

**City of Keene**  
**New Hampshire**

**MUNICIPAL SERVICES, FACILITIES & INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE**  
**SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES**

**Wednesday, May 8, 2024**

**5:30 PM**

**Council Chamber,  
City Hall**

**Members Present:**

Mitchell H. Greenwald, Chair  
Randy L. Filiault, Vice Chair  
Andrew M. Madison  
Laura E. Tobin

**Staff Present:**

Elizabeth A. Dragon, City Manager  
Don Lussier, City Engineer  
Brett Rusnock, Infrastructure Project Manager

**Members Not Present:**

Catherine I. Workman

Chair Greenwald called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM and explained the procedures of the meeting. He stated that it is not on tonight's agenda but he would like to announce that the Master Plan Update is underway and he encourages participation in that process.

**1) Downtown Infrastructure Project – Focus Area: Central Square**

Chair Greenwald introduced the topic and explained the procedures for public comment. He continued that the MSFI Committee does want public input, because this is very important. He asked to hear from City staff.

Don Lussier, City Engineer, stated that this is the third of the project team's three presentations to the MSFI Committee. He continued that there are several items/topics for the Committee to give input on. No formal action is needed tonight, but he and Brett (Rusnock, Infrastructure Project Manager) will be in the background taking copious notes and adjusting the plan based on the feedback they get.

Mr. Lussier continued that after they get through the Central Square discussion tonight, the next step is to refine the plan according to the feedback the team receives. A City Council workshop is scheduled for June 11, to run through the whole plan, based on the input and feedback, to get informal feedback from the Council at that point. They expect it will be referred back to the MSFI Committee for one final discussion and final adjustments. That is when staff would be looking for a formal vote from the Committee with a recommendation on the project for the City Council. He asked the consultants to present.

Ed Roberge of Stantec stated that with him is Dave McNamara and Bob Corning. He began the presentation with a schedule of the workshops they have been through so far, stating that he sees many people tonight who attended last week's workshop and he thanks them for their input. There was good attendance and participation and he thought it went very well. The workshop had three stations laid out, Traffic/Circulation, Sidewalk/Streetscape, and Central Square Common. He, Mr. McNamara, and Mr. Corning will share what they heard, what they thought, and some of the changes that happened along the way. He asked Mr. McNamara, who was at the Traffic/Circulation station, to present on the traffic components.

Mr. McNamara stated that there were some focused discussions at the Traffic/Circulation table. He continued that going back to the alternative from last year that the Council voted on, essentially the traffic pattern around the Square is the same. Coming from Washington St., you take a right and go around the Square. Roxbury St. only has the right turn into the Square, no crossing through to West St. The circulation pattern is the same. The focus was really on two pieces – the possibility of recreating the U-turn that exists today or creating another version of it, and the lane configuration of the crossing at the top of the Square.

Mr. McNamara continued that regarding the U-turn, the first alternative is what they had from last year, called here the "Recommended Alternative." Anyone coming up Main St. north comes straight through, and either circles the Square to come back down to make that U-turn, or goes to Court St., West St., or Washington St. All of the U-turning traffic today that diverts out of the intersection to the south circles through the Square under this configuration.

Mr. McNamara continued that the next alternative they looked at ("U-Turn Alternative") is trying to create something similar to what exists today. They added a protected U-turn pocket, using that left-most lane that exists. There are three lanes on Main St. as you approach the Square. In this case, they combined the right-hand lane, which became a through lane, and a right turn lane to Roxbury St. The traffic movement to Roxbury St. is minimal, so that does not have much impact to the signal or the operation of the intersection. That allows the left turn to be protected and covered up. The expanded island allows the U-turn outside of the signal, to go back southbound. There are a couple of constraints. It pushes the sidewalk in about four or five feet to the west, to allow larger trucks to make that turn. Vehicles will end up encroaching on that second lane, so both lanes need to be clear to make that turn. Otherwise, that would be an unprotected turn and you would have to yield to any oncoming traffic, whether it is southbound from Court St. or right turn in from West St.

Mr. McNamara continued that the third alternative they looked at ("Left Turn Alternative") was adding a protected left turn into the signal phase. That would allow a left turn onto West St. directly from Main St., as well as a U-turn. It would essentially add a fourth traffic phase. The rest of the signal would operate as it does today and as it would in the preferred alternative, except for the fact that they would have to add that additional phase. It would eat into the time allowed for all four of the other phases. From a traffic standpoint, they found that adding this left-turn pocket degraded the operation of the intersection. The only way to get it reasonably

close to the other alternatives was to put a concurrent pedestrian phase in. Today there is an exclusive pedestrian phase. That is, when the pedestrians are allowed to cross, there is no traffic movement. In this case, there would be simultaneous pedestrian walk phases and traffic movements.

Mr. McNamara stated that the next piece was the traffic configuration across the top of the Square in the crossover area. Here, they are looking at the two-lane option across the top (“Two Lanes at North of Square.”) Today, it is 30 feet through there and it functions generally as a two-lane. Sometimes people will go three abreast and it can be “kind of a free for all.” Originally, they laid this out as a two-lane. As you come in off Washington St., you are supposed to yield to traffic circulating from Main St., but it does allow traffic to merge and weave in together.

Mr. McNamara continued that it is such a short crossing, however. They wanted to see how it would be if people lined up single file. That is the next alternative (“Single Lane at North of Square.”) You are still yielding as you come in from Washington St. The vehicles get in order a little earlier than they would in the first phase, and then separate as they come to the splitter to either go on west on Court St., go north on Court St., or turn left to go south on Court St. The main advantage here is they took the curb-to-curb width of the crossover from 25 feet to 20 feet. The five feet gained there could be put into the sidewalk area at The Stage and the church side. They gain quite a bit of sidewalk room by doing this. Functionally, the way the traffic operates through here is rather similar. The cars do not have a lot of time to merge, weave, and run by side by side anyway, so this just allows them to get together a little more orderly, and has the side benefits of gaining space on the outside.

Mr. Roberge stated that he will run some traffic visualization models that they looked at, to give some modeling to each alternative. They will look at several options and see how they behave, because many conversations they had were related to those questions.

Mr. Roberge showed the Preferred Alternative. He stated that it is the intersection as it is configured now, with three lanes northbound. The Preferred Alternative did not have the U-turn movement, so they have those two through lanes and an exclusive right. Roxbury St. is not changed. There are two lanes northbound on Washington St. There are two lanes across the top, and a single southbound lane, the combined “left turn/left turn lane,” which is the tight inside left turn and the left turn to Roxbury St. Then there is the ramp off to West St. The traffic does queue up. It is very similar to the queuing seen today, but with the optimized timing, you can see how the cycle interfaces, particularly along the Court St. area. There was a lot of conversation about the queuing’s effects even at the top of the Square. In this traffic visualization model, you can see consistently what the Main St. queuing is, and how it does a good job of clearing out when this cycle goes. It does not eliminate the queue, though, which they see today with the existing conditions and the “No Build” option. The queue would be to about the top of the Square, maybe sometimes beyond that. It is the same with the line of cars along Washington St. that you would see right now.

Mr. Roberge stated that at the public workshop the team heard concerns about the length of the potential queuing if we have this configuration the way it is today. (The traffic visualization shows) it is “not that dissimilar.” They are still looking at the same amount of delays from the “No Build” to this alternative, but when you see the cycle that releases, both northbound on Main St. and southbound on Court St. are able to process traffic through the intersection.

Mr. Roberge continued that one of the questions was what the Preferred Alternative looks like. He showed the traffic visualization model with the introduction of the U-turn, and continued that even though the visualization model does not show cars physically doing the U-turn, you can see it reduces the traffic volumes that make the U-turn today. That is a limitation in this particular model, because they are modeling a signalized intersection and the U-turn is an unprotected movement. However, the overall volume is reduced, to see how that affects the queuing length at the top of the Square and on Court St. It reduces the traffic, but there is still queuing. Even in an optimized condition, there is still queuing at the top, along the Court St. upper area, but it clears out fairly well by a cycle.

Mr. Roberge continued that each of these alternatives is looking at a mid-day cycle. They chose the mid-day cycle because it has a little less (traffic) than the PM peak, but more than the AM peak. They were trying to find the fair balance between the two. There is still queuing to the top of the Square on the Court St. side at times during that peak. If the model were a little bit larger, you would be able to see the pedestrians crossing/moving around in this model. The holdups that you see are all of the data inputs the team put into the model, like people coming and going from parking spots. This shows that the U-turn is obviously pulling traffic away from the top of the Square, as predicted, but there is still queuing that is very similar (to today’s). They are talking about levels of service between a C and a D. That is probably typical for most urban situations like this. Again, both intersections work, but it is not solving the complete backups that we see (today.)

Mr. Roberge continued that he wanted to bring the single lane at the top to people’s attention. It is configured right now (on the screen) as the Preferred Alternative. It is not the U-turn solution, because there are still three active lanes on Main St., but the single file action, which they were talking about to calm the traffic there. It does not show that they are having any problematic capacity issues. With the U-turn implemented, this model would perform a little better than how it is showing here today. The bottom line on the three alternatives is that it is modeling consistently with how the intersection operates today, with the exception of some of these changes. They think it will still operate at an adequate level of service.

Mr. Lussier stated that he asked the Stantec team to demonstrate the modeling, because there has been a lot of discussion, both internally and at the public workshops, about whether they can actually manage the southbound traffic with one lane. He continued that he thought it was important to spend a few minutes tonight showing and explaining the work that has gone into figuring out how this will work. He thinks (the visualization model) summarized it well – yes,

they are confident it will work as well as it does today. It will not be a real improvement, but it will work as well as it does today.

Mr. Roberge stated that with respect to the signal timing cycle that Mr. McNamara just described, they look at it as a “two-minute piece of pie.” He continued that they talked before about three traffic movement phases and then one exclusive pedestrian phase. Putting more into it means they would need to take time away from that pie. It is either a three-piece pie or a four-piece pie. Obviously, a three-piece pie would have larger pieces. That all equates to time.

Mr. Roberge stated that moving on to the topic of Pedestrians and Bike Crossings/Streetscape Elements, he was at that station at the workshop, and he thinks the team shared and had a great conversation with the folks who were there. Regarding the crosswalk crossings at Court St. and West St., this (slide) shows graphics of how the bike lane interacts with the intersection. He showed precedent images, and continued that the team wants to understand sight distance, materials of ramping, how all of that works, and the interaction (at the crossing). The new (precedent image) is of an RRFP, Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon, also called an RFB, Rectangular Flashing Beacon, or just “flashing light.” They will talk about the potential to integrate some of those and how they interact with the mid-block crosswalks.

Mr. McNamara stated that there was a lot of conversation at the Traffic Circulation station, with a few key pieces. The U-turn south of the intersection, outside of the signal, was the most well received option by nearly everyone who looked at them. There was some support for having the U-turn through the intersection, and almost no support for the option of adding the left turn into the signal. The second option with the standalone U-turn was well supported. The single double lane across the top of the Square had mixed responses. Some people were concerned about the traffic, which the visualization models tried to speak to, but there was also a lot of positive feedback about picking up that extra five feet along the top sidewalk, which is a nice feature.

Mr. McNamara continued that to summarize the feedback from the public workshop, as Mr. Roberge was just noting, there was general concern about reducing the two existing southbound lanes to the single southbound lane. He continued that (they believe) that the traffic will work with optimized timings in that scenario. The raised crosswalks and RRFBs definitely had support, at Washington St., Court St., and going across to the Square. Similar to the two southbound lanes on Court St., people had concerns about that left from the crossover onto southbound Court St. toward Main St., and reducing that to a single lane. There was a lot of desire to see a second lane restored there so drivers could sort themselves a little bit and traffic going to West St. could line up in one spot, and traffic taking a left to go to Main St. or Roxbury St. could line up next to it. Those were the biggest pieces of discussion.

Mr. McNamara stated that next they will get into the questions (for the Committee) specific to (their thoughts on) the traffic circulation piece. He asked if they want to go through piece by piece or continue on to the next section before coming back to the discussion points. Chair

Greenwald replied that they can continue the presentation for a bit and then they will take public input.

Mr. Roberge stated that he was at the Sidewalk/Streetscape station at the workshop, and there were some great conversations. He showed a slide of the Preferred Alternative that came originally from the design study. He continued that there are two lanes at the top, the single Court St. lane on the south side, and no U-turn configuration. It establishes the spacing on the sidewalk. They gain sidewalk width in most areas. You can see the geometry of this building block and the way Court St. comes in and creates this triangular section. It is at matching dimensions at the northern end of the parking bay and grows much wider when you get further south. You see the parking, buffer, the bike lane, the “furniture or plantings zone,” and then the open sidewalk. They show a 9-foot sidewalk panel along this section. They know there are licensed commerce areas or café tables set up along the Court St. block. They are showing that area put back to the building, leaving spaces for some of the businesses’ door openings. There is a ramp to the Chamber location. They are trying to balance it all.

Mr. McNamara continued that something they are seeing here came out of the public workshop, which was people’s concern about cars blocking the intersection. People who are coming along the top of the Square to get into the right-turn lane (onto Court St.) to then take a left (onto Winter St.) at times see many cars blocking this (area the cars are turning into). They would have (painted stripes on the road in a rectangle) and call it a “do not cover the box.” They are trying to keep the intersection (clear). This would be a good way to create awareness. They could have a yield line here (on Court St. right before Winter St). It would help keep the space open. There is a similar issue (in another location), too. If the lanes are queued up to their maximum and someone wants to go to West St., there is an opportunity if this is not blocked, for them to actually get through. Otherwise, they would continue to queue. You saw some of that queuing through the left loop to get back along to Court St., whether to go southbound Main St. or to go westbound on West St.

Mr. McNamara continued that these are some things they heard from the public and thought were important to bring back in. They are showing flexible/commerce space along the face of the building here (at the top of the Square). What they are showing in their dimensioning is adding space, because again, this is a 30+ foot wide pavement today. They reduced that to two lanes. The parking stalls are still there. Between the parking, the buffer, the bike lane, and the tree or furniture zone, they are showing a six-foot sidewalk with an eight-foot area along where there are existing café tables. They are trying to match the opportunity that would be created here due to the single lane reducing the width by about five feet, going from 25 to 20 feet. That adds space back into the sidewalk dimension, and potential for flexible space. That has a big advantage to the livability of this block, as well as the traffic-calming component.

Mr. Roberge stated that the section along Washington St. matches consistently with what they are showing today. Going from about a 10-foot walking path to an 8-foot spacing along where the café tables are that exist today, trying to match that same amount where possible, and

keeping all the amenities as they look today. One of the features they talked about was related to creating better awareness on the crosswalks at Washington St., Court St., and the top of the Square going to the Common. They asked the public for their thoughts on raising those crossings. Similar to the crossings at Gilbo and Railroad, they would raise them as tabled crosswalks. There was some good support for that. They would like input from the MSFI Committee about that. They think it serves the purposes of increased pedestrian safety and traffic calming. In addition, it is like a gateway. When coming from Court St. or Washington St., the space is a little different. They would expect to see many more pedestrians coming and going from the Central Square.

Mr. Roberge continued that this (next slide) is the section opposite Washington St. and its cut-through. It shows the difference between what was there before and what is there today. Along Washington St., the pavement is about 58 feet wide today. Through the reduction of the large pavement width, they are able to gain amenity space on the sidewalks. They can still fit in the 13-foot travel lane, the 11-foot travel lane, and 19-foot pavement. This is a good snapshot for people to understand how they are making these changes so there can be a 10-foot walking path and a commerce area of eight feet or more, and still fit in the bike lane, have the buffers, the furniture zones, and the trees. This is a great example of how that all fits. It was well received.

Mr. Roberge continued that in summary, he has been trying to plug in what they heard from the public. The RRFs had mixed reactions. There was concern about “clutter” in the right-of-way, and about whether a large sign is appropriate. They think for protecting a mid-block crosswalk that is a good thing to do, but again, there was feedback about the aesthetic/appearance issue. There was positive feedback about the raised crossing. Someone had a question about the material and signage to indicate the space is for both pedestrians and bikes, about whether there is a way to separate that out. There were some concerns about road narrowing, but overall positive feedback about improving the streetscape width and maximizing the sidewalk width if there were opportunities for that. At Court St. and Winter St., (the question for the public was whether to) add stop signs or do something like the “do not block the box” striping.

Bob Corning, Senior Principal Landscape Architect with Stantec, stated that they have some historic photos of the island/Square itself to show tonight. He continued that they thought the walkways’ layout was interesting, how they originate in the center and radiate out in different directions. In some, you can see that the crosswalks extend across the roadways. He is not sure what the materials are, but it was an interesting detail. Regarding the post and chain that exist today, they think the posts are original. The original design had two horizontal solid rails, and you can see in some of the existing posts where those rails attached.

Mr. Corning stated that they have a graphic of the existing elements of the Square that the team wanted to make sure the public was aware of – the soldier’s monument, the cannon and cannonballs, the furnishings, the water feature fountain, the posts and chain, and the gazebo/bandstand. The only existing tree proposed to be removed is a sugar maple that is in

poor shape. That is the only tree that would be impacted as part of the project, and they are proposing a few new trees.

Mr. Corning showed a graphic of the existing conditions of the Square. He continued that you can see the pavement around the perimeter and the left hand “fly by” (lane) at the corner. The team presented three options at the public workshop last week. The “Minimal” option keeps all of the existing features. The only real modifications are for the gazebo. One of the concerns the team heard was that the limited visibility of people on the stage because the only view in is where the stair is. The team suggests wrapping the stair around two of the other sides of the octagon and removing the railing, thus opening up the bandstand so it could be better viewed by more people. The fountain and other features stay. Because the crosswalk at Court St. moved further south than where it is now, the team had to reconfigure the walkway, looping it around an existing honey locust tree. They also added a connection across for a direct connection from the Court St. crossing to the Washington St. crossing.

Mr. Corning continued that added to the plan was an apron around the perimeter of the green and island, accommodating emergency vehicles coming down Washington St. instead of around the Square. Their preference was to come straight through. That provides some additional width, if needed, to accommodate that use. It also could be a feature for the Square. Now, when there is an event, people unload and park along the top of the Square; maybe this apron makes that safer. The extended Square on the south end gives a nice spot for the Christmas tree.

Mr. Corning continued that the second option, “Enhanced,” is the option they just looked at, but with a couple additions. First, the addition of a perimeter pathway that would potentially have benches or additional landscaping, to provide additional pedestrian circulation around the perimeter. The other idea was to introduce some specialty paving, such as brick or Uni paving, at the gateways or thresholds to gateways to the Square or potentially around the fountain in the center. That could be applied to any of the options.

Mr. Corning continued that the third option, “New,” minimizes the pedestrian pathways and focuses on the main connections, from the raised crosswalk to the north of the Square to the Court St. intersection, and similarly from Washington St. up to the gazebo. It is an X pattern, which relates to the history of the radial walkway layout. This option also proposes shifting the bandstand back, because the team heard that sometimes there is limited space in front of the bandstand. Adding this direct walkway impacts the honey locust tree, which was a concern for many people. This plan also suggests relocating the soldier monument, cannon, and cannonballs further south. It leaves enough room for the Christmas tree while providing opportunity for a landscape feature, like an amphitheater, steps, or seating.

Mr. Corning continued that generally, people preferred Option 1 and Option 3. People generally felt the perimeter walkway in Option 2 was unnecessary, and preferred having more green space versus pavement. There was concern about removing the honey locust tree in Option 3. There was general preference for some kind of accent paving in key locations. Many people



commented on the fact that the fountain does not work often, does not look great when empty, and does not have enough noise to buffer the traffic noise. Thus, there may be an opportunity to upgrade the fountain, which the team had not talked about, either internally or with the TRC. The modifications to the gazebo were generally well received. People thought the statue could stay in place, or saw the benefit of moving it south to make room for more green space. There were many positive comments about how the crosswalks are much shorter due to the road width narrowing on Court St. and Washington St., and how that is a great benefit of the plan. Many people think it is quite prohibitive now. Having a much shorter crosswalk length gives easier access to the Square. People thought it was very important to maintain the traditional New England character, and protect the existing trees.

Chair Greenwald asked if the MSFI Committee had questions or comments.

Councilor Filiault stated that he drove around the common about 25 times today at various times. He continued that at the times he saw it, the traffic coming north and the traffic coming out of Washington St. pinched going into one lane. His concern is the single lane (option). With two lanes queuing into one lane, plus the cars backing out from in front of the church and the restaurant, he sees that as a pinching zone. He realizes that with the two lanes (option), they kind of merge, but it works. They are going from a traffic pattern that actually works, although not perfectly, to one that would pinch too much.

Councilor Filiault continued that his other major concern, which he has mentioned at the last two meetings, is on the west side of the Square where the common is now being pushed out farther. On this plan here, you have one lane coming out. The problem is that if there is one car coming out of that lane intending to go over to West St., and heavy traffic as there is during heavy volume times, any car wanting to go down Main St. now has to wait for that car to clear over to West St. He sees that pinching during heavy times, especially with only one lane coming around the common, and it will back it up in both directions. The (purpose) is to at least make traffic flow the same, or hopefully better. They showed the (traffic visualization) today, but reality might be different. Some (parts of) this (plan) are ones he is not happy with, but he is one out of 15 (Councilors) and can live with it, but he does see the one lane (as a concern). Once again, they have also reduced the amount of lanes going down Main St. Now, they will force the one lane to go across to West St. or to go down Main St., and he thinks they are pinching it too much. His opinion is that they should reduce the common back a bit. Maybe not to where it is now, but they should allow for at least two lanes to come around the common, to allow for a free lane to go out to West St. and a free lane to come down Main St.

Councilor Tobin stated that she has a question regarding the different traffic pattern options and the safety of pedestrians. She asked what the risk is, or which ones would cause a significant difference.

Mr. Roberge replied that from a pedestrian safety perspective, starting with the U-turn piece at the top of Main St., he thinks in this scenario here ("Recommended Alternative"), all the

crossings on the Square side are essentially the same. He continued that the advantage to the “U-Turn Alternative” scenario is it shortens the crosswalk a bit, so it does increase some pedestrian refuge in the center. From a pedestrian perspective, he does not think the U-turns cause a big change in safety. The benefits of “Single Lane at North of Square” are that it shortens the crossing, and has a single of traffic. With the “Two Lanes at North of Square” scenario, there are two lanes of traffic, so it is like crossing the two lanes anywhere else on Main St. Many times, the far lane would be the concern (for pedestrians). Here, the lanes are combined as they are approaching the crosswalk, as opposed to kind of jockeying across the crosswalk where the crosswalk is today. One of the problems is it is such a short distance, so if you have two lanes, you are kind of jockeying within that short distance, so it would be hard to not start positioning yourself as you go across that. Those vehicles are going to be paying attention to each other as much as the pedestrians. The U-turn (alternative) has its own pros and cons regarding traffic circulation, but there is not much difference from a pedestrian perspective, whereas “Single Lane at North of Square” is a safer pedestrian layout.

Chair Greenwald stated that he wants to note that they will not be answering all of the questions tonight. He continued that they are just raising issues and having a discussion. On Wednesday (May 22), they will hopefully get some answers up. Comments and questions are appropriate. This is a work in progress.

Councilor Filiault stated that as a follow-up to the comments about safety, he realizes that two lanes are a little larger than one lane. He continued that however, they are looking at raising those crosswalks and putting in yellow, flashing/warning lights on Washington St., Court St., and crossing over from the church to the common. One of the current problems with the common is that there are many things going on to the left and right. A raised crosswalk and flashing light would catch people’s eye and increase pedestrian safety at all three crosswalks. He asked if that is correct. Mr. Roberge replied yes, either one of these is safer than what is out there today.

Chair Greenwald asked for questions and comments from the public and other Councilors.

Autumn DeLaCroix of Court St. stated that regarding the single lane option, she watched carefully during the traffic visualization models, and it did not seem to increase queuing, compared to the two-lane option. That makes sense to her. She continued that when people are jockeying to get in front of each other, they actually end up blocking traffic more due to trying to force themselves into the space someone else is trying to get out of. She sees it all the time on Main St. and in a short space, it will happen a lot.

Ms. DeLaCroix stated that the width is 20 feet, even at a single lane. At the meeting last Wednesday, she asked if they could give a little more space to the sidewalk anyway, but the team said no. A semi is about 8.5 feet, so with 20 feet for a single lane of traffic, you know there will be cars backing out of these angled spaces, and they have space to back out without interfering with the traffic, to kind of line up and get ready. There is room for conflict resolution. It is not as if everyone will be blocking each other. In addition, with cars paying attention to how to get

in front of each other, they will end up clunking or crashing, and will probably end up scaring many pedestrians. In all of these meetings, she remembers hearing repeatedly, from many citizens, that they hate that narrow little walkway right by Fireworks. It is too tight. She does not see any reason to not give them all the space they can, to have as much decent sidewalk as possible. She knows they will push how much they can get from it. They should make sure there is not a conflict there.

Ms. DeLaCroix continued that kind of like with the cars queuing up for the parking, coming onto the Square from Court St. right now, cars that are going to West St. versus going down Main St. regularly stack next to each other, even though it is less than 20 feet. There is no reason to think they would not do that even in this narrowed version, coming from the Square. They will still end up side by side a little bit while they try to get where they are going. She does not think it will slow much down.

Chuck Redfern of 9 Colby St. stated that he thinks between the consultants, the public workshops, and what the Council is doing, they are coming up with a very good project. He continued that he does not have a preference on a particular option. He feels there is give and take with both of them, and he thinks they are doing a good job. There have been some ideas about furniture placement, and he suggests having a few bike racks here and there. The U-shaped ones would allow a person to attach their bike while they go in a shop and the merchants can have business from bicyclists. Something else to keep in mind is that the City is doing a branding campaign, which he thinks is very successful. As they do the work downtown, they might want to consider maintaining awareness of the new branding look the City has.

Roger Weinreich of 51 Railroad St. stated that he loves the focus on saving the Square, keeping the peripheral section that is outlined by the granite posts intact. That has always been an issue for many people downtown. He continued that he wants to give voice to what saving the Square really means, which is to return it to the use it had 100 years ago when it was easily accessible. There has been a lot of discussion about the difficulty of pedestrians walking in crosswalks to get there. He would like them to consider a plan that eliminates crosswalks to the Central Square area. He showed a map, continuing that it was created by Jeff Speck, a well-known, world-class designer who may have worked with Stantec a bit on the concept. The idea is to create a signalized intersection, and annex the part of the green space that is a square with City Hall, so you can have "City Hall Plaza" as a great gathering space for the community at the heart of the downtown. It would give space where they could have events all the time, without any street closures going forward. It would maybe inflict "a little pain and suffering" on people in terms of traffic. Much of the discussion is about the flow of cars and traffic, but if they want to design a historical place for the City as a landmark in the future, they might want to consider a space that is more usable, functional, and accessible. He asks the Council to look at this plan, have Stantec advise on it, do a traffic flow (visualization model), and see if it is an idea worth keeping or throwing out.

Councilor Bobby Williams of 66 North Lincoln St. stated that he likes the idea of the single lane of traffic across the north end, which would widen the available sidewalk space. He continued that he noticed the bike lane there is one-way. Maybe if they get that extra space, it would be worth making that part of the lane go both ways. It would probably not take too many feet of extra space to do that. That would be a valuable use for that space.

Ryan Clancy of 51 Dover St. stated that he would like to point out that a quorum of City Councilors is present, which he believes means Councilors can only ask questions, not give input. He continued that regarding Central Square, he has gone through quite an evolution about where we are going to be, because when the plans originally came out with the north side extending all the way, he thought that was great, and the bike lanes were great. Over time, he thinks about this being the county chair, and so much commerce and business goes around the area. Traffic flow, unfortunately, is something they need to live with, being the city that it is. He likes the proposed raised sidewalks, but he believes that Mr. Lussier said earlier that the traffic mitigation or reduction is nearly the same no matter what (option) they go with. He personally likes what they have today. In terms of getting the cars through, painted lines and smart traffic lights would help immensely. He noticed the (presentation) pointed out the ramp going to the Chamber, but not the ramp that goes to The Pour House currently, which would cut into some of the commerce frontage the team proposes there. He likes the idea of moving the bandstand back, and extending the south side of Central Square forward and eliminating that turn that goes up to Washington St. or up Emerald St. The current flow works well. From what he is hearing, the proposed options do not help as much as what exists today.

Judy Russell of 34 Brook St. stated that she uses all the crosswalks frequently and drives through Central Square frequently. She continued that she would not like to see it become a single lane through there, because nowhere in all of these queueings did she see Washington St. backed up beyond Vernon St. due to (cars) being unable to get into Central Square, and it will make it that much harder. They should do what they can for crossing safety, but currently at Vernon St., there is a red light. You press the button and the red light comes on (so pedestrians can cross), which (drivers) fly right through. She suggests having the Police stop people who are not doing the right thing, and suggests educating drivers.

Connie Joyce of 81 Grant St. stated that she would like to ask Mr. Roberge how many people are in the figure of the “general public.” She continued that she went to all the meetings and workshops, and found them difficult and chaotic. She knows a lot of people, and everyone she has talked to disagrees with the changes proposed for the city. Her major concern is safety. She questions how bicyclists will safely enter downtown’s new bike lane. The access roads do not have legal space for car and bike to travel together. The path on West St. is dangerous. She feels that mixing people, dogs, and mobility devices will lead to accidents and create dangerous crossings. The City is not liable for the accidents. They do not need bike lanes. They need “people lanes,” parking, and shade trees. She does not wish for any of these changes and is heartbroken to think that one of the concepts will be accepted. She believes in making

improvements like proper lighting, improved crossing signals, safe walkways, a comfort station, and seating. She asks the (Council) to not “injure and disfigure” the city.

Nancy Ancharski of 60 School St. stated that during most of these meetings and discussions since January 2023, most of the people in the room, including herself, have been one-track minded. She continued that she has focused on protecting the streetscape of mature trees. Others have dedicated themselves to bike lanes or event spaces. She feels as if they are all stuck. Maybe they are stuck because they have an escalation of commitment to a certain conclusion to this downtown infrastructure project. The City has already spent so much time and money on Stantec. It seems they cannot step away from their vision. The City has already written a grant, which she assumes is based on (Stantec’s) vision. Now, they have to wait for a decision on the grant, and if the City gets the money, the City will follow the direction of the grant. She wishes an outline of the grant had been revealed before these workshops took place, so the public had that information. It seems that the grant will be the guiding force if the City gets it. It seems that the public comments, which she thought were great, mean nothing. She is disappointed that these workshops probably will not count, and disappointed about the lack of transparency about the grant. She is afraid that if the City does get the grant, she will be very disappointed with the new downtown.

Sue Lefferts of 126 Gunn Rd. stated that this is the first meeting she has come to of the last several meetings and she is thus not completely up to date. She continued that however, she wants to say that whatever they plan, they cannot settle for just keeping it the way it is, in terms of accommodating the traffic. She heard it said several times that it will be as good as it is right now. That is not good enough. In ten years, there will be twice as much traffic and twice as many bicycles, so they cannot do without the bike lanes, and any problems that exist today will be multiplied. They need to focus on making it more accessible to cars and people, rather than maintaining what exists. She asks that they look to the future, and choose a design that will accommodate the expected increase in traffic.

Alex Jackson of 35 Woodbury St. stated that he has another historical picture that did not see on the slide, of the spoke design, and a traditional fountain. He continued that other historical photos show a large, wooden structure built over the fountain. He does not know if that was to winterize it or because it fell apart. It makes him think fountains are hard to upkeep. The heart of Central Square, which is the heart of the City, has “a bunch of boulders from the 70s,” which feels anticlimactic to him. You would want to go through and find out what the middle is, what the climax is. He works here as an artist and these are things he thinks about. He knows the water feature is a minor element, compared to the existential horror of traffic patterns and modernization and all of that, but in many ways, what is in the center of the center square would be the capstone of the project. There are many possibilities to consider that are not water related. At a minimum, he suggests they consider retiring what is there now to a different park and consider something new and fresh, to celebrate a new era with.

Mr. Jackson continued that lastly, in all of these historical pictures, it is amusing to see that horse parking is *on* the island. It is a reminder of how everything needs to evolve. This was built in a different era to accommodate a different transportation reality, and so it goes, as time keeps moving on. He does not want the city to be in stasis, and he thinks that 100 years ago, people would have had the same idea.

Chair Greenwald stated that he thinks Mr. Jackson's comment about the fountain is very well founded. He continued that it will be followed through on. That will be a whole other effort, because that is about art.

Sam Jackson of 618 Court St. stated that she likes what she is seeing, from a safety perspective. She continued that she likes seeing the shortened sidewalks, which makes it easier to get across. Regarding the area coming around (that) corner, when she used to drive, a (part of the car) created a blind spot all the way around until she got in front of that crosswalk. Although she likes the idea of flashing beacons, she is not sure if they would be helpful for certain vehicles coming around the corner, for there are wide blind spots. She is not sure how long paint lasts when it is driven over, especially by studded tires. She is not sure how frequent that maintenance would be. Pulling the two lanes together is nice, because you would not need any paint or maintenance in that way. Everyone would just come together and merge or de-merge as needed.

Jim Sterling of Jordan Rd. stated that he wants to compliment the Council, Stantec, and everyone who has been participating in this process. He continued that as much as they have been divided about many issues, he thinks they have come together to get something that probably will work. No one will ever get everything they want, but he thinks everyone is getting *something* now. A little bit of change is needed. He appreciates listening to (various points of view). His one plug for bike lanes is a financial plug. Not that they are going to have a parking garage, but just as an interesting thought, a parking garage is \$14 million dollars and has 400 spaces. That is \$35,000 per space. Bike racks can be 100 spaces for \$10,000. That is something to think about.

Mr. Redfern stated that he agrees with many of the comments made by the previous speaker and wants to add, regarding Winter St., that many folks go to the Keene Public Library, one of the City's jewels. If they could figure out a way to assist people getting to the Library safely, that would be great. The Bicycled Pedestrian Path Advisory Committee has looked at this (project) and recommended the bike lanes, and they are very appreciative of what the City has done. He continued that his third comment is that grant writing should remain to the professionals in the City. He does not think they would have time to have public workshops on a grant document. Those documents are thick and take a long time to prepare, which he has personal experience with. Writing a grant is not an easy task, and it is even more complicated when it is for the City. People should ask their questions at the workshops, and not go by hearsay. The world is run by those who come to the table. He sees many people here who have done their due diligence and have come to this table, and he has seen others come to the table. If someone sees something

wrong, they should speak up and talk to their Councilors. The process has been very open to the public and very fair. He commends Stantec for what he feels is outstanding work.

Elizabeth Dragon, City Manager, stated that she wants to add a point of clarification about grants. She continued that they went through quite an extensive process before the Council to make a decision on a design, and the grant was based on that design. The overall design of the project was based on the one that the City Council voted on. There are additional things related to work on Gilbo to School St. and further down on Main St., but the design is the one the Council chose.

Ms. DeLaCroix stated that someone made the comment earlier that there was no legal (bike) access to the Square from West St. and/or Court St. She continued that as a cyclist, she reminds everyone that when there is no bike lane, bicycles are legally required to be in the road. People (driving) would not want her in front of them (on her bike), so if they do not want her in front of them, they should put in a bike lane.

Don Lussier, City Engineer stated that the grant was written specifically based on the July 2023 Council vote on the overall project concept. He continued that it was not based on the specific designs that have been in discussion over the past several months. The heart of the grant application was the preliminary/conceptual design report that Stantec prepared as the final summation of last year's project. That, in turn, was based on a year and a half worth of Steering Committee and Council meetings and workshops. He wants to emphasize that what is in the grant is not going to preclude or allow any of the things they are talking about tonight. All of the discussions they have been having over the last three months are all within the conceptual guidelines that were discussed at that point.

Mr. Lussier continued that that said, there were decisions that the Council made that make the application more or less competitive. Bike lanes will make the application more competitive. It is called the "Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE)" grant. What the Administration (the US Department of Transportation) is looking for is right in the name. They are looking for and emphasizing projects that advance climate goals and are addressing equitable transportation options for all of the population. If they were to change the Council's decision from last July and eliminate bike lanes, that would definitely adversely affect the application and probably change whether the City would still be eligible. However, he thinks that everything else they have talked about is fair game within that grant application. The grant application materials are all on the City's website and are available for the public to review.

Chair Greenwald stated that he wants to reassure people that this project, be it Central Square or anything else, is not change just for the sake of change. He continued that if something is outrageous, he will oppose it. People brought up many issues, which he thinks will eventually come down to money. All of these things need to be paid for. It might be nice to, for example, move the soldier monument three feet to the left, and move the gazebo five feet to the back, but that is thousands of dollars. Eventually, it is real money. It is not just grants. That is a

consideration for him. He will not get into the specific recommendations, based on the questions being proposed; he will hold those for Wednesday (May 22). People can email the Committee, speak to their Councilors, and continue to share their input. These are monumental things they are talking about. (For example), a U-turn here or there will change the dynamics of the entire traffic flow. The consultants, City staff, and Councilors are listening to all of these nuances in the design, and if he has learned anything from this whole project, it is that if you make a little change here, it shows up over there, and it is thus a very complex process. The consultants definitely are listening. This is not easy. He considers this probably the most difficult thing he has been involved with during his time on Council. This discussion will continue on Wednesday (May 22).

**2) Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chair Greenwald adjourned the meeting at 6:57 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

Edits submitted by,  
Terri Hood, Deputy City Clerk