

City of Keene
New Hampshire

MUNICIPAL SERVICES, FACILITIES & INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, May 22, 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
Laura E. Tobin

Staff Present:

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

Members Not Present:

All Present

Mayor Jay Kahn

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

1) Charles Smith – Requesting an Opportunity to Speak Before the City Council about Tourism and Homelessness

City Manager Elizabeth Dragon stated that Charles Smith was in communication with the City Clerk's Office and asked to withdraw his letter. She continued that the MSFI Committee does not need to make a motion.

2) Oral Update – East Side Residents – Traffic Calming on East-side Keene Streets - City Engineer

Don Lussier, City Engineer, stated that he is happy to report out on the petition from residents in the east Keene neighborhood for traffic calming and a speed study to look at their neighborhood and speed issues. He continued that in tonight's presentation he will address three separate issues. First is the petition the City received from the east Keene neighborhood a couple months ago. Second is a task in from the City Council to Public Works in 2019 that was left hanging after the pandemic started. Third, staff has had several requests for four-way stop signs in different locations, including a couple in east Keene.

Mr. Lussier continued that regarding the east Keene traffic study, over the last few months, staff has collected data from 11 locations throughout the east Keene neighborhood. Each location includes two data collection points, one in each direction on the roadway. The machine can only record data in one direction, so to collect at each site, they must put out two monitors to collect data in both directions. At each site, data was collected for two separate weeks. They collected data for four or five days with the display turned off, and then turned the display on and collected data for another four or five days. Those collections were set up to straddle the weekend. The machine's batteries do not last seven days, so there are between four to six days of data collection with each one. All told, there are 44 different data sets to look at. Staff selected locations where they thought they would find the fastest speeds. For example, on the side streets, they put the devices toward the center of the road, not near the intersections. On Roxbury St. and Water St., they moved them away from the bottom of the hill where curves and hills cause people to drive differently.

Mr. Lussier continued that tonight he will talk a lot about "the 85th percentile speed," which is the speed at which 85% of the drivers are traveling at or below. By definition, it means that 15% of drivers are going faster than the 85th percentile speed. The 85th percentile speed is what engineers consider an indication of what a reasonable and prudent driver will be expected to do. The 85th percentile speed is like a "natural speed limit." Without any signs or speed limits at all, that is the speed at which most people feel comfortable driving on a given roadway segment.

Mr. Lussier showed the first data set. He continued that each of the 11 locations has two columns. The left column is westbound traffic or northbound traffic, depending on the roadway and the orientation of the road. The right column in each pair is the opposite, eastbound or southbound traffic. For example, Eastern Ave. goes north/south. The blue column is the northbound 85th percentile speed with the display turned off. The orange column is the 85th percentile speed in the southbound direction with the display turned off. Eastern Ave. is currently posted at 25 mph.

Generally, what they see at all the data collection locations is the 85th percentile speed was at or only slightly above the posted speed limit. Eastern Ave was the highest recorded for the 85th percentile, which was 34.25 mph in the northbound direction and 31.5 mph in the southbound direction. He uses the averages of the north/south or east/west pairs. In the table, the 85th percentile speed for Eastern Ave is 32.9 mph, which is the average of 34.25 and 31.5 mph. That is slightly above the posted speed limit. Engineers would not look at this set of data and say there is a holistic, system-wide speed problem in this neighborhood.

Mr. Lussier continued that comparing this to the data with the display turned on, they see very little change. Intuitively, that makes sense. If a person is already driving at or below the posted speed limit, they are not going to drive any slower because a (display) reminds them of the speed they are driving. Each location has two pairs of data. The first pair on the left is the data with the display first off, and then on, in the westbound or northbound direction. The right two columns show the data with the display turned off and then on, in the other direction. The first

column for Eastern Ave., for example, is the display turned off in the northbound direction. When the display is turned on, the 85th percentile speed drops a few tenths of a mile per hour. In the southbound direction, the speeds were recorded a little lower, and again, they dropped slightly when the display was turned on.

Mr. Lussier continued that Valley St. is a quirky outlier. When they turned the display on, the 85th percentile speed jumped up 4.6 mph. Maybe a reminder to people that they were driving slower than the speed limit caused them to speed up. On this low volume road, drivers already go well below the posted speed limit. Thus, he would not put a lot of stock into that.

Mr. Lussier continued that staff have done several different data collections on Eastern Ave. over the years, typically in response to complaints or requests from residents. The first two columns of data on the left were taken before the speed limit was changed in the fall of 2020. September 2020 was immediately before and because of a request to lower the speed limit. The data following the reduction in the speed limit does not really show any change in driver behavior. The speed did not change once the speed limit was lowered. That reflects what he was saying earlier about the 85th percentile speed sort of being a natural speed limit. If the reasonable, prudent driver feels comfortable on a given roadway going 32 mph, just putting up a sign that says “25 mph” will not change that. If they really are intent on dropping the speed from 32 mph to 25 mph, they will have to look at additional control measures, such as lane width reduction, curbing, and tree canopy to make the roadway feel more constrained. They could think about things like speed tables, which can be controversial, or a big enforcement effort, ticketing drivers going 26 mph. Barring that, people’s natural behavior will not change just because you put up a sign.

Mr. Lussier continued that to summarize the speed study, the data does not suggest there is a widespread speed concern in this neighborhood. However, they know there is a small number of vehicles going much faster than the speed limit. He is fond of saying “There is no engineering solution to human behavior.” That last 2 to 3% of outliers, the people who are intent on driving (irresponsibly), are very hard to control. Reminding drivers of their actual speeds did not really change the behavior. Again, he thinks that is mostly because the majority of drivers are already driving the speed limit. Lastly, reducing the posted speed limit on Eastern Ave. did not actually change driver behavior either.

Chair Greenwald asked if they have any numbers on the 15% of drivers who are speeding. Mr. Lussier replied that the machines do not give a measurement of every vehicle that goes through. They have the maximum speed during each one-hour block, for each of the data sets. He looked at Eastern Ave. for all four data sets, and the maximum speeds recorded during those hours generally fluctuated between 46 and 52 mph. There were some outliers, maybe up into the 60s. A percentage of vehicles are going to drive like that, unfortunately, but they are outliers. Chair Greenwald replied that that sounds like an enforcement issue.

Mr. Lussier stated that next he will talk about the Council's request from 2019. In 2019, the Council directed the Public Works staff to develop a scope of work for a comprehensive neighborhood speed study, to look at in which neighborhoods and on which streets it would make sense to lower the speed limits. In January 2020, the "world went upside down," and this fell off staff's radar, until the east Keene petition came in. Based on the data they have collected in the east Keene neighborhood, and many other one-off speed studies staff have done over the past 6-8 years, they can say the results from the last few months are quite typical of what they find when they get speed complaints. The majority of people drive reasonably, and a small number of people drive much faster than the speed limit. It is hard for him to look at those trends and say it would be worthwhile for the City to spend a lot of time and money researching and doing these speed studies to look at this problem.

Mr. Lussier continued that said, they do have new tools that are available that were not available – or at least, not known to him – in 2019. That is in the form of so-called "big data." A few companies do this sort of data aggregation. They take data from GPS units in commercial vehicles and connected vehicles. A Tesla, for example, connects to the cloud when parked at night. They collect data about where someone was driving during the day and sell that data. If your phone has location-based services turned on, or you use the Waze app to navigate to your friend's house, (these companies) collect data about your driving habits and selling it to these third-party aggregators. Thus, City staff can get access to that data. The benefit would be that it gives staff access to every street in the city for any period of time. For example, they could look to see what the trends are in the winter months or the summer months, the trends during different times of day, and parse it in many different ways. They are able to collect, through these third-party sources, much more data than City staff could ever collect with their five sign panels.

Mr. Lussier continued that he does not have a quote, but he exchanged emails with the regional sales representative for Streetlight, one of the "big data" companies, and he suggested that a budgetary number for a city the size of Keene, depending on what data sets they would want access to, would be between \$5,000 and \$20,000 per year. That is something to consider. These companies do not just have access to data for vehicles, they have access to all land-based modes. They do not have data on air or sea travel, but they have data on train travel, bike, pedestrian, and transit. They aggregate all of it. Their algorithms can supposedly figure out if a person was riding a bike, walking, or in a vehicle. That would give them a solution to something he and Mr. Bohannon have talked a lot about having, good sidewalk count data, good trail counters, and that sort of thing. That would be great to have. He told the sales rep what the City's use case is, that they just wrapped up this three-month data collection effort in this neighborhood and are presenting the data. The sales rep, who is of course trying to make a sale, quickly emailed an analysis he did showing average speeds for some of the roads in the study area, graphically and on a map. It was impressive.

Mr. Lussier stated that last is four-way stops. He continued that over the last few months, staff has received requests for four-way stop signs at a few locations. This would include Roxbury St. at North and South Lincoln Streets, Water St. at Community Way and Grove St., as well as the

Ralston St./Emerald St. plaza four-way intersection. Staff went through the analysis on those three locations. The City has adopted the NH Department of Transportation (NHDOT) standards for traffic control devices. The NHDOT standard has adopted the federal Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) as their standard for traffic controls. The MUTCD provides “warrants,” which are criteria for evaluating four-way stop conditions. The first criterion is crash experience, specifically, more than five crashes in a 12-month period, or more than six in a 36-month period. The second criterion is sight distance that is “not adequate,” which the MUTCD does not give a number for. For a definition of “not adequate”, you would have to look at the Highway Design Manual. City Code is based on a 200-foot safe stopping sight distance. That essentially works out to what the Highway Design Manual safe stopping distance is for a 30-mph speed zone. The third criteria is interim control. For an intersection where you are planning to install a traffic signal, you could put in an all-way stop condition as an interim measure until that is installed. Obviously, that is not applicable here. The big (criterion) is traffic volumes. The threshold would be more than 300 vehicles per hour for a major street and 200 for a minor street.

Mr. Lussier continued that then, there are other factors to consider, such as conflicts during left turn movements, or an engineering study suggesting that the operation of the intersection would improve if everyone had to stop, or heavy bicycle/pedestrian volume. The MUTCD also says that the satisfaction of an all-way stop control warrant or warrants shall not itself require the installation of an all-way stop control at a non-signalized intersection. These criteria for evaluating are guidelines, but they do not mean that if one criterion is met you absolutely have to install a four-way stop. Conversely, it does not mean that if one criterion is not met they (cannot) do it. The City Council still has the discretion.

Mr. Lussier continued that people frequently ask what the harm would be in putting up a stop sign if a neighborhood wants it. It is a fair question. The engineering explanation and reasoning is that overuse of any traffic control system or sign, such as installing stop signs for speed control has disadvantages. That would not be an appropriate use of a stop sign. Overuse or misuse of any traffic control measure tends to diminish the effectiveness of that traffic control measure where you need it to work. They could put in a stop sign at every cross street on Roxbury St., but he can guarantee that people will not obey those stop signs. It would just encourage people to not obey stop signs where they really do need people to stop. That is why they do not want to install stop signs where they are not needed.

Mr. Lussier stated that regarding Roxbury St. at Lincoln St., going through the MUTCD’s criteria, the KPD reports two crashes at that intersection in a 42-month period ending in February. There is a sight distance greater than 200 feet. There is no need for interim control. It does meet the criterion regarding traffic volume, but only for the major street, not the minor street. Regarding the sight distance, the shrubbery on the south side of Roxbury St. was starting to encroach on the sidewalk, which did reduce the sight distance for northbound folks looking back toward downtown on Roxbury St. He put in a work order to have the highway staff trim that back. That will improve it. Generally, however, it still maintains a 200-foot sight distance. Staff does not recommend an all-way stop for this location.

Mr. Lussier continued that Water St. and Grove St. are interesting, in an engineering sense. There were seven crashes in the last 42 months. One was a serious motorcycle crash. Again, the criterion was met for the traffic volume on the major street, but not the minor street. The crash history makes it clear that something is not working correctly at this intersection, and staff does recommend a four-way stop control here.

Mr. Lussier continued that Emerald St. and Ralston St. had one crash in 42 months, and has a sight distance greater than 200 feet. The traffic volume criterion was met for the minor street but not the major street. This intersection is unusual. He considers the major/through street to be Emerald St. on the east side and Ralston St. on the south side. Regardless, given the lack of crash history and the good sight distance, staff does not recommend a four-way stop here.

Councilor Filiault stated that one area that has always been a concern is Eastern Ave. He continued that as Mr. Lussier brought up, they looked at Eastern Ave. several years ago and reduced the speed limit, but as Mr. Lussier has shown, people are still driving at about 35 mph, which is almost on the 85th percentile. They are still exceeding it by 10 mph, which is excessive. Every time he visits relatives on Eastern Ave., even if it is just for 15 minutes, someone drives by at about 50 mph. Many people see Eastern Ave. as “the east side bypass.” They drive there to avoid downtown. Of all the intersections and streets they have talked about, he still thinks of Eastern Ave. as a priority where something needs to be done, because of the speed. When you add in the extra 15% of drivers going above the 85th percentile, they see a lot of excessive speed. Even if the average speed there is 30 or 35 mph, every 10th, 12th, or 15th car, in his opinion, is driving 45 or 50 mph, because it seems like a bypass. His concern is that when this downtown project starts, the traffic on Eastern Ave. will increase dramatically as people avoid the downtown project. The short-term solution needs to be enforcement. They need to slow the speed down on that street, before a fatal or major accident occurs. Long-term, it is for the Committee and Council to decide, with all of the city streets, but in the short-term, going through all of this, with the exception of the Water St. intersection that needs to be dealt with, they really need to jump on Eastern Ave. He knows the City has been short police officers for a while, but maybe installing radar there for a couple of days to get drivers’ attention is overdue. This presentation is a lot to take in and he will go over the data again and they can all try to come up with something. In the short-term, he thinks they need enforcement.

Councilor Workman stated that Mr. Lussier mentioned the “big data” companies and the cost ranging between \$5,000 and \$20,000. She asked if, in his conversations with them, the sales reps gave any indication of the different features between those costs. That is a big range. She asked if Mr. Lussier has an indication of which package or price range would meet the City’s needs. Mr. Lussier replied that they have not gotten into that level of detail. He continued that it was literally just an exchange of emails. He reached out to the company through its website and said he wanted to give the Council a ballpark estimate of what the service might cost. If that is something the MSFI Committee is interested in and wants staff to look into, he would be happy to meet with that vendor’s representative, talk through those details, and report back.

Councilor Tobin stated that she has a question about the software, too. She continued that it sounds like what has happened at this point is staff has run certain intersections through this criteria (from the MUTCD). She asked if there is the potential for, as data is being collected, that they would get a red flag indicating that there is an intersection they should look at.

Mr. Lussier replied that he does not know the answer to that question, but he assumes that they could have it search and trigger based on the volume metrics. He continued that it would not be able to trigger based on the crash reports, because it does not have that data set available. It might help with analyzing some of the criteria, mainly the volume, but not all of the criteria.

Councilor Tobin stated that Mr. Lussier mentioned the tree canopy being helpful in certain places and needing to cut the brush back in other places because it was impacting the sightline. She asked if that is specifically because it is at an intersection, or if there is another reason.

Mr. Lussier replied that generally, having a broader/longer sight distance tends to encourage drivers to drive faster. He continued that conversely, you want clean sight lines at intersections where there are conflict points. The tree canopy he mentioned would not have the intent of diminishing sight distances, but rather to make the road feel more restricted and closed in. It is sort of a hybrid of engineering and psychology.

Councilor Workman stated that to go back to Eastern Ave., she appreciates the data Mr. Lussier provided, especially with the slide with the four different bar graphs. She continued that if she remembers correctly, they also have an upcoming project at the rail trail. They were talking about possibly having a tabletop crossing there. Mr. Lussier replied that what was proposed, and approved by the Council, will be a rapidly flashing beacon, not a raised tabletop at that location. Councilor Workman replied that the tabletop option had been discussed, though. Mr. Lussier replied yes, but it was not the plan proposed and approved.

Councilor Workman stated that she agrees that once the construction starts they will probably see more traffic on Eastern Ave. as a result, similar to what they see right now on Ralston St. and Emerald St. because of the construction on Island St. She continued that she wants to point out that if there are more cars using Eastern Ave., the likelihood is for traffic to be slower, not faster. She recommends better lighting at the Ralston St. intersection. It is rather dark there. That might help with some of the traffic issues and concerns there.

Chair Greenwald thanked Mr. Lussier for his presentation. He continued that his observation is that most people are doing the right thing, and a few people are exceeding the speed limit, which would be easily remedied by some directed enforcement to pay attention to and pick out those few people who are really speeding.

Chair Greenwald asked Vicky Morton to speak.

Vicky Morton of 275 Water St. stated that she has a question and a comment. She asked if the data about the outliers includes days and times of the greatest violations of the speed limit.

Mr. Lussier replied that he tried to pull out a pattern of when those outlier speeds were happening. He continued that generally, it is during evening hours, but they found those outlier speeds anywhere from 3:00 PM to 2:00 AM. There was no clear pattern. He would love to be able to tell the KPD, for example, “Set an officer there at 10:00, because every night between 10:00 and 11:00 PM, you’re going to catch somebody,” but they just did not find that.

Ms. Morton stated that she is disappointed to hear about the recommendation for the four-way stop signs at Water St., Grove St., and Community Way. She continued that she thinks initially when Community Way became a formal street, there were four-way stop signs, and she thinks it was very dangerous. She thinks there were more accidents then than there are now. Her concern is the many schoolchildren who use that intersection. If people are not paying attention to their turn in a four-way stop, her concern is the children will be more in danger than they already are. Some of the children have difficulties crossing that intersection to get to Wheelock School.

Ms. Morton stated that if that is the end of the update, she has questions about other items (the neighborhood) has had ongoing, through their conversations. She thanked Mr. Lussier for the good presentation and continued that she was not surprised that the neighborhood does not have many speeders, but “when we have speeders, we really have speeders.”

Ms. Morton continued that one of the things they first talked about was the conditions of the sidewalks on Church St. and Roxbury St. She continued that she attempted to find out when those are scheduled to be replaced or upgraded, and they do not seem to have been moved sooner on the calendar. It seems that they are still far out. She wondered if the one particularly for Church St. had to do with any renovations that are going for the whole street, versus just improving the sidewalks. The conditions of the sidewalks on Roxbury St. and Church St. are still an issue. She hopes that the people from Stantec have in their presentation a piece about public toilets. Public toilets have been a huge issue with the neighborhood. She hopes they will be found in the final plan for the downtown redesign. Regarding the Pat Russell Park, the neighborhood asked for two things. First, a bike rack. There is no bike rack at the park.

Chair Greenwald asked Mr. Bohannon to respond. Mr. Bohannon stated that the bike rack will be installed after the holiday.

Ms. Morton continued that second is a much larger, more expensive piece – the lighting the neighborhood requested on the canal side of the park, where it is very dark. There are lights in Pat Russell Park, but they are on the street side, not the back side where the canal is. They also had asked for improved lighting at the intersection of the bike path and Water St. There is a light there, but it is very dim. They would like improved lighting there, to make that intersection safer. The neighborhood is very interested in what happens with the neighborhood parking project, how that coincides with renovations for downtown and Marlboro St., and the impact on

the neighborhood of traffic around that, as well as the Roadway Safety Plan impact on east-side Keene.

Ms. Morton continued that the neighborhood has not heard any resolution to the parking/no parking in front of the South Lincoln School. In the fall, Councilor Roberts made a comment. He said that if they want to bring more people back to the east side Keene, they need to upgrade the quality of the apartment buildings. He spoke about previous Council conversations regarding a fund to help people buy and/or upgrade their properties. She wonders where that is. Hand in hand with that is an update on Code Enforcement and whether they have a more proactive approach in helping east Keene clean up the neighborhood.

The City Manager stated that regarding the program to upgrade properties in the east Keene neighborhoods, there is a program, called 21 in 21. She continued that it is in partnership with SCS. It was started a few years ago, and the City has done several projects in partnership with them, and it is still ongoing. Regarding Code Enforcement, they have made significant changes. They have brought on Rick Wood as the Fire Marshall. He now oversees the inspectors in both the Community Development Department and the Fire Department. This was done in an effort to bring unity to the two departments and provide clear direction. He has been looking at creating a long-term program, because it will be a long-term program, to address blight issues. Mr. Wood has only been on board for a short period of time. He will be making recommendations as he moves forward.

Chair Greenwald stated that regarding Code Enforcement, people need to make complaints. He continued that Code Enforcement should be out with their eyes open, but it takes complaints, and follow-up complaints, to motivate them. After that, it takes a call to City Councilors, to keep pushing them along. He has several pending complaints – on specific properties. There are several properties, such as one on Roxbury St., which he knows he will be calling in. He thinks it is a legal three-family home but is functioning as a seven-family unit. However, without a call, (Code Enforcement) is not going to move. He encourages any resident who is not comfortable (calling) to call him, and he will make the call. That keeps anonymity. He hopes that with these changes in Code Enforcement, things will improve.

Mr. Lussier stated that Ms. Morton's comments reminded him of something he neglected to mention. He continued that the Grove St./Water St./Community Way intersection has a flashing beacon at the crosswalk that staff installed as part of the Water St. project. If the Committee opts and the Council adopts changing that to an all-way stop, staff would recommend removing that flashing beacon. They have had the practice and policy of using those at mid-block crossings where vehicles are not expecting to find pedestrians and they need to draw drivers' attention to that situation. He would recommend relocating that flashing beacon to the bike path. He knows that is not the lighting Ms. Morton was talking about at the crossing, but staff thinks that would be a good application at a midblock crossing on a through lane to draw drivers' attention to the fact that there is a trail crossing there.

Chair Greenwald asked if it is correct that staff's recommendation is to make that a four-way stop. Mr. Lussier replied yes. He continued that he was not aware that the intersection was previously a four-way stop. He is a little hesitant now. Having a Public Works Director with a 30-year history really came in handy, because he knew the historical context. Before they move forward, he would like to look at that history and understand why that was a four-way stop and why it was changed. Chair Greenwald asked if that could come back on the MSFI Committee's next agenda.

Chair Greenwald asked if there were further questions from the public. Hearing none, he asked for a motion.

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

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee accepted the east side Keene update as informational.

3) Downtown Infrastructure Project – Focus Area: Central Square

Chair Greenwald stated that tonight's focus is Central Square. He continued that they had a presentation and a lot of public input. They will now hear from the Stantec consultants. The Committee has a list of topics/questions to give input on. This is the time for everyone to say what is on their mind, because after this, the consultants will turn the discussion into a document. The next step is a Council workshop.

Brett Rusnock, Project Manager with the Public Works Department, stated that Stantec is here tonight to give a presentation on Central Square, very similar to the one reviewed on May 8. He continued that they made two minor changes, which they will review. As a reminder, on May 8, they went through a detailed presentation on how they approached the design of the Central Square area. Since they did not have time then to get the Committee and Council's thoughts on the questions/topics, they hope that will be the focus of the discussion tonight.

Ed Roberge, engineer with Stantec, introduced himself and his colleagues Dave McNamara and Bob Corning. He continued that they went through a detailed presentation at the last meeting. Tonight, they will quickly review those slides and have the slides available for reference as they present the questions to make decisions on. These slides on Central Square are the same as the ones at the public workshop.

Mr. Roberge stated that Traffic was the first section they focused on. He showed a slide of the Recommended Alternative (for Signal Phasing), continuing that you can see it has very similar traffic patterns to what exist today, with some of the new lane arrangements. They talked about U-turn alternatives. This one essentially replicates what is there, with a bit of required geometry change. The MSFI Committee saw this last time. They also looked at (the Left-Turn Alternative), an alternative that was also a U-turn but had a permitted left turn for northbound

Main St. to West St. They talked about the traffic and how the intersection's levels of service change a bit with this.

Mr. Roberge stated that one of the things that came out of the last conversation was regarding what is happening at the top of the Square. He continued that he will zoom in on this area that the Committee and the public had a lot of conversation about, regarding the width of the "left turn loop back." They talked a lot about the "do not block the intersection" painting on the street to discourage drivers from blocking the intersection to Winter St. and the "do not block" for someone coming around the top of the Square to go right on West St. They talked about the option of widening that for a bypass capability. He wants to note that in the options Stantec is showing today, they have incorporated that. That is a consideration point for the Committee to discuss. They went from about 20.5 feet, which was the previous number, to a 25-foot wide lane in this location. They did that for the alternative that has two lanes at the top of the Square and for the alternative that has a single lane at the top of the Square. Both alternatives now have that widened section.

Mr. Roberge continued that the conversation that came about regarding the top of the Square included the question of how the traffic is managed along the top. You can see, here in the Single Lane at North of Square alternative, that it is a single file arrangement of traffic coming from Washington St. and Main St. or Roxbury St., which combine. They wanted to present this alternative and understand the safety ramifications, the management of traffic, and a traffic-calming component. They also showed the Two Lanes at North of Square alternative and how that weave really works today. That weave is nearly as long as the length of that leg of that quarter itself. You can see a lot of stress and conflict happens there. Part of the decision points they will get to tonight will be a two-lane versus one-lane approach there.

Mr. Roberge continued that they talked about bicycle and pedestrian crossings. In the next section, you will see they talked about raised table intersections at the crosswalk approach from Washington St., Court St., and the intersection at the top of the Square. These images on the slides are examples of raised crosswalks people are familiar with in the community already, the yellow crosswalk signs with flashing beacons, and the interaction between bicyclists and pedestrians at some of these crosswalks. At the last MSFI Committee meeting, they talked about the summary of the public workshop, so he will not go through that again tonight.

Mr. Roberge stated that after Traffic, the next section to consider is the Sidewalk/Streetscape north of the Square. He continued that they are showing the two-lane arrangement, and also showing the single-lane arrangement at the top, but you can see that the perimeter of the circle is flanked by the bike lanes, the furniture areas, the sidewalks, and the existing commerce areas that are already licensed. He showed the raised crosswalk at the Washington St. approach, continuing that it shows how the bike lanes from Washington St. tie in. They talked a little bit about the raised crosswalk to the top of the common area, shown here in the single-lane operation. They reduced the single lane to 20 feet, which allowed them to gain some space along the corridor at the sidewalk. They are showing bike lane, buffer zones, a nine-foot sidewalk, and

a 10-foot commerce area. As he mentioned before, this has a raised crosswalk at the Court St. approach, “do not block the intersection” boxes they think would help, and the widened loop that would seem to help, as the Committee and the public mentioned before. This would maintain the sidewalk commerce zones.

Mr. Roberge stated that Stantec went through some section views, showing the differences between what exists and what is proposed. He continued that there were three sections they cut. Public comments were positive about this graphic (North Central Square section view of sidewalk/streetscape). There was a section on each at the top of the Square. They had summarized general comments from the public and now they are looking to get the MSFI Committee’s feedback for the approaches here.

Mr. Roberge asked Bob Corning to detail the comments.

Mr. Corning stated that nothing has changed in the presentation that the MSFI Committee viewed last time. He continued that the presentation included historical photos for reference, photos of some of the existing features at the existing green, the existing conditions, and the inventory of trees around and in the green. The only tree they propose removing is a diseased Sugar Maple in the green.

Mr. Corning continued that the presentation then had three options alternatives. The first alternative, “Minimal,” is keeping the existing pedestrian circulation, modifying it at the south end to respond to relocated crosswalks, mostly the one at Court St.; modifications to the gazebo/bandstand; and some additional plantings. The second alternative, “Enhanced,” is an extension of the first option with the introduction of some spoked walkways, reminiscent of some of the history of the Square’s layout; and a perimeter walk. The third alternative “New” was simplifying the pedestrian circulation, connecting the strong desire lines from crosswalk to crosswalk and then from the Washington St. crosswalk to the bandstand, which would require the removal of an additional Honey Locust tree on the south side. Stantec summarized the public comments last time. Something to highlight is that there was much discussion about modifying, replacing, or enhancing the existing fountain, which Stantec had not originally included. That is an important element to get input on.

Chair Greenwald stated that the MSFI Committee can now go through the checklist/questions to give input on. The first topic is regarding the south side of the Square. The question is which alternative the Committee members prefer for northbound traffic: no U-turns permitted, a dedicated U-turn lane, one lane for Court St. and West St. traffic, or one lane for Roxbury St. and Washington St. He continued that he thinks choice #3 was pretty well eliminated last time. That was creating a left turn from Main St. straight over to West St. He thinks that even if that were a great idea, it would be too confusing for the public. He personally likes the option with the U-turn at the flagpole. It is necessary and takes the pressure off the Square.

Councilor Workman stated that she is strongly opposed to the U-turn at the flagpole. She continued that she thinks they should push traffic around the Square. Councilor Madison stated that he agrees with Councilor Workman. He continued that the U-turn at the flagpole tends to be problematic from his perspective.

Councilor Filiault stated that he disagrees. He continued that he hears from many of his constituents that the U-turn at the flag pole is needed. Especially if they will be reducing lanes around the common. The last thing they want to do is push extra traffic into the common that does not have to be there. He knows a complaint on that U-turn has been that it has a tendency to back up a little bit. He thinks with the new lights installed could easily rectify this situation. When the northbound light turns green, the southbound lane could be delayed six or seven seconds to allow those several cars to get out of the way. That is one of the reasons they are getting new, programmable lights. Eliminating the U-turn would force every car that was fully intending to go back south to now become additional traffic in the common. They do not need to be there. He thinks, and he is hearing from his constituents, that the U-turn is needed.

Councilor Tobin stated that she has mixed feelings. She continued that on one hand, she is not opposed to the U-turn. However, a concern is that, if she remembers correctly, the NHDOT says that you should not have a crosswalk at a U-turn. Chair Greenwald replied that he thinks the crosswalk is a little north of the U-turn.

Mr. Roberge stated that the way the signal is operated now is as an “exclusive pedestrian phase.” He continued that if a pedestrian pushes the button, the lights go “all red/all stop.” You do have that (U-turn) movement, and folks could still make that movement. It is behind the crosswalk. There is enough of a separation. He does not think there is a vehicle conflict, and anything moving through the intersection would be at an all stop condition at that point. The pedestrian phasing should not be too affected by that.

Councilor Tobin replied that she would keep the U-turn then.

Chair Greenwald stated that the other reason why he thinks the U-turn is important is people searching for parking spaces are different from people who are just traveling through or around. It would make it more convenient, where there is no real loss of any traffic flow or any problem to keep the U-turn.

Councilor Workman stated that she does not think that any amount of traffic lights will fix the problem of that left inner lane. She continued that that is a separate lane than the U-turn, but then again, they are taking more space for a third lane. She does not see the need for it. Then, there is still traffic coming in from West St. that delays people from taking that U-turn, too. She is a strong opponent of that U-turn.

Chair Greenwald stated that it sounds like the Council workshop will be resolving this issue, since the MSFI Committee is split. The City Manager asked what Chair Greenwald’s choice

would be. Chair Greenwald replied that he wants the U-turn, no question. He continued that Councilor Workman is adamantly against it, and he is adamantly in favor of it. The 15 Councilors will decide this.

Chair Greenwald stated that the next question is regarding the traffic circulation around the Square. He asked if the MSFI Committee members prefer two circulating lanes on the north side, or a single lane.

Councilor Tobin stated that the visualization of traffic patterns was helpful. She continued that she realized that she had been thinking of it in terms of one lane or two lanes, but looking at the traffic patterns, it looks like it is actually a decision about where to merge. That is, whether to merge before the crosswalk or after the crosswalk. That made a lot of sense to her, that it would be one lane to merge before the crosswalk.

Councilor Madison stated that he is inclined to go with the two-lane alternative. He continued that that is what he is thinking right now, but he reserves the right to change his mind.

Councilor Workman stated that she leans toward the single lane, to ease the flow of traffic and avoid any merging conflicts.

Councilor Filiault stated that he has had some long discussions about this one. He continued that he definitely prefers two lanes, and as he pointed out before, especially at the top of the Square on the west side where the newer plan showed one lane going and waiting to go. If you are going to go south on Main St. or go out to West St., the plan being shown was only going to be one lane. As he has said before, his problem with that is what happens during heavy traffic periods, when traffic is coming down Court St. If one car is sitting at that intersection trying to come over to West St., any car trying to go south on Main St. has to stack behind that car around the common and is not able to access the southern lane going down Main St. They will wait for that car to clear to go over to West St. He thinks this is an extremely important issue. For him, it is a “go or no-go vote on the whole project.” There absolutely needs to be two lanes going through there, even if they have to shift the common a couple of feet to the east so they can allow a little bit more space to come around the common.

Councilor Filiault continued that in addition, it needs to be clearly marked with yellow lines. It will be much narrower than it is now. One of the problems now is that it is not marked. Even if it is narrower, and if the City has to repaint the lines a few times a year, so be it. Just let the traffic know where they will be going. One of the problems they hear about now is people do not know where to go around the common. It is hard to know, because it is not clearly marked. It has to be two lanes, where vehicles merge as they come up in front of the Square, coming up in front of the church. The right lane will have to go up Court St. anyhow, then the lane coming around the common, going south, needs to be widened a little bit. If a car wants to go up West St. and has to wait, they can, and if a car wants to go south down Main St., they can. He sees this whole project coming to a grinding halt if they do not do this right, in this particular area.

Councilor Filiault continued that he wants to point out that a few weeks ago, the majority of the Council voted to put money towards looking at a 400-car parking garage. If that is built, that will be 400 extra cars downtown, and the last thing he wants to see is reduced lanes going around the common for that added traffic. At this point, for him, this whole project is a go or no-go based on those lanes coming around the common.

Chair Greenwald stated that when he looks outside, he sees that at the church it is not two lanes, it is more like three, maybe three and a half. He continued that he thinks there is more than enough room to accomplish everything there. Two lanes of traffic, more sidewalk vending space, and if needed, a couple of feet shaved off the top of the common. The common is actually getting larger, if you look at the diagram. He does not think it would make a lot of difference, and he thinks the engineers can make it work to keep two lanes. If it goes to one lane, the other real disaster would be the cars trying to back out. He cannot imagine how that would happen if it is all squeezed down to one lane.

Chair Greenwald stated that Stantec now has a general sense of the MSFI Committee's thoughts on this item. He continued that again, when the Council meets as a whole, they will have to see what happens then.

Chair Greenwald stated that the next question is regarding raised crosswalks across Washington St., Court St., and Central Square in front of the church.

Councilor Filiault stated that his answer is "yes." He continued that he thinks this might be an easier item for the Committee. The raised crosswalks increase safety downtown. Councilor Madison replied yes, definitely.

Councilor Workman stated that she is concerned about accessibility with the raised crosswalks. She continued that anytime you continually change the surface, it can create problems for people with mobility issues. She would like to see more of the flashing beacons for crossings at those intersections.

Chair Greenwald asked if someone from Stantec could speak to the issue of raised crosswalks and accessibility. Mr. Corning stated that the tabled crosswalk is actually better for accessibility because it is at sidewalk grade. He continued that that means you are not going down through a curb cut to cross the street and then back up onto the sidewalk. It is all at sidewalk level.

Chair Greenwald asked if that makes Councilor Workman feel better. Councilor Workman replied yes.

Councilor Tobin stated "yes" to raised crosswalks.

Chair Greenwald stated that the next question is whether to have flashing beacons installed at the three crossings. He continued that he says “yes.” Councilor Filiault, Councilor Tobin, Councilor Madison, and Councilor Workman agreed.

Mr. Corning stated that he wants to point out, as a designer and landscape architect, the sensitivity of the green. He continued that one option would be to do the RFBs at Court St. and Washington St. but not the Central Square crossing, due to the visual impact it might have on the green. That is his personal opinion. He does not know if there is an opportunity for the Committee to look at each location individually, or if they need to look at them all together.

Chair Greenwald replied that he would be open to listening to Mr. Corning’s thoughts on this, because he himself did not see it as an issue, but he would if Mr. Corning does.

The City Manager stated that thinking about the number of people who take pictures of the church, she thinks the flashing beacons, which are rather large structures, could be problematic at that location. She continued that the other two locations make perfect sense.

Chair Greenwald stated that there are also flashing lights embedded in the ground. He continued that they tried that on Winchester St. He does not know if that is something worth considering. Mr. Lussier replied that he would not say they were “an abject failure” on Winchester St., but they were definitely problematic. He continued that they would work great in locations that did not need to be plowed. They have been a maintenance issue from the beginning. He cannot recommend the in-ground lighting systems.

Councilor Workman stated that she wants to highlight that if they went with the single-lane option in this location, it would make the crosswalk much safer.

Councilor Tobin stated that she does not feel great about having lit crosswalks in that area, because there are many lights, at different levels. She continued that restaurants have lights outside, stores have lights in windows, and there are streetlights. When it rains, the reflection can be quite problematic, with light bouncing off everything.

Chair Greenwald stated that the next question is regarding southbound traffic. He continued that there are two options, a left with a U-turn lane and a single through lane, or a left with a U-turn lane and two through lanes. He asked Stantec to clarify that.

Mr. Roberge stated that Stantec is showing, in the Recommended Alternative that came out of the design study, this configuration (in the slide titled “Traffic/Circulation – Signal Phasing – Recommended Alternative”). He continued that the question was whether the MSFI Committee prefers southbound traffic to be provided with a left U-turn lane and a single through lane, which is what is recommended here, or a further expansion to include two southbound lanes.

Chair Greenwald stated that it seems to be a given that the slip lane is gone. He continued that as was adequately explained to him this morning, it increases the pedestrian safety at the crosswalk and there is no great loss to the drivers. You could still go from Court St. around to Washington St. You just do not have that slip lane. He would give it up for pedestrian safety. However, the question before the Committee is regarding how many lanes to have heading south.

Councilor Filiault stated that they have discussed this issue recently. He continued that he is concerned, not so much with the slip lane, but with only having one lane going southbound. Regarding the lane where there used to be a slip lane/reverse lane coming around the common, when the lights change green, that light stays red. There will only be one green light sending people down Main St. Anyone who will be taking a left to go down Roxbury St., or not reversing direction around the common, will now have to wait in that one lane until that light turns green. Once again, he thinks that as they narrow the traffic lanes around the common, it will back traffic up. He would like to see two lanes going south, along with that lane for turning left onto Roxbury St. or reversing direction up to Washington St.

Councilor Filiault continued that they had some discussion on this. At the east side of the common, they had what was described as a “drop off area” or parking area. The common will be all dug up, and when they put it back together again, they could add that third lane simply by shifting the rebuilt common a few feet to the south. He does not think that would create any hardship, and it would allow the extra southbound lane going down Main St. Currently, there are two designated lanes going down Main St. and one to loop around the common. Once again, they are reducing lanes and reducing traffic flow. He does not see that working adequately. He would like to see two designated southbound lanes. The other lane that is going down Roxbury St. and around to Washington St. can remain there, but once again, it is lighted. Only one light turns green for southbound traffic. He would like to see that modified.

Mr. Roberge stated that they tried to put together what could potentially be that solution they talked about last time. He continued that Stantec is aware of it. A couple of things drive the geometry you are looking at right now. This is what they were just talking about, two southbound lanes in this left turn lane that would operate. They left the common as is. If there is a decision to encroach in the common, because as the Chair mentioned before, they are gaining space elsewhere, the concern here is that when they add the lane, if they are pushing from “this” configuration to “this” configuration, they are pushing everything back a little bit. The area along the sidewalk frontage is pushed back a little bit. You can see where the bike lane is near or maybe halfway into where the existing curb line is. There is still space to be had here, it is just less than what was there before with two lanes. Geometrically, it works, if they were able to pull it a little further east. That would be an advantage to maintain maximizing the sidewalk they would like along this block.

Mr. Roberge continued that the U-turn is unique. They talked about this before. That is why you see this jog here in the bike lane. To keep vehicles from encroaching into parked cars on this movement, they shifted it over a little bit. There is still sidewalk gain, less than there was

before, but still sidewalk gain from how it exists today. That helps this movement out a little bit because it positions this bump out a little further back to make it work. It makes the crosswalk a little longer, as well as another crosswalk is a little longer, but in the end, it is a tradeoff in how it operates. They saw, when they did the traffic visualization models, that they were able to clear this queue quite effectively. It is still a long queue, behaving the same way as today. There is a delay. There is a D to E level of service at times, during peak hour traffic, but this certainly would empty the queue much easier. This also could play into other parts of the Committee's discussion. If they are looking at trying to maximize sidewalk space in (a certain location) or encroaching into the top of the common a little, that is where the sidewalk width can maximize. Or they could consider dropping down to a single lane along the top, because now they know the queuing will clear out well with the two southbound lanes.

Mr. Roberge continued that Stantec did hear the Committee, and they think they have a solution that would work geometrically and would perform at least as well as it performs today. Chair Greenwald replied that whatever they are calling this, they can put him down for it.

Councilor Filiault stated that he appreciates this. He continued that he knows they have heard his comments over the last week. For him, the design they are showing here works. There are some aspects he does not like, but politics is the art of compromise. As far as getting the extra traffic down Main St., getting the two lanes around the common, if they must shift a few feet to the east, that is fine. They just eliminate the "drop off area" a little bit to pick up a few feet. This plan, although not perfect for him, works. He is one out of 14 Councilors, and the others might think differently.

Chair Greenwald stated that it is not a question on the sheet, but regarding the turn onto West St., he wonders if that will just become a yield instead of a traffic signal. Mr. Roberge replied that he thinks that movement will be signalized. Chair Greenwald asked if it must be. Mr. Roberge replied that is a good question for the signal designer. Chair Greenwald stated that he has the same question about Roxbury St.

Councilor Filiault stated that obviously, they will be putting in modernized traffic signals, because the current ones are about 50 years old. He continued that you can program the traffic lights to do anything, such as right turn on blinking red, right turn on blinking yellow. There are simple solutions; it is just a matter of programming the lights, depending on what the majority of the Council asks for.

Mr. Lussier stated that to respond to something Councilor Filiault said a few moments ago regarding the "loading zone" on the east side of the common, to refresh everyone's memory, that was put in there not specifically as a parking or loading area, but due to a request from emergency services. Their preference was to maintain the counter flow of traffic for emergency response, due to their concern about people who stop dead in their tracks when they see the lights and wanting to be able to maneuver around vehicles stopped in the traffic lanes. He does not want to lose sight of the purpose of that.

Chair Greenwald stated that another issue is that many large trucks knock over those granite blocks. He continued that he thinks that is a great solution.

Councilor Filiault stated that he has no problem with that, as he said. He continued that if this is the plan brought before the Council, he is fine with it. It prevents people from using those particular few feet of the common. He is good with this proposal.

Councilor Madison stated that he is fine with this proposal as well. He continued that he thinks it makes sense.

Councilor Workman stated that she likes the third lane, but again, she still wants the single lane around near the church and no flagpole (U-turn). She will give them their third lane in exchange for the deletion of those two.

Councilor Tobin stated that she prefers the single lane. Chair Greenwald replied that they are not really talking about the single lane; this is about the third lane. Councilor Tobin replied that she will pass on this question. The City Manager replied that she thinks what is confusing is that the question is written as “two lanes or one,” and it is because they are talking about the lane that is going onto Main St.

Chair Greenwald stated that the next topic is landscaping treatments for the common. He continued that the question is which walkways on the common the Committee prefers. Choices are: minimal changes only as needed to meet proposed crosswalks, add an exterior circulating loop and spokes, or reconfigure walkways to create direct paths or along desire lines. He does not think this is a critical decision currently.

Councilor Tobin stated that she really likes the path that goes around. She continued that when she looks at the Square right now, she sees that a lot of it is underutilized. She sees this perimeter path being used a lot. She knows from an overhead view it might not seem so appealing, but they are making the Square bigger, which creates it as a place to go. Right now, it would not make sense to her to create a path through it, as opposed to creating a path around it, where people could walk and enjoy it.

Councilor Madison stated that initially, he was going to choose the “minimal changes” option, but after hearing Councilor Tobin’s thoughts, he agrees. He continued that he thinks the path around it looks nice and would be enjoyable.

Councilor Workman stated that she also likes the “enhanced” alternative. She continued that she thinks that having more concrete pathways, when they do have events, will move people better. It also creates smaller pockets of green areas, and she can envision different people using them for various activities and enjoying the common in various ways, if the green space were broken up that way.

Councilor Filiault stated that the Committee members might be aligned for this one, because he agrees with Councilor Workman, Councilor Tobin, and Councilor Madison. Chair Greenwald replied that he himself does not care which landscaping treatment is chosen. Councilor Filiault replied that that is close enough to having them all in agreement.

Chair Greenwald asked if the Committee prefers all the walkways to remain concrete, or if they want to selectively use pavers or other treatments to highlight areas of the common.

Councilor Filiault stated that people who have lived in Keene for a while remember what a disaster it was when they did pavers on the sidewalks. He continued that especially for people with mobility issues and people in wheelchairs, it was very bumpy. Shoveling them was difficult, with ice pockets created between the pavers. He thinks it should be a hard surface that is as smooth as possible, especially for the benefit of people who use wheelchairs and other mobility devices.

Chair Greenwald replied that he did not like those pavers years ago, either. Councilor Madison stated that he agrees that pavers are a pain. He continued that he agrees with keeping it as flat and smooth as possible. Councilor Workman and Councilor Tobin agreed.

Chair Greenwald asked if the Committee members want to reconfigure the bandstand to allow improved visibility of performers. He continued that he does not want the project to include rebuilding or moving the bandstand. Reconfiguring or improving it is fine with him. At some point, they need to consider that all of these things need to be paid for and eliminate some of the less essential items. The question is whether to reconfigure the bandstand, with wider stairs for performers.

Mr. Corning stated that the thought was to wrap the stair around two other sides of the octagon shape and remove the railings, to open it up and make it more visible and accessible.

Chair Greenwald asked if everyone is good with that. Councilor Workman, Councilor Madison, and Councilor Workman replied yes. Councilor Tobin replied that she does not have a preference.

Chair Greenwald asked if the Committee members want to relocate the bandstand to increase seating on the lawn. He continued that he thinks it is a great idea, but he assumes it would be expensive, so he chooses “no.” Councilor Workman, Councilor Madison, Councilor Tobin, and Councilor Filiault replied that they agree with Chair Greenwald.

Chair Greenwald stated that regarding the fountain, the options are to keep the existing fountain, replace the existing fountain with a more historical fountain, or eliminate the fountain. He asked if Stantec has a graphic of the original fountain, to which they responded “no.” He continued that this is likely to turn into a community project, because now they are talking about art. He

asked if the Committee members want to eliminate the fountain, keep the granite blocks that are there now, or have something new.

Councilor Filiault replied that he remembers when the fountain was installed in the 1970s. He continued that it was a low budget, and it shows. It is ugly. He agrees with getting the community involved with this, maybe by putting a few designs out and allowing the community to make some decisions on this. This is art, and people have different opinions on art. It would be a simple item to let the community decide on.

Councilor Madison asked if it is correct that a portion of the fountain was donated by the City of Einbeck (Germany). He continued that Einbeck is Keene's "sister city." The City Manager replied that she does not think it was donated by Einbeck, but she thinks there is some plaque or recognition of Keene's partnership with Einbeck. Councilor Madison replied that in that case, he would be fine with replacing the fountain.

Councilor Workman stated that she likes the fountain but does not have a preference either way.

Chair Greenwald stated that there was a fountain at the Rec Center and the choice was to turn it into a garden. He continued that that was a good choice.

Councilor Tobin stated that she is not attached to this fountain, but she does like the seating it creates on the outside, so it would be nice to see something, if they decide not to keep the fountain.

Chair Greenwald stated that the next question is whether they prefer to keep the statue/soldier in its current location or relocate it closer to the southern tip of the common.

Councilor Filiault and Councilor Madison stated that they have no preference. Chair Greenwald replied that he favors leaving it alone. Councilor Tobin stated that she would like to be able to walk and see the front of it. Chair Greenwald replied that they will be able to see more of the front of it, with this enhanced common.

Chair Greenwald stated that the next question is how they feel about the cannon and cannon balls.

Councilor Filiault stated that he is in favor of keeping them. He continued that at another meeting, they heard about how there is a lot of history behind those, as far as the dedication to them. They are historic and he wants to keep them, along with the statue. Councilor Madison and Councilor Tobin agreed.

Chair Greenwald asked if they have concerns about adding trees to the common or removing shrubs around the fountain area. He continued that he had not really thought about it.

Mr. Corning stated that the removal of the shrubs around the fountain was in response to trying to create some space for spectators of performances at the gazebo. He continued that it would open that space up a bit more. The additional trees are in response to the fact that they are expanding the green in a couple of areas, increasing the green space. Also, they are thinking about succession of trees. You always want to be replacing trees as some trees mature and need to be removed.

Councilor Filiault stated that he agrees with removing the shrubs and adding trees. He continued that it gives more shade, and as they know in this city, they can never have enough trees.

Councilor Madison stated that he appreciates the comments about tree succession, because his concern is that many of the trees at the common now are of a similar age. That probably means they will die around the same time. Thus, having trees planted and ready to mature on the common will be important. He is fine with removing the shrubs around the fountain. Councilor Tobin agreed.

Chair Greenwald stated that the next question is whether they would like to see any changes to the proposed sidewalk commerce zones. He asked Stantec which changes they are asking about.

Mr. Roberge stated that he will pick the Washington St. side first. He continued that there is a wide section, then an additional section that meanders out, and even some tables are located here. That is all part of the City's licensing. Stantec tries to apply a consistent approach, where they would have the sidewalk curb, the bike lane, the buffer, and the sidewalk section, where you can see that continuous walking path without interruption. Then, any commerce would be placed against the building. If there was a need to be more creative, maybe it is not even a design decision, because they are trying to offer as much flexible space as possible. Then, the Council can decide on how those licenses are issued. Referring to the top of the common, Mr. Roberge stated at this location the activity is licensed along the curb edge between the trees. Again, being consistent with the assumption that most of the commerce would be against the buildings, on the other side of the common as well, the commerce areas are up outside the curb line out in the front, and Stantec reapplied it. Again, he does not think this is a critical decision component, other than just trying to create enough flexible space to offer the same similar use through licensing.

Chair Greenwald asked if Stantec is suggesting the concrete have a different finish or (something like that). Mr. Roberge replied that they did not drill into the material types along the sidewalk, other than coloring it (in the graphic) just to display where the centralized walking path would be, and then any other space, either on the landscaping side or on the building side.

Mr. Lussier stated that his recommendation and his hope is that they do use the same material, which will probably be concrete, for these streetside commerce zones. He continued that the coloring on the graphics is there just to explain what the different areas in the zones are that they

are trying to create. It is not a different paving treatment or anything like that. It is just showing the space that is available for that use.

Chair Greenwald replied that he was reflecting to the downtown of the 1970s, which had stamped green concrete. He continued that it looked great, but it got slippery, and anytime there was a repair or a patch, it was a disaster. Going along with what the City Engineer was saying, he thinks they should be consistent and be simple. Councilor Workman agreed.

Chair Greenwald stated that the final question is, if additional sidewalk space is available, whether it should be used to increase available pedestrian zone, commerce zone, or furnishings zone, such as more landscaping.

Mr. Lussier stated that this question would come if the Committee decided that they wanted to do the one-lane option. He continued that they have not heard that as a consensus tonight, so it might be a moot point. The question was getting at what the Committee would want to prioritize for the use of the additional space that would be created if the road width were reduced.

Chair Greenwald replied that he would choose commerce. Councilor Tobin stated that she would choose benches. Chair Greenwald replied that benches are going wherever they are going. He continued that they have not really gotten into the furniture and benches yet. Councilor Tobin replied that the options in this question were commerce, pedestrians, furnishings, or landscaping. She leans towards furnishings or landscaping.

Councilor Filiault stated if the project is for one lane, he would vote “no,” so his answer to this question would not matter.

Mr. Roberge stated that one point to make, which they tried to stress before, is that when they are talking about a “single lane,” it is 20 feet wide. He continued that it is very purposefully 20 feet wide, because when they coordinated with the police/fire/safety group, that width was important to them. That group would acquiesce to having one lane if there was bypass capability. In this case, this has the ability for moving traffic that is coming in and out of parking spaces, as well as the bypass capability or the occasional box truck. It is substantial for a single lane. For a utility purpose, it needed to be wider than a standard 12-foot lane.

Councilor Workman stated that if they did the single lane, she would like to see the extra space used for pedestrians/sidewalk expansion and commerce, split equally.

Chair Greenwald stated that he would choose commerce, but he will work hard to get to the two lanes.

Chair Greenwald stated that they have made it through the checklist. He continued that he would throw in a comment from a previous meeting, the question of allowing the left turn onto Railroad

St. to continue. He is voicing a comment from the Mayor. He knows it is not a Central Square question, but that was an open, undecided issue.

The City Manager replied that she is not sure that was undecided. She continued that it might have been controversial, but she thinks the conversation landed on pedestrian safety, because there are so many things going on in that location and that is a pedestrian safety concern. Chair Greenwald replied that the Council workshop will end that one.

Chair Greenwald asked if the Committee had anything else to add. Hearing none, he recognized the City Engineer.

Mr. Lussier stated that this meeting has been extraordinarily helpful, and he commends the Committee for getting through this list and giving the team clear guidance on most of the items. He will wrap up with a summary of the next steps. For items the Committee did not have consensus or clear guidance on, they can talk about the alternatives and the pros and cons at the Council workshop on June 11. They will go through boiled down versions of the three presentations, showing the Council the preferences the Committee expressed to the team. At the Council workshop, staff is not looking for a formal vote or action, which is in keeping with their policy of not taking votes at a workshop. They are looking for discussion and open debate about these topics and issues, to “tune up” what has been discussed and reviewed, and the preferences expressed so far. Then, it will be referred back to the MSFI Committee at their June 26 meeting. The team will show the Committee the project from start to finish, based on what they have heard at all of these meetings and what they think the Council is ready to vote on. He hopes that at that point there will be a clear direction. At that meeting, they will be looking for the MSFI Committee to make a formal recommendation to the Council on the preliminary design.

Chair Greenwald stated that he wants to thank City staff, Stantec staff, the City Manager, and this Committee. He continued that he thinks they have maintained the integrity of downtown in this discussion. They have gotten along well, and much compromise has happened, and there will be more. Ultimately, the integrity of what they have that makes this downtown is terrific is being maintained.

Chair Greenwald made a motion to consider this conversation informational. Councilor Workman seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

4) Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Greenwald adjourned the meeting at 7:49 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker