the corridor is within the Branch River floodplain and floodway. It was most recently studied in FEMA's 2006 Flood Insurance Study (FIS). They are currently replicating that FEMA model to perform detailed hydraulic analysis of the alternatives. As part of that, they will look at compensatory storage and mitigation for any floodplain impacts that may occur. They are looking at water quality issues. The existing stormwater runoff discharges into the Branch River without any treatment. The proposed design looks to improve that water quality and stormwater treatment. They will follow NHDES and City of Keene water quality standards. While the City is technically not an MS4 Community (Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System), they will strive to meet the City's MS4 guidelines. They will look at best management practices, and stormwater management areas that they hope will be onsite within the project corridor, but if necessary, they might look offsite as well. Lastly, an existing Tier 1 stream comes down from the north near Thompson Rd. near the Swanzey Factory Rd. intersection and goes into a 36-inch culvert. It combines with the closed drainage system along Rt. 101 and then discharges to the Branch River. They will look to separate the Tier 1 stream flow from the closed drainage system.

Mr. Faulkner continued that to date, they have conducted much of the natural resource assessments. They are working on the stream crossings assessment. They have contacted the US Fish and Wildlife Services, have looked at hazardous materials and contamination through the corridor, and have evaluated the Section 4(f) and Section 6(f) properties – the Cheshire Rail Trail, the Stone Arch Bridge, and some potentially historic properties through the corridor that are subject to Section 4(f). They have also done some cultural resource assessments. They have reviewed the historic properties and architecture through the corridor. The Stone Arch Bridge is on the National Registry, and the Rt. 101 Bridge over the Branch River is eligible to be. Other properties through the south Keene area (are being evaluated). They also conducted Phase 1A and 1B preliminary Archeological Surveys, which indicated some sensitive areas and findings within the corridor that need further evaluation.

Mr. Faulkner continued that public outreach for the project include a Public Involvement Plan, available on the NHDOT website. They sent several outreach letters to 42 entities in Keene and 7 entities in Swanzey. They will establish a Project Working Group. They had an initial meeting with the Public Works Director and the City Engineer to lay out the framework for that. They will conduct public officials meetings, tonight's being one. A project specific website is on the NHDOT website. They will conduct agency coordination meetings with the natural and cultural resource agencies as the project continues forward. As they complete the NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) document, there will be a public comment period. This phase of the project will culminate in a public hearing on what will be the preferred alternative that will then be carried into final design.

Mr. Faulkner stated that the preliminary project schedule (begins with) this preliminary engineering phase, during which they will be evaluating alternatives and completing the environmental documentation, will continue through 2025. They are wrapping up the survey and base mapping of the corridor and completing the remaining cultural and natural resource

assessments. Through 2025 they will be evaluating several alternatives for Rt. 101 as well as Swanzey Factory Rd., and bringing those back to the MSFI Committee. They plan to have a public hearing in 2025 with the final design taking place in 2026 to 2028.

Councilor Filiault stated that he attended the NHDOT's (meeting about the) Ten Year Plan the other evening, and it seems like it might be stretching out to something more like a 20-year plan. He asked if they think this particular project will stay on track with the dates they are presenting. Mr. Faulkner replied that Dave Smith will make sure that (McFarland Johnson) does their part to keep the project on track for a public hearing in 2025 and the final design occurring thereafter. Mr. Smith stated that there is a great team supporting the advancement of this project, so he is confident that it will advance in a strong manner and meet the dates as best they can. He continued that they can never predict the interaction with the public and the coordination the team will get from the public, but the team commits to do their best to meet the schedule as best they can. They have commitments in the Ten-Year Plan, and their charge is to make sure they are in compliance with it, meeting those timeframes.

Mr. Blomquist stated that Swanzey Factory Rd. is referred to as a Class V Highway, a City-owned street. He continued that whatever NHDOT does on that street through this project will be turned over to the City for maintenance in perpetuity. Thus, as the NHDOT is presenting options, City staff will be looking at it, and making recommendations to the MSFI Committee about what it means. For example, do they want to add another bridge to the City's inventory of the 32 bridges they already have? That is (an example of) why City staff will make sure the NHDOT continues to come to speak to the MSFI Committee. The City's interest is the safety on Rt. 101, which is the State's interest, but at the end of the day, whatever happens to Swanzey Factory Rd. will return to the City of Keene for maintenance responsibility. Mr. Lussier mentioned earlier that City staff are potentially trying to integrate a City project.

Mr. Lussier stated that City staff have known for a while that this project was coming. He continued that in the CIP now, funds are scheduled for the water main replacement through this project corridor. The water main was installed in 1914 and has served its purpose. In the upcoming CIP update, staff will be truing up that cost to better line up with their more defined project limits, as well as their schedule. There will be some adjustments there, but (the City) is certainly working with (the NHDOT) on that.

Mr. Lussier continued that Swanzey Factory Rd. is the biggest impact for the City's perspective of this. Some of the alternatives being considered are more advantageous and desirable to the City than others. He has not been shy about telling (the NHDOT) that from his perspective, anything that puts a new bridge in front of or adjacent to the Stone Arch Bridge is a non-starter, in terms of the impact that would have on a cultural icon in the city. That is very undesirable. Many people received the letters asking for input on the project. He wants people to know that a number of City staff members, including himself, also received it. He will prepare a consolidated City staff response through the City Manager's Office. It will say that the City's preference is for the eastern most alternative, with each of the other alternatives being

increasingly undesirable as you proceed from East to West (from right to left). If this Committee has a different opinion, he would like to hear it before staff opines in writing.

Mr. Lussier continued that something else to mention, which he discussed Monday at the Ten Year Plan meeting, is that the project presents an interesting opportunity for the City. Mr. Faulkner mentioned the challenges of this corridor for bicyclists and pedestrians, and the City has already created solutions to offer them, in form of the Prowse Bridge. They will be formally requesting that the NHDOT include the construction or placement of the Prowse Bridge, connecting the Stone Arch Bridge to the Eastern Ave. section of the Transportation Heritage Trail as part of their project. It benefits pedestrians and makes a lot of sense from a practical and economic perspective to try to do that as one project rather than have the NHDOT rebuild Rt. 101 and have the City go back a couple years later and tear it up to put in the bridge. The NHDOT has been receptive to that idea, and they are working through those (details and discussions).

Councilor Williams stated that something he would love to see for the long run would be a safe bicycle route between Marlborough and Keene. He continued that this project fills in an important link in that connection, and he appreciates that.

Chair Greenwald asked if there were any further questions from the Committee. Hearing none, he asked for public comment.

Mr. Redfern stated that for the project that the City is working on for the Transportation Heritage Trail, he is part of a group [Pathways for Keene] that fundraises the local share of project money. He continued that for instance, say they get a grant for 80%, and the City contributes a certain percentage, and Pathways for Keene tries to kick in 10%. Historically, the group has been very successful doing that, but the cost of a bridge might be a harder reach for them than usual. They will make every attempt to do it. With that strong public support, they expect this project to not be pushed out beyond the contemplated time that they are hearing about for this project. He strongly supports the idea of doing both projects at once. It makes common sense. He heard from someone who heard from someone in the SWRPC that the Proust Bridge project might be pushed out beyond the Ten Year Plan, and that would be very concerning to the community, because Pathways for Keene has been raising funds for this project for 3.5 years. It would “take a lot of air out of the balloon” and reduce the momentum they have from the public. Pathways for Keene has hosted a series of races, which generate public support and some good funding. The Proust Bridge is a ten-year hold for the City. It has already been three or four years, and there about three years left; that agreement is another factor to consider. The group respectfully asks the MSFI Committee to place this item on more time so they can square away the Ten Year Plan timeframe, because what he heard tonight is that if they can pair (this project) up (with the other), they are within a reasonable range. However, if the project gets pushed out, as he heard that the person from the SWRPC said, it could put a stop to matching it up with this project, and it could severely impact Pathways for Keene’s ability to fundraise. The group asks the MSFI Committee to place the item on more time so Pathways for Keene can generate a letter to the

Mayor and the Council, specific to this project. Executive Councilor Cinde Warmington is on the [Governor's Advisory Commission on Intermodal Transportation, or GACIT], representing [District 2, which Keene is part of]. They will ask for her help. Last time the City needed help from the Federal delegation, a letter was written to the Federal delegation, asking that a project not be moved out. That was successful. If the recommendation for tonight is for the MSFI Committee to file this (agenda item) as informational, his plea is for two weeks more, so Pathways for Keene can come up with a solution for writing a letter to the delegation before the Ten Year Plan hearings are over. He will attend either the hearing in Peterborough or Claremont in the very near future.

Mr. Blomquist stated that what is happening right now is the State's Ten Year Plan process is going through the GACIT, and they are having those public hearings around the state, through the fall. Most recently, they held a public hearing here in Keene on Monday night. After the public hearings are complete, the GACIT makes a recommendation to the NH Governor and the legislature, who then has their shot at the Ten Year Plan after the first of the New Year. He thinks creating a letter is fine, and putting that into the record, submitting it to the GACIT at some point. He is not sure this item needs to be placed on more time in order for that to happen. He thinks the letter is underway to the City Council and that can be submitted into the process at any time. When the draft Ten Year Plan moves to the legislature next spring, the City Council can request that our state legislative delegation propose an amendment, if there is a need, to the Ten Year Plan. His thoughts are that by accepting this as informational, the MSFI Committee is not saying they are done with the project. A local staff committee will be established, and they will be talking to the Committee. The City Engineer has indicated what he would like to see happen. They still have not come to how that communication will move forward, but his recommendation is to continue with what is on the Committee's agenda for tonight while all of these other things are in process.

Chair Greenwald stated that he suggests Mr. Redfern send a letter to the Council for the next Council meeting, requesting the letter and anything else he wants to request. The MSFI Committee has heard the presentation and they are done with the presentation, but that (what Mr. Redfern is asking for) is a whole new action.

Councilor Jones stated that he has a few hats in this ring, as a City Councilor, as a member of the State's Transportation Committee, and as what he is most proud of – member of the board of directors for Pathways for Keene, along with Mr. Redfern, raising money for these trails. What he asks is, as the City Engineer already said, to try to combine the projects. That would be what is best. They mentioned the historic value of the Stone Arch Bridge. That will be part of the trail heading south. It is not ready to be part of the trail yet, but due to its historic value, they might be able to get some State money to help refurbish and strengthen it, which should be in the letter.

Councilor Roberts stated that this presentation was on Rt. 101. He continued that the MSFI Committee is here to decide whether they like this project on Rt. 101 and want it to go forward,

and yes, they do. That was the issue tonight. The secondary part is yes, they want to add on to these to get the items done - the water main, the bridge, and the bike lanes. If they can, that is what they want to do, because it is best for everyone and best financially. That is, again, "if they can." Tonight the issue is Rt. 101, and as Chair Greenwald said, it is up to the other people to get the letter to the City Council to go from there.

Chair Greenwald asked if there were any further comments. Hearing none, he asked for a motion. Councilor Roberts made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Workman.

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee recommends the acceptance of the presentation on Reconstruction of NH Route 101 from East of Optical Avenue to Branch Road as informational.

5) **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chair Greenwald adjourned the meeting at 8:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

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