

City of Keene
New Hampshire

MUNICIPAL SERVICES, FACILITIES & INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, September 23, 2026

6:00 PM

**Council Chambers,
City Hall**

Members Present:

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

Staff Present:

Elizabeth A. Ferland, City Manager
Amanda Palmeira, City Attorney
Andy Bohannon, Deputy City Manager
Don Lussier, Public Works Director
Bryan Ruoff, City Engineer
George Downing, Project Ombudsman

Jay V. Kahn, Mayor

Members Not Present:

Molly V. Ellis

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

**1. Duncan Hilchey and Amy Christian – Request for a Traffic Study and Safety
Assessment of School Street**

Duncan Hilchey (of 45 School St.) stated that he appreciates the opportunity to speak here and he has a statement on behalf of himself, his wife, and a few residents of the Ashuelot neighborhood he and his wife have spoken to regarding traffic speeds and related noise on School, Winter, and Summer Streets. He continued that he thanks the Public Works Department for installing a speed radar sign this summer. Whether it has made a difference is unclear, but they are grateful for the effort. School St. serves as a bypass to Keene's central business district. Residents he spoke with understand that reality and accept it to one degree or another. School St. issues have been an ongoing concern for neighborhood residents for decades. The concerns flare up when something bad happens. For example, a pedestrian was hit years ago, and the City added a stop sign at the intersection of School and Summer Streets. The school zone there now has somewhat established a control of traffic.

Mr. Hilchey continued that he observes that people generally drive the 30-mph speed limit, but they do not seem to slow to 20 mph when the schools let in or out, which is an issue. Some of the traffic noise and speed level might be seasonal or temporary due to construction around Central Square. In any case, neighborhood residents have, over the years, suggested speed bumps and raised crosswalks to reduce speeds and possibly lower the noise from revving engines and motorcycles. However, what they know is anecdotal. They do not know the problem's scale and scope or how to mitigate it. They respectfully request that the City consider conducting a study that examines:

- Vehicle traffic volumes and patterns on School St.
- Vehicle speeds and the prevalence of speeding when the 20-mph speed limit should be enforced
- The extent to which School St. functions as a cut-through route for drivers seeking to avoid Central Square and other downtown congestion
- Pedestrian- and school-related safety conditions, such as how safe it is for bicyclists
- Traffic noise, particularly from motorcycles and vehicles with missing or modified mufflers
- Potential opportunities for traffic calming, safety improvements, and other appropriate measures, such as adding a “School Zone” sign closer to the intersection of West St. and School St.

Mr. Hilchey continued that he, his wife, and other neighbors believe a careful, data-informed assessment would provide a clearer understanding of the current conditions and help identify whether changes are warranted. Keene’s downtown and surrounding neighborhoods are closely interconnected. The downtown revitalization program is critical to the city, but maintaining a vibrant central business district should not come at the expense of the safety, livability, and residential character of nearby streets. They respectfully ask the City to consider this and to work with the neighborhood residents to evaluate possible next steps.

Chair Greenwald thanked Mr. Hilchey for his clear, well-written presentation.

City Manager Elizabeth Ferland stated that she knows School St. is a cut-through, and currently it is a detour, depending on where the construction is happening around Central Square. The street is seeing increased traffic, which will happen throughout the downtown project. As the construction work continues to move, the side streets nearby will be used as detours. This will be a continued concern for several years. She noticed that Public Works put up a speed sign on School St., so they were already gathering some information when Mr. Hilchey’s letter came in. Public Works can get a good sense of traffic counts and speeds. Regarding the letter’s other suggestions, traffic concerns are an issue throughout the city, especially in neighborhoods. Staff have heard that many times and they try to take actions to mitigate that. It is somewhat limited in nature, but they are happy to continue the conversations. She asks the MSFI Committee to refer Mr. Hilchey’s letter to staff, so staff can look at it and then report back.

Chair Greenwald asked for public comments.

Sunny Art (of 150 Court St.) stated that her house is on the corner of School St. She continued that she also emailed this week, because the corner is “a nightmare” and has only gotten worse with the new traffic. People are aggressive, especially when people on School St. are trying to turn left on Court St. and there are drivers, cyclists, pedestrians crossing, the school, and the bus stop. Traffic and problems have increased. They need to figure something out.

Mr. Hilchey stated that he and his wife have to do what they call “budging,” nudging their car out a little bit into the intersection on Court St. just to get enough attention to get into the flow of traffic. He continued that otherwise, you could sit for five or ten minutes, trying to get in. He

does not know whether the location needs traffic control devices. Maybe it needs temporary alternatives. They cannot just rely on citizen friendliness to make that easier. Budging could lead to accidents.

Ms. Art replied that she, too, wondered about a traffic light and then thought that would probably make it worse. She continued that maybe not allowing left turns onto Court St., or something like that, would help.

Chair Greenwald replied that staff will think about everything possible. He continued that he does not know whether it is legal, but he would like to see an individual flagger assisting.

Nancy Ancharski (of 60 School St.) stated that she has lived on School St. since 1993. She continued that the traffic problems, especially the speeds, have increased dramatically. She is glad to not have young children at home anymore, because the speeds are sometimes scary. People stop at the stop sign but then speed up to make up the difference. Mr. Hilchey replied that he can confirm that people are regularly speeding ten miles per hour beyond the limit in the mornings and afternoons when it is supposed to be 20 mph.

Councilor Tobin stated that while walking on School St., she noticed that only about two out of ten drivers stopped at the stop signs. She continued that at the turn onto Court St. near Leverett St., you cannot see around the corner if you stop where the line is. That might be a problem. Chair Greenwald agreed that drivers “pause” at the stop signs.

Councilor Workman stated that she thinks it is well-known that she is always pushing for more speeding enforcement and solutions to traffic problems, but as a Colorado St. resident, she understands what Mr. Hilchey and the neighbors are saying. She, too, regularly sees what they are describing. She is sure the City Manager will have some creative options for the Committee.

The following motion by Councilor Favolise was duly seconded by Councilor Tobin.

On a vote of 4 to 0, the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee recommends referring the request for a traffic study and safety assessment of School St. to staff for a report back.

2. Michael Guitard/Guitard Homes LLC – Petition for City Ownership of Water and Sewer Infrastructure – Cottage Court Community on Court Street

Michael Guitard of Guitard Homes LLC stated that this application’s benefit to the City is that maintenance of the water lines tied to the City infrastructure would ensure that water quality was maintained. He continued that there will be an additional hydrant adjacent to Genesis Healthcare. A looped water line will maintain the pressure in the neighborhood.

Chair Greenwald added that for those unaware, this is on Court St. by Genesis Healthcare. He continued that the big, cleared area is about to be housing.

Don Lussier, Public Works Director, stated that as Mr. Guitard explained, this is a petition to accept infrastructure as public infrastructure. He continued that Chapter 23 of the Land Development Code (LDC) spells out that process. The additional documents in the agenda packet are all the items the LDC requires for a petition of this nature. The design for the water distribution system on site meets the public infrastructure standards, regarding the size of mains, standard hydrants, valves, and so on and so forth. Public mains would supply individual services lines to each dwelling unit. The valves and hydrants would be owned and maintained by the City. City staff could flush the water mains as part of their biannual program and ensure the water quality in the mains is maintained. The City would own and operate the individual curb stops serving the dwelling units. Thus, if City staff turns and breaks a valve, fixing it would be the City's responsibility, since the City would be maintaining them. Since the City would be maintaining them, the City would have reasonable expectations that they be working when they need them.

Mr. Lussier continued that the individual dwelling units will be owned by the tenants as condominiums. There is a plan, included in the agenda packet, to create a condominium for this property. That allows the City to use a state law element to attach liens to real property in order to collect water and sewer utility debt. Without encumbering the entire development, the City could attach a lien to just a single tenant space.

Mr. Lussier continued that regarding Mr. Guitard's request, staff does not have a preference. It is a City Council decision. The City would be responsible for the care and maintenance of an additional 1,200 linear feet of water mains and sewer lines. That adds cost to annual maintenance. On the other hand, it would be public infrastructure, and the City could maintain it, ensure water quality, ensure the sewer lines were cleaned regularly, and provide reliable service to those homes.

Chair Greenwald asked if there would be any reason to not approve this. Mr. Lussier replied that as he said, staff does not have a strong opinion. He continued that the only reason to not approve it would be the additional maintenance costs and liability the City would be taking on. He continued that eventually, many years from now, the City would have to replace the mains.

Councilor Favolise asked Mr. Lussier to explain the rationale for why there is a different approach for condominium-style developments as opposed to other residential uses. Mr. Lussier replied that water quality will always be the primary concern. He continued that with public infrastructure City staff can take actions to ensure water quality. If they have a problem with the water quality, they can flush it through a standard-sized hydrant. The six-inch barrel hydrant allows them to get proper flushing velocities and clean that line, whereas a two-inch blow-off would not. A smaller line is fine for bleeding the air out, but it would not allow them to flush the main and get the needed velocity of water in the pipe to mobilize the sediment. The other issue is related to collections and revenue. It would be difficult to justify turning off water to an entire development because a single tenant did not pay their bill, but if there is a real property that is defined as part of a condominium, the City can attach the lien to the condo owner.

Chair Greenwald asked for public comments or questions. Hearing none, he asked if the Committee had further comments.

Councilor Workman stated that she thinks this is a normal tradeoff for the City, as far as encouraging housing development. She continued that as new housing is built, she is sure the City Council will continue to run into these types of issues. She is in favor of approving this.

Chair Greenwald stated that most importantly, this is being constructed to City standards. He continued that that is very important, because they might hear about the City taking over the road, too, in the future. Mr. Lussier replied that that is not a conversation at this point.

The following motion by Councilor Workman was duly seconded by Councilor Tobin.

On a vote of 4 to 0, the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee recommends accepting the water and sewer infrastructure proposed to be constructed as part of the proposed Cottage Court Development on Court St. (Parcel No. 228-016), including valves, hydrants, manholes and other appurtenances, but excluding individual dwelling unit service connections, be accepted as Public Infrastructure. Approval and final acceptance shall be subject to the conditions and requirements listed in Article 23.2.2, 23.2.3 and 23.2.4 of the Land Development Code.

3. Shawn Voisine/Elmside LLC – Request for Waiver of City Public Utilities Standards for Water Metering Infrastructure – Elmside Cottage Court
Staff Recommendation: Elmside Cottage Court Petition to Waive Public Utility Standards - City Engineer

Chair Greenwald stated that previously, he had stated he felt he had a conflict, since his office was possibly involved in the project, which it is no longer. Therefore, he has no conflict. He asked to hear from Shawn Voisine.

Shawn Voisine (of Surry) stated that Fieldstone designed Elmside Cottage Court, and they were all under the impression that it was public. He continued that there is a lot of confusion. He is not pointing fingers, but they thought it was public, and then it came up that it is private. They were asked to put a heated shed in for a main water meter. They are looking to have that waived for a few reasons. If there is a power outage, it could freeze, disrupting water to all 18 homes. The other issues are accurate and fair billing, and increased costs for residents. They want to have it set up the way it is for normal people. His request is a little different than the prior item. Initially, he was going to go with the request for the City to accept the infrastructure as public, but because of where they are at, he figured this would be an easier avenue. The easement is already drawn in, if the City needed to come do a shut off. Each home would have a curb stop and individual meter, and easements would be in place.

Mr. Lussier stated that for this request, unfortunately, the answer is different. As Mr. Voisine explained, they are requesting a waiver to public infrastructure standards. The standard is in Section 23.3.11.e of the LDC. It says, “*The owner of water service into a commercial, industrial, or institutional building or use shall install, maintain, and inspect, at their own expense, a backflow prevention device approved by the Public Works Director.*” In this instance, a property with 18 dwelling units qualifies as commercial use. Staff interprets it as the property needing a

backflow prevention system. The backflow prevention, as the developer explained, has to be above ground in an enclosed structure that protects it from freezing. The meter would also go in that same building. The differences are related to ownership and responsibility for the infrastructure. This project meets the definition of a commercial project because it is three or more dwelling units on a single parcel. The distribution system is not under City control, so the City cannot ensure the water quality to the individual tenants. The valves and blowoffs on the property are not owned or operated by the City. Mr. Voisine expressed willingness to give the City an easement so City staff could operate individual valves to turn off tenant spaces if need be, but they would still be owned by the property owner. Thus, if City staff breaks something or something is not functioning, who is responsible for repairing it at that point is a concern. The other piece is the state law about collections. The City is allowed to attach a lien to real property for an unpaid bill, but he does not believe the City would be able to attach a lien to the entirety of this parcel if one individual tenant had not paid their bill.

Mr. Lussier continued that he understands that this agenda item seems similar to the previous one, but there are differences. The distribution system is not built to City standards, does not have the features the City would need in order to maintain it and ensure the water quality was maintained, and will not be operated by the City so City staff cannot ensure the valves were working properly when needed. For those reasons, staff recommends against this waiver request.

Chair Greenwald stated that he assumes that with some time spent working with the Petitioner, they could work out solutions to these issues. Mr. Lussier replied that staff have discussed with the Petitioner the alternative of going the route of the previous item, building the system to Public Infrastructure Standards, and requesting and petitioning the City Council to accept it as public infrastructure. Then they would be in the same boat. It is about control of the water mains and water quality more than anything else.

Councilor Favolise stated that he is still trying to wrap his head around the thrust of his previous question. He continued that he keeps coming back to the fairness in billing issue. It does not make sense to him, as someone who has never lived in a condominium complex. Maybe that is normal for condominiums and people accept that as the community-building aspect, but he is still thinking through it. The City Engineer's memorandum to the City Council said none of the conditions that would lead to a recommendation for granting the waiver seem to be met here. He asked what they would need to see, for staff to recommend granting a waiver.

Mr. Lussier replied that the waiver process in Section 23 is to make a request to the City Engineer. That is why the City Engineer wrote a memorandum, as the one responsible for making written recommendations to the City Council. The changes staff would recommend, if the Committee was inclined to recommend granting the waiver, would be that the infrastructure be built to Public Infrastructure Standards. Even if they did not want to request the petition that they accept it for public maintenance now, it would put the infrastructure in the ground where the City could take over and be able to maintain the water quality in the future if that became an issue.

City Attorney Amanda Palmeira stated that in the LDC, Section 23.6 – Waivers does not lay out a very good test. It says, *“requests for waivers from this Article are to be made to the City*

Engineer, who shall make a written recommendation to the City Council.” She continued that the only substantive guidance for the MSFI Committee is Section 23.6.C, which says, “In no case shall financial hardship be used to justify the granting of a waiver.”

Mr. Voisine stated that the intent was for it to be public, and it sounds like that is what people want anyway, but they were told that it is private. He was confused and surprised when he was told that it had always been private. Chair Greenwald replied that Mr. Voisine will need to figure it out with the Public Works Director or whoever Mr. Voisine’s consultant might be, the site planner or engineer. Mr. Voisine replied that if the recommendation is to go public, that would be great. Chair Greenwald replied that it is different piping and different technology and he does not want to get into those particulars here. Mr. Voisine replied that he understands they would have to meet the standards. That would be fine. Fieldstone, the designer, told him it was public, but Public Works staff said no, it is private. He continued that he was asked for easements in the prints. This has been a series of confusions. Chair Greenwald replied that Fieldstone can talk with Public Works and figure out what is going on.

The following motion by Councilor Tobin was duly seconded by Councilor Favolise.

On a vote of 4 to 0, the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee recommends denying the Petitioner’s request to waive City of Keene Public Works standards for the referenced project.

Councilor Favolise asked the City Attorney, for clarity, if it is correct that this action tonight would not preclude whatever could come out of a future conversation with Public Works.

The City Attorney replied that is correct. She continued that it would just be about the specific waiver the Petitioner has presented that he is looking for.

4. Kenneth Kost – Request for a Comprehensive Planning Study of the Gilbo Avenue Site Prior to Solar Pavilion Development

Chair Greenwald stated that with Ken Kost’s letter is an additional submittal, because Mr. Kost was not available for tonight’s meeting. He continued that he fully agrees that the City needs a comprehensive plan for Gilbo Ave. It is a blank slate full of opportunities.

The City Manager stated that staff let Mr. Kost know they are planning to do a Plan NH Charrette for Gilbo Ave. She continued that they had been waiting for the potential transfer of ownership of a piece of property on Gilbo Ave., and that is getting close. Plan NH has a rolling process for applications, so the City could apply at any time. She has asked the Community Development Department to start that process to apply for a charrette. Staff agree that a charrette would be helpful. There have been some planning documents for Gilbo Ave. in the past, and a charrette-type process by Arts Alive, but this is a good time to move forward with a Plan NH Charrette. She is not sure when that would be; it will take some time for that to happen. She hopes they do not hold up the solar pavilion while that process is moving forward.

Councilor Tobin stated that her question is how it would work if they were to create a plan for this space, considering that it would need to be budgeted, probably put into the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), and built out. She wonders how that would compare to how long the solar panels would last if they were to build a solar pavilion now.

The City Manager replied that the difference here is that the Plan NH Charrette would be for all of Gilbo Ave., not just the small area the solar pavilion is planned for. The Charrette would be a much larger plan, and to go through that process, you have to apply to Plan NH and pay the \$6,500 fee, and then it takes several months to get it ready. Then, Plan NH comes with designers, for about three days, and produces a result. It would take the City several months to go through that process and get into the Plan NH team's schedule. The solar panels should last at least 20 years. Once the City builds the structure, they have a responsibility to maintain it, because it is being built with federal funds. The Committee will hear in the next agenda item that staff have awarded the contract for preliminary design of the solar pavilion design, and the City has spent approximately \$60,000 that they need to get reimbursed by the federal grant. However, if the Council does not want to move forward with the solar pavilion at all anymore, they would need to find a way to pay for that \$60,000 that has been spent.

The City Manager continued that the Public Works Department, since the last Committee meeting, has looked at other potential solar pavilion locations that have come out of the public workshops and the last Committee meeting. Maybe hearing Public Works' presentation about that would help the Committee so they could think about both things at the same time. She thinks the Plan NH Charrette is a great idea, and she has asked the Community Development Department to start the process, but it will take a while, and they are under a timeline to build the solar pavilion according to the federal grant they accepted.

The following motion by Councilor Favolise was duly seconded by Councilor Workman.

On a vote of 4 to 0, the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee recommends accepting the request for a Comprehensive Planning Study of the Gilbo Avenue Site Prior to Solar Pavilion Development as informational.

5. Gilbo Avenue Solar Pavilion Conceptual Design - City Engineer

Mr. Lussier stated that he wanted to clarify something. As he read Mr. Kost's letter today, it occurred to him that Mr. Kost was focused on the 1.9-acre site. His concerns about not being able to redevelop that site for some higher or better use are only applicable for two of the five options that he and the City Engineer will be presenting tonight for the solar pavilion. That is something to keep in mind. Mr. Kost's request would be relevant to Options 2 and 3, but the other options are a separate site and would not affect the redevelopment of the Commercial St. lot.

Bryan Ruoff, City Engineer, stated that they will go through the status update of where they are with the Gilbo Ave. Solar Pavilion, based on public feedback, feedback from the MSFI Committee, and additional options staff looked at based on that feedback. He continued that a slide summarizes what was included in the Timber for Transit grant application, that the overall

intent of the structure/facility is as an arts and culture corridor. Everyone thinks of it as a solar pavilion, but the solar pavilion is the “frosting on the cake.” The artistic license on the timber structure is really the draw for this original idea and grant.

Mr. Ruoff continued that at the public engagement meeting and MSFI Committee meeting in July, they went over three concept designs. Concept Option 1 – Monoslope Roof is a modest slope, more typical for a solar pavilion. Concept Option 2 is a Checkmark Roof, and Concept Option 3 is a Gable Roof. Based on all the feedback staff has received today, he would say about 70% of people prefer Concept Option 1. Almost no one is interested in Concept Option 2; they rightfully have concerns about it, based on the New England climate. There has been some interest in Concept Option 3, but not enough to be more than the interest in Concept Option 1. Given the cost increase difference between Concept Options 1 and 3, the City would need to incorporate the additional costs of Concept Option 3 into the design. It does not fall within the budget they envisioned and received a grant for.

Mr. Ruoff continued that in the September community engagement session, they incorporated input from the public and the MSFI Committee. They looked at three locations, with Location Option 1 being the original one described in the grant. Location Option 2 is within the parking area, just on the other side of the trees. Location Option 3 split the pavilion into two pavilions. That would add costs as well, so almost no one from the public was interested in that. They disposed of Location Option 3 and looked at the other options discussed at the community engagement meeting. Staff came out of that meeting with five options to look at:

- Location Option 1 - the original location as described in the grant.
- Location Option 2 - the location on the northern side of the internal limits of the parking lot
- Location Option 3 - on the southern side across from the other parking area
- Location Option 4 - in the Gilbo West lot immediately adjacent to Syd's
- Location Option 5 - within the Wilson St. right-of-way

Mr. Ruoff continued that from a solar standpoint, Location Option 5 would be quite difficult to configure. They would likely need a different structure from the preferred structure. The City does not own the location, so costs would increase and the City would need to contribute to those unplanned costs.

Mr. Ruoff continued that Location Option 1 has already been through the extensive, year-long permitting process through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). It checks all the boxes for federal funding compliance to ensure the site location is acceptable. All the other options would need the NEPA review. It would cost about \$40,000 for any other site, for the engineering and associated survey.

Mr. Lussier stated that the slide shows what he said earlier very well. He continued that Location Options 2 and 3 are on the Commercial St. lot, which is a separately defined parcel. Location Options 1 and 4 would not affect that 1.9-acre site. Location Option 1 is part of the Gilbo Ave. right-of-way, so it would be within the public highway.

Chair Greenwald stated that he appreciates that Public Works looked at Location Options 4 and 5, which he himself was interested in hearing more about, but for clarification, Location Option 5 was to look at the adjacent parking spaces, not the skate park itself. Mr. Lussier replied that he apologizes; he thought they were talking about the old skate park. Chair Greenwald replied that he was not, because he realizes there is a hope to straighten Wilson St., which would involve the skate park.

Mr. Ruoff continued that they determined pros and cons of each option. Location Option 1 was the identified one and Stantec created about a dozen conceptual designs. It is located close to the electrical cabinet they will tie into. The biggest benefit would be utilizing the electricity generated by the solar panels and putting it directly into the City's grid, rather than putting it back into the grid and getting the cost of electricity back at a discounted rate. They would be using that direct electricity to power downtown's lights and offset those costs. Other pros of Location Option 1 are:

- It is within the NEPA documented and permitted area that has already been surveyed.
- It is close to downtown, not in an isolated area, which was the intent as described in the grant.
- It is immediately adjacent to the Transportation Heritage Trail
- It is within the project budget
- It supports community events and downtown activities well, but if the opening were on the Gilbo Ave. side, they would need to close Gilbo Ave. to have a concert or event
- It does not develop the existing parking lot, so future potential development of the lot will not be impacted by the proposed solar pavilion design

Mr. Ruoff continued that Location Option 2 is inside the existing parking lot and aligns generally with the Timber for Transit grant application with some minor variations. It is not that far from Location Option 1. It is a high solar efficiency area, probably higher than Location Option 1 because there is no shading from trees. The Location Option 1 would have about a 30% reduction in efficiency of the unit, but it would still be enough power for all the lights downtown. Other pros of Location Option 2 are:

- It acts as an extension of downtown Keene
- It is within the project budget
- It supports community events

Mr. Ruoff continued that some cons of Location Option 2, not associated with Location Option 1, are:

- Impacts to traffic and truck circulation within the lot
- The loss of some parking spaces
- Costs associated with additional permitting and surveying that was not done in the preliminary design for the grant application
- It would preclude development of the parking area

Mr. Ruoff continued that Location Option 3 is similar, except it is the mirror of Location Option 2. With Location Option 3, the slope would be southern facing, whereas with Location Option 2, the southern facing would be pointed at the travel lanes/aisle. Location Option 3 is thus better in that aspect. It would not create that potential hazard of snow falling on people coming out from underneath the pavilion. Other pros of Location Option 3 are:

- It aligns with the Timber for Transit grant application
- It has high solar efficiency
- It supports community events
- It is within the project budget

Mr. Ruoff continued that the cons are similar to those of Location Option 2. Both have the disadvantage of precluding future development of the parking lot for anything else.

Mr. Ruoff continued that Location Option 4 is across the street in Gilbo West. It has high solar efficiency. Public Works staff have heard that some groups who are planning on using the solar pavilion likely would not use it in this location. People also have concerns about how truck movements would work, as it is a shared access for Syd's. There are concerns about feasibility or the need to do a smaller shape because of that. Based on the square footage area, it would generate the same amount of electricity, so there is no offset in that case. This location is further from the electrical cabinet, so there would be some road trenching and restoration and associated costs.

Mr. Ruoff continued that for Location Option 5, they looked at Wilson St. but view it as a non-starter. If the City ever got that property back, they would want to realign Wilson St. to be a straight shot through and correct the current awkwardness of getting through the parking lot. With solar structures built on this lot, that Wilson St. realignment would be very difficult or impossible. Mr. Lussier replied that they could build half of the structure in the parking stalls just to the east of where the slide shows.

Chair Greenwald replied that he appreciates them considering Location Option 5, but he eliminated it as an option in his mind, due to not being big enough. He visited Farmer's Market last week and it was completely full.

Councilor Favolise stated that he appreciates how Public Works listened to the Committee's feedback about the scheduling of the community engagement session and then rescheduled the session to give as many engagement opportunities as possible. It seems like it was well attended and went well.

Councilor Favolise continued that Mr. Kost's letter references 36,000 kilowatt hours of power per year, and Mr. Kost says that the return on investment would take 62 years. He asked where that number comes from, versus the numbers staff are showing. Mr. Lussier replied that he is not sure where Mr. Kost's number came from. He continued that with Location Option 1, the shading from trees would affect the panels' efficiency. He believes it would be 60,000 kilowatt hours per year. It would be about 90,000 kilowatt hours per year for Location Options 2 or 3. The consultant who looked at this gave staff a straight-line payback of a little over 20 years. He

does not think anyone is arguing that this is the most lucrative solar project the City will do. That has not been the goal. This project was inspired by the arts and culture corridor. It was advanced through the grant to meet a specific goal, which was based on conversations with the Energy and Climate Committee and the Conservation Commission about the Downtown Infrastructure Project, trying to balance more trees downtown and advancing the City's renewable energy goals. The solar pavilion project was the way for the City to accomplish both of those things, offsetting the use of electricity in the downtown with renewable energy, while also having good tree cover downtown. This was not created or envisioned to be like the solar project the City is doing at the Airport, which is clearly lucrative and economically driven.

Councilor Favolise stated that last time, he spoke about supporting the simplest, least expensive, monoslope design. He hears that the inception of this was more about activating the space and pulling people down Gilbo Ave. and spurring some of the development in the area that Mr. Kost is interested in. He would like to see this pencil out as quickly as possible. His question is about the impact of the trees in this area, because he has heard a couple different things about that. The shading is one thing. He asked if Location Option 1 includes looking at cutting trees back. Mr. Lussier replied no. That was a clearly articulated concern at both community engagement sessions. The reason Location Option 1 would produce 30% less energy is the shading analysis the consultant did. They might need to trim lower limbs so they do not rub on the panels, but the analysis said they did not need to remove trees.

Chair Greenwald stated that referencing his observations of the Farmer's Market in action, he wonders why Location Option 1 cannot be moved further into the street. If the vendors were informed that they cannot park their vehicles behind their tents, there would be a lot more room. It would move the pavilion from the trees and reduce the shading. Mr. Lussier replied that during the first session, staff heard that people wanted to see the structure's posts not in the parking spaces. One of the amendments staff made between the first and second engagement session is a proposal to widen the sidewalk along Gilbo Ave. The structure will extend over Gilbo Ave. where the vehicles parked, but sidewalk will surround the posts and allow for the customers to be on the sidewalk while the vendors are in the parking stalls.

Chair Greenwald replied that sounds good, and it moves the structure away from the trees, which is also good. Mr. Lussier replied that they might be able to find additional efficiencies as they get further into the design. He continued that as they have said, this roof is larger than needed just to supply the downtown. For the economic analysis, they have assumed the same number of panels, but they have always assumed a portion of them would be "dummy panels," just clear panels. They might be able to push the panels that are generating the power further up on the slope, further away from the trees, and optimize production. The next iteration of the design process would answer that question.

Chair Greenwald asked why there would be dummy panels. Mr. Lussier replied that they scoped this in the grant for a 75-kilowatt system. That roof could generate a lot more power if it had nothing but solar panels, but it would also cost a lot more. Based on the funding available through the grant and the City's match, the 75-kilowatt system is the size the City could afford.

Councilor Workman asked, regarding Location Option 2, what would happen to the EV chargers that are currently in that location. She asked staff to go into more detail about the impacts to traffic and truck circulation and the elimination of existing parking.

Mr. Ruoff replied that the EV charging stations would need to be relocated, which is a con of Location Option 2. Since this is internal to the parking lot and fits exactly to the depth of the spaces, they would probably lose a couple of spaces on each end and install something like a raised granite curb to protect the structure from getting hit from within the site by, say, a vehicle backing into it or a plow truck running into it. The original location utilized for the grant application is offset from the road. There is about 1.5 times what they need for that space for the structure, so it provides some separation and they know the structure would be protected. For both locations inside the parking lot, it would be right within those stalls and even extending a bit into the aisle, in order to get that structure in.

Mr. Lussier stated that a surprising amount of truck traffic uses this lot, for restaurant deliveries and load-in and load-out of Colonial Theatre shows. He continued that one specific corner, where trucks try to turn from the parking lot onto Gilbo Ave., is the radius staff would have to look carefully at. It would probably result in a shorter structure.

Councilor Favolise stated that for Location Option 2, he recognizes that there would be additional cost to go through the NEPA permitting process again. He continued that he hears that the amount of solar power generated was not how this project was initially conceptualized, but there is such a significant difference in the estimates for annual solar power generation. Payback would come so much sooner with Location Option 2. He leans towards Location Option 2 despite the challenges staff have raised.

Councilor Favolise continued that they are hearing tonight about maintaining this structure in perpetuity. He asked if there is clarification on whether it has to be maintained in perpetuity in this exact way in this exact location. He is thinking about the potential future development question and what that might mean. Mr. Lussier replied that he has not seen the restrictive language that they would need to agree to. He continued that he does not think it would be in perpetuity; it is more likely for the lifespan of the structure and system.

Chair Greenwald stated that the Committee has two or three decisions to make. He asked if they wanted to pick a location and a configuration. Whatever they decide, if they go forward, he expects the design to return to the Committee for final approval, so they know tonight is not their last opportunity for comments.

Councilor Tobin stated that she is still comfortable with Location Option 1. Especially with the expanded sidewalk, which would activate the space in the way she thought they had initially discussed, as an arts corridor. She is also comfortable with Location Option 2. To Councilor Favolise's point about the significant difference in electricity, the city's electricity use is increasing, and to obtain and maintain the City's renewable energy goals, it would not hurt to have the surplus as an option.

Councilor Workman stated that she knows the MSFI Committee is not the FOP Committee, but her question is whether the \$1.5 million cost for Location Option 2 includes the changes such as moving the EV chargers, or if that is just the cost of constructing the pavilion itself. Mr. Ruoff replied it is just the cost of the structure. He continued that the added costs, between the additional engineering and moving the EV charging stations, would be about \$75,000 to \$80,000. Mr. Lussier stated that the total grant amount for this project, with the local match, was \$2.1 million. He thinks either option is within the City's budget. He is fairly confident that if they decided on this other site, relocating the EV chargers would still be an eligible cost that would be covered by the grant.

The City Manager asked if they could add more panels to bring up the production of Location Option 1. Mr. Lussier replied that they could add more panels, but there would still be efficiency loss caused by shading.

Chair Greenwald stated that the area called "Location Option 2" is used for Farmer's Market overflow. Mr. Lussier replied that both sides are used. Chair Greenwald stated that if they start out with Location Option 2, they will run out of space quickly, maybe putting Farmer's Market back into Gilbo Ave. Mr. Lussier replied that Location Option 1 would still not completely cover all the vendors. About half of the vendors would be covered, with either option. Chair Greenwald replied that the overflow would go to the Location Option 2 area. Mr. Lussier agreed. Chair Greenwald replied that if they start out with only the Location Option 2 area, the overflow would go back into the street, which is not good. Mr. Lussier replied that every time he has been to Farmer's Market, both sides have been nearly full. Chair Greenwald replied that his hesitancy about the location was his hope to see a multi-story building with retail on the ground floor and housing on the second and third floors, but he thinks the timeline would not work to do that. At best, it would have to be advertised, and they would have to find a developer, and it would take years. By then, the whole solar pavilion concept would be aged out. Thus, his choice would be Location Option 1. He has come around.

The following motion by Councilor Workman was duly seconded by Councilor Tobin.

The Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee recommends Location Option 2 be selected as the preferred alternative, and that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to complete the design for the Gilbo Avenue Solar Pavilion Project.

Councilor Favolise stated that he will support the motion, but he would like to continue conversations with staff around the City Manager's idea of potentially packing more solar panels on there as additional eligible costs to maybe get Location Option 1 closer. If they could split the difference here, he would be interested in that, but as things stand right now and as presented, he cannot vote against the significant difference in energy generation and the shortened payback time.

The motion passed on a vote of 3 to 1. Chair Greenwald was opposed.

The City Manager stated that Councilor Favolise said he was still interested in what would happen if they added more panels to Location Option 1 and what those numbers mean. She does

not know if it is possible to have that information before next week's Council meeting. Once they decide on an option, they will start the final design process. Mr. Ruoff and Mr. Lussier replied that they will do their best to have that information before the Council meeting.

Chair Greenwald asked staff to review the roof concepts for the Committee to choose from. Mr. Lussier listed the three roof concepts again. He continued that he personally prefers the gable roof (Concept Option 3), but its structural supports would be in the parking stalls and they would get damaged, so he cannot recommend it.

Councilor Tobin stated that she is struggling. She continued that she loves the look of the gable roof.

The following motion by Councilor Tobin was duly seconded by Councilor Workman.

The Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee recommends Concept Option 1 with the flat, monoslope roof be selected as the preferred alternative for the Gilbo Avenue Solar Pavilion.

Andy Bohannon, Deputy City Manager, asked if the slope of the roof will need to be changed if they switch it to the other side. He continued that right now, the angle is going up into the street. Mr. Lussier replied that it would still be angled to the south. He continued that they would just pick up the structure and move it 40 feet south. Mr. Bohannon replied that he is asking because vehicles coming in will be at the shallower end. Mr. Lussier replied that the structure will be tall enough so that normal vehicles will still be able to park there.

Chair Greenwald stated that he prefers the gable roof.

The motion passed on a vote of 3 to 1. Chair Greenwald was opposed.

6. Partner City Committee – Annual Report

John Mitchell (of 6 Hilltop Dr.) stated that he is the Chair of the PCC. He continued that the Einbeck/Keene partnership started about 25 years ago among some friends who worked at Schleicher and Schuell and occasionally traveled to Einbeck, Germany. Some German people traveled to Keene, and friendships quickly built. It was soon picked up by the City of Keene. As soon as some of the politicians talked with each other, a formal agreement to become sister cities was formed. Since then, the PCC's activities have grown exponentially. Last year, they had 65 German guests, just in October. That does not reflect the other exchanges that came throughout the year as well. The PCC helps foster the development of private exchanges that include schools, sport groups, and social groups. They are working on Rotary, golf, and pickleball, for example. The PCC, through the City, works to help build connections and friendships between Keene and Einbeck. It has been hugely successful, and it is growing all the time.

Mr. Mitchell continued that he would like to clarify something people frequently ask him. All of the money the City provides to the PCC is used to host groups that come from Germany or to help foster the development of exchanges from Keene. The PCC gave support to groups of

singers, dancers, and students. As hard as the PCC works, the \$5,000 does not go as far as it did 20 years ago. They also fundraise as much as they can. Just like every other group, they are short of funds, but again, they have been successful and they are growing. At the first PCC meeting this year, he said they have to be careful about their success because they are getting much bigger. That is what is happening now. For example, last year, the German Consulate General from Boston found the PCC on the internet, communicated with them, and came up to visit, because she was shocked the PCC had kept such a long exchange. In her experience, these types of exchanges do not last this long. The Mayor informed him that the new German Consulate General is also interested in meeting with the PCC. His latest communication with their community in Einbeck is that they are now in contact with the US Consulate for Einbeck. This is something the City should be proud of. He hopes the PCC maintains the City Council's support.

Chair Greenwald thanked Mr. Mitchell for his great presentation.

Mayor Kahn stated that to add to what Mr. Mitchell said, the German Consulate visited Keene three times. He continued that one time was in support of the Cohen Institute's Kristallnacht remembrance at the Colonial Theatre where she was invited as a speaker. She spoke of how Germany addresses Kristallnacht remembrance. Another time was for the Radically Rural event, as she was interested in how they might participate in the future. The Consulate General rotates every four years, and the new Consulate General is coming next Friday. MSFI Committee members are welcome to be present. The Consulate General was interested in doing a briefing and exchanging ideas as to how to further these kinds of relationships, with Keene or other cities in New England. He is coming to brief the 18 people who will be traveling to Einbeck in two weeks. This is an accomplishment of what Mr. Mitchell was describing, a 24-year relationship.

Chair Greenwald stated that he himself, the Mayor, and former Councilor Andrew Madison are among those who are making the journey.

The following motion by Councilor Favolise was duly seconded by Councilor Workman.

On a vote of 4 to 0, the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee recommends accepting the Partner City Committee's presentation as informational.

7. Continued Discussion: Erik Murphy – Petition – Safety Improvements at the South Lincoln Street and Roxbury Street Intersection

Chair Greenwald stated that this agenda item goes with the next one, which is an ordinance for the MSFI Committee to consider. During the Committee's last discussion, they asked the City Attorney to give them a potential ordinance for consideration, if the Committee wants to go the route of the two stop signs. He asked to hear from the Petitioner.

Joan Murphy (of 287 Roxbury St.) stated that she wants to thank the Committee for understanding how serious the concern is on the East Side regarding this intersection, and for their willingness to move forward. She reminds the Committee that a school bus stop is on Roxbury St.'s corners. Many factors impact how challenging the intersection is, including vehicle speeds up and down Roxbury St. and the difficulty in seeing the stop signs on the North

Lincoln St. and South Lincoln St. sides. She thanked Public Works for their attempted adjustments to those signs. Maybe Public Works can improve the line of sight. The Murphys might be part of that. She thanked the Committee and hopes they consider the idea of a four-way stop.

Mr. Ruoff stated that Public Works has reviewed and done engineering studies on this intersection a couple of times. He continued that requests come up approximately every six months. They have implemented some safety-related signs. The area in question is the intersection of Roxbury St., which runs east/west, and South Lincoln St. and North Lincoln St. Under the current conditions, Roxbury St. is the major street, while North and South Lincoln St. are the minor streets, based on traffic volume. Roxbury St. does not have any stop signs. Prior to the turn in either direction, there are warning signs to slow down. North and South Lincoln St. are in a stop condition at the intersection.

Mr. Ruoff continued that Public Works previously looked at this with the East Keene Traffic Study Report and reported earlier this year about this intersection not meeting warrants for recommended changes. Conditions have changed since then. The five or six major accidents within the last year have triggered a warrant for these conditions. Anyone who has been at the intersection will agree that one of the limiting factors is sight distance. There are two types of sight distance, required stopping sight distance and the intersection sight distance. The latter is your ability to see onto the road that you want to turn onto. Stopping sight distance is the car that is in the street making sure they have enough time to stop if something comes out on the street. The only place currently with sufficient sight distance is on North Lincoln St. looking at eastbound traffic. At all other locations at this intersection, maybe if you are lucky on a perfect day with no solar glare, you might get 80 to 100 feet of sight distance. There is not enough sight distance to be able to judge whether a car is coming, how fast, or whether you have time to make it across the intersection.

Mr. Ruoff continued that Public Works thanks the KPD for the summary of accidents. Public Works staff looked at the “conditional accidents,” which are based on the conditions of the intersection, such as being unable to see a car in one direction or the other. Staff noticed that it is almost always a case of a car on North or South Lincoln St. crossing Roxbury St., every time getting hit by a car in Roxbury St. that they were unable to see. This shows how sight distance is an issue nearly every time.

Mr. Ruoff continued that Public Works staff looked at a few corrective actions. Some were non-starters based on the associated costs. A four-way stop is a possibility, but it would create some conditions where they would now be putting themselves in non-compliance. From Roxbury St. approaching Lincoln St., the amount of stopping sight distance is less than what is required for that. Thus, for a driver coming that direction to see the stop sign and be able to have enough to stop, the City would be creating a condition that they would not be meeting that required stop distance there. There would also be some issues with driver familiarity, putting a stop sign where it has not been prevalent and having that be performed correctly. Thus, Public Works has concerns about the four-way stop option.

Mr. Ruoff continued that another option would be a raised intersection. It would slow down cars, but of course, if your muscle memory going through that area is driving a certain speed, not slowing down or stopping, there is potential for launching off that raised intersection. Increased costs would also be associated with it. Flashing traffic lights, while another option, would not be telling anyone anything new. People creep out at North and South Lincoln St. because they know they cannot see. They get out into Roxbury St. before they make that turn. It is already a yield condition based on how people are acting, so there would not be a lot of benefit for the cost there. The option of a roundabout is a non-starter, given the cost. The other option, based on how bad staff noticed the lines of sight were, would be to clear those lines of sight so they can get the required line of sight distance. To do so, the City would need easements and cooperation from the property owners on all four corners. The Public Works Director has met with all the property owners within this intersection and could speak to that.

Mr. Lussier stated that staff has met with four of the five property owners that are identified here. The fifth one is a rental unit, and they have not been able to make contact with them yet. Staff spoke with the owners of the four properties immediately adjacent to the intersection. He is encouraged. It reaffirms his faith in human nature to report that all four have been amenable and receptive to the idea of granting the City these easements. There are obviously still details to work out. These easements would have impacts to their properties. The property owners have recognized the concern, and they are willing to work with the City to try and fix it. A slide shows how the sight lines are encumbered by a fence on one of the properties. They would remove the fence. They do not plan to remove the large tree on the corner, but the owner would let the City remove some bushes on the western side of the property.

Mr. Lussier stated the con with the sight distance easement, is it would remain the property owner's property, but it would have restrictions as to what could go there. For example, the property owner could have grass, low-growing shrubs, or plants up to two- or three-feet tall, as long as drivers could see over it. If something started growing too tall, City staff would have the right to go in and remove the vegetation or obstruction to maintain the easement. On the northeast corner, there are no visual obstructions. However, they thought it made sense to document that and create that easement, if the property owner is amenable, so that some future owner does not put a fence or obstruction there. The property owner is amenable to that. The issue on the southeast corner is mostly vegetation. There is no fence, but staff would want to remove a tree on the corner, a few shrubs along the South Lincoln St. side, and some vegetation on the eastern edge of the property. The property owner is amenable to that.

Mr. Lussier continued that lastly, he met with the Petitioners to discuss their property. The Murphys are probably the ones who would be most impacted by this concept. They have a nice privacy hedge along Roxbury St. and along South Lincoln St. City staff would be requesting to remove all the shrubs on Roxbury St. and pulling the shrubs on South Lincoln St. back about 14 feet. He discussed different options with Ms. Murphy today, such as a lower hedge or keeping the hedge in that location at a lower elevation, but the Murphys would have a significant impact. The Murphys are open to discussing it and they have not committed to anything at this point, which he thinks is completely reasonable and fair. He believes, as Mr. Ruoff pointed out, that sight distance is the number one contributing factor to the safety concerns at this intersection,

and staff's number one recommendation is to try to get these sight distances improved, before they do anything more expensive or more invasive.

Mr. Ruoff stated that those sight distance easements and the clearing they have coordinated with the property owners would essentially quadruple the existing sight distance. It would expand it to nearly the furthest extent possible. Based on that, staff would recommend that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to negotiate and obtain these sight distance easements and that City staff review and assess the improvements and associated conditions with the intersection in six months to determine if additional measures are then required, or if the conditions at the intersection have improved significantly.

Mr. Lussier added that in a nutshell, their recommendation is to start with cleaning up the sight distances, and to not do a four-way stop or anything more extensive until they see what difference that makes.

Chair Greenwald replied that he thinks cleaning up the sight distances is imperative. Even if they wanted a four-way stop, they need the sight lines. It makes sense to him.

Councilor Favolise stated that he appreciates the menu of options. It strikes him that this addresses a significant part of the problem, but not all. He does not drive in this area often. The speed of vehicles on the road, particularly coming down the hill, is scary. The Committee heard that a lot from neighborhood residents at the last Committee meeting. One reason he really liked the idea of some sort of speed table or the raised intersection was that although it would rock a couple of drivers' suspensions, it would only do that for those drivers once. Drivers would soon know that speed bump was there. Clearing the sight lines feels like part of the solution, and he appreciates the recommendation to assess it in six months, but it does not address the speed factor. As Councilor Workman said, the City Manager knows where he, too, is at with wanting directed enforcement, while recognizing the resource availability. He wants to make sure that the Committee gets this right. He asked staff to speak to the speed question and the continued concern.

Mr. Lussier replied that speed is a valid concern. He continued that it is part of the reason he has concerns about the four-way stop. Staff did some speed measurements of drivers coming down the hill. The 85th percentile speed was around 35 mph, which is 5 mph above the posted speed limit. If you are coming down that hill and around that corner, if you are looking right in the direction of the stop sign and you see it right when you come around the corner of that house, you would just barely have enough time to understand the stop sign, apply the brakes, and come to a controlled stop before you hit the intersection. That is why he has concerns about the four-way stop. Unless everything goes perfectly, he could see somebody not being able to stop safely in time and blowing through the intersection. The drivers on North and South Lincoln St. might think it is their turn and they are fine to go, but they might not appreciate that someone is coming down the hill at too fast a speed.

Councilor Tobin stated that she really appreciates the attention to sight distance. Looking at this, she sees that the sight distance of where the vehicle coming down would need to be, before they could see there was a vehicle coming. With a stop sign, as staff pointed out, a driver would have

to be looking right in that direction in order to stop in time. As a pedestrian, she feels that concern. Children cross, as there is a school right there. It is important to find a way to get drivers to slow down before they get to that point. She always hopes, as a pedestrian, to hear the vehicles coming down, knowing they might not be able to stop.

Mr. Lussier replied that the City can do things to mitigate that risk. If the Committee and Council were inclined to do the four-way stop, staff would install advance warning signs before the curve so drivers on Roxbury St. going down the hill would at least see a sign in advance, warning them of the upcoming stop. Councilor Tobin replied that to clarify, she was not suggesting they need to put a stop sign there. She was saying that if people cannot stop for a stop sign, they cannot stop for a child crossing that, which is a problem.

Joel Lathers (of 305 Roxbury St.) stated that his home has been hit three times by drivers coming down the hill too fast and trying to dodge the house on the opposite side of the street. Not only do drivers come down fast, but it is a short distance, due to the curve. He and his wife thought rumble strips installed for drivers coming down the hill might help. He does not know how much maintenance would be involved but he thinks it would be okay for plow trucks. He and his wife also suggest reducing the speed there to 25 mph. This spring, a driver hit the tree on his property that the City proposes removing. It would be fine with him and his wife if they removed the tree, which has limited time due to the hit. He does not think a four-way stop is the answer, due to drivers' muscle memory. It might make things worse. Regarding Councilor Tobin's comments about the bus stop, rumble strips would alert drivers who were driving too fast down the hill.

Mr. Lussier stated that transverse rumble strips, which are not along the edges of the road but go across the roadway, are a possibility. He continued that Mr. Lathers is correct that the rumble strips would not impact plowing or maintenance operations. He would have to research how to install transverse rumble strips, because the City does not have those.

Ms. Murphy stated that she thinks they would not be considering the whole situation if they did not think about the speed of traffic on Roxbury St. It is an issue with drivers going up the hill as well as down. She is grateful there have not been accidents involving children at the bus stop. That bus stop and the speeds need to be taken into consideration. She and her husband are good citizens and are willing to be part of reasonable solutions that improve the line of sight. However, the line of sight is a contributing problem, not the only problem.

Chair Greenwald stated that he hopes Public Works can look into the transverse rumble strips idea.

Councilor Favolise asked what signage exists at this intersection. He asked if they could install one saying "dangerous intersection ahead." Mr. Lussier replied that there are intersection advance warning signs on Roxbury St. They do not say "dangerous intersection;" they just warn that an intersection is ahead. The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) no longer recognizes the "dangerous intersection ahead" sign. Their logic is that if a municipality knows an intersection is dangerous, they should fix the intersection. There is also a stop sign advanced warning on South Lincoln St. One of the issues has been the stop sign on the South Lincoln St. approach is for northbound traffic, and it was behind a tree, difficult to see until you

were close to the intersection. Staff pushed it out about a foot. That improved the sight distance. They also moved the advanced warning sign back about 100 feet, so it is more visible and gives drivers an earlier warning.

Councilor Favolise stated that he is not sure reducing the speed limit here would be the solution. He asked about having one of those yellow signs that gives a suggested speed limit, although not the official speed limit, for turning around a curve or approaching an intersection. Mr. Lussier replied that he does not think there is one there. That might be appropriate. He continued that to Mr. Lather's comment, just reducing a posted speed limit without other changes to make the driver want to drive at a slower speed is not effective.

Councilor Workman stated that she knows they will get comments from the public about the City removing a tree. She asked staff to talk about the tree's status and plans for that. She continued that she also wants to second what others have said about the sight line clearing just being part of the solution. She hopes that if they move forward with this and reassess in six months, they also have some additional traffic calming or speeding calming measures or options. When they last heard about this, there was a lot of good conversation about Reservoir St. and that bend coming around Roxbury St., and as Ms. Murphy pointed out, coming straight up from Roxbury St. Since that is such a straightaway, it is used like a drag strip. She would like ongoing conversations around those issues.

Mr. Lussier stated that he does not have all of the details about the tree, but it is about six inches in diameter, so he would not call it a mature tree. Its health has probably been compromised, as Mr. Lathers said, due to having been struck by a vehicle, but it is not a dead tree.

Councilor Tobin stated that to Councilor Workman's point, they should talk about where else people should be stopping. If they do not want people treating this as a highway, they would need to set the expectation of stops. Parks are in the area. Making the entrances safer, where there is the expectation of stopping, could impact the speeds over time. She is not suggesting a four-way stop here, but when the City made the Grove St. intersection a four-way stop, it became much easier to cross at the nearby bike path because drivers were already going slow, not escalating.

The following motion by Councilor Workman was duly seconded by Councilor Tobin.

On a vote of 4 to 0, the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee recommends the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to negotiate and obtain sight distance easements, and that City staff reassess intersection conditions in six months to confirm improved conditions.

8. Related to the Installation of Two Stop Signs On Roxbury St.
Ordinance O-2026-15

Chair Greenwald asked if they should place this on more time. Mr. Lussier stated that if the Committee is not looking to do the four-way stop, staff's recommendation would be for someone to make a motion to deny the ordinance.

The following motion by Councilor Tobin was duly seconded by Councilor Workman.

On a vote of 4 to 0, the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee recommends the City Council vote against Ordinance O-2026-15.

9. Relating to the Alteration of Thompson Road - Resolution R-2026-37

Mr. Lussier stated that the petition requests four specific actions:

- Add three strips of land to the Thompson Rd. right-of-way, totaling 5,098 square feet in aggregate
- Grant a waiver from Article 23.2.1 of the LDC, related to whether the City owns the soil underlying the right-of-way or if the City just has an easement for the usage of the area. Staff recommends the Council grant the waiver because the City does not own the underlying soil for the rest of Thompson Rd., so it would be a “legally weird” strip of land that the City owns
- For these three strips of land, authorize the City Manager to accept and record deeds, to use the land as a public highway, not to own the land
- Authorize payments to the affected property owners as it is described. Those payments were developed using an independent appraiser to determine estimated value for the land and the negotiated value of the two trees they had to remove from the one property

Chair Greenwald asked if the Committee had questions, noting that all Committee members present were at the site visit. Hearing no questions, he asked for a motion.

The following motion by Councilor Favolise was duly seconded by Councilor Workman.

On a vote of 4 to 0, the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee recommends adopting Resolution R-2026-37.

In response to an inaudible question from a member of the public, the City Attorney stated that Section 32 of the City Council rules say that after they have had a public hearing, which does have a public comment section, when the item goes down to committee there is no further public comment. It is just the Committee’s deliberations for a recommendation.

Chair Greenwald declined to hear and address a question from a member of the public, due to the City Council rules explained by the City Attorney. The City Manager stated that she and the Public Works Director would be happy to try and answer the person’s question, if she wanted to reach out to them outside of the meeting.

10. Roadway Safety Action Plan Update - Public Works Director

Mr. Lussier stated that he apologizes for not bringing the Roadway Safety Action Plan (RSAP) Update to the Committee earlier in the year. He continued that the KPD did their part and gave him all of the data in December 2025.

Tonight, he and Mr. Ruoff will talk about what they observed in 2025, what actions Public Works has completed based on the plan, and what the coming attractions are for 2026 and the future. Councilor Tobin was closely involved in the development of the plan. The Council adopted it in January 2025, and the stated goal is to reduce Keene's roadway fatalities and serious injuries by 50% by 2035 and to 0 by 2045. That is an ambitious, aspirational goal they are working toward.

Mr. Lussier stated that the 2025 accident data was summarized for the Public Works Department by the KPD. In New Hampshire, they cannot actually get police reports about accidents and understand all of the details of what caused the accident and what they could do to fix it, which frustrates him, but Public Works at least has summarized data. In 2025, there were a total of one "K" (fatal) and nine "A" (serious bodily injury) crashes. Public Works tracks this on a five-year rolling average. Thus, even though the raw number of crashes in 2025 was less than 2024, the rolling five-year average went up. This is because 2020, which had a much lower number, dropped off the rolling average. When he gives the next update in about four or five months, the 17 they had in 2021 drops off and the number will drop dramatically. The rolling average went from 11.6 in 2024 when the City adopted the plan to 12 at the end of 2025. The goal is 0 by 2045, and the trend line is heading in the right direction.

Mr. Lussier continued that he spoke with Lieutenant Chidester at the KPD, who leads the Accident Investigation Team. The RSAP has emphasis areas, categories and factors that affect the prevalence and severity of accidents. He asked Lieutenant Chidester if he has seen any trends or anything that concerns him within the emphasis areas. Lieutenant Chidester's comments were related to the "vulnerable roadway user – motorized" emphasis area. The prevalence of e-bikes, scooters, and electronic personal assistive mobility devices is increasing, and the rules are not well-defined. They are not saying e-bikes, scooters, or electronic mobility devices were implicated in any of the 2025 accidents, but it is an area of concern for the KPD. Lieutenant Chidester's other comment was that the "vulnerable roadway user – non-motorized" category's one fatality in 2025 was unfortunately a pedestrian. Lieutenant Chidester suggested they not read too much into that. The pedestrian was inebriated or impaired, standing in the middle of Rt. 101 at night during a snowstorm when he was struck by a vehicle. Thus, there were mitigating factors beyond just the fact that he was a pedestrian.

Regarding what Public Works has accomplished, staff ran all of the recommendations and suggestions for infrastructure improvements through a scoring rubric to determine the top 25 highest priority recommendations. They filtered out ones that are already planned through, say, the Downtown Infrastructure Project or the Winchester St. Project, so you will not see those on the top 25 list. He is happy to report that seven of the 25 were completed in 2025. They are as follows:

- Island St. - the recommendation in the RSAP was to add speed bumps, which staff did not do, but they did some traffic calming measures in the form of narrowing lanes down to 10 feet and widening the shoulders to create more space for bicyclists
- Roxbury St. - Sidewalk Overlay, thanks in large part to the Committee allowing staff to use asphalt overlays as part of their suite of tools

- Washington St. at Spring St. – the issue was traffic queuing during school pickup and dropoff for the Gathering Waters School. Staff worked with the school administration to change their pickup pattern, and parents are now cueing within the property
- Water St. at Eastern Ave. - they added advanced warnings for westbound traffic
- Water St. and Grove St. - they added lighting to the intersection
- Winchester St. at Island St. - there were too many signs at the roundabout and it was causing confusion. They removed the redundant signs and that seemed to help
- Winchester St. at Foundry St., where the Ashuelot Rail Trail crosses Winchester St. - they installed RRFBs with extra parts they scavenged from the roundabout project

Mr. Lussier continued that work completed in 2025 also included restriping the approaches to the Grove St. and Water St. intersection, installation of a new crosswalk at Pearl St.'s intersection with West St., and an RRFP signal system, based on a resident request. Staff worked with the NH Department of Transportation (NHDOT) to get the Rt. 101/Winchester St. roundabout markings refreshed. That will be an annual item, so the City might have to occasionally remind NHDOT to do that. The intersections of School St. and Winter St., and Forest St. and Chestnut St., got new stop signs authorized in 2025. Staff completed the Roadway Safety Audit Rt. 9 at Whitcomb's Mill Rd., which lines them up for funding in the future for safety projects. On Maple Ave., staff restriped the lanes when they repaved it to narrow the lanes and create more space for bicyclists. Arch St. at Chesterfield Rd. had a request for advanced warning signs approaching the tunnel, and clarification at the tunnel for who has the right of way. Approaching from the Arch St. end, you will see a "Yield to oncoming traffic" sign.

Mr. Lussier continued that finally, it is not a specific recommendation in the plan, but one of staff's ongoing tasks is vegetation management at intersections. They trim back the bushes in the public right-of-way to maintain sight lines, and trim vegetation that obscures signs. A Public Works staff member spends a lot of time driving around the city looking for obscured signs and finds many on his own, but he cannot see them all, so if anyone sees bushes and trees obscuring signs, they can alert Public Works through "See, Click, Fix" or a phone call.

Mr. Lussier continued that regarding projects that are underway, of course the Downtown Infrastructure Project is the biggest one. That project will address many specific recommendations of the RSAP. Similarly, the Marlboro St. Project will address many issues with crosswalks, traffic calming to slow the speeds, additional bike lanes, and more. Those projects are well underway. The Transportation Heritage Trail Project is also underway. That adds a new crosswalk across Eastern Ave. with flashing beacons to allow trail users to safely cross.

Mr. Lussier continued that looking ahead to what is coming up, tonight they talked extensively about Roxbury St. and Lincoln St. That work will be implemented this fall. Other projects include:

- Route 101 Reconstruction - a NHDOT-administered project that will address roadway safety and pedestrian safety, and intersection safety at Swanzey Factory Rd.
- The Reconstruction of Lower Winchester St. – this will add sidewalks, addressing pedestrian access through that corridor. The biggest safety concern addressed in the project design was left turns and access to left turns, with drivers trying to cut across two

lanes of traffic to turn left into traffic going 40 or 45 mph. That is a tough situation, which the project will address

- The Reconstruction of the Rt. 9/10/12 Intersection - a NHDOT-administered project likely to result in the T intersection and the traffic signal being converted to a roundabout. That will slow drivers down and avoid T-bone crashes.
- Prowse Bridge over Rt. 101 - they have had issues with pedestrians trying to cross the road. That is now funded in the state's Ten Year Plan for 2031
- Reconstruction of West St. - at public engagement sessions for the RSAP, West St. was one of the biggest concerns for pedestrians, bicyclists, and people making left turns. The most recent iteration of the Ten Year Plan delayed it to 2033 for construction, but it is an important project the City wants to see move forward

Mr. Lussier stated that he would like the Committee's feedback on some funding opportunities. The Transportation Alternatives Program has been the City's number one go-to funding for the rail trail projects. With the Transportation Heritage Trail Phase II, the Prowse Bridge, and the safety railings over the Stone Arch Bridge being addressed, that series of programs and projects is coming to an end. He foresees a time when Keene will not have any new rail trails to build, so he would love to hear thoughts on what they should be looking at this funding source for in the future. Based on a recent flash vote survey, what staff hear and what he knows the Committee hears, is that sidewalks need a lot of work. They do not need to decide tonight, but for the next opportunity to apply for a grant through that program, they will try to put together a package of sidewalk improvements through that program. Funding in the range of \$1 million to \$1.5 million would allow them to do a lot of sidewalk work.

Mr. Lussier continued that the next big one is the Highway Safety Improvement Program. They anticipate that NHDOT will be looking for applications to that in the fall of 2026. His recommendation is to implement some of the safety recommendations that came about for Whitcomb's Mill Rd. at Rt. 9. Some options they looked at did not meet the cost/benefit threshold to be funded through this program, but there are some options that would be. For example, adding turning lanes to that intersection and some additional lighting. He thinks that would be a good candidate for the Highway Safety Improvement Program funding, in terms of the cost of the project and meeting those thresholds.

Mr. Lussier continued that Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality is the program NHDOT is using to fund the T-intersection conversion to a roundabout. Speaking with Southwest Regional Planning Commission (SWRPC) staff and NHDOT staff, he thinks the conversion of Rt. 12 to 32 into a roundabout would address the safety concern at that location, regarding how difficult it is to pull out of that location. It would be a good fit for the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality funding, which requires demonstrating an air quality benefit. Roundabouts check that box very nicely. It would be easy to quantify the air quality improvement, because the math has already been done. He welcomes the Committee's thoughts on any of those funding opportunities.

Councilor Favolise stated that he appreciates the focus on both major projects through the RSAP and smaller items such as getting the crosswalk signs correct and accurate. He continued that so often when they talk about these long-term strategic plans, they talk about what big thing they can do. Correcting crosswalk signs *is* a big thing for people who use the crosswalk on a regular

basis, so he appreciates the mixed focus. He also appreciates the focus across the city. He heard Mr. Lussier talking about projects in various wards, and it is important that they take a whole city approach like that.

Councilor Favolise asked about the status of the Rt. 9/Whitcomb's Mill Rd. project. He knows NHDOT was at a Committee meeting about that. As he recalls, there was some confusion with the motion around whether to accept the presentation as informational or endorse a specific option. He thought the Committee really liked the idea of left turn lanes. He thought that since the Committee had the presentation from NHDOT, the project would be moving forward.

Mr. Lussier replied that it does not happen automatically. The Roadway Safety Audit identifies potential solutions or approaches that meet NHDOT's threshold for more benefit than cost. Because they did meet that threshold on the left turn lane option, that would be eligible to apply for funding through this other program. It is not automatically put in the queue, but it gives them the ammunition they need to submit a competitive application.

Councilor Favolise stated that it is a high-traffic intersection and an intersection for interstate travel and commerce, so he is totally fine with that being a priority area for the grant. He knows it is not the exact same dimensions and geometry and situation, but the left turn lane works well for Chesterfield Rd., and he imagines it would work well for Whitcomb's Mill Rd. Some West Keene residents use those side roads as their main access point to Rt. 9. That would be a reasonable priority to continue to pursue.

Mr. Lussier stated that as much as he loves roundabouts, he does not think it would be competitive if Keene tried to get a roundabout there. He does not think it would be able to be funded through the Highway Safety Improvement Program because of the cost, and he does not think it would be competitive competing for a Ten-Year Plan project with other regional priorities.

Councilor Tobin thanked Mr. Lussier for bringing the report to the Committee and taking the time to collect the data. It was very important to the people on the RSAP committee that the RSAP be a living document that was maintained and evolved; that trends in terms of safety were addressed over time; that projects were added to the list, not just addressed, so that it becomes a running list; and that the City responds to things that are actually happening. The plan addressed a couple of emphasis areas: intersections, vulnerable road users—motorized, vulnerable road users—non-motorized, older drivers, occupant protection, speed and aggressive driving, and a few more. She is interested in what overall policies or areas the City should be looking at, not just specific projects. She thinks the projects come from the trends and initiatives. Mr. Lussier heard from the KPD about "vulnerable road users – motorized." Maybe the City should be creating additional policies in response to that. Another is vegetation management; maybe there are things the City should be doing to address some of that. Mr. Lussier also mentioned that some of the data was hard to collect. She wonders if they could create a way for people to submit intersections where there was an accident. She would say the same thing about suggested projects. Instead of coming to the Council to say a stop sign is needed at a certain intersection, someone could submit that as a "problematic intersection," which would somehow make it onto a list that staff then reviews and prioritizes.

Mr. Lussier replied that he thinks that last one is a great idea. He continued that the project website for the RSAP is still live and all the background information is still there. He thinks it would be a light lift to work with Deputy City Manager Rebecca Landry to update that and make it more of a “project request” interface. Then they could advertise that, in a *“If you know of a safety concern that you’d like reviewed, here’s how to submit it”* way. Staff could incorporate this into their presentations going forward, talking to the Committee about the suggestions they received over the year.

The following motion by Councilor Tobin was duly seconded by Councilor Workman.

On a vote of 4 to 0, the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee recommends accepting the Roadway Safety Action Plan Update as informational.

11. Downtown Infrastructure Project Update

Mr. Lussier stated that after he gives a brief update, he will ask Casella to present their plans for the rest of the fall and ideas they have for accelerating construction and getting more work done. He continued that during the last couple of weeks, Casella has been working on water main installations, which is going well. They expect by next Thursday, all the new mains in Central Square will be in the ground, and Casella will make the first connection from the old system to the new system. They have to connect it at one point, fill the pipe, disinfect it, and do pressure testing. Once all that is done, they will start moving individual service connections. Buildings will get connected from the old pipe to the new pipe. They are making great progress. It is nothing they did not expect to find, but they have found utilities that were not mapped. Casella has been doing a great job working around the telecom conduits and unexpected things that they found and being productive at the same time.

Mr. Lussier continued that the Project Ombudsman is here and could answer specific questions the Committee has about engagement with business owners and residents. He invited Casella to present.

Jeff Chase and Brian Rossier from Casella provided an update on the project. A graphic of Central Square, with their progress highlighted and color coded. Mr. Chase stated that their intent is to continue working well into early winter. As Mr. Lussier mentioned, they hope to finish the water in a week and a half, pending any other surprises. There are many communication duct banks in the ground, which make it hard to needle the pipe underneath. However, they are progressing, so the next step is to begin work on the sewer. It is hard to, given the logistics with the amount of real estate, open up too much at once in Central Square without totally locking down traffic. After the sewer work comes the drainage work. They would like to continue working into December, barring the weather, of course. Then in the spring, they want to start getting the signals in, approximately in mid-March if the frost is not too bad, before they can do the road work. They want to hit the ground running doing road work around April 15. That means removing all the existing asphalt, fine grading, then paving. That will start establishing the new limits of the roadway. Once the paving is done, the curbing will go in rather

quickly. Then they will start indexing, starting over on the west side of Central Square, working on sidewalk and working in a clockwise method.

Chair Greenwald asked at what point they would be taking out sidewalks. Mr. Chase replied that they will take out sidewalks in segments. They will not remove all the sidewalks at once. With new sidewalks, the alignment of the curb changes significantly. They will try to rip out the old sidewalks in the shaded area/segment within a two- to three-week period then put it back together before they go on to the next segment. There might be some overlap, because as they get going, they can gain efficiencies. Chair Greenwald asked if they mean in the spring, or soon. Mr. Chase replied in the spring. Mr. Rossier added that there will be a six-foot walkway between the buildings. They will do the sidewalk for the main priority of it and then the last six feet after; that way, they can keep pedestrian access to all the buildings. They will install bridges the day that they are working right in front of a business's door, so the business still can operate.

Mr. Rossier explained that paving would be mid-April to May 1. Curbing would be the first week in May. Sidewalks in small segments would be done in late May, June, and July. The center gazebo area would be at the end. The effort is to try to keep things open as much as possible and work in segments. The pavement date is a little fluid, dependent on temperature. This is what they have dealt with in recent projects like the one at the Keene Airport. They need the right temperature in order to get the asphalt in. April 15 is about when the local asphalt plant opens. That paving would be the base course. Mr. Chase added they would not top the road until the fall, at least for whatever phases they have completed by then.

Mr. Chase continued that they think it would be beneficial if they could press forward in another phase, doing underground work. The slide shows Phase I on the southern end of the project. They would work in small segments at any given point. The segments could be viewed as weeks, such as Week 1 is Segment 1, Week 2 is Segment 2, and so forth. They would start that right after Pumpkin Fest. Mr. Rossier explained the reasoning is that while they are doing work above ground, other team members are doing work to get that underground work going, which takes time. The unknown conflicts they have been finding here will also happen in other places. They could get the jumpstart on the underground sewer work while the other work is being finished, so it is just "a rolling machine" coming up. Mr. Chase commended that a lot of the pipelines are off the side of the road. They would close one lane of traffic. It is two lanes in each direction. There would not be any more than a lane closure and funneling them down to one lane for a couple of days per side.

Councilor Tobin stated that it is hard to follow what they are saying because she cannot read any of the labels on the graphic as they move from section to section, and she does not know what the colors mean. She asked if they could identify the areas. Mr. Chase indicated Water St., Main St., Cumberland Farms, and Dunbar St. Mr. Lussier stated that in general terms, the area Mr. Chase and Mr. Rossier are talking about is the section from Water St. to Emerald St. That is the area they would like to continue working in into the winter.

Chair Greenwald asked what happened to the plan for Central Square to Water St., the middle section. Mr. Rossier replied that they could do that; there are a couple of options. They continued that most of the sewer utilities are coming from "that way," and when they build this stuff, they

like to build it uphill. That is one reason why they wanted to start at the far end and bring the pipes uphill. Mr. Chase added another reason is that if they put everybody on one side of the project, traffic impacts would be greater, but if they could spread the team out a bit, it would minimize delays with car movements.

Chair Greenwald stated that he is not objecting or disagreeing, but this is very different from what people were told. Mr. Lussier replied that is right, and that is why he asked Casella to come talk about it tonight. He continued that City staff are not asking the Committee for any specific motion or authorization tonight. All of this falls under “construction administration” and it is part of Public Works’s work to do. That said, it is very different from what they have been talking about for the past eight years. He wanted feedback from the Committee about what Casella is doing and planning. He thinks it makes sense to try to advance the project as much as possible, especially during the colder months when construction will have less of an impact on businesses. Obviously, they had hoped to start this project in April or May. By the time it went through the DES review and the rigamarole of contracting and rebidding, it was the first week of August when the City had the contract in place and gave Casella a notice to proceed. They hope to still finish this by the end of 2028. What Mr. Chase and Mr. Rossier are presenting tonight is a way to give them a fighting chance of meeting that goal, to jumpstart the construction next year by doing it this way.

Mr. Chase stated that if they can start a second phase prior to wrapping up the first phase, it gives them a good sequencing to move at the speed that they want to. Chair Greenwald replied that again, he is not objecting. He is just thinking about how the downtown community has been thinking in a certain timeline, and this scrambles it. It will take a good deal of public information to communicate this, regarding the timing of when people should expect this to happen. He personally is confused.

Mr. Chase replied that what people are seeing out there now, when the team is out there doing the water pipe, is essentially what they are describing they would be doing down there. They would not be completely blowing apart the road. They would just be surgically going in and getting that sewer pipe done. Chair Greenwald replied that he gives the team tremendous compliments for the work they have been doing to dig a hole, fill it in, and move on. He continued that Casella has absolutely been minimizing the chaos, but there is chaos. His concern now is to try and clarify the timeline, for when a Main St. business asks him when the digging will be. It sounds like it would not be two years from now; it would be a lot sooner.

Mr. Rossier replied that this method of working would give Casella a better fighting chance that what they are doing now would be closer to being wrapped up, where the last year is just a lot of finish work. It is small spots, and then it is finished, and everyone likes it. Chair Greenwald replied that he understands the philosophy. Mr. Rossier replied that they understand that it is completely different from what they had been telling people. They understand how people feel. They have been trying hard to work with business owners, and people have been receptive. Chair Greenwald gave kudos to Casella for their efforts so far to move the project forward.

Councilor Favolise stated that he is not objecting to the plan. He continued that it is not what he was expecting to see tonight. To Councilor Tobin’s point, he cannot see the graphic well enough

on the screen to understand it, either. He thinks for future meetings, the Committee needs to get the graphics in advance or get handouts during the meeting so they can follow along.

Councilor Favolise stated that tonight, the Committee heard about the impact of downtown traffic being detoured to School St. He thought they would have more time to plan for the potential impacts to side streets in this area, like Water St. and Davis St. He asked if Public Works has thoughts about this. Mr. Lussier replied that Central Square is the most difficult part of this project, from a traffic control perspective, with those five streets coming into one location. Once the team is on Main St., a lot of the work is on the road's edges, so they will be able to keep the northbound lane going and have traffic bypassing their work area, without having to do a lot of detours. There will be *some*, such as a detour around Davis St. the day the team is crossing there, but the detours will not be nearly as extensive or continuous as they have been with the work in Central Square.

The Mayor stated that he totally understands that they need to do this and have two teams working. It makes absolute sense to do the piping in the way that they just described. Having seen similar work many times at KSC, he thinks this is a good approach. He endorses what Casella is proposing. He wants to understand that the scope of the work between Water St. and Emerald St. is in fact just sewer replacement, and that they were not intending to do water supply and storm water replacement.

Mr. Chase replied that the intent would be to do the sewer first, then water, then drainage. They would do the whole setup, but not all at once. They would finish one utility and then move to the next utility. The Mayor asked if that is what would occur over the one-year period. Mr. Chase replied that at some point, the frost will be deep in the pavement. If they can get the sewer work done, in that phase, there are only about 600 feet of water mains, 16-inch, a straight run of pipe that comes off of Water St. and then heads down the west side of the road in the parking areas, which are ultimately future walking areas. If time permits and the weather is conducive to going on to water, they would like to.

Chair Greenwald stated that maybe he is missing this, but nothing is shown now from Davis St. to West St. He asked if that would be the last phase. Mr. Chase replied that is what is labeled as Phase III on the drawing. They could go back and forth about the wording in the contract. At the preconstruction meeting, it was brought up that if Casella had a better way to approach the project, they could speak up. There are milestones, and a general phasing plan presented in the contract, but they have to consider not just the downtown businesses, which they are respectful to, but keeping traffic moving and not shutting the city down. They have been hearing about traffic issues throughout the town. Spreading out with multiple crews, not having them all in one spot, will help the general project flow and not shut the city down. Cramming two or three crews into one area would not work well.

Chair Greenwald replied that he understands. He just wants to know what he and Mr. Downing should be telling the downtown community. Mr. Chase replied that they have brought the topic up at the weekly meetings, and before they came to the Committee, they talked to Mr. Lussier and Mr. Downing. Mr. Downing has talked to some people, and they think the changes will be received if the reasons can be explained.

Councilor Tobin stated that she wants to echo Chair Greenwald's point, because this is a big deal. She continued that no one here is saying there is no room to change the plan. But people need to understand what is happening, and they need the opportunity to ask questions, to get on board. From her perspective, that takes months. Initially, the expectation was that Phase I would be complete year one. She understands that things happen. She understands that it was delayed. However, they need to have the information to communicate, and in a way that allows people to participate in the conversation. For example, the solar pavilion project was initially delayed due to insufficient public engagement. People had a response, and they needed more time, to understand and get on board with the project. She does not want to underestimate the importance of getting people on board with these changes to the Downtown Infrastructure Project.

Chair Greenwald stated that he urges everyone from the downtown community to attend the upcoming Coffee and Hard Hats meeting.

Councilor Workman asked how much notice the City gives a business when a project will impact the business's hours of operation, deliveries, and so forth. She asked if it is 24 hours or 48 hours. Mr. Lussier replied that if a project will impact a business's water supply, for example, they give a three-day notice, because that is a major effect and some business would have to shut down for the day. If the impact is smaller, such as work happening in a business's section of the street, there is no specific notice for that. It is just general knowledge that they are working on the project. Councilor Workman asked if he is saying that if services and utilities will be interrupted, the City gives 72 hours' notice. Mr. Lussier replied yes.

The Mayor stated that one thing that has made Casella's process so smooth is the repaving they have been able to do. He continued that winter carries its own repaving issues as to where they could source asphalt from. For the success of having this new strip the length of 600 feet, he asked if they would be able to patch in the manner they have been able to do on Central Square. Mr. Chase replied that most of that patching will be sidewalk. Yes, they know they would have to patch it back up at the end of the week, just like they are doing. Past late November, they would have to go further towards Massachusetts to get hot mix asphalt. They use about 20 to 30 tons per week, so it would be a load or two, but it would be worth it. Casella is willing to take on the burden of the extra cost in order to gain on the project. Not as many people will be outside at that time of year. They think businesses would rather be impacted at this time of year rather than summer. They are trying to be respectful to businesses, especially those with outdoor seating, and to have those conversations with businesses themselves or through Mr. Downing. They are making sure to get businesses' input. If Casella needs to push off a week or two or make adjustments, they will. Once they start doing sidewalks, they can have better conversations and figure out if there are ways to not impact even three weeks.

Councilor Filiault stated that he was on the MSFI Committee for the first four years of this project, and he agrees with Chair Greenwald's point. He understands there are changes, but tomorrow, he and other Councilors will bear the brunt of the public's frustrations and confusion. When Councilors go out there and give dates to the business owners to the best of their ability, all they have is their word. Then changes like this come out of the blue. The response from the public "will not be pretty." People will feel that the City Council broke its word.

Councilor Filiault continued that towards the end when they were finalizing the project, around Central Square there was originally going to be 20 feet. They widened it to 22 feet so it could handle two lanes of traffic. At this point, he thinks it is still scheduled to be one lane of traffic going around the square. One of the reasons they went to 22 feet, which the Mayor was behind, was so they could have two 11-foot lanes going around the square. He still feels that one lane would bottleneck during heavy traffic at certain times of day. He does not expect to change that right now, but he will make a formal request to change that to two lanes.

The City Manager replied that the City Council decided that it starts as two lanes, changes to one, and goes back to two lanes. The compromise was that the 22 feet would provide for the possibility of having two lanes if that does not work. That is what has been planned for.

The Mayor stated that the college link to the downtown is the pathway that they are talking about. The question Public Works gets, from all around the city once the snow starts to fly, is whether they can plow the sidewalks. That will have to occur in this area. The flow that comes from the college is what sustains the downtown businesses during the winter months. He wants to make sure Casella is aware of this.

Councilor Favolise asked what downtown business owners and residents can expect in terms of changes or interruptions or what will be happening in their buildings when Casella is hooking up the new water mains and getting those flushed and tested. Mr. Chase replied that the system they are building is independent of the old system, so there will be a cutover period at a certain point. It will probably be a couple of hours. Like Mr. Lussier said, they need to notify people a certain amount of time ahead. It should have minimal impact. Many times, when they hook people up to new water lines, people have to clean the faucet screens in their kitchen sinks, their toilets, and so forth. With multi-story buildings on Central Square, they will probably have a few calls on that, but they are usually simple fixes.

Mr. Lussier added that when they make the connection between the old system and the new system, which is tentatively scheduled for next Thursday, several properties will be out of service for four to six hours. Those are the properties served by the water main they will need to shut down to connect the new main. Those properties will be notified three days in advance. However, when they are individually connecting services from the old main to the new main, it is a couple of hours at most.

Councilor Tobin stated that she has heard a lot of positive feedback about how clean the project area has been at night. In addition, the flaggers are very polite and kind. Many times, in a challenging situation, that makes all the difference. She appreciates that.

Councilor Workman stated that she had questions for Mr. Downing. She continued that she thinks it is important for the Committee to hear not just from Public Works, but from the Project Ombudsman directly, regarding how his outreach is going and what feedback he has been hearing. Otherwise, Councilors only hear about it from business owners who choose to contact them, or on social media.

Project Ombudsman George Downing stated that he has a lot of work to do over the next week or two to get this information into a digestible format and start getting it out there. He continued that there has already been a hunger for more updates outside of the weekly email blast. He thanks Councilor Haas for bringing him some suggestions from the Keene Downtown Group on what people want to see. He developed an outline for a bi-weekly update that gets brought out to businesses for inclusion in their binders. He will have a prototype or actual version of it to share at the next Committee meeting. The number of visits he has had to make to specific businesses for coordination-type things has seen a significant uptick, as expected, now that the project has started. He has had to coordinate some on-site property visits for documentation of existing conditions. They have gone through Central Square and are working their way down Main St.

Mr. Downing continued that business owners are starting to realize how they can reach out to him when they have specific issues, so they can utilize the connections he can facilitate for getting questions answered, especially about immediate frustrations with the construction that is directly impacting them. He is encouraged that the outreach he and the City did over the months leading up to this is starting to pay dividends, where people know they can call him and he can put them in touch with the right person, or sometimes answer the questions himself, such as why certain work is unexpectedly happening right in front of the business that day. If it is a frustration that can be dealt with, he can put them in touch with the person who can help. More of that has been happening, which is good. He thinks that is how the City envisioned the Project Ombudsman position, and it is what he has been trying to explain to people, but when there were not yet trucks in the street, it became more of an informational thing. He is glad people are now seeing it more as a facilitator position.

The following motion by Councilor Tobin was duly seconded by Councilor Workman.

On a vote of 4 to 0, the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee recommends accepting the Downtown Infrastructure Project Update as informational.

12. Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Greenwald adjourned the meeting at 9:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Terri Hood, City Clerk and Kathleen Richards, Deputy City Clerk