

City of Keene
New Hampshire

MUNICIPAL SERVICES, FACILITIES & INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, March 26, 2025

6:00 PM

**Council Chambers,
City Hall**

Members Present:

Mitchell H. Greenwald, Chair
Randy L. Filiault, Vice Chair
Catherine I. Workman
Laura E. Tobin
Jacob R. Favolise

Staff Present:

Elizabeth A. Ferland, City Manager
Andy Bohannon, Deputy City Manager
Carrah Fisk-Hennessey, Director of Parks and
Recreation
Don Lussier, Public Works Director
Bryan Ruoff, City Engineer

Members Not Present :

All Present

Jay V. Kahn, Mayor

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

1) Carl Jacobs – Installation of a Peace Pole – Central Square

Brought back from later discussion: Chair Greenwald stated that the Committee has a communication from Cole Mills, who cannot be present this evening, in opposition to the installation of a Peace Pole on Central Square.

Chair Greenwald asked to hear from Carl Jacobs.

Carl Jacobs stated that as he indicated in the communication, they (he and Cameron Tease, Phil Wyzik, and Tom Julius) submitted a proposal last year for a Peace Pole. He continued that as he understands it, the MSFI Committee and some City staff members were interested in pursuing the notion of the Central Square fountain becoming some sort of peace monument. Now, they (he and the others who submitted the proposal) understand that that is not going to happen, and the fountain will go in another direction. He and the others are still interested in donating a Peace Pole to be installed in Central Square, which is their purpose for being here tonight.

Chair Greenwald stated that he would throw this question to the City Manager. He continued that he was not aware that the function or design or anything about the fountain had changed. He

hoped the fountain would become a fountain of peace and that has not changed. Maybe the shape will change, and maybe not; they have not decided.

Elizabeth Ferland, City Manager, replied that she would let Deputy City Manager Andy Bohannon talk more about this since he is the one who worked with the group, but they did go through a process for a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a fountain with a message of peace. She continued that they received one proposal, and the group, comprising Mr. Jacobs, Mr. Tease, Mr. Wyzik, and Mr. Julius, decided not to pursue that direction.

Chair Greenwald stated that his observation was that at first, the group wanted a Peace Pole and then a suggestion came forth to make the fountain a fountain of peace. He continued that he does not think the City said anything further. He does not think there was any design work done on the fountain.

Andy Bohannon, Deputy City Manager, replied that that is correct. He continued that after the last MSFI Committee meeting, staff took the direction for the fountain, created a Request for Qualifications (RFQ), and put it out to bid. They received one proposal, reviewed it, and determined that it was not what the group of people who originally petitioned the Committee was looking for. The group said they wanted to go back to the Peace Pole idea. Thus, staff re-directed them back to the Committee.

Chair Greenwald stated that there was nothing said by City staff that the fountain would be inappropriate for the use. He continued that he just wants to set the boundaries of where they are. He asked if Mr. Jacobs wanted to speak more or if there were other people with him who wished to speak.

Mr. Jacobs stated that he learned something tonight that he did not know, because he had the clear impression that the idea of the fountain becoming a peace monument was off the table. Chair Greenwald replied that they are having the conversation.

Mr. Jacobs stated that the proposal they received was for a beautiful piece of sculpture that represented “peace” in the artists’ eyes and probably in others’ eyes. He continued that several people in the group, who were petitioning for the Peace Pole, had a concern. Rotary International has a Peace Pole program, and the group of people petitioning for the Peace Pole in Keene thought that being associated with this effort to install Peace Poles all around the world would strengthen their effort. The proposed sculpture was beautiful but did not really make that connection to Peace Poles around the world. In his opinion, the design would evoke beautiful thoughts but is not immediately recognizable as “peace.” Peace Poles are clearly labeled with “Peace” in many languages and “May Peace Prevail.” For the Peace Pole in Keene, it would be the languages commonly associated with Keene, or that have been in the past, such as Abenaki, Braille, and obviously English. The artistic expression was more than they were looking for; they were looking for a more literal statement about peace.

Councilor Favolise stated that as someone who is not an architect or sculptor, he had not envisioned this as a sculpture combined with a fountain. He asked if the group would be open to having an inscription of “peace” around the fountain in various languages. To clarify, he is not saying they should or should not go in this direction. Mr. Jacobs replied that his is just one voice, and he should probably have some of the others in the group speak to this as well, but yes, that was one of the possibilities they were thinking about. He continued that the word “peace” seems to be essential to the effort, as did something like an obelisk to associate the monument with the other statements of peace around the globe. That is especially important to the Rotary Clubs that are supporting this effort.

Phil Wyzik of 15 Base Hill Rd. stated that he is the past president of the Elm City Rotary Club that has been part of this project from the beginning. He continued that the group was confused, because they thought someone had decided that the delay of the infrastructure project would mean a delay of the renovation of the fountain, so they thought they were back to square one with asking the Council to make a place somewhere in Central Square for a standard granite obelisk. The group could go back and think about it more, if using the fountain as a memorial to peace is still a possibility.

Cameron Tease of 21 Grant St. stated that he is the past president of the Keene Rotary Club and a member of the committee that has been meeting since the end of 2023 on this subject. He continued that he agrees with Mr. Wyzik. The group thought that the (fountain as a peace monument) had been nixed. He saw on the front page of the Keene Sentinel a picture of a fountain like what had been there in the early 1900s, and it seemed like the decision had been made to separate the fountain and the Peace Pole or peace monument. The group is still open to a monument. It is just that, as Mr. Bohannon said, they did not come up with a design with the one submission they received (from the RFQ). The bottom line is that the group is committed to the symbol of peace they feel is universal, as a gathering place to show that the people of Keene are united around peace.

Chair Greenwald stated that the only thing that has been decided is that the fountain will be in the middle of Central Square, and not on the side. He continued that what it will be has not been decided and is up to people with more artistic ability than the MSFI Committee.

Mr. Bohannon stated that he thinks he can explain the confusion. He continued that at the Committee meeting in February, there was discussion about the fountain and its location. Then, the Keene Sentinel published an article about how Stantec had put forward a design that was like the more traditional fountain from the early 1900s. He himself was on vacation at the time of that meeting. When he returned, he met with the group petitioning for the peace monument, and they talked about their decision to move on from what they had done the RFQ for and to go back to the monument piece, thinking that Stantec had moved forward with the downtown infrastructure project and moved forward with a different fountain design. He thinks that explains the disconnect here.

Councilor Filiault stated that he and Chair Greenwald have been dealing with this for three years, and sometimes things get too much press, and the fountain is one of those things. He continued that he has no problem with the Peace Pole and thinks it is a good idea. His opinion is to keep it separate from the fountain. All the Committee talked about a few weeks ago was whether to move the fountain to the side or keep it in the middle, and they decided to keep it in the middle. That is all they said about the fountain, but social media (then had a large amount of conversation about the fountain). He thinks a Peace Pole would be great. There is one at the airport and there is no controversy there. He was joking before the meeting that if they put a Peace Pole in the middle of the night, it would probably take people weeks to even notice it, but if it is attached to the fountain, it will always have controversy to it. Because for whatever reason, even though this Downtown Infrastructure Project is a \$17 million project, people decided they were going to focus on the fountain. He thinks they should keep the peace monument separate from the fountain so it is not an issue down the road, with (the public) asking who designed it, who is paying for it, how much it costs, who in City Hall decided, who on the Council is friends with someone in the Peace Pole group, and on and on. He thinks if the peace monument was separate from the fountain, it would go through quickly.

Councilor Workman stated that she encourages the peace monument group to continue discussions with the City to come to an agreement or compromise to make sure the group's wishes and intent are fulfilled. She continued that the City can help with the logistical planning piece of it.

Mr. Jacobs stated that he is hearing that there is still support for a peace monument or Peace Pole on Central Square, which fills his heart with joy. He continued that the group started with the notion of a free-standing Peace Pole, and they would be happy with that. The idea of the fountain (being a peace monument) did not come from them; it came from City staff and Councilors who wanted to address other issues with the fountain. If others want to continue exploring that option, they could, but he is sure that if the Council is willing to accept the gift of a Peace Pole to be installed on Central Square, the group that has been requesting that is able to provide it. Probably the final design needs to be agreed upon, as well as the location. The group got sidetracked on the fountain effort but could easily come back to the (free-standing Peace Pole) option, as long as they clearly know which fork in the road they (the City Councilors) are taking.

Councilor Tobin stated that she was a little confused, too. She continued that she remembers the group coming to the MSFI Committee with the proposal of a Peace Pole. It is her understanding that the group is still working with City staff. She appreciates the clarity that one of the important elements is (peace) in different languages.

The City Manager stated that she would like to ask the Committee for some clarification. She continued that she had envisioned something like what Councilor Favolise described, with peace language in the fountain design, however that fountain ends up looking. For example, it could be engraved, or bricks, or something else. She appreciates Councilor Filiault's point about how this (the fountain) has been an emotionally charged topic. She wants to know whether the Committee

wants staff to continue to work on the fountain idea or if they want them to work on the Peace Pole as a separate item. If it is the latter, she wants to know if they want it in Central Square. She would like additional direction to clear up the confusion.

Councilor Workman stated that she would be comfortable moving forward with exploring the fountain idea with the group (that is asking for the peace monument), in Central Square. She continued that she has some concerns about the aesthetics of having a pole in Central Square. She is not as comfortable with the pole being on Central Square as much as the fountain idea, but she does like the idea of a Peace Pole, and she would not vote against it if it came down to it.

Councilor Favolise stated that he agrees largely with Councilor Workman about the direction and concerns about the pole itself. He continued that, depending on the design that comes back, if it goes in the fountain direction, he does not feel comfortable judging how the community will react. There is a big difference between, say, adding something to the existing fountain versus redesigning the entire fountain. They have at least answered the question about moving the fountain or not moving it. It would be harder for him to support a standalone Peace Pole than it would be for him to support something that is tied in with the fountain, although he appreciates the message and he thinks this is a unique opportunity for them to recognize all the different backgrounds of community members. He appreciates the group coming to the Committee about this.

Jennifer Sizo of 10 Fairfield Ct. stated that as a member of the public, she thinks a Peace Pole is a great idea. She continued that the Peace Pole is very recognizable across the world, whether it is tied to the fountain or not. To a member of the public driving by and seeing the Peace Pole with different languages on it, it is very recognizable. She supports the idea. She is not 100% opposed to the fountain idea, but that will take a while.

Councilor Jones stated that he, too, received questions from the public about this. He continued that one of the unanswered questions is how it will fit. He thinks people are asking questions about how tall it will be, how much square footage it will take, how it will affect the Christmas Tree and/or the Pumpkin Festival, and so on and so forth.

Chair Greenwald asked if there were any further questions or comments.

Chair Greenwald made a motion to put this matter on more time to come back at the next MSFI Committee meeting, to allow the Committee and staff to work on a combination fountain and Peace Pole concept. Councilor Favolise seconded the motion.

Councilor Filaault replied that he is fine with that, but he thinks that is just one of the options to look at. He continued that he thinks all options should be explored. He is fine with the Peace Pole, whether it is with the fountain or not. It is up to them how they want to present it and how staff wants to work with it, but combining the Peace Pole with the fountain is not a good idea, based on what they just went through when all the Committee said about the fountain was that

they wanted to keep it where it is, and the topic blew up on social media, on the radio, and in the newspaper for a month. The Peace Pole process would go faster if it were not combined with the fountain. If they say they want it to be part of the fountain, he expects many more people would come out here and say they want their thing to be part of the fountain.

Chair Greenwald stated that the comments he personally has heard about it have been more about the funding of (the peace monument). He continued that with the City Attorney's permission, he would like to be the first to contribute \$100 toward a self-funded peace fountain.

Councilor Favolise stated that he can argue both sides of this. He continued that he can imagine that if a Peace Pole goes up, more people will want their pole or monument to go up. He is not sure that is necessarily a consideration for him. He would be open to tweaking the language of the motion to just direct staff to continue conversations, if the Committee does not want to pigeonhole it. He is not sure this conversation tonight could be productive much longer.

Public Works Director Don Lussier stated that he thinks Councilor Favolise addressed his question, but the way he heard the motion was that it was specifically about options involving a Peace Pole with the fountain. He continued that he was not sure if that was the intent, or if the Committee wanted staff to look at both options, having the Peace Pole in the fountain or not in the fountain. He does not have an opinion; he just wants to make sure staff is clear on what the Committee wants them to do.

Chair Greenwald replied that to clarify, the Committee wants staff to look at all options.

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee voted unanimously to place this item on more time.

2) Councilor Jones – Request for City Council Communication to State of New Hampshire – Proposed Roundabout at Rt. 9 and Whitcombs Mill Road

Chair Greenwald asked Councilor Jones to speak.

Councilor Jones stated that in the early 2000s there was an issue on Rt. 9 and Washington St. He continued that the State built a jug handle there that the City was against from the beginning, saying it was dangerous. Michael Blastos was the mayor. There was a petition to change it because it was dangerous. He himself got 200 people to sign. The petition went to Governor Nichols and the Executive Councilor, Mr. Wheeler. Nothing was done about (the jug handle) until one day a woman was killed there, coming south on Rt. 9, crossing over two lanes and trying to make that left turn onto Washington St. At that time, Mayor Blastos told the Governor and the Executive Councilor he could go public with the petitions or the (State) could do something about it. It got done right away.

Councilor Jones continued that that is the kind of action they are looking for today. They are not looking for something to go on the State's Ten-Year Plan. This is a whole different action, working on something that will make life safer. He is not a traffic expert and does not know if a roundabout is the answer, but "if you ask for diamonds and hope for rhinestones, sometimes you get it." He does not care whether the City Council's communication to the State is a letter or a Resolution, but he does not want it to be just an email. Regarding to whom the letter or Resolution goes, he specifically asked for it to include the NHDOT Commissioner, the Administrative Services Commissioner, the NH Public Works Director, and the Safety Commissioner. Those are the people who get together all the time and look at what is going on with safety and traffic around the state. The current Governor and Executive Councilor should be copied, because they want them in tune with this.

Councilor Jones continued that he will not read all the bullet points from his letter, but they all know it is a failed intersection, and they all know that soon there will be a 12-unit residential complex going in there. That will cause hundreds more vehicle trips per day. The intersection is commonly used by employees, guests, visitors, and service vehicles going to Langdon Place. All delivery trucks, school buses, and emergency vehicles servicing Whitcomb's Mill Rd. must access via Rt. 9 as they are prohibited from coming the Arch St. way because of the limited-weight bridge going over White Brook. That is what causes part of the issue there.

Councilor Jones continued that as everyone knows, there have recently been a high number of fatal and tragic accidents along this stretch of Rt. 9 in both Chesterfield and Keene. They hope the State can do something about that. There is a high need for improvements at this intersection. There is a lack of turning lanes, narrow shoulders, steep terrain, excessive curvature, and limited visibility. A few years back, the State installed a roundabout about a half mile east of this location, on Rt. 9 and Base Hill Rd., to the acclaim of the local residents. It made life a lot safer.

Councilor Jones stated that he has something else he did not put into his bullet points, which he thinks is very important. He has maps of the intersection to show tonight, with a red dot at the intersection where Whitcomb's Mill Rd. crosses over. Along Whitcomb's Mill Rd., Daniels Hill Rd., and Langley Rd., there are about 50 houses. About a year ago, there was a bad accident where Daniels Hill Rd. comes out and meets Rt. 9. He challenges anyone to go into that neighborhood and try to make a left turn onto Rt. 9. If there were a roundabout at the intersection of Rt. 9 and Whitcomb's Mill Rd., all those people could make their way to that one intersection and safely get across to the other side or make that turn to go toward Chesterfield.

He continued that it could not hurt to ask (the State for a roundabout). It came up a few years back when the City improved the residential complex. There was a different mayor at the time, who said he was going to contact the State. He (Councilor Jones) does not know if that happened or if he made any progress with that. Tonight, all he is asking is for the City Council to send a communication to the State, either a letter or a Resolution, asking for a roundabout and seeing what happens.

Chair Greenwald asked if anyone on the Committee objects to sending this communication. Hearing none, he asked if there was any objection from the public, or the Public Works Director. Hearing none, he continued that he thinks a letter would be preferable to a Resolution. He asked the City Attorney if she thinks a letter would be good. The City Attorney (replied yes).

Councilor Favolise asked if there is a preference for who writes the letter. He asked if it should be the Mayor. Others replied yes.

Mr. Lussier stated that Councilor Jones mentioned that a couple of years ago when the residential development was approved, the Mayor talked about going to the State. He continued that what came about as a result of that was the City submitted a request for roadway safety audit to the State, through their normal process. That was in 2023. In 2024, the City was notified that they were selected to have that intersection audited, scheduled for April 1. Next week, NHDOT staff will come, and the Southwest Regional Planning Commission (SWRPC) will participate. They will do a site visit and all the on-site portion of that. He handed out copies of the roadway safety audit flow chart. They will do the audit next week, and the City will get a copy of the draft report and will be invited to weigh in on it. The State will then compile the draft comments into a final report. The final report goes to NHDOT's Highway Safety Improvements Committee, and then they make recommendations about the implementation. There will probably be some near-term or immediate implementation steps, such as re-stripping the roadway for turn lanes or something like that, and then potentially longer-term implementation.

Mr. Lussier continued that he knows Councilor Jones does not want this to go into the Ten-Year Plan, but long-term solutions such as a multi-million-dollar roundabout would almost certainly be part of the State's Ten-Year Plan. His suggestion is to wait for the roadway safety audit to be completed. When the City gets the draft, that would be the appropriate time for the City to weigh in with the recommendation that this intersection be improved with the roundabout, which would be a long-term improvement there.

Mayor Jay Kahn stated that this week, the SWRPC rendered their final decision on the TAC (Transportation Advisory Committee). He continued that the City had one project in there, the intersection improvements at Rt. 32 and 12. It was not recommended. He voted against the TAC's recommendation; his was one of 14 votes. The two authorized projects were not in Keene. His point is that if the highway safety audit renders that this is another intersection worthy of improvements and those improvements need to go into the Ten-Year Plan, then Keene would have two competing projects. He would ask the Committee, before he gets into the position of writing to someone, that there is some consideration as to which project is of higher value and of higher priority for the City.

Councilor Jones stated that the Public Works Director and the Mayor are exactly right, and that is why he was trying to avoid that process altogether and having it sound more like an emergency process. He continued that he wanted the letter to go to the department heads to try

and circumvent the (Ten-Year Plan) process, because it does cause problems as the Mayor is talking about.

Chair Greenwald asked if there is a problem with sending the letter and asking for the consideration. Councilor Filiault replied that he does not see a problem with it; he thinks it is a good idea. He continued that if they go through the process like the Mayor talked about, it causes a conflict for the Mayor. But if it is two different processes, he no longer has that conflict.

Chair Greenwald replied that the State will make their own decision, and chances are, it will be “Don’t hold your breath.” Councilor Jones replied that he is trying to have this recognized as an emergency situation versus something for the Ten-Year Plan.

Councilor Tobin stated that she is curious about what the turnaround time is for the report. She asked if it will take months to get back, or a week, for example. Mr. Lussier replied that the City will have a draft report in two or three months, but the final process with going through the Highway Safety Improvements Committee, the executive council, and all the different steps, will probably take six or more months before the implementation plan is finalized. Councilor Tobin replied that that makes her feel more comfortable with sending the letter now.

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

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee recommends the City Council authorize the drafting of a letter to the State of New Hampshire, proposing a roundabout be constructed at the intersection of Rt. 9 and Whitcomb’s Mill Rd.

3) Continued Discussion – Proposal to Add the Necessary Infrastructure to Accommodate Banners Across Main Street

Chair Greenwald stated that this is a discussion brought forward by Ted McGreer and Tim Pipp. He asked them to speak.

Tim Pipp stated that he owns Beeze Tee’s on Main St. He continued that he and Mr. McGreer came a couple months ago to talk about pole infrastructure for banners over Main St. Ideally, they are looking to promote events and things happening downtown. Many cities in NH, VT, and MA have banners over their main streets. Such a banner would drive foot traffic to events. For example, if you leave a banner up for two weeks before an event, people will know about it. It would support the local economy, bringing more people downtown who recognize what is going on, and strengthen the community identity. They could have a “Welcome to Keene” message on a banner, or holiday greetings, or that sort of thing. It is a flexible communication tool that could promote tourism or increase visibility for underserved organizations. There would be minimal ongoing costs. The only real cost is hanging up banners, which could possibly be taken over by an organization. They (he and Mr. McGreer) talked about it with the City and they are trying to figure it out. It shows that the City is business friendly. By promoting these events, they are

welcoming people into the city. Many times, people come into his store and say they did not know there was an event that day. That is probably the biggest thing they hear when there is a big event, such as Wizarding Week or Pumpkin Festival - people coming in and saying they did not know. He always asks if they are from around here and whether they ever drive downtown. Even if they drive downtown, sometimes there is nowhere to figure that out.

Mr. Pipp continued that as he said, these (banners) are very beneficial for other cities and towns around New England. They (Beeze Tees) have worked with the City of Manchester frequently to do their banners, and it is an easy process. The City has all the requirements for that.

Ted McGreer of 115 Main St. stated that he echoes what Mr. Pipp said. He continued that he would also say that Keene used to have one of these (banners across Main St.) and it has a level of nostalgia to it. He was at Market Basket on Tuesday around 1:00 PM and could not find a parking spot. That side of town was packed. He came back to Main St., and it was “a ghost town.” He does not want this ghost town to feel to continue. Concord and Manchester both have (banners across Main St.). He knows that the two poles that are designed to support this banner in the wind and the loads on it are substantial. There might be some discussion about having issues with changing the way the town looks and losing the side of the church because there is a banner across Main St., but he really endorses this and he hopes the Committee will, too. The two poles supporting the banner could even be beautiful peace poles.

Mr. Lussier stated that the City Manager directed staff to look at this issue from several different perspectives. He continued that staff met with Mr. McGreer and Mr. Pipp to discuss it a couple weeks ago. The engineering Mr. McGreer mentioned is kind of the easy part. The poles that would be necessary are large, steel poles 18 to 24 inches in diameter. They are more substantial than streetlight poles and are supported underground by concrete bases approximately 42 inches in diameter. Thus, these are large poles, which is necessary because of the wind forces the banner would be subject to. Yet in many ways, that is the easy part of this question.

Mr. Lussier continued that the more interesting and complicated questions are related to legal issues like freedom of speech. There are questions about who would get to use the poles for their banner, who would get to decide who was allowed to use the banner and who was not, what kind of messaging would be allowed, and how much of the messaging could be commercial in nature. All of those sorts of issues get very hairy, very quickly. For these reasons, staff have significant reservations regarding those issues, as well as concerns about aesthetics, as Mr. McGreer mentioned. It would definitely change the perception and look of the downtown as you approach Main St. from the south.

Mr. Lussier continued that they would most likely be looking at a 35-foot-wide banner. Staff looked at different options, such as one that was centered over the roadway, over the median, or one that was centered over the northbound lane, for example. Then it would be in one direction only. Either way, it will change the way you can perceive the downtown, the church, the tree canopy, and so on and so forth, as you approach downtown. Those aesthetics are a real concern.

Mr. Lussier continued that if the City Council wants to move forward with this, his recommendation is that it be used only for City-sanctioned events, either City-sponsored events that are official community events receiving funding from the City, or events that receive a license from the City Council. That way, they can have a little control over the messaging and content. Or it could be official communications – banners put up by the City itself. He would imagine that when it was not in use for a community event, it could say “Welcome to Keene” and maybe some seasonal message from the City.

Mr. Lussier continued that his other recommendation, if this moves forward either through an Ordinance or just directives from the City Manager’s Office, is for them to develop a clear set of guidelines for how this is going to be implemented, in terms of the management. For example, they need to determine how long before an event someone is allowed to put the banner up, how long it is allowed to stay up, and who is eligible and qualified to put the banner up. Installing the banner is not just a matter of having a volunteer with a stepladder. It will be more like a bucket truck parked in traffic with traffic controls, to protect the work area and avoid liability for someone getting hurt. Staff would need to develop those controls in the form of an administrative directive or City Ordinance.

Chair Greenwald stated that a question came to him. He continued that the Rotary Club puts up banners on the light poles. He asked how they would differentiate the ability to put up a banner on the light pole from a banner across the road. He clarified that he is referring to the banner’s content, not the logistics of how it is hung. Mr. Lussier replied that he thinks the Rotary Club controls the content. Chair Greenwald replied that his question is how they would determine when to say “No, you cannot put that up” on a banner on a light pole, if it is for some downtown event.

The City Manager replied that it was before her arrival, but it was her understanding that the City created an agreement with the Rotary Club that gave them control of those light poles and those banners, and the City was not monitoring or controlling the content. This banner (across the road) is very large, and she does not recommend that (the City be uninvolved in the content). She thinks the City Council will want to have some control, and they will want to have it in a way that does not get the City into trouble or predicaments when people are competing for time to use those banners. That is why, when they were having the conversation with Mr. Pipp and Mr. McGreer, they were talking about how if this were to move forward, they would potentially start with government speech. (That means) things that are City-sanctioned events, things that come through the community event process, or something that the City is putting out there. Even just with that, there would be a banner there nearly every month, if not multiple banners a month. Then there is the process of figuring out who puts it up. She does not recommend using City staff and a bucket truck. There are many other competing needs for those staff members, in the Fire Department in particular. There would then need to be an understanding of who is doing it and who pays for it.

The City Manager continued that staff looked at many elements of this. Terri Hood and the City Clerk's Office did a great job looking at how Manchester, Concord, and other municipalities do it, finding that they also limit it to some degree. Different municipalities do it in different ways, depending on their requirements. Some have a list of people who can be hired to put the banners up, while others are a bit more lenient, and they do it themselves at the city. Thus, there are options, but what staff wanted to emphasize most with the Council are the look and size of these poles, and the infrastructure that will be up all year long, even when a banner is not in place, to be sure the Council realizes that when they make the decision. The other (thing that staff wanted to emphasize) is that if they choose to do this, they need to have a good program in place that does not get the City into predicaments where they have people competing for time on the banner system.

Chair Greenwald thanked the City Manager for touching on all those issues. He continued that he still has the question of how a banner could be allowed on a light pole and then denied on the big banner. That could become a real problematic speech issue.

Amanda Palmeira, City Attorney, stated that she is glad to jump in here, as the First Amendment is her favorite area. She continued that her understanding is, as the City Manager said, that the City gave the Rotary Club permission to do the whole thing themselves. The City does not look at what goes up on those light poles. For the banner across the street, being much larger infrastructure, the City would obviously be much more involved. There are safety concerns, issues of rights-of-way, and things like that. As far as the speech goes, government speech, the government cannot be regulating speech when it is somebody from the public and saying, "This speech is acceptable, but not this type." That is where they get in trouble. The alternative for that is the government speech doctrine, which would mean the City controlling all of the speech. Therefore, they would not be picking and choosing; all of the (banner content) would be coming from the City. That is why it would make the most sense. If it is just going to be government speech, the City is putting content out about things the City is already involved in, like community events.

Councilor Favolise stated that he has not yet heard the installation cost addressed. He continued that that question was on the Committee's mind the last time around. Mr. Lussier replied that the materials cost is about \$25,000, for the systems themselves. He continued that to include the cost of installation he would probably double that. For the system to be installed – the poles, wires, and everything else – would be about \$50,000. Regarding the banners, he has heard quotes between \$1,500 and \$2,500 for each banner.

Councilor Filiault stated that he has lived in Keene his whole life and has been a Councilor for many years. He continued that they are still known as "the City that says 'no,'" finding a reason to say no, and he thinks they need more of an attitude of finding a reason to say 'yes.' It is easy to say 'no' to things, but they should think about what they can do to say 'yes.' Other NH communities have banners like these. He and his wife drove by the banner in Concord and thought to come back the following weekend for the event the banner was promoting. He works

part time at the Colonial Theater, where 700 to 900 people per night come to the shows. He engages with them and asks them if they have been to Keene before, and when they ask him what else is going on here, he tells them about what he knows is going on. Having a banner across the roadway would inform those 900 people who are popping into Keene (about other events). Most people going to the Colonial Theater shows are not from Keene, so if they see that banner, it could draw another 100 or 200 people to Keene. That increases revenue. The Colonial Theater fills up, and the restaurants and retailers are full. When a Colonial Theater show sells out, the downtown hotels are completely full.

Councilor Filiault continued that instead of just talking about how much the banners and poles will cost, they should consider the return on investment. Thirty years ago, when the City brought Jumanji to Keene, there were many negative naysayers saying that it would not work, it would cost a fortune, it would shut down businesses in downtown, and everyone who wanted it was crazy. Now, they have a major event coming up for Jumanji's 30th anniversary because it went so well. Thus, he thinks they should be approaching the banner across Main St. not from a 'why should this not happen?' mindset but a 'why can't we make this happen?' mindset. They would not be creating something new. Other communities have this. They should see what they can do to get it done. If it is cost prohibitive, they can talk about that down the road. He wants them to have the mindset of "we can do this," until they find a reason they cannot.

The City Manager stated that she agrees that the City tries to find ways to do things, and they try to be creative, but it is also (staff's) job to make sure the Council is thinking about all sides of an issue. She continued that the way this was presented tonight was, 'here is the size of the pole, here is how much the City would need to have to put it in place, and here is the program the Council would need to think about.' Never once did someone say they should not do this. Staff were not advocating for or against it. It is staff's job to make sure the Council understands that the poles and infrastructure Keene would need in place is much larger than in Concord or some other communities, due to the width of Keene's Main St. She agrees that the banners are very visible and can be very effective for people who go downtown and might otherwise not know an event is happening. She also agrees that having people come downtown and support local businesses is very important. Staff are not saying the Council should not do this. They are just providing all the information Council needs to think about when they are making their decision.

Councilor Filiault stated that he agrees with everything the City Manager is saying. He continued that it could be cost prohibitive, but until it is shown to be so, he thinks they should move forward in a positive direction. If something comes up and they realize they cannot do it for some reason, then so be it; they will look at an alternative route.

Councilor Tobin stated that for her to feel comfortable saying yes, she would need to see what the program is and how the payment would work. She continued that if this were going to be, say, specifically for festivals, she assumes the person or organization hosting the festival would be paying. She would want to see a lot of support from organizations that are hosting festivals

saying that they are willing to pay the \$1,500 per banner or whatever it costs, and that this would be really helpful (to have). She would have trouble considering it until she knew those things.

Chair Greenwald asked Mr. Lussier if they considered having a pole in the middle, so the banner spanned half the road, not the full road. Mr. Lussier replied yes, they did. He continued that if they were to do just the northbound half of the roadway, for example, they would put a pole in the median and one on the outside. That lessens the span, but it is still a 35-foot-wide banner, which is catching the wind. It makes it a little bit easier, but it is still a substantial piece of infrastructure. They could potentially do two banners, one on each side. It would complicate the installation, because they would have to install them from each side, basically installing two separate banners.

Chair Greenwald replied that that was his thought. He continued that they could have (two banners for) two different events, or just the banner split in half, but it would cut down the span. His concern is there will be a cable there all year, whether there is a banner or not. Mr. Lussier replied yes, the way the systems work is the guy wires would be continuously in place. He continued that the banners themselves hook onto them on the top and bottom and a pulley system deploys the banner across the street and retracts it.

Mr. Pipp stated that he wants to clear something up. He continued that the banners are more than \$1,250. The way he saw this was for an organization to take over this like the Rotary Club does and then report to the City, and the City would use the permitting for events for this. It would directly correlate. If you have a permit to do an event in the city, you would be allowed to hang a banner, otherwise, no. He thinks that is fair. Another option they discussed before is putting it from building to building, which would make it private. That was originally what he was thinking, but he was told that the City should take care of it and put poles up. However, if the banners were tied from building to building, it would be less of a distraction. He does not really love the idea of three poles on Main St. He thinks there are options other than just a big pole.

Chair Greenwald asked what Mr. Lussier thinks about the building-to-building idea. Mr. Lussier replied that it potentially eliminates the issue with the poles being visible, but it does not really eliminate the government speech concerns, because that messaging is still over the public way. He continued that if there is no control over that, then they have to worry about distracting messaging that will create traffic problems, whether the messaging is appropriate for the public way, and that sort of thing. Theoretically, he thinks that it could work through an air rights license, but there would still have to be some sort of restrictions on the content.

Chair Greenwald asked if the buildings line up appropriately. Mr. Lussier replied that he is not sure about the height, but regarding horizontal alignment, he thinks it would work. He continued that north/south, he thinks it works out okay using Ted's Shoes as one side. He cannot visualize right now whether the building across the street is high enough to meet what they would need. The bottom of these banners would be about 17 feet off the ground. The tops would be 20 to 22 feet off the ground. He is not sure if the building on the east side is tall enough to work.

Councilor Workman stated that they talked about the advertising above the light posts being overseen by the Rotary Club. She continued that she has not heard about the message boards that are put up usually by the Post Office and maybe up by Central Square. They have used those frequently for event promotions. She asked if Mr. Lussier could provide a little history on that, such as how one goes about getting their event advertised there. Mr. Lussier replied that his understanding is that that is managed by the City Clerk's Office, and he believes it is only for City-licensed events.

Mr. Bohannon stated that there is an application. He continued that any organization can utilize that. There is a \$15 fee to post for your banner for 10 days, he believes it is. Councilor Workman asked if it is correct that the City has no control over that aspect of it. Mr. Bohannon replied that the City licenses it. The City Attorney stated that she thinks the City Clerk's Office does review it ahead of time, although she does not know exactly what that review is.

Chair Greenwald stated that it sounds like there are many options that need to be explored, such as the building-to-building idea, the building heights, and two poles versus three poles. He asked if they should place this item on more time. Other Committee members replied yes. Chair Greenwald asked if there was anything further from the public or the Public Works Director. Hearing none, he asked for a motion.

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

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee placed the item on more time to come back at the next meeting.

4) Monadnock View Cemetery – Section B New Cremation Lots – Parks and Recreation Director

Chair Greenwald asked to hear from Parks and Recreation Director Carrah Fisk-Hennessey.

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that she is here tonight to request that the MSFI Committee recommend the City Council approve additional cremation lots in Section B of the Monadnock View Cemetery. She continued that the cemetery is quickly running out of space. They are in the process of accepting and reviewing proposals for cemetery expansion on a larger scale. In the meantime, they are worried that they might run out of cremation spaces specifically. Currently, there are 13 cremation lots available, and 56 full body burial lots available.

She continued that in November 2024, staff went to the Trustees to request the ability to add some lots to the existing mapping at Monadnock View Cemetery in three different sections. Section B is the first section they would like to use. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey provided a map for the Committee's reference. The map of these 27 additional lots in Section B shows they will not interfere with anyone else's resting place. They are currently located within an area of

vegetation, so that everyone will have access to the new spaces. She is here because of Section 22-61 of the City Code. For them to develop and use lots, and before they can open them up for sale, they need to have it plotted and recorded in the City Clerk's Office upon City Council approval. She is here to ask the MSFI Committee to request City Council approval for the addition of these lots.

Councilor Tobin asked where Section B is. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey replied that if you are going into Monadnock View Cemetery, you go up one of the roadways, and Section B is in the center of the cemetery.

Councilor Tobin asked what vegetation is there now. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey replied shrubbery.

Chair Greenwald asked if members of the public had any questions. Hearing none, he asked for a motion.

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

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee recommends the City Council approve additional cremation lots in Section B of the Monadnock View Cemetery.

5) Verbal Update: Former Findings Property and Keene Skate Park Project – Parks and Recreation Director

Chair Greenwald asked to hear from the Parks and Recreation Director. He continued that he and other Committee members have been asked what is going on in this location.

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated that in the map the Deputy City Manager handed out to the Committee is a conceptual rendering of what is going into the former Findings property space. She continued that right now, they have the survey and wetlands delineation and sidewalk design in progress by Meridian. They will have these plans ready for construction at the end of April. You will see the sidewalk that goes along the front connecting Water St. to the parking area at Russell Park. Bazin Brothers will be coming back to the site around mid-April. They are the ones who did the demolition of the Findings property. They will cap and abandon the water, sewer, and gas utilities and loam and seed the site to complete that part of the project.

She continued that the City will be putting a skate park permanent fence out to bid to make sure that they can get rid of the temporary fence that is there now. A Bocce ball court will be likely installed in May. The lights, posts, and bases will be delivered for installation around the third week of April. The green circles on the map show where they anticipate being able to plant trees. Again, this is a conceptual idea at this point. They want to preserve this space as green space and increase the number of trees that are available in this park. The trees will not all be the same

species. It is important to have a diversified forest. Also, they will not all be planted at the same time, so it will be an eventual planting of different species of trees in this space.

Chair Greenwald stated that he was under the impression that this property is a floodway and that is why buildings cannot be built there. He asked if that is true. Mr. Bohannon replied that if you follow the demarcation of the walking path, the skate park was located just outside of that. He continued that the wetland that is earmarked up above is part of the property. The floodway goes close to the sidewalk. Chair Greenwald replied that among the questions people ask him are, “Why don’t we rebuild the building?” and “Why not get an industry out there?”, and the answer is that it is a floodway. Mr. Bohannon replied that is correct. He continued that the City has accepted LWCF funds, so this will be green space for perpetuity.

Councilor Favolise stated that he really likes this, and he thinks it is consistent with what folks in the east Keene neighborhood have asked for in that space. He continued that it is always nice to see investment and development of all sorts of projects, industry, green space, and otherwise, in east Keene. He also wants to say that he does not think this is a terrible place for a Peace Pole, if that is the ultimate design direction that they go in.

Chair Greenwald stated that among the other questions and comments he has heard, as he is sure Councilor Haas has, too, are ones about community gardens and a pickleball court. He continued that green space is a good idea, too, but those are things the public is asking about.

Councilor Tobin stated that she met the woman who was testing for wetlands, and it was fascinating to hear about that process. She continued that she noticed, walking over there, that there are still some invasive vines in the ground in that area near the skate park and around where it says the existing tree is. She wonders if there are plans to remove those. Ms. Fisk-Hennessey replied that she is not sure, so she thinks that it would warrant further exploration as Bazin Brothers comes back to loam and seed the area.

Mr. Bohannon stated that regarding the pickleball question, the other side of the map shows basketball courts, which have four pickleball courts lined on that space. He continued that there is no need to put a whole new set of pickleball courts on the other side. He is thus informing the public that pickleball courts are in that location. People do need to bring their own nets. The spaces are lit from the lights of the basketball courts. Quite a few groups use those because they are kind of quiet and unknown, although they might become a little more competitive for the space now that he has announced it a little more. What he sees is that the basketball and pickleball community have worked out a cohesion. It is working out well.

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

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

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee recommends the update on the former Findings property and the skate park project be accepted as informational.

6) Verbal Update: Downtown Infrastructure Project - Public Works Director

Mr. Lussier stated that there is nothing too heavy to talk about with the downtown project this month, but he has some brief updates. He continued that to date, the City has received seven applications for the Project Ombudsman position. He will send the resumes to the selection team probably this week, to schedule interviews with the candidates the team is interested in meeting in the next couple of weeks. By this time next month, they will be able to give the MSFI Committee more insight on the selection process.

Mr. Lussier continued that this week, the drill rig was on Main St. doing geotechnical exploration, also called subsurface investigations. They are collecting data on the soil conditions below ground. Some people were confused about the purpose of that work. It has nothing to do with investigating the condition of the utilities or determining the scope of the utility work. It is providing the design parameters they need for things like how to hold up the foundation for a traffic signal pole or making sure the gravel under the new roadway is of sufficient quality and quantity that it will hold up over time, not about what the actual utilities are. That is the information they are collecting this week. It is expected to wrap up by the end of the week.

Mr. Lussier continued that the City Clerk's Office has scheduled a meeting with the license holders. There have been some questions about how the City would manage things like sidewalk café licenses during construction. A draft Ordinance was put into the Council process, which would allow the Public Works Director to deny licenses when the roadway was under construction. That did not go over well. Based on that feedback, staff will meet with folks who currently hold sidewalk café licenses, on April 7, to give them realistic expectations about what it will be like to try to have sidewalk dining during construction. Staff want them to understand, for example, that the tables will be sitting on gravel and the area will be dusty. They also need to figure out what they can live with in terms of notification when they need to move their tables out of the way, and for how long a period of time a site needs to be inactive in order for them to be allowed to move back in, and then move back out, and similar issues. They need to just set some parameters for how to manage it during construction.

Mr. Lussier continued that the draft Ordinance that was placed on more time and is languishing will be withdrawn. Instead of having an Ordinance allowing the Public Works Director to direct the City Clerk not to issue licenses, they will manage it through conditions of approval that will be written into (an establishment's) annual license for the year that the site is under construction.

Mr. Lussier stated that finally, he wanted to mention the Northern Borders Regional Commission. The City received a grant for the solar pavilion on Gilbo Ave. They received notice on Monday that that grant had moved its way through the process, so now they (the Northern

Borders Regional Commission) are waiting for some paperwork from the City to document a few things. They hope that within the month they will get notice to proceed on the work that is covered by the grant. When that happens, staff will come to the Council for authorization to execute an agreement with the SWRPC. The City is required to use the services of a Local Development District (LDD) to help administer the grant. The City pays the SWRPC 2% of the grant award, for the SWRPC to make sure the City is following all the federal regulations. The SWRPC is the LDD and they have agreed to do that work, and the City will sign an agreement with them. The Council will also be seeing, hopefully next month, a solicitation for a consulting team to design the structure. The design of that structure was not included in Stantec's work, because the City was not sure if they would be moving forward with it at the time they issued Stantec the contract for the final design. Thus, the City will do a separate solicitation to select an engineer to design that structure. Of course, it will need to be integrated with the downtown plans.

Councilor Tobin asked if there are plans to communicate with the Farmer's Market. Mr. Lussier replied yes, absolutely. He continued that that will be managed the same way the City manages events during the process. The City has committed to accommodate all the community events that are happening downtown during construction, including Farmer's Market, which is a weekly event. Events might be in a different footprint. During the second year of construction, they will be working on Gilbo Ave. Right now, that is 2027. The Farmer's Market will not be located on Gilbo Ave. then; the City will find a different location for that. Councilor Tobin stated that she wants to make sure that the Farmer's Market is given plenty of notice so they can notify the customers, which might be more than two weeks' notice. Mr. Lussier replied that this will be worked out months in advance and it will be the same location for the duration of the season. He continued that it could be in one of the parking lots. The Commercial St. lot is half of the Farmer's Market today; maybe all of it could be within the Commercial St. lot, such as by using both sides of the lot. Maybe it would be in a different part of the downtown. The location has not been decided. Once it is decided, his preference is that the Farmer's Market be in (that one location) for the season.

Councilor Favolise stated that he does not remember the details of this conversation at a previous MSFI Committee meeting, but he had asked about whether the City had been doing enough to compile resources and work with places like the Hannah Grimes Center to help businesses manage through this. He continued that there was a specific event Mr. Lussier had said staff would be at, and he wonders how that went. Mr. Lussier replied that Hannah Grimes hosted a coordination meeting for events planners, in January. He continued that staff did attend, and essentially the message staff gave was what he just said here, and staff showed conceptual plans of how alternative arrangements could be arranged. The Highway Superintendent and staff from the KPD met to talk about how they are going to manage events when Central Square is under construction, and everything is torn up. They determined that by using a combination of other spaces, they could accommodate the footprint of any event currently being held. Again, events might not be in the usual locations, but the City can provide as much as or more room for every event that is currently being held. Parking will be a challenge, because part of the space they are

counting on to accommodate those events is the Gilbo Ave. parking lot. That is a challenge they still need to figure out details on. Just as they do now, staff will work with (organizers for) each event to determine the footprint they need and how to safely accommodate that, with event security and all the other considerations.

Councilor Ed Haas stated that he has a question for staff. He continued that the Project Ombudsman position is deemed a part-time position. He asked what the anticipated start date is. Mr. Lussier replied that it was going to be early spring as part of the construction ramp up, but now that the project has been delayed a year, they would like to select the person for the position and have them officially become a part-time employee, but their work scope will be fairly limited through the summer and early fall. It will ramp up later in the fall as they go into bidding the project, receiving the bids, meeting with the contractor to coordinate schedules, and whatnot.

Councilor Haas stated that the Ward 2 listening session brought up the need to understand traffic flows around construction during construction, not just during the events. There will be a lot of diversion of traffic into neighborhoods during construction. That would be good for the ombudsman to take on and plan for.

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

Councilor Favolise made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Workman.

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee recommends accepting the verbal update on the Downtown Infrastructure Project as informational.

7) Verbal Update: Route 9 Restriping Project - Public Works Director

Chair Greenwald asked to hear from Bryan Ruoff.

Bryan Ruoff, City Engineer, stated that last fall they discussed this Rt. 9 intersection. He continued that the Public Works Engineering Division, in conjunction with NHDOT, came up with a solution to re-stripe this intersection. They planned to execute that plan a day or two before Thanksgiving, but it snowed, which killed the plans for getting it done before the end of the year. Staff has since communicated with NHDOT. The reason the City was taking on the work and its expense was because NHDOT was no longer able to do the striping that late in the season. NHDOT has since confirmed, at the start of this season, that they will schedule and coordinate with the City to do this striping work. It is anticipated to be done within the next four to six weeks, at no cost to the City. There is no exact date yet; they are waiting for warmer temperatures. For a location with this volume of traffic, the temperature needs to be 50 degrees and rising in order for the striping to hold up. This work being performed by NHDOT in-house, at no cost to the City, which is different from the original plan.

Chair Greenwald replied that with the original plan, there *was* going to be a cost to the City. He continued that the other great news is that there were no accidents (in this location) over the course of the winter, which they are very glad about.

Chair Greenwald asked if there were any further comments or questions. Councilor Tobin thanked Mr. Ruoff for including the compass on the document, which was helpful.

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

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee recommends the verbal update on the Route 9 Restriping Project be accepted as informational.

8) Proposal for Installation of a Stop Sign on Wilber Street at Water Street – City Engineer

Mr. Ruoff stated that this request for a stop sign came in through the “See Click Fix” program. He continued that this is an area they have been talking about a lot recently for safety concerns. Someone brought up the concern that on Wilber St. at Water St. there is limited sight distance looking left for westbound traffic on Water St., and they recommended the City look at installing a stop sign on Wilber St. The agenda packet shows an overhead view of the location and a picture of the line of sight. Due to the horizontal geometry of the curve, there is less than adequate sight distance to see a vehicle coming on Water St. In light of that, staff recommend that the Committee recommend the City Manager be directed to draft an Ordinance to add a stop sign at this location.

Chair Greenwald asked if Committee members or members of the public had any questions. Hearing none, he asked for a motion.

Councilor Filiault made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Tobin

Mr. Ruoff stated that in conjunction with this, staff have noticed a few locations in City Code where stop signs are listed but are no longer at those locations. There are also some yield signs listed where that is no longer the configuration, and traffic lights listed in places that have changed to roundabouts. Some of these date back to 20 years of roadway improvements and changes. They did an audit of the entire City Code for all traffic enforcement signals, and they submitted Ordinances to the Council to update all those discrepancies between the Code and what is actually installed within the city and confirmed what is appropriate as well.

Chair Greenwald asked if there was anything further on the Wilber St. stop sign. Hearing none, he called for a vote.

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee unanimously recommends the City Manager be directed to draft an Ordinance to add a stop sign on Wilber St. at its intersection with Water Street.

9) Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Greenwald adjourned the meeting at 7:38 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

Edits submitted by,
Kathleen Richards, Deputy City Clerk