

City of Keene
New Hampshire

MUNICIPAL SERVICES, FACILITIES & INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, March 13, 2024

6:00 PM

**Council Chamber,
City Hall**

Members Present:

Mitchell H. Greenwald, Chair
Randy L. Filiault, Vice Chair
Andrew M. Madison
Catherine I. Workman (remote)
Laura E. Tobin

Staff Present:

Elizabeth Dragon, City Manager
Rebecca Landry, Assistant City Manager
Don Farquhar, Fire Chief
Don Lussier, City Engineer
Amanda Palmeira, Assistant City Attorney

Members Not Present:

All Present

Chair Greenwald called the meeting to order at 5:33 PM and explained the procedures of the meeting. Councilor Workman stated that she is participating remotely from Kentucky at a work conference, in her hotel room and no one else is in the room. Chair Greenwald stated that the MSFI Committee grants her request for remote participation.

1) Downtown Infrastructure Project – Focus Area: Main Street Streetscape

Chair Greenwald stated that the only item on tonight's Special Meeting is the Downtown Infrastructure Project, specifically the Main St. Streetscape. He continued that City staff and the consultant seek the public and the Committee's input on project features. Subsequent meetings will focus on different areas, including Central Square and the Gilbo Ave./Railroad St. area.

Don Lussier, City Engineer, explained the process for tonight's meeting, stating that Stantec will give a brief presentation as was given last week at the public workshop. Then, they will talk in detail about design elements they want input on. Throughout, staff and Stantec will explain what they have heard from the public. Sometimes staff will jump in with information about the City's ability to maintain certain elements and their long-term resiliency. Tonight, staff is not looking for any formal actions from the Committee, just "straw poll feedback" on the different elements. They will then incorporate the feedback into the design going forward.

Ed Roberge, Civil Engineer with Stantec, and Ngan Han, Landscape Architect/Lead Designer for the Main St. Project, introduced themselves and gave a PowerPoint presentation, beginning with an overview of how this is part 1 of a three-part series of engagements. Mr. Roberge continued that tonight is about the Main St. area of the project. The other two areas are Gilbo/Railroad, and

Central Square. Each area had many focus points, which is why they separated them out. Stantec does preparation work with the Technical Review Committee, which includes staff, then informs the public via the public workshops, following up with the MSFI Committee.

Mr. Roberge showed a slide of the plan the City Council approved for the Main St. streetscape. He continued that it includes all the features they went through last year in the design study, such as two lanes in each direction, the removal of center parking between the signalized intersection at West St. and Roxbury St. and Gilbo/Railroad, parking spaces reallocated along the main corridor, a protected bike lane, and all the features that come with the alignment change. They added a lot of sidewalk space. The circular operation of the intersection at Central Square is maintained, with traffic calming/lane narrowing and optimized signal improvements.

Mr. Roberge continued that (tonight's presentation) captures where the Council-approved plan left off, and where Phase 2 of the preliminary design comes into play. He showed a slide of Stantec's current Roll Plan. He continued that they are now refining the concept to more of an engineered alignment. They took care to make sure that they could fit the improvements proposed in the concept, and to see how that fits within the corridor. They want to ensure balanced sidewalk widths on both sides of the street. Currently it is slightly offset.

Mr. Roberge continued that during the planning study, Stantec heard a lot about three focus areas. First is street trees and how this project would impact them, which Ms. Han will talk about. Second is the streetscape itself and how it will look in the end. Ms. Han will go through the base design option for that. Stantec has several alternatives they want the Committee's feedback on. Third is the bike/pedestrian interface component where the bike lanes are aligned, and how to ensure that interaction is as safe as possible. They have details of the intersection connections with bike lanes and pedestrians, and details on how to treat, sign, or pavement mark some of the awareness folks would need to see there.

Ms. Nan stated that Stantec worked with Bartlett Tree experts in the summer of 2022 to conduct a tree assessment. She continued that for Phase 2 of the preliminary design for Main St., they used that information, looking at each individual tree in comparison to how the proposed design will impact it. She displayed a slide showing each section of Main St. that determines whether there is an opportunity to save/transplant the tree, or if it is impacted by the design to a degree where the tree needs to be removed. She continued that when Stantec shared this information last week at the public workshop, many people had comments about the tree removals in the median because they are younger trees. Thus, Stantec is looking at potentially transplanting those and for opportunities to either plant during the construction phase or other locations around Keene that could use new trees. They looked at strategies for protecting trees they plan to save, such as chain link fence and avoiding construction compaction on the tree roots. Bartlett Tree recommends looking at improving a tree's health via soil amendments, root excavation, or pruning.

Ms. Han continued that Stantec's list of recommended street trees for downtown is based on their understanding of the urban condition and their experience. They propose seeing if there is an opportunity to diversify the canopies or species; or an opportunity to use trees to promote pollinators and wildlife habitat; or using trees as a way to create a destination for spring or fall, given their aesthetic appeal. They heard positive feedback on diversifying the trees and using salt-tolerant and drought-tolerant trees, and opportunities to expand the underground surface to invigorate the roots and give them soil volume to grow.

Ms. Han stated that the next slide shows ideas/character images of what the streetscape could look like. She continued that Stantec wants to see what type of experience people want downtown. Regarding the overall plan, Stantec looked at all of Main St., from Roxbury St. and West St. to Davis St. and Water St., on both sides, trying to balance the expansion of sidewalk and pedestrian use with the realignment.

Ms. Han continued that starting with where Central Square is in the northbound area, going south, they propose the integration of the angled parking and a bike lane in the pedestrian corridor zone, along with a commerce zone. They try to balance all that with the opportunity given with expanded sidewalk space.

Mr. Roberge stated that in this slide of the concept plan of Main St., going from the center line, you can see the two lanes in each direction. He continued that there is a three-lane approach as you go northbound toward Central Square. You see the angled parking, and the strip next to it is the three-foot buffer they have been talking about, needed for separation between vehicles and the bike lane. The five-foot bike lane is right beyond the buffer. Then there is a buffer from the bike lane to the walking (area). In this case (in the view of Church St. to Roxbury St.), the sidewalk on the west side is 10 feet wide, and anything that is up against the building is referred to as a "flexible space." It could be a continuation of sidewalk (for example). The drawing shows the east side has an area that already has sidewalk commerce. Stantec is making sure they identify the areas that the City has under a licensed agreement today. Everything is color coded to show what is usable space. All of the dimensions vary.

Ms. Han stated that northbound and southbound on the left side is about 10 feet of commerce zone and about 10 feet of pedestrian zone. She continued that the dimensions for the raised planter area vary depending on where you are on Main St., but Stantec has tried to keep a consistent buffer between the bike lane and pedestrian area, as well as a three-foot buffer for cars and for people to cross the bike lane. It is a little space from which to look both ways before they cross. The same strategy is implemented on the west side as well.

Ms. Han continued that moving south between Church St. and Railroad Square, the planter space on the east side starts to narrow. That is based on Stantec's studies of maintaining a six-foot minimum pedestrian way and trying to maintain an 8- to 10-foot wide area for a commerce zone. On the east side, they are trying to maintain a 10-foot wide pedestrian zone, but the planters proposed as a buffer between the bike lane and pedestrian zone starts to narrow.

Ms. Han continued that moving south toward Cypress St., of note is the raised intersection at Gilbo Ave. and Main St. The intent is to connect the Cheshire Rail Trail across the way at a raised intersection to prioritize pedestrian use and be a traffic-calming strategy. That allows people more room to cross at the intersection. Expanding the space creates a more pedestrian-friendly environment. Because the dimension between the building and curb begins to narrow, they transition from using planters between the bike lanes and pedestrian zone to tree pits. That still allows a buffer between. They are trying to signal to pedestrians that (this) is the area to walk and (this) is the area for cyclists to travel.

Ms. Han continued that the same strategy is implemented further south. You can see the existing commerce zones they are trying to maintain. There are challenges to keeping the current dimensions. The priority is maintaining the six-foot wide pedestrian area. They are looking at opportunities for planters, maintaining a larger growing area for trees, and saving existing trees.

Ms. Han continued that they looked at alternatives for the blocks. They studied what it would mean to keep all existing trees. If they prioritize keeping all existing trees, there would be tradeoffs, such as reducing the sidewalk width or reducing the commerce zone. The image (of the section between Roxbury St. and Church St.) shows that keeping the existing trees in front of the buildings significantly reduces the areas for flexible space, the area for pedestrians, and the area for outdoor commerce. That is why Stantec went with their base plan to remove those trees to have the benefit of a more impactful pedestrian zone.

Ms. Han continued that (in Concept Layout Option 2), they also looked at introducing movable tables. In the areas with all the planters and seat walls, they looked at what it would look like to have more flexible space that allows people to move tables around while still maintaining the pedestrian corridor across the way. When it is possible to save trees, they are trying to do so.

Another alternative they considered was (Concept Layout Option 3), how to create more flexible open space. Events that happen throughout the year bring an influx of pedestrians, so wider sidewalks might be needed. They considered what that would look like. They could still introduce permanent seating, and still introduce movable tables and chairs, but reduce the footprint of the planters.

Ms. Han continued that the next slide shows and compares the four studies they have for this specific block (which are “Keep Existing Trees,” “Base Design with Seat Walls,” “Introducing Movable Tables,” and “More Flexible Open Space.”) They decided to pursue the base design because it is easily replicable throughout the corridor. However, with this block being the widest, there is an opportunity to look at introducing movable tables and expanding the flexible open space. They want the community’s opinion on this.

Ms. Han stated that to touch on what Stantec shared at last week’s public workshop and the feedback they have, they are starting to look at material precedents. They are comparing types of

concrete and types of pavers, and it seems like there is more interest in the unit pavers or the stamped concrete having some color, versus standard concrete. They also have feedback on the types of materials for curbing at the planters. People prefer a more natural stone block. Regarding streetscape site furnishings, Stantec wanted to gauge people's interest in more contemporary furnishings versus those similar to what exists. There is a range of options.

Mr. Roberge stated that they looked specifically at the bike lane configuration, looking at several options. They looked at the option of a street-grade bike lane, which took up more space due to the separation between the parking interaction and the sidewalk. They decided on the option with the bike lane at sidewalk grade. The slide shows one segment of the project. The key is how to cross all the side streets. The side streets along both the pedestrian way and the bike lane is at sidewalk grade. There will be tables at each cross street, which prioritize pedestrians and bicyclists, to keep a continuous path throughout.

Mr. Roberge showed a slide of guidance on pavement markings, showing how it would lay out. He continued that people have questions and concerns about two main pedestrian interactions. First is the experience of someone getting out of their car and going toward the sidewalk, with a bike lane (there). Stantec has examples of signage and/or pavement markings that create guidance for pedestrians and bicyclists. State law says pedestrians always have the right of way. Thus, bicyclists need to yield to crossing pedestrians. Stantec has heard concerns about there being multiple crossing locations, but the buffers and planter areas limit the (concerns). That is not to say that if there are 169 parking spaces there are not necessarily 169 opportunities for an interaction, but there would be a number of interactions here. It would be common law, and common sense, with pedestrians and bicyclists making eye contact. Bicyclists would be making eye contact because it is their responsibility to yield, but pavement markings will help that.

Mr. Roberge continued that the second interaction (people have concerns about) is where there would be a crosswalk across the bike lane. Showing the location in the image on the screen, he continued that bicyclists would have advanced yield markings. He indicated the location of the Cheshire Rail Trail near Railroad St., and continued that (the plan) shows a yield on the bike lane. Stantec thinks of these areas as "mixing zones," zones where pedestrians, bicyclists, and others might interact in the course of just being in the downtown. (The plan) shows pavement markings and there could possibly be minor tick marks that show a directional path for bicyclists and pedestrians. There could be guidance in this low speed area, such as having bicyclists get off their bikes and walk their bikes until the next section. (The question is) what the priority is for this area. Different communities handle it in different ways, but Stantec identifies this as a mixing zone and they would provide the guidance. Again, rules of the road apply, including pedestrians always having the right of way, bicyclists and vehicles needing to yield to pedestrians, and vehicles needing to yield to bicyclists if they are on protected crosswalk locations. There was a decent conversation about this. The newness of this in Keene would be (an opportunity for) good education and good communication on how, exactly, these would work.

Mr. Roberge showed an image of the layout Stantec is looking at (for the crossing at a bike lane). He continued that the “shark teeth” pavement markings are the yield marks, for vehicles and, in this case, for bicyclists yielding to a crosswalk that has priority over the bike lane. He showed a tabled intersection, continuing that the crosswalk for pedestrians is marked, similar to the bicycle crossing. All of this happens in the protected tabled area, alerting vehicles to the fact that there is a special condition there, and that bicyclists and pedestrians are important. He showed images of actual installations (as examples), and continued that one shows a pedestrian path with a buffer line of trees and lighting fixtures, which could be newspaper boxes, benches, or something else. For Keene, Stantec is looking for something more substantial than the three- to four-foot buffer shown in the image, to separate pedestrians from the bike lane. The image shows a three-foot buffer, then parallel parking. The buffer space is where vehicle doors open, which is a condition bicyclists and motorists need to be aware of.

Mr. Roberge continued that another image of a way to yield to pedestrians shows a bus stop at a major crossing, with a crosswalk in the bike lane and pavement markings saying to yield to pedestrians. Another shows pedestrians crossing with a sign that says “LOOK,” to encourage people to look before just walking across the bike lanes. It is an attempt to increase people’s awareness of various activities.

Mr. Roberge continued that in summary, Stantec received generally positive feedback about the idea of raised crossings, the buffer, and the general layout. People seemed to prefer having the bike lanes at the sidewalk level, which gives the opportunity to balance and better maintain the right of way. People had concerns about the overall safety on the corridor, speed limits within the bike lanes, and safe walking. Regarding speed limits, the advent of e-bikes is an ongoing conversation not just here, but everywhere. In the City Manager’s committee meeting this morning, he heard a lot of good conversation about what sort of controls Keene will look at to manage that. (Other feedback from the public workshop) included an interest in bikeshare facilities and opportunities. There was good, general discussion about the education component. There is a strong education component when something is new. For example, roundabouts are not new to Keene anymore, as Keene had had great success with them, but at first, there was a strong need for education when roundabouts were implemented.

Ms. Han stated that as she talked about earlier, (the public workshop had) conversation about prioritizing the relocation and transplanting of the elm trees that can be relocated. She continued that in general, Stantec received positive feedback on promoting native species, diversity, and food sources for pollinators and wildlife. There was positive feedback on using structural soil/soil cells to increase the soil volume to promote tree health.

Ms. Han continued that regarding the streetscape, Stantec heard that a wider pedestrian zone and a dedicated commerce space were positive additions, and heard a preference for natural stone blocks for seating. People have concerns about removing the left-turn pocket on Main St./Elm St. People desire an increase in pervious surface where possible; an increase in bicycle parking;

and an increase in raised walkways, including beyond Gilbo Ave., as a way to prioritize pedestrians.

Mr. Roberge continued that as a reminder, this three-step process is underway, (with public workshops on the designs for the other two areas of Main St. coming up). They think the first introduction of the Main St. details was well received.

Chair Greenwald stated that he thinks they learned in round 1 of this project that the City Council needs to make these decisions and provide input. He continued that Councilors solicit input from and listen to the public. The 20 to 40 people who give their feedback at a workshop are not designing the project; they are giving input. He hopes that makes sense to people and that they continue receiving a lot of input from Councilors.

Chair Greenwald stated that personally, he likes the idea of the bike lanes at sidewalk level. He continued that for the sake of clarity, some (elements) shown in the plans tonight have not been decided. For example, the U-turn at Roxbury St., the slip lane at Central Square, and the left turn from Main St. onto Emerald St. are still being decided. These are important to him. He is unclear about the left turn from Main St. onto Railroad St. He hopes that continues. He cannot tell, and is confused with the raised crosswalk and all that goes with it. He assumes it will be part of the discussion about Gilbo Ave. and Roxbury St. at a future meeting. Regarding materials, he hopes the Committee members and Councilors keep cost in mind. Many of these materials are beautiful but (expensive). Materials need to be durable and attractive, but also cost effective.

Chair Greenwald asked to hear from other Committee members and Councilors and then the public. Councilor Filiault replied that he will withhold his comments until they hear from the members of the public who attended the workshop last week. Councilor Tobin agreed.

Chair Greenwald asked for input from the public and Councilors.

Autumn DeLaCroix of 618 Court St. stated that she thinks this is a beautiful plan with many great elements and she is happy. She continued that there were many images of benches, including one with middle armrests, which are commonly used to be hostile to homeless people. There are not many homeless people sleeping on Main St. She thinks these type of benches are unnecessary and would dramatically hinder flexibility, and send the wrong image for how we feel about people. Regarding trees, she would love to see some elms on Main St. There were some blocks between parking spaces that did not have previously described things in them, and if possible, it would be great to use those for bike parking. She is happy to see raised crossings, especially on cross streets. That is one of her biggest “panic points” as a cyclist who wants to use the bike lanes, and that would make her more comfortable. She knows colored concrete for bike lanes or sidewalks has an added cost, but only up front, and it would not need constant replacing as paint would. It might save money in the long term to consider those things now, so the City does not have to spend money every two years to repaint.

Bobby Williams, City Councilor, Ward 2, stated that he is impressed with this bike infrastructure, and the way it seeks to ensure a safe interface with pedestrians. He continued that more bike parking would be great, and specifically covered bike parking, to extend the season for people using bikes not coming back to a wet bike.

Raleigh Ormerod, City Councilor, Ward 1 stated that he assumes the three-foot buffer between the street and the bicycles is where the parking meters or kiosks would go. He continued that Stantec shows four possible scenarios, and he hopes and assumes that they all contain the trees in the central median between northbound and southbound, even though they were not all shown. If that is not the case, he wants to understand why. He heard planter boxes will be part of the buffer, but he wonders if they are planning for irrigation. Usually there would be a drip irrigation system there. When trees are transplanted, especially new ones, a root watering system would go into the soil and could be removed after the trees are established. It yields much faster growth, and fewer trees will be lost.

Diana Duffy of Page St. stated that she has been a car-free commuter for years. She continued that a designated bikeway makes commuters happy, but as a member of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Path Advisory Committee (BPPAC), she is aware of the community's concerns about new risks and new hazards with the new layout. Her understanding is that the bikeway is the same level as the sidewalk. She knows many people want to (bike) into downtown but worry about the hazards, which the bikeway minimizes. However, others say, "Now we have this bikeway to worry about!" (Her response is) that the raised bikeway, which makes people physically take a step up as they exit their cars, is a reminder that they are entering a new space. It is a helpful alert. It will help educate people, and will encourage more people to bike, since there will be fewer hazards downtown.

Roger Weinreich of 51 Railroad St. displayed and distributed copies of photos. He stated that he advocates the single-lane concept. He continued that some might say, "The ship has sailed. We already voted on this," but the project is still a few years away. At first, he thought the single-lane concept was (bad), but then he looked into it, talked with design engineers around the country, and found it is some communities' top choice. Scaling back to one lane in each direction creates more space. He thinks Keene should look at it, as it is the only (option) that would make Keene an economic driver. It makes communities more walkable and inviting and creates vitality for economic growth, which increases the tax base. As a Keene resident, he does not want to pay increased taxes. This would be a great way to increase the tax base. There is still time for the Council to look at this (single-lane concept) again. Fire departments love it; an apparatus can get down the street just fine, and traffic flows through. Keene has the benefit of controlling signalization and can clear streets so apparatus can go through. He has a rough sketch to show this concept, which creates more green space, more walkability, more trees, and more parking downtown. There would be a calmer traffic flow, with increased housing and business opportunities for development.

Chair Greenwald stated that he thanks Mr. Weinreich for his presentation but agrees with his comment that “the ship has sailed.” He continued that two decisions came out of last season. One was the bike lanes, and the other was the two-lane concept. Unless there is a strong vote out of Council to change that, they are working with the plan that is being presented. It would take eight votes to turn the ship around.

Nancy Ancharski of 60 School St. stated that she attended last week’s workshop, and she understands that they are now, according to Stantec, at the downtown infrastructure phase where they are identifying and evaluating specific plans for the details. She continued that she personally describes this phase as “putting lipstick on the pig.” At the workshop last week, she tried to decipher the streetscape plans. Instead of selecting her favorite benches or sidewalk materials, she was looking at the measurements of the sidewalks, streets, parking, bike lanes, and buffers. She was surprised to see that the median, an important component of the streetscape, has not been talked about much or evaluated thoroughly. She knew the parking would be removed. She never knew all the trees would be, too. She knew there would be changes, but did not understand the entire median was being removed. That requires extensive and expensive changes that appear unnecessary. It will extend the time of the project and negatively impact downtown businesses. The change to the median requires unnecessary removal of many trees. Before talking about curbing, lights, and other details, she wants the Committee, the City Council, and the Mayor to ask Stantec why the median needs to be moved. Ask Stantec if they considered keeping the median while removing parking, and adding a central bike path in the current median footprint, while conserving the healthy, mature trees. Maybe that would eliminate building an unsafe, multimodal lane that impinges on sidewalks, plantings, and outdoor dining, and removes trees.

Ms. Ancharski continued that before they go any further, she thinks the taxpayers deserve an itemized account of the major portions of this \$16 million project. She thinks Stantec should be able to report an estimated cost of the fees paid to Stantec; the utility infrastructure; the Main St. improvements, broken into specific elements; Central Square traffic and roadway improvements; Central Square other improvements; and the Gilbo Ave. and Railroad Sq. raised crosswalks. The public deserves to know what each piece will cost. The City has developed a strong, inspiring mission statement and values statement. One value is *“to obtain public input to measure citizens’ satisfaction and to determine community values and spending priorities.”* The City of Keene put this value into action when they listened to Save The Square. They need to listen to more citizens now to determine the scope and spending for this important, very visible project in an already beautiful space that belongs to everyone.

Chair Greenwald thanked Ms. Ancharski and asked if she has copies of her comments to share with Stantec. Ms. Ancharski replied yes.

Dorrie Masten of 326 Matthews Rd., Swanzey, stated that she is a large real estate holder in Keene. She continued that one of her largest properties is on Central Square. Central Square is where her heart beats, what she cares about, and what she sees. It and the entire downtown

means a lot to her. She has been listening tonight and knows this is just a piece, and not the Central Square piece, but she wants the Committee to know that she is against the bike lanes in this revitalization program. They have gone years without it and have been doing great. Past Councilors and City staff have worked hard to make the city what it is. She says, leave the city alone. The trees are a huge concern to her and most people. She wants whatever trees are taken out to be replaced. Regarding the estimates, she has been in business since age 19 and she would not be where she is today if she were not frugal with her funds and did not do her research. The money being spent on this project is (taxpayer) money. This belongs to all, such as elderly people who can barely afford the current taxes, youth trying to buy houses, and everyone. She does not think estimates of big pieces of this project are enough. Taxpayers deserve a complete breakdown. She wants to see every contract Stantec hires, what connection they have, and what they are paying them. They should hire local companies and pay reasonable rates, not just hire friends and connections. Not many local companies can take on a project of this size, but there must be a few within the state.

Jim Sterling of Jordan Rd. stated that he questions how you can give an estimate for something that has not been decided on. He continued that people talk about the cost of different things, but they are here to make a decision on what they want. When they make that decision, then they can get an estimate. You cannot give a “million different estimates for a million different people.”

Chair Greenwald stated that in terms of their conversation and input, there are questions regarding the types of plantings, the tree areas, and some boxes they need to check off to give Stantec input. He asked if Stantec could give them a topic, to perhaps solicit comment on.

Mr. Roberge replied yes, and he has been taking copious notes tonight. He continued that regarding Councilor Ormerod’s question about the plantings, the sketch (seen tonight) was detailing the different choices, and he knows the trees are not shown there, but yes, trees would be included in the center median in any of the options. Regarding the U-turn movement and the left-turn movement from northbound Main St. to Emerald St., those were evaluated. Stantec did not show them on the base plan. Their traffic study looked at what the delays would be and the potential impact. Both of those facilities could operate in either condition, either as is shown now without them, or with them. Chair Greenwald made it clear that he thinks those are important. He thinks those two can be worked back into the plan.

Mr. Roberge continued that regarding Chair Greenwald's question about the left turn into Railroad St., they had a long, detailed conversation about that during the planning study. The interface at (this part of Main St.) is confusing, and one intent of the raised table at the Cheshire Rail Trail is to interrupt that confusion. Thus, that left turn onto Railroad St. is not included, because Stantec thought it was a priority to focus on this location as a major pedestrian and bike crossing. However, if they need to revisit that (topic), they can. They looked at it from a traffic standpoint. The southbound left turn onto Railroad St. is relatively low. There are opportunities to divert. There is a built-in U-turn at the south end of the corridor, the Winchester roundabout,

so there would be access. Stantec thought that prioritizing bike and pedestrian crossings at the raised crossing and eliminating the conflicting movement with the traffic was important.

Mr. Roberge stated that the clock is in a prominently featured position. He continued that Ms. Han and the design team are well aware of that.

He continued that regarding the overall theme of the cost projections, Stantec's design study was that last presentation they did where Council adopted the concept they are now working from, and the cost estimate was about \$14.9 million, which was inclusive of what they are talking about/showing tonight. As they pin down some of these alternatives and choices, the cost estimate can be refined. They want to get through the Main St. component, the Gilbo/Railroad Square component, and Central Square, to understand the MSFI Committee's position and the public's position. The refined cost estimate will include contingencies, because you always carry a heavy contingency early in a project like this. Regarding the way the City procures their projects, he needs it to be clear that Stantec is not the one that goes out and hires contractors. The City has a specific and rigid procurement program. He agrees that with specialized projects like this it can be hard to find a contractor. The City needs to think about how to be creative and innovative to procure this project, but they are not there yet. First, they need to get through this preliminary design phase, which concludes in August. Then they will get into the final design details, talking with the public and the downtown core about specific phasing. Stantec is not involved with procurement but is responsible for providing cost estimates. As the project continues, that is a deliverable Stantec will hand to the City Manager.

Mr. Roberge continued that the overall concept of the single-lane approach, as well as the center median shared use path, was an alternative Stantec looked at. The section from West St. and Roxbury St. to Gilbo Ave. would be the area that featured that center median. The concern was that there was not enough width to continue that path south. As you can see, the median is much narrower south of Gilbo. In that place, there was an opportunity to have a shared-use path, so to the location of the centralized parking in the median, and have a ten-foot path. Stantec's concern was (not knowing) where the path would lead people. They could not demonstrate a safe path for bikes. Bikes could get to the Cheshire Rail Trail and north and south, but when they get to Central Square, it would put bikes and people in the middle of the intersection without a clean, good path to cross. That was the limitation. The Technical Review Committee and the Mayor's ad hoc advisory committee evaluated the idea, but that is why it did not go any further. That information is on the website so people can see that Stantec looked at it. Stantec evaluated the single-lane concept, and as Chair Greenwald noted, it was part of the evaluation process and was not selected by Council.

Ms. Han stated that there was a question about irrigation, and yes, Stantec is integrating irrigation in the planters. She continued that the three-foot buffer is an opportunity to add pay stations, lighting, or parking meters, spaced so there is enough room for access throughout. Regarding the trees in the median, the Bartlett Tree report indicates that many are not in great condition. The ones in good condition would be transplanted.

Councilor Madison stated that he appreciates the presentation and the comments. He continued that to him, it is important to be aware of the fact that they are planning for the future. They need to think about the fact that unfortunately, whether you love, hate, or deny it, our future includes climate change. They need to plan for resilience. He was glad to see diversity in the tree species chosen, which was one of the comments the Conservation Commission, which he is a part of, brought to the MSFI Committee. Having diversity in the tree species gives protection against pests. Many ash trees disappeared on lower Main St. due to the emerald ash borer. When there are many trees of one species in one area they became susceptible to one pest, but having diverse species in an area means they are not just resilient against specific pests because there is less food for pests, but they are also resilient against weather events. There will be more extreme precipitation events. He wants to make sure these designs incorporate stormwater infrastructure, especially impervious surfaces where possible. Last year was the wettest year in NH history, and that weather continues this year. The city needs to be able to handle the stormwater that comes with increased heavy precipitation. The city is at the bottom of an old lakebed, and thus, there are not many more places for water to go.

Councilor Madison stated that one final question for the Committee and Council to think about, as they create this plan for the future, is whether the future should have a say. He continued that they could consider presenting this (plan) to the high school. Our students are our future, and this will be their city in 10 or 20 years. It might be good to get their input on this.

Councilor Filiault stated that the presentations at the Rec Center were pretty well attended. He continued that he thinks his feelings are known about the bike lanes downtown, but a majority of the Council decided to go in that direction, so it is what it is. A conversation at the Rec Center (was about how) part of the goal of the redevelopment of downtown is to create more walkable space, more outdoor seating, and room for tables. However, once you get south of the Fireworks restaurant where the streetscape narrows, the sidewalks narrow, and he is still concerned that with bike lanes there, in some cases it eliminates the chance for outdoor seating at restaurants. They need to look at that.

Councilor Filiault continued that another issue they discussed at the Rec Center, which Chair Greenwald has stated also, is the ability to reverse direction from north to south before you get into the common. As they will see upcoming, but is not shown today, the street going around Central Square will be much narrower. Sidewalks will come out and there will be fewer lanes going around the common. Without that reverse lane, his concern is that they will be putting too much traffic into the common and defeating the whole purpose of spending the money it will take to have traffic flow more freely. He thinks keeping the reverse lane from north to south is important. That said, he knows there are concerns about that reverse lane backing up when the lights change. He thinks that is a simple fix, especially with the new, computerized lighting going in. (A fix would be) a ten-second delay for the traffic going south so the traffic reversing from north to south have a chance to clear the lane instead of backing up.

Councilor Filiault continued that something else they need to look at is the slip lane into Emerald St., as you are coming north on Main St. It would not add any cost to add at least a two-car slip lane so you can continue to go down Emerald St. It would reduce traffic going north into the common. They want traffic to flow smoothly and not bottle up downtown. Those two easy fixes would not add any cost.

Councilor Tobin stated that she heard a lot of support for the raised sidewalks, which is worth noting. She continued that tree irrigation is a concern of hers as well. She understands vaguely the concept of the tree buckets, but she would be interested in how that mini ecosystem functions. She heard these are draught-resistant trees, but she agrees that this area would be just as likely to struggle with a flood. Regarding the slip lanes, if that option were added, it makes biking and walking challenging. If they add sidewalks and bike lanes, some of those decisions would make it more difficult for people to commute (via foot or bike). Regarding the benches, and someone's comment about "hostile architecture," she was reading about that and talking with an architecture student from Keene State College (KSC). She thinks it is worth considering how it impacts the perception they are giving off.

Councilor Tobin continued that Mr. Roberge commented about the system of pedestrians "making eye contact" with drivers. She has heard from many people that it is difficult to see into a car's window. She consistently hears from drivers and pedestrians that there is a visibility problem, and she assumes that is true for bicyclists, too. She does not think that people making eye contact with each other is something they can rely on.

Councilor Workman stated that she thanks Stantec for their thorough presentation, and for having heard the concerns from Phase 1. She continued that she also thanks people who expressed their thoughts and opinions tonight. She is on the steering committee for the revision of the master plan, and to go along with what Councilor Madison noted, they met last night and talked about how to get the voices of KSC students and high school students, because as he said, they will be the future users. She understands that people love the city as it is now, but she has been downtown a lot lately during the day, and "it is a desert." There is plenty of parking between 9 AM to 5 PM. She has the receipts and pictures to prove it. What the city does not have is nightlife. Right now, if you try to go to any restaurant after 5:00 PM, that is when you cannot find parking. That is when the median strip parking is being used and you have to park a block away. Downtown youth are changing, and the City needs to be ahead of that, and be proactive instead of reactive. She thinks that is what they are trying to do now.

Chair Greenwald stated that he looks forward to a future when there is vibrant retail downtown also, not just nightlife. He continued that they should plan optimistically that businesses bring customer who shop, eat, and drink. He is optimistic as this is all going through.

Connie Joyce of 81 Grant St. asked how many feet from her car, using her wheelchair, it will take for her to get into a storefront. She continued that gas lines have already been updated under the city, and she wonders if that will have any effect on the trees. The trees have helped

absorb a great deal of water in a critical area, drinking from 10 to 150 gallons of water per day. She thinks the safety issues with the bike lanes are critical, especially since the city has such an aging population. The project will make the safety of the bike lanes downtown terrific. The problem is getting downtown. It is not safe to get downtown from West St., Court St., or Roxbury St. on a bike. She questions how people will go into the safe zone downtown. She questions who will pay for the hookups that are broken when these antique pipes are jiggled to make room for the new pipes from the street to the stores. She questions who will pay for the repair work.

Chair Greenwald replied that that (repair work) is part of the project.

Ms. Joyce stated that when she and her grandson were on the corner of Cross St. and Washington St. a couple years ago, there were overgrown lilacs, and a young man was on the sidewalk with his bicycle and hit her car. She thinks people are not very educated, even about speed limits or stop lights, so she questions what they will do when the City makes that change.

Chair Greenwald stated that regarding Ms. Joyce's last comment, the City Manager has appointed a special committee to look into bike safety and how this will work.

Chair Greenwald stated that they are out of time for tonight's meeting, but will meet again in two weeks to talk some more. He thanked everyone who came, everyone watching, the consultants, and City staff.

2) Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Greenwald adjourned the meeting at 7:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker