ADOPTED

City of Keene
New Hampshire

MUNICIPAL SERVICES, FACILITIES & INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, October 21, 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
Molly V. Ellis

Staff Present:
Rebecca Landry, Deputy City Manager
Amanda Palmeira, City Attorney
Don Lussier, Public Works Director
Bryan Ruoff, City Engineer
George Downing, Project Ombudsman

Jay V. Kahn, Mayor

Members Not Present:
All present

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

1. Court Street Drain Replacement Acceptance of Permanent Easements - City Engineer

Bryan Ruoff, City Engineer, stated that as part of the Court Street Drain Replacement Project in the City's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), staff identified four properties the City will need an easement from. He continued that this is to construct, maintain, and repair in the future a culvert that replaces an existing culvert on Court St. It is about 200 feet northeast of the intersection of Court St. and Evergreen Ave. The existing drain is about 30 feet below Court St. The most feasible way to construct it is to install the drain with a horizontal directional drill under the road. This would prevent the need to dig up the road and have Court St. dead ended at that location. To do that, they need to extend about 30 feet onto four properties: 649 Court St., 646 Court St., 650 Court St., and the property immediately north of 649 Court St. at Guitard Homes Cottage Court, which is currently being developed. It is possible some of these properties will end up not needing an easement and could just have a temporary access for construction. Those details are still being worked out as staff negotiates with the property owners. The project design is about 60% complete, and ready for construction next summer when low flows will be in that channel.

Pam Slack (of Keene) asked how much it would cost to purchase those easements. Mr. Ruoff replied that currently, the City is not offering money for these easements. Ms. Slack asked if they will. Mr. Ruoff replied there is no plan for that.

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

On a vote of 5 to 0, the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee recommends the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to negotiate and execute permanent easements and temporary access agreements with the affected property owners for the access, installation, and future maintenance of the Court Street Culvert Replacement Project.

2. Guitard Homes Court Street Cottage Court Acceptance of a Utility Easement - City Engineer

Mr. Ruoff stated that the City Council voted at the October 1, 2026, meeting to accept the infrastructure, water, and sewer being installed as part of the project as public infrastructure, upon the completion and satisfactory confirmation by Public Works staff on the project. In doing so, the City requires an easement to maintain those water and sewer main utilities as part of the project. It is important to note that the City is not taking on the road. That still will be privately owned and maintained. Because of that, the City is also not taking on the drainage. That will be privately owned and maintained. This is a request for authorization to execute and record an easement for the maintenance of those utilities included as part of the Cottage Court project that the City Council confirmed the City would take at the end of the project.

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

On a vote of 5 to 0, the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee recommends the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to negotiate and execute a permanent easement with the property owner for the access and future maintenance of the public water and sewer utilities for the Guitard Homes Cottage Court Project.

3. Verbal Update: Traffic and Safety Assessment of School Street - City Engineer

Mr. Ruoff stated that Public Works staff, in conjunction with a request from *See, Click, Fix* performed a traffic study on School St., with traffic counts and vehicle speed monitoring. The study went from late May into June, to get a good idea of traffic counts and speeds before the end of school. The results indicated an average traffic speed of 17.4 mph, and about 2,100 vehicle trips per day on School St. The 85th percentile was 25.6 mph, which is about five miles per hour lower than the speed limit in that area. In consideration of the petitioner's request, staff repeated the study in the last two weeks. It yielded similar results for both the average speed and the 85th percentile. They are actually slightly lower. That could be a result of the approximately 100% increase in traffic volume. The June traffic count was about 2,100 and the current traffic count was about 4,250. That significant increase was largely caused by the detour for the downtown project.

Mr. Ruoff continued that staff reviewed potential traffic calming measures based on the average speeds, 85th percentiles, and the amount of traffic. They would not recommend the previous suggestions of a raised intersection or speed bumps. The study results do not meet the criteria for those, based on a Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) analysis. Volume of traffic is potentially the biggest concern on School St. There are potential options. However, since the current condition is based on the detour traffic, staff would not recommend

implementing anything right now. Traffic speeds indicate that the traffic calming due to the narrowing of School St. is working. Staff recommend continuing monitoring of the situation, identifying potential safety implementations, and a report back to the MSFI Committee in six months when the Central Square work has been completed.

Councilor Favolise stated that he is not questioning the MUTCD guidelines, but by his rough math, there still could be 630 or 640 vehicles with speeds above that of the 85th percentile. He would guess that in at least a few cases, speeds are significantly above that. He wants to be mindful that even if the 85th percentile benchmark shows there is no problem on School St., he worries that residents might interpret that as the City saying there are no problems at all on School St. He does not think that is staff's intention. If 600 vehicles are going above the 85th percentile speed, that is still a lot of vehicles.

Mr. Ruoff replied that normally, he would agree with Councilor Favolise's point, but not in this case, because he has the raw, breakdown numbers. Staff got an hourly speed breakdown for every five miles per hour. Categories are speeds of 1 to 5 mph, 6 to 10 mph, 11 to 15 mph, and beyond. About 3% of vehicles exceed the 30-mph speed limit. That is a small number. The 85th percentile does not speak to how few vehicles are speeding. He was looking at the difference between the posted 30 mph street and the 25-mph street. One idea is to post School St. as 25 mph and include it in Chapter 94, Section 372 as a 25-mph street. Traffic data suggests that is the appropriate speed for that street. That might bring the speeds of a few cars down five or ten miles per hour. Some people think they can drive 35-mph in a 30-mph zone, so if it were posted 25 mph, that could bring changes. That is low-hanging fruit. Staff could draft an ordinance for that speed change on School St. Councilor Favolise thanked Mr. Ruoff for the additional context.

Chair Greenwald invited the letter-writer to speak.

Duncan Hilchey (of 45 School St.) stated that he appreciates the City taking up this issue and for gathering this data. It is convincing to him that maybe his and others' impressions of the problem are greater than it is, but he is glad to hear they will continue to monitor it and to consider low-hanging fruit possibilities. People do not see a speed limit sign until about one third of the way into School St. It would be nice to have one closer to West St. Going north on School St. from West St., there is no speed or school zone sign until you are close to Summer St. It would be great if drivers could see a school zone sign soon after turning onto School St. People use Winter St. as a shortcut to School St. There is a length of road where people pick up speed without realizing they are driving too fast. It would help to have the extra sign.

Chair Greenwald asked if that could be handled administratively. Mr. Ruoff replied that anything related to safety implementation can be done at the direction of the Public Works Director. He continued that as staff continues to monitor these conditions and look at potential actions to take, they could also meet with Mr. Hilchey to make sure staff understands the full extent of the concerns and problems and consider other things to implement.

Councilor Tobin asked if it is correct that speed limits are lowered during certain hours in school zones. Mr. Ruoff replied yes. Councilor Tobin asked if the Public Works's traffic study took this into account. For example, a vehicle traveling 30-mph would be considered speeding, during

certain times of day. Mr. Ruoff replied that it would take more time to get that detailed breakdown, but they do have hour by hour data. They were limited to the location in which they put up the speed counter. They would need to set it up at another location to get that data and confirm that information. As early as tomorrow, they could start gathering that additional information, confirming that drivers are slowing down within the school zone when they are supposed to.

Councilor Tobin stated that before the Committee's last conversation about these School St. issues, she stood and watched for a while. Coming from Court St., turning onto School St., it seemed like many people were not stopping at that stop sign, merely slowing down. She wonders if staff could look at stop sign compliance, which would impact safety and the perceived speeds in the area. Mr. Ruoff replied yes. Staff can work with KPD to get a good handle on that.

Councilor Ellis stated that she thinks shifting the street to 25-mph would be helpful, because there are many pedestrians. She asked if Public Works staff could create and bring the Committee a draft ordinance on that. Mr. Ruoff replied yes.

Councilor Workman stated that to clarify for the public, these traffic studies were done in-house. She lives within this block and is concerned about the increase in numbers. She understands the calculations and the parameters the City follows, but she thinks improvements are still needed and monitoring should continue. This was a good discussion.

Mayor Jay Kahn stated that he thinks it makes sense to have this zone be 25-mph. On Court St., as traffic approaches School St., just south of the School St. intersection, there is a 25-mph zone on Court St. Since School St. will intermittently be a detour for the Downtown Infrastructure Project, he thinks adding School St. to the list of 25-mph zones would be a good recommendation from the Committee.

Mr. Hilchey stated that raised crosswalks are another consideration. Maybe the data will show those would help slow traffic speeds. Many neighborhood residents would like to see them. In addition to vehicles, they are concerned about occasional motorcycles that are loud and unsafe. Speed bumps would help.

Don Lussier, Public Works Director, stated that he heard talk of a "draft ordinance." He continued that since the Committee only meets once a month and it is a long process, if the Committee agrees, staff could bring an ordinance to Council for a first reading on the next cycle. At the Committee's November meeting, they could make a recommendation. If staff brought the draft to the Committee in November, instead of right to the Council, it would not be implemented until December. Chair Greenwald replied that sounds good.

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

On a vote of 5 to 0, the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee recommends City staff continue to monitor traffic, implement improvements to address identified safety concerns, including creating an ordinance to reduce the speed to 25 miles per hour, and report back in six months.

Chair Greenwald reaffirmed for the Committee that the ordinance would be ready for a first reading at the Council meeting in November.

4. Councilor Filiault – Request to Review Planned Traffic Lane Configuration Around Central Square

Councilor Filiault stated that he submitted a letter to the Committee a month ago. He continued that a couple of years ago when the Committee was discussing the changes downtown as part of the Downtown Infrastructure Project, initially there was going to be a 20-foot lane going around Central Square. He asked the Public Works Director what the minimum lane requirement was, and he said 11 feet. With that, the Committee and Council approved 22 feet going around Central Square, for two 11-foot lanes. At that time, the Committee said they would discuss it more later. And here they are.

Councilor Filiault continued that he recommends two 11-foot lanes instead of just one lane with paint coming out from the common, squeezing into one lane. He realizes the Public Works Director disagrees, but he thinks two lanes would work better than one. One lane during peak travel hours would pinch traffic too much. There will be traffic coming off Main St. and Washington St., and cars backing out in front of The Stage. Some people said it would be safer with one lane. However, currently there are about 40 feet "of no man's land" out there. As you drive around the common, there is enough room for three lanes. Two 11-foot lanes, painted as such, would have a calming effect. The City painted two 11-foot lanes in front of the college, and it is slowing traffic there. No one rushes through there.

Councilor Filiault continued that another safety issue, regarding going around the common, is that there will be a large, raised crosswalk. That is like a large speed bump. That will slow traffic down at any time of day or night. The width will be 22 feet, reduced from about 40 feet, and there will be a raised crosswalk, so he thinks the safety issue is a little overhyped. It will be safer for pedestrians to cross the street to the common, because the walk will be shorter and with a raised crosswalk.

Councilor Filiault stated that people might say that the Council already made its decision and they should stick with it. However, if they had gone with the original recommendation from staff, they would have paved from Washington St. to Court St. right now and there would not be a Central Square as people know it. He and Chair Greenwald fought this proposal long and hard. Many times, they heard City staff and other people say it was a great plan, and that is why easels with the plan were in the City Hall lobby and at the library, saying it was the plan that was going to happen. Fortunately, after much discussion, the original proposal of paving from Washington St. to Court St. and eliminating Central Square as people know it was defeated, but only by an eight to seven vote. If one Councilor had voted the other way, the project would be very different now. His point is that the City Council can make changes. That is their job. This whole project has involved making changes as it progresses. In this case, the Council needs to do what he considers is the right thing.

Councilor Filiault continued that over the weeks since he submitted his letter, dozens of constituents have asked him about two lanes versus one lane. Not a single one thought one lane would work better than two. To him and the constituents he talked to, it is common sense that two lanes would work best. He knows City staff will speak after him and explain why they think he is wrong. He understands that the Committee's process is sometimes to accept submitted letters as informational, but he requests that the Committee not do that. He wants an up and down vote of the Committee members and the full City Council. Their constituents need to know how their Councilors feel about such recommendations, because many of them feel their input on the downtown project has not been heard.

Mr. Lussier stated that he will not disagree with Councilor Filiault, but he will remind the Committee of the process they went through. He continued that the screen shows a graphic of the design that was originally presented to the Committee in 2024. The configuration it shows is one 20-foot lane across the head of Central Square. People had concerns about that, as Councilor Filiault said. Staff switched it to a 22-foot lane, which would allow for two single lanes through that space. The argument at the time was that today, the intersection operates as if it were a single lane. The vast majority of traffic heading south on Washington St. is heading either south on Main St. or out West St. or Roxbury St., not turning around and going back up Court St. Similarly, with the traffic coming from Main St. or Roxbury St., the majority of those turning movements are headed toward Court St. Those two streams of traffic have to operate as a zipper. The southern traffic is heading north, the northern traffic is heading south, and they need to pass each other. They sort of have a forced yielding and interweaving action right now.

Mr. Lussier continued that the raised crosswalk, which Councilor Filiault mentioned, is one of the concerns he (Mr. Lussier) has with the two-lane configuration. If he were heading south down Main St., there would not be room for him to merge with the lane of traffic before hitting the raised crosswalk. He does not want to try and switch lanes while on top of a raised crosswalk. A driver would have less than 100 feet to make that switch, from the northernmost lane to the southernmost lane and heading south. It would be similar for drivers heading north and going up Court St. They would go over the speed hump and have less than 100 feet to merge with the traffic on the righthand lane and get over and head up Court St. The engineering team recommended it be a single lane to allow the yield to happen. Washington St. traffic will have a yield sign. Drivers will be required to yield to traffic coming in from the south. They will all single file over the raised crosswalk and then diverge into their different directions. That recommendation from the engineering team was approved by the City Council.

Mr. Lussier continued that there will be 22 feet of pavement from curb to curb, and four feet of that will be a shoulder hatched with white paint. If it turns out that Councilor Filiault was correct and the single lane was a terrible idea, it would be a relatively easy process to eradicate those pavement markings and mark it as two lanes. However, he himself remains convinced today that a single lane is a better way to manage the traffic. When they were studying this question, Stantec demonstrated through their modeling software that a single lane would work fine.

Mr. Lussier continued that he does not want to oversell it. The single-lane design will not substantially improve the traffic delays that have always happened on Central Square. There have always been backups and delays during peak traffic hours, and this will not solve that. The

traffic improvements the analysis showed were marginal. They were mainly due to the lane selection being clearer and simpler, and the more modern traffic signal equipment that is more adjustable to the demand.

Chair Greenwald asked if the Marlboro St. roundabout is single lane. Mr. Lussier replied that it is a hybrid roundabout. Going north-south, you have two lanes, and going east-west, you have a single lane. Chair Greenwald replied that the public interprets it as two lanes, regardless of what lines are there. He continued that assuming the public will use the Central Square roundabout in a single-lane manner, when a vehicle is trying to back out, it will stop traffic entirely. How he sees it is that Central Square traffic is chaotic, but it works. Since 1970, he has been amazed at how it works. It is so chaotic that the public drives slowly and cautiously, but it works, as a two-lane roundabout. He questions why they would want to change something that is working. As Councilor Filiault said during the design and at Committee meetings, just to get the design moved along, at least they preserved the option. Now it is reality time.

Mr. Lussier stated that it was the City Council's decision and remains so. He continued that at this point, they could change it, with no consequence. Chair Greenwald replied that they are having the discussion early enough. It is not finished and not paved, so they are not changing anything at all.

Councilor Favolise stated that the workshop at which the City Council discussed this extensively was right after he was elected to Council. It was his first full meeting. He recalls Councilors having legitimate reasons on both sides of the discussion. He asked if Mr. Lussier could speak about the issue of drivers backing out of parking spaces, which he has heard some conversation about in the community, and which Chair Greenwald alluded to. He does not think that was discussed a lot when the initial decision was made. He asked if it is accurate that backing out of parking spaces will be problematic.

Mr. Lussier replied that it is another reason he likes the single lane configuration. With a single lane, a driver could back out, and others would still be able to go around them to the left. He would also point out, that condition exists everywhere where there is diagonal parking on Main St. Throughout the downtown, there is diagonal parking with two lanes of traffic. When a driver backs out, it stops that lane of traffic.

Councilor Tobin stated that Councilor Filiault mentioned something about adding the additional lane as a traffic calming measure. She asked if Mr. Lussier could speak to that. Mr. Lussier replied that he does not think two 11-foot lanes would have any more or less traffic calming impact than a single lane.

Councilor Workman stated that she agrees with Councilor Filiault that the Councilors can change their minds and update aspects of the project still, but she does not necessarily agree that this is one of the best changes to make at this time. She continued that as Mr. Lussier said, driver behavior already creates one lane here. Even with a roundabout with two very distinct lanes, people will often just go around it as if it were one lane. She wants to mention that the single lane at the head of Central Square increases pedestrian safety going to and from the common.

For pedestrians trying to cross there, having a single lane means only having to worry about one vehicle and not two, which will make a big difference.

Councilor Workman stated that for the record, as an MSFI Committee member, she received no calls or emails about this matter. Councilor Favolise stated that he received a voicemail today from Chris Coates, who expressed concern about the bottleneck and asked him to put that on the record. Chair Greenwald stated that he received calls and has been stopped on the street. He continued that no one can understand the single lane idea, which is fine. Stantec did all kinds of wonderful work.

Chair Greenwald asked for public comment.

Pam Slack (of Keene) stated that she has a graphic to share, which she personally paid for and thinks is a better representation of the design than the official one. She continued that she had this graphic done because she could not understand how traffic was going to go around Central Square. Originally, the road width was going to be 18 feet. After discussion, it was changed to 20 feet. That was still not enough, so now it is at 22 feet.

Ms. Slack indicated a portion of the road that is currently 33 feet wide, the crosswalk from the church over to the common. She continued that it was changed to 18 feet, and now to 22 feet, which is important and would allow the two 11-foot lanes. When this project came to the MSFI Committee, which she chaired, there was no traffic study done about this. Stantec did a kind of study, for one week, from 5:00 to 7:00 PM. An individual did a kind of study, for keenesquare.org/design, from 5:00 to 6:00 PM every day to see how many vehicles went through there. From 5:00 to 6:00 PM on Main St., there were about 1,000 to 1,200 vehicles. That does not include the morning traffic. She has lived on the east side of Keene for almost her whole life. This will impact the east side. The traffic coming in at 5:00 to 6:00 PM from Roxbury St. is 200 to 350 vehicles. The traffic coming in from Washington St. is 350 to 600 vehicles. She is not a traffic engineer, but she wonders how all those vehicles would fit into the square with one lane.

Ms. Slack continued that her second concern is about traffic backing out of parking spaces from The Stage or any of the several businesses that are above The Stage. Drivers backing out will tie up traffic. She does not want to hear staff saying that drivers can go around vehicles that are backing out. They should just put in the two lanes.

Ms. Slack continued that for her, wanting two lanes has nothing to do with the bike lanes. This was a compromise for the bike lanes. The bike lanes are going in. She asks the Council to change this back, or leave it to two lanes, so the traffic can move slowly so there is not a continuous backup downtown. She comes to work at 8:00 or 8:30 AM and the traffic is backed up to Marlboro St. just to get to the square with one light. She cannot imagine how that will be impacted.

Ms. Slack continued that she asks the Committee to not accept Councilor Filiault's letter as informational. She would like to hear a roll call vote. She does not buy into the idea of safety for pedestrians. She looks at the safety for people on the road, coming into the city. One lane is not enough.

Dorrie Masten (of Swanzey) stated that she owns real estate in Keene. She continued that she appreciates Councilor Filiault's and Ms. Slack's comments as well as Mr. Lussier's. She speaks from a business standpoint, not logistics. The downtown project is hitting downtown merchants hard. They would like to believe there is light at the end of this tunnel and that they will be able to maintain business in this city when the project is over. She drives Central Square every day. She has been documenting the project regularly. Currently, the roundabout is not being used as one lane. It is currently two lanes. There are dots in the middle and white lines on the edges. Two sets of vehicles drive around the common, all day. Yes, traffic is merging. Yes, a new sidewalk is going in in front of the church. She does not agree that it needs to be a fancy, raised one. She wonders if they expect heavy usage of that crosswalk, because right now, that crosswalk does not get much use. She does not see the need for it. If that is what prevents Mr. Lussier or others from thinking the roundabout could be two lanes, she does not think the raised crosswalk is necessary. She would rather have the traffic kept rolling.

Ms. Masten continued that even right now, backing out of a parking space by The Stage is difficult, as it is all over downtown, but people are managing fine, because the traffic coming from Roxbury St., Washington St., and Main St. can still flow. The people who have spoken in favor of two lanes have been in Keene for a long time, having grown up here, and they know more than most people in this room about how the downtown operates. They are clearly saying, leave the square as it is. It works. The way it works is quite impressive, and it does not need to be changed. They want to make sure The Stage, the church, the bank, and other businesses continue to be successful. When The Stage, which is probably the most popular restaurant in the city, has a line too long, customers go to other nearby restaurants, including hers. Thus, many businesses benefit from The Stage at the head of the square, so if The Stage is harmed, they all are, too. Thus, to her, this is business, but also logistics. Having two lanes just makes sense.

George Benik, owner of The Stage, stated that his first question is whether paint would stop cars from going over the paint. If there is traffic, people will utilize the area either way, so it does not make sense to him as a business owner. Cars backing out have always been a problem, but as Ms. Masten said, it is a problem they have had for 45 years. His business is flourishing. Everyone is doing well downtown. He questions why they would shrink the area and make it harder for drivers to back out or slow down traffic. He supports two lanes. He does not think they need the raised sidewalk. He sees how many people are using the crosswalk over to the square, and it is minimal. The safety issue is minimal. He does not recall seeing anyone get hit by a car in the last 45 years. Maybe once.

Andy Holte (of Forest St.) stated that he does not know which option would be better. Most people in the room do not know, either. It is easy for people who have driven for many years to have opinions about what works well when driving, but they are not traffic engineers. The plan was to put in one lane and have the option to change it. This feels like manufacturing an issue they have not yet experienced, trying to change it before the project is even done. This does not feel necessary. He does not have strong feelings about one lane versus two. His concern is how they think about this decision. He hears people saying that there is a traffic issue and they need to solve it, doing whatever it takes to make traffic move as smoothly as possible. That ignores the tradeoffs. Councilor Filiault's letter mentioned cost. There is always a tradeoff with projects and

cost. This one would have very little cost, but it is ignoring other tradeoffs. The topic of safety comes up a lot. Yes, this will be much safer than before, but that is not an argument to not do more for safety. They should do as much as they can to make it a safe environment. Another consideration is the experience of being outside, walking around, dining outside. Someone said that not many people use the crosswalk currently. That is a reason to make it a raised crosswalk, and to make the crossing distance shorter, because the current conditions discourage people from crossing there.

Mr. Holte continued that there would be a tradeoff to moving cars quickly through the square, regarding what that does to the environment. On Route 101, for example, everyone wants to move cars through there quickly and efficiently, which works, because you would never want to sit and eat on the side of Route 101. Moving cars through quickly is the opposite of having an environment that you want to spend time in and enjoy. If the goal is to make the Central Square area successful for the businesses, it would be good for vehicles to be moving more slowly through the area. No one wants to wait in traffic or wait for someone to move out of their parking space, but at least in your car, you have climate control and a comfortable seat and you will only have to wait a couple of minutes. The tradeoff would be having a place that is much more enjoyable to be outside in. That is how he looks at this decision. They should look at all these factors, not just the question of how to move cars through as quickly as possible. He thinks that should be the lowest priority.

Councilor Filiault stated that the Public Works Director said they should try one lane, and if it does not work, they can always go to two lanes. He continued that he thinks it should be the opposite, starting with two lanes, and going to one lane if that does not work. He challenges the Public Works Director to prove him wrong.

Councilor Tobin stated that she remembers the Committee discussing this at length. She did not have a strong opinion about one lane or two until she saw the animation of traffic and where people would be crossing. Currently, the green space of the common is underutilized. It is also very difficult to access. When the Committee talked about expanding it, they talked about making access easier. As she recalls, the plan was to see how one lane worked. If it was problematic, there would be enough space to make it two lanes. As she heard from Mr. Lussier tonight, traffic would have to stop for vehicles to back out if it were two lanes. If it were one lane, drivers could navigate around the vehicles backing out. Because of the X of traffic, people will need to merge either before the crosswalk or just after. She hopes that before drivers get to the crosswalk they will be looking to either side for pedestrians. That seems like the safer way. Regarding the issue of one lane versus two, she does not feel differently than she did when the Council last voted on this.

Chair Greenwald stated that he thinks this matter should go before all 15 Councilors. It is significant enough that they should all weigh in.

Councilor Ellis stated that the Council already discussed this at length before she joined. She continued that she sees no reason to change the decision of the Council before they know it is not working. She agrees with Mr. Holte. She is not a traffic engineer and does not know whether one or two lanes are better. However, she disagrees with the sentiment that there are not many

pedestrians here so the City does not need to do much for them. She thinks there might be more pedestrians if the City made Central Square more hospitable to them. They had a great opportunity to make Central Square bigger, greener, and more pedestrian-friendly, but decided against it. Thus, she does not want to move toward making Central Square more car-friendly and more hostile to pedestrians.

Ms. Masten stated that it is true that the Council voted on this already. She continued that she believes that when it was discussed at prior meetings, the plan was for the road to be narrower, and two lanes would not have been possible. That has since changed dramatically. They talked about traffic studies. A simple Google search will tell you that before you turn two lanes into one and cause bottlenecking, road rage, accidents, and more, first, that one lane should have its own traffic study. And it does not. Maybe the Council could review that. As Ms. Slack said, an individual did a traffic study for keenesquare.org, but only between 5:00 to 6:00 PM for one week. Stantec's study was a little more in depth, but it was not just for the head of the square, which has many lanes of traffic going into one lane. She thinks the full City Council should consider this.

The Mayor stated that he favored two lanes from the start, and he still does. Two lanes go through the entire downtown area. The plan had the option of going to one lane, which was a discussion. They did not go there. It seems that the amount of conflict in the Central Square area, where all the traffic merges, is the place to continue that consistency around. People have to look out for every spoke and arm and crosswalk. That is what calms traffic there. He has observed that this is a rather safe roundabout right now. In the three years he has been in City Hall, he has not seen a single emergency vehicle respond to a pedestrian or traffic incident there. Thus, what is there is working. Preserving it is in the best interest.

Roberta Mastrogiovanni (of Court St.) stated that she has property on Main St. and Marlboro St. and travels through the Central Square roundabout multiple times a day. She continued that she has lived in town for 40 years. Moving to one lane will be a disaster. Traffic will back up and people will avoid driving on Main St. Downtown business owners will suffer. She agrees that if this is not broken, they should not fix it. She is confident that Central Square will be beautiful, and she sees no need for raised crosswalks. Those will be more of a hazard. They could use markings or find other creative ways to increase pedestrian safety. They should not create a traffic nightmare on Main St. Right now, everyone knows the traffic pattern. It is a double lane going around. In fact, there are three lanes that become two. Reducing it to one lane would be a big mistake.

Chair Greenwald stated that the Committee needs to move this forward with some recommendation to the Council. He continued that he is prepared to make a motion if someone else does not want to. He recommends two lanes. Councilor Tobin stated that she recommends one lane. Chair Greenwald asked the City Attorney how they should word a motion. City Attorney Amanda Palmeira replied that they could make a motion either way and see how the vote goes.

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

The Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee recommends the City Council not reconsider the current plan of one traffic lane around the north section of Central Square and maintain the one lane plan.

The Mayor stated that he thinks the manner of maintaining what they currently have as a plan would be to accept the letter as informational. He continued that however, as Chair Greenwald said, it is likely to have an amendment at the full City Council, regardless of what the Committee adopts.

The City Attorney replied that as the Committee is aware, if their recommendation is to accept an agenda item as informational, the tradition has been for the Council to not vote on it. It would be accepted as informational pro forma. If the Committee wants to continue with the existing plan and have the Council vote on that and not have it just be accepted by the Council as informational, she recommends the Committee not have a motion to accept it as informational. That would get the Council to vote, instead of it just being read into the record.

The motion passed on a vote of 4 to 1. Chair Greenwald was opposed.

5. Direct Referral: Communication/Dorrie Masten – Concerns Related to Downtown Infrastructure Project

Dorrie Masten (of Swanzey) stated that as she explained in her letter, a couple of weeks ago, a pipe broke in downtown Keene. It was originally scheduled to be without water from 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM. Around 12:30 PM, the pipe burst, and chaos followed. She originally had a hard time accepting the downtown infrastructure project but came around to it, accepting that the work had to be done. She was, and still is, against "all the fluff." When the pipe broke, it reminded her and others who fought this project that the work needed to be done. However, she and others had no idea what was happening with the burst pipe. It was a mess. Mr. Lussier was running in the back alley with the Casella crew. Casella workers were running all over town. Around 12:30 PM, Mr. Lussier came to her restaurant and told her the water would be off for another two to eight hours. They dealt with it. Casella brought them portapotties and staff did their best to get through the day with disposable dishes. Then, she found out her restaurant should have been placed on fire watch. When she called Mr. Lussier and told him, he did not believe fire watch was necessary during the day. It is in effect 24 hours a day and it is important.

Ms. Masten continued that she thought originally that 39 Central Square did not have water as well and told all of her tenants they could not use water. It turned out that 39 Central Square did have water, because the water comes in off of Winter St. and Court St. Her restaurant also did not have a fire suppression system. Although the fire suppression system comes in off the back of the building, as she confirmed with the Facilities Director of the county, those pipes connect to the pipe that was broken. They were never told their fire suppression system was not working. She was very upset when she found out, because they were still cooking. The restaurant's hood system has the foam backup system, but had there been a major fire, they would have been in big trouble. She is not sure how the fire department could have responded anyway, given that there were holes in the earth from construction and the fire trucks cannot fit in the alley out back. Everyone in the building was in danger and it was unnecessary.

Ms. Masten stated that even if the Committee accepts her letter as informational, she asks them to ensure a plan is put in place for life safety during this project. She questions why there was not temporary water for a scheduled shutoff. The scheduled shutoff was for four hours. In New Hampshire, restaurants must close if they do not have water for two hours. Staff at her restaurant kept cooking, not knowing. She called the New Hampshire Fire Marshall's office to ask what the protocol is for such situations. She was told the fire department, engineer, and the health department are all supposed to communicate. She cannot change what happened October 1, but she asks the Committee to take this seriously and send this to Council to make sure there is a plan in place for what to do if this happens again. If a pipe breaks, they should know where the next one is to shut it off. She hopes there will be a backup water tank. This is serious enough, and this is a big enough project that has only just begun, for the Councilors to authorize whoever makes the plans to sit down and have a meeting, to do something about this.

Chair Greenwald stated that the phrase "direct referral," to him, indicates that the City Manager takes this very seriously. He continued that he and the Mayor agreed, which is why Ms. Masten's letter, which normally would have gone to the Council and then been referred to the Committee, went straight to the Committee. It is being taken seriously. He does not disagree with anything Ms. Masten is saying. There need to be contingencies, as water is essential, for fire suppression and otherwise.

Ms. Masten stated that she has one more comment. When she spoke with the Facilities Director from the county, he and Mr. Coates had no idea this had happened, until she told them about it. The Facilities Director told her they do not have a lot of people in the building, but it only takes the loss of one life to matter. He also told her that something to think about is how the entire history of Cheshire County sits in that one building. Lives are at stake, which is what is most important. There needs to be a way to tell everyone in every building that is shut off what is happening, and maybe communicate with the health department, too, because she did not see them, either. She cannot stay to listen to Mr. Lussier's response, because she has to go back to work right now.

Mr. Lussier stated that first, he wants to explain in more detail what was happening and the chain of events that preceded Ms. Masten's concerns. He continued that Ms. Masten owns two abutting properties on Central Square, 44 Central Square, the Pour House restaurant, and the Ann Henderson building. He has a graphic showing the City's water mains and fire lines. Off Winter St., there is a fire line and a service line that run into the backside of the larger of Ms. Masten's two parcels.

Mr. Lussier continued that regarding where these records come from, they are a compilation of over 100 years of history. Some records are kept on hand-written cards from whenever the service lines and valves were installed. The Pour House property is labeled as "43 through 45 Central Square." The Pour House is 44 Central Square. It is connected from the rear of the block. A note on the card says, "*See small plan book*." That is a separate set of records maintained in the engineering office. Similarly, 48-49 Central Square is the former Chamber of Commerce and refers to that same plan. Another slide shows a more modern set of cards, records related to services. They are drawn in Computer-Aided Design (CAD) and updated when a project like the

Downtown Infrastructure Project updates a service connection. These are the records used when a contractor needs to work on a private service. It helps them locate it and helps locate the shutoff valves. Those are the records City staff had when planning the project.

Mr. Lussier continued that two of the properties refer to the "small plan book," which has a hand-drawn sketch showing a single line coming in off West St. that feeds the back side of the Russell Block and 33 West St., the County offices. Another line goes into the back of the former Chamber of Commerce, and another line goes into the back of Ms. Masten's property. The best he can ascertain from talking with engineering staff and folks who were on the ground is that there was an assumption made. Ms. Masten's two buildings share a common fire service. That was replaced in 2014 when the City did the Winter St. project. He thinks when the engineer reviewed the records and saw that the water and sewer were reinstalled from Winter St. in 2014, they assumed that was for both the fire and the water. That is the sort of assumption that was reflected in the contract documents. The fire line was correct. That fire line serves both buildings. He wishes Ms. Masten was here to hear it, but he wants to reassure her that her building was never without fire suppression during this day of work. The fire line remained on and active the whole time. However, the assumption that the domestic line was also reconfigured at that time was incorrect. Her northern building was supplied off Winter St. The Pour House, specifically the domestic service, was not supplied during that service.

Mr. Lussier continued that on the day in question, Casella was scheduled to make the first of four connections that will run between the new water mains they have been installing over the last month around Central Square to West St., Roxbury St., Washington St., and Court St. They were going to remove about 40 feet of pipe, install a new valve and a new length of pipe, and leave it there to build off of as they connected up the rest of the pipes around Central Square. Before you can cut into the old pipe, you need to isolate the work area and drain it. Working with City staff, they identified the four valves, one right in the mouth of Central Square, one at the northern end of Federal St., one at the northern end of St. James St., and one right next to St. James on the main line that runs down West St. However, two of those valves were installed in 1891. The newest of the four was installed in 1930. Obviously, those are well past their prime. Staff had concerns about being able to use them and have them function properly during the event, so they also looked at a secondary plan, where to go if the valves did not operate properly. Ms. Masten's misconception was that the crew did not have a backup plan that day, and that everyone was running around not knowing what to do. In fact, the crew had a best-case scenario plan and a backup plan for all of the valves not being operable. Depending on what happened, that might have meant turning off two additional valves, one on West St. at School St., and one on School St. on the branch line that goes north from West St. On Federal St., the next available line was right at the intersection with Lamson St. That valve was new in 2016, so the crew was confident about that one.

Mr. Lussier continued that for the Central Square valve, the backup plan was to turn off three valves. One was on the main line that runs down Main St. Another was on that same main line that runs up towards Court St. The third was on the crossover that goes from the western side of the square over to Roxbury St. Most of the valves worked fine that day, but three had problems. They were all leaking, and not giving the crew a good shutdown. The crew did their notifications based on that secondary plan of having to go to the secondary valves. Based on that, they

notified National Grange they had a fire service only, not domestic line. They notified the property on the corner of School St. and West St. The Public Library is fed off of Winter St. The Cheshire County building did receive a notice. The three properties on West St., the lingerie store, One West, and the former Chamber of Commerce, received notice, as did the two properties on the southern side that fronted onto that. All of the properties that face onto West St. received notice as being potentially affected by the shutdown. They did not include Ms. Masten's restaurant, because they assumed her property was fed off of Winter St. That ended up being an incorrect assumption. To that extent, he apologizes and takes full responsibility for that.

Chair Greenwald asked if there is a sprinkler line in the Pour House. Mr. Lussier replied yes. It is apparently fed through Ms. Masten's adjacent building. He checked that record earlier tonight and confirmed that she is only paying for a single sprinkler line, the one fed off the 39 Central Square property. The one that comes off Winter St. feeds both buildings.

Mr. Lussier continued that in terms of the notification, staff typically does doorhangers. The contractor is required to hand them out a minimum of 72 hours before a planned shutdown. In this case, they were handed out six days before the planned shutdown. Casella was optimistic about the length of the shutdown. They said in the notice that they expected people would be out of water for four hours, 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM. Unfortunately, because of the difficulties in getting a good shutdown and getting that resolved, Casella did not begin the work until a little after 12:00 PM. Thus, the four-hour shutdown that should have ended at 1:00 PM in fact ended a little after 5:00 PM and it ended up being about five hours.

Mr. Lussier continued that the three valves were still leaking. More water was coming through than Casella could manage in the excavation. Thus, they had to go to what he calls the contingency plan. They turned off two valves at Winter St., one near the common, and one near Roxbury St. That was successful in getting the flow from two of the leaking valves to stop. All those were able to operate properly. There was no contingency that he found acceptable for the Roxbury St. valve. The next available valve was at Gilbo Ave, also from 1891. It would have affected many properties on Main St. At that point, the flow leaking through the valve was about 50 gallons per minute. The contractor was able to manage that residual flow in the excavation just using normal construction pumps. They decided to cut the pipe, do the work, and manage the water in the hole with the pumps.

Mr. Lussier continued that by a little past 5:00 PM, all the properties down West St. were turned back on, and everything was back in service. This is now a dead end where all of the lines come in. When the valve failed during the operation and they were unable to get a shutdown, the valve body actually cracked. It was flowing catastrophically. They could not pressurize that valve without taking it offline and removing it. By that point, it was 6:00 PM and not a good time to start that work. The way it was left was that the two valves at Winter St. were off, Central Square was off, and Roxbury St. was off. That meant that 1 West St. and the block on the corner of Roxbury St. did not have fire lines. Their domestic services were restored, but they did not have fire service overnight.

Mr. Lussier continued that that is a good transition to talk about fire safety, which he appreciates was a big focus of Ms. Masten's letter. As he said, and confirmed with records, 44 Central

Square was never without fire service. However, two properties were left without fire service overnight. He discussed that with Fire Marshall Rick Wood. They worked out a plan for how to manage that. That contingency plan calls for the Fire Department to be notified of the situation and having a plan in place to provide water to the fire services through the outside connections. Typical with commercial construction is to have a connection on the outside of the building, and you might see an "FDC" sign. That is a way for a fire department to force water into a building's fire suppression system if something happens with that system. The plan was that in the event of an incident, the Fire Department would provide pressure to that FDC through the external interface. He himself communicated that contingency plan to Fire Chief Seymour by phone. Staff also emailed KFD officers. An internal email distribution list, the "Hydrant Use" group, includes the Water/Sewer staff who maintain the hydrants, the engineering staff, and all KFD officers. Public Works staff uses that distribution list to communicate when a hydrant is found to be inoperative, is taken out of service for maintenance, or is being put back into service. This time of year, staff are removing water from hydrants and winterizing them, and they use that distribution list to notify people which ones have been winterized. If the KFD needs to use a hydrant, they use the distribution list to notify Public Works staff that they need to winterize it.

Mr. Lussier continued that Ms. Masten's letter said that KFD was not notified. He wants to assure the Committee that that was not the case. KFD was well aware of the situation overnight. Staff also reached out to both property managers. George Downing, Project Ombudsman, has made connections with many people. He was able to get Mr. Lussier in touch with both buildings' property managers. He (Mr. Lussier) notified both property managers that afternoon about the situation and about their fire suppression system not having water pressure overnight. KFD had been notified and a plan was in place for if there was an incident. He asked the property managers to remind their tenants to make sure their smoke detectors were working.

Mr. Lussier continued that lastly, he wants to address the topic of the fire watch. When Ms. Masten called him a couple of weeks ago and asked if she was supposed to have a fire watch, he was surprised by the question. He had thought it was only required for overnight issues. Since she called, he discussed it with Mr. Wood and did more reading on it. Mr. Wood confirmed that neither the NFPA guidelines nor the state's Fire Code require a fire watch. However, if an impairment of the fire suppression will last more than 10 hours in any 24-period, the authority who has jurisdiction is required to take certain action, with several actions to choose from. In this case, that is Mr. Wood. That mitigation measure, depending on the Fire Marshall's decision, could include a temporary water supply, a fire watch, turning off all heating elements, or evacuating the building. The contingency plan he and Mr. Wood developed was to supply water to the buildings in the event of an incident. Thus, as far as the Fire Marshall is concerned, the City met that requirement through their actions that afternoon.

Councilor Tobin stated that she appreciates the review of fire safety. She continued that as she understands it, Ms. Masten's concerns were about communication. She asked what the communication plan is for if something does not go according to plan, to update people as the issue is being resolved. Mr. Lussier replied that the primary communication is in advance. The City requires customers to be notified at least 72 hours in advance of a planned interruption to service. That was done. He was in Ms. Masten's restaurant that morning, as soon as staff knew what was going on and that her property would be affected. He apologized for the unplanned

interruption. As he said, City staff's information and communications are based on their records, and their records are not perfect. It is probably true that throughout the day, as crews were working and things were happening, they were not in Ms. Masten's doorway every hour to give an update. They could have given Ms. Masten and others more updates.

Councilor Tobin stated that she works from home, and recently, she could not figure out why her internet suddenly stopped working. It turned out that people were replacing a cable outside. She had the same question about what the communication plan was. Without knowing when her internet would work again, she did not know what to tell the people she works with who rely on her. Thus, it is important for staff to update people during such unplanned interruptions to service. If they are talking about just a few businesses for a span of two to three hours, it does not seem unreasonable to expect staff to be communicating with those few businesses to say that they have not been forgotten about and that they are still working on the problem. That would allow business owners to relay information to their staff members and customers. For example, maybe a restaurant would switch to pick-up only. Without updates about what happened and how the work is progressing, business owners do not know what to expect.

Councilor Tobin continued that she does not know what conversations staff has had with Ms. Masten since the incident, but it is almost two weeks later, and Ms. Masten is still concerned that she did not have fire protection, even though she did. It might have been helpful for staff to clarify that with Ms. Masten instead of waiting to talk about it at this meeting.

Chair Greenwald stated that this incident underscores why the downtown project is occurring. The pipes are old. He asked if some of the valves were repaired. Mr. Lussier replied that none of the valves will be remaining in service. The crew installed one temporary valve so they would have a good valve to use during the next series of shutdowns, but none of the valves that malfunctioned were repaired, because the ones on Central Square are all getting replaced. The ones on West St. further to the west will go into the City's list of valves that need replacement. That will be a separate project.

Councilor Favolise stated that he appreciates the detailed explanation and the clarifications. He continued that Mr. Lussier has said many times that "the records aren't perfect." Thinking back to Ms. Masten's concern about the speed and accuracy of communications, he asked if staff have double-checked the records they have. Work will continue downtown for quite a while. There will be more interruptions, and not all will happen neatly within the planned three- or four-hour window, as is the nature of it. He asked if staff have, thinking about the next time something needs to be communicated, double-checked the records of which downtown business lines are hooked up where, to check for inaccuracies.

Mr. Lussier replied that operationally, staff have discussed with the Casella team that they should not be optimistic in predicting how long work will take. If there is a disruption, it would be better to warn customers that it could be up to eight hours and then turn service back on in five hours, rather than the other way around. Regarding Councilor Favolise's question, he guarantees that crews will find things during this construction project that the City has no record of. It is not a matter of City staff needing to check their records for errors; it is more that the records just do not reflect what is in the ground.

Councilor Workman stated that she has a similar concern to Councilor Tobin's, that communication seems to be the real issue here. She still has not heard a definitive plan for communication. They should plan for more things to go wrong in a situation like this. People who were not initially perceived to be impacted might end up being impacted inadvertently. She wants to hear a plan for how they will handle a similar situation moving forward.

Mr. Lussier replied that he has been thinking about what Councilor Tobin said about giving more updates during the course of the interruption. Not every day of the project will involve work this risky or this impactful, but he thinks that when the team is doing "high stakes" work like this, it would be wise to schedule Mr. Downing to be dedicated to that task that day. Mr. Downing can be the person who is walking around to give periodic updates.

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

On a vote of 5 to 0, the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee recommends that the communication regarding concerns related to the Downtown Infrastructure Project be accepted as informational.

6. Downtown Infrastructure Project Update - Public Works Director

Mr. Lussier stated that in terms of work completed, this past month has been mostly focused on the water main work, along with connections to the adjacent buildings around the square. City staff anticipated challenges surrounding the existing utilities, but the challenges have been greater than anticipated, with telecom utilities, specifically. Telecom utility companies informed the crew where the utilities were located, but what was not realized or communicated was, for example, that some of the duct banks are 14 feet wide, and in one instance, two duct banks were stacked on top of each other. Today, the crew replacing the service line going to a set of buildings on Central Square had to go down more than 10 feet to get past the duct banks. Duct banks are typically two or three feet below ground. Casella has been doing a great job getting through these challenges, and they have made great progress.

Mr. Lussier continued that the water lines around Central Square are scheduled to begin testing next week. Before the new pipes can be used, they must go through a two-part testing sequence. First, the crew tests them for water tightness. That is a hydrostatic test. They fill a pipe with water and pressurize it to about twice what it will ever see and monitor its pressure. The pipe needs to be able to hold the pressure for at least an hour, to prove it does not leak. Next is a bacterial test. They flush the line and fill it with a high dose of chlorinated water to kill off any potential bacteria. Then, they discharge that chlorinated water down the sewers, and put regular, clean, drinking water in the pipe for 24 hours. They then test that water for the presence of bacteria. If they find any bacteria in the sample, they have to start all over again and redo it. Before a pipe is put into use, it must be watertight and completely sanitary.

Mr. Lussier continued that also next week, sewer replacements will begin. At the same time, crews will be doing exploratory excavations to prepare for the drainage work. They said there is a chance they would bring in a second vacuum excavator next week. That noisy machine is

useful for when you are dealing with other utilities and you have to dig around duct banks and gas lines. You can do it with that machine versus an excavator where you have to literally dig by hand with shovels. The exploratory excavations will help make sure that when the crew starts laying drains, they will not be running into any conflicting pipes. The drainage work is expected to begin in the next couple of weeks.

Mr. Lussier stated that he wants to thank the contractors for their efforts last week. They did a nice job cleaning up before the Pumpkin Fest. They have been leaving their tract equipment on Central Square over the weekends. Last weekend, they kept a couple of pieces out as displays and even decorated them for the festival, but other than that, they brought all of their equipment off site to clean up Central Square and make it part of the event footprint. He appreciates that effort.

Mr. Lussier continued that the next Coffee and Hard Hats meeting, to not be held on Veteran's Day, has been rescheduled to Tuesday, November 3, 2026, at 9:00 AM. It will be in the Transportation Center.

Mr. Lussier continued that finally, Mr. Downing has been distributing copies of the new and improved project schedule phasing plan graphic. It has also been updated on the City's website.

George Downing, Project Ombudsman, stated that this morning, Mr. Lussier had suggested he put together a log of how many people he had been talking to and that sort of thing. However, he was only in the office for about 35 minutes today, because he was out here for various other reasons. He will instead give the Committee a picture of what he does and how he talks to people on a regular basis, without the data behind the numbers. This week has been outside the norm. As Mr. Lussier mentioned, Public Works staff and Rebecca Landry pulled together a printable version of the new construction phase schedule that is on the website. Andrea Bixby from Public Works gave him about 100 copies last Friday. From then through today, he has been walking to the businesses and handing those out to put in their binders. It has been nice to see how many businesses have their binders right there, instead of stuck on a shelf in the back somewhere. He is glad people are truly using the binders as a reference. He got to 27 businesses last Friday afternoon, south of Railroad St. He thought it was most important to get to them because they are the ones immediately impacted by this change in schedule. The other days this week he has been getting to the rest of the businesses. There are about 10 he has not gotten to. A couple of those are not open on Mondays and Tuesdays. Others are therapists and he does not want to just walk into their offices if he does not have a schedule, so he has been trying to communicate with them via text or email. He will finish getting the binder updates out soon.

Mr. Downing continued that it has been a good opportunity. He finds that now that this has been publicized, people are a little more interested in finding out how it will be impacting their businesses. Counter staff are more likely to say, "Oh wait, the owner wanted to talk to you," so he has been able to. The graphic was great. He can hold it up against the old plan and explain the schedule, so people have at least some idea of when to expect work in front of their businesses, which is the kind of information people really want to hear. He has been having some good conversations. He has also met a couple of people he had not been able to meet in person before and had only communicated with via phone or email, so that was good. That includes two new

owners since this fall started. One just purchased the former Monadnock Family Services, the 64 Main St. block, this month. It was great to meet them and talk with them. He hopes the business owners have been finding this as helpful as he has.

Mr. Downing continued that when he is not spending so much time walking to all these businesses downtown, he typically receives two to four calls, emails, or texts a day. Most are questions he can answer, such as what the ribbon colors on the trees mean, when the crew tags the trees, or why a detour is going specifically the way it is going instead of another way. Some questions he gets need to be elevated either to GPI, the oversight engineers, or to Public Works because they are things he does not have the authority to deal with or does not have information about. He has a similar number of outgoing calls and emails each day, responding to communications from earlier days that he just found out the answers to, or to an ongoing email chain. A few business owners are in continuous conversation with him, not in a bad way. For example, George Benik's son calls or emails him about once a week with questions about how things are impacting The Stage, and they are always good questions. He also takes a daily walk and drive through the project area so he knows what the public is experiencing as opposed to what the contractors tell him they are experiencing. That is helpful for when he gets calls. Someone will say they saw a detour that did XYZ, and since he has been to the area, he knows what the caller is talking about. There were two or three days when he did not get down to the project area, and he got things wrong, so he tries hard to do that walk and drive.

Mr. Downing continued that there is not a good way to track this, but he also gets stopped on the street. Many more people now are aware of who he is and what he is doing, which is great, but it is not something he can document. The questions people stop him to ask have lately been about the trees or how the free parking works. His other assignment is to go out once a week with a subcontractor who takes photos and videos of existing conditions of all of the buildings. That puts him on the street and in the buildings, and when he is up and down Main St. for that, probably a couple of times an hour, he helps someone navigate the parking kiosk and how to get the free parking as opposed to just throwing money into the meter in frustration.

Mr. Downing continued that Public Works provided colored prints of the final project, which they have up on the windows at the Gilbo Ave. site, which is very helpful. The prints are beautiful, done by Kayla Smith, a Keene High School student who interned at Public Works this summer. One of her assignments was to do those beautiful, colorized pictures of what the downtown will look like. People stop and look at those prints all the time. When he can tell that they are trying to figure something out, he goes out and talks to them about it. It has been great publicity for the project.

Mr. Lussier added that the electrical equipment box behind Corner News has a mural painted on it, also by Kayla Smith. He continued that that box had been frequently marked with graffiti, so the Highway Superintendent had the clever idea of having someone paint the mural on the box. There has been no graffiti or tagging since.

Mr. Downing stated that based on how positive it has been for him to go around with the image of the new construction phases and actually having useful information to bring to businesses, he would like to start a conversation with Public Works and GPI, and Casella to a degree, but they

are more tied up in the day-to-day work, to figure out a regular schedule where he can bring useful information. He wants to have a reason to stop by, rather than just popping in. He does not want to be a nuisance to business owners, which he would be more likely interpreted as if he just popped in regularly without something useful to share with them. Maybe once or twice a month he can do that, if they can figure out what is useful information to bring to people that would make people want to see him and take the information on board.

Councilor Workman stated that Mr. Downing does quite a bit as a part-time employee. She continued that it sounds like he is responding to calls and emails in a timely manner. She asked what the timeframe is for a return call or email that someone should expect, such as 24 or 48 hours. She asked what his general availability is as a part-time employee. For example, she wonders if he is trying to be available for a few hours every Monday through Friday, or something different. It sounds like his hours might flex depending on the need of the project.

Mr. Downing replied that it has been very extensive this fall, as the project kicked in. Casella has three crews out there now. He is in every day. He anticipates the hours he needs to be in to start reducing as they settle into a more consistent pattern. Generally, he finds it most helpful to be in in the mornings. He rarely responds to texts and emails on weekends. If there is an emergency, he is not the person to be contacting on a weekend anyway. On weekdays, he responds to messages within 24 hours. If a message comes after he has left for the day, he generally will not get it until the next time he is in. If a message comes in while he is at work, he usually replies the same day. Otherwise, the next day. It rarely takes longer than that.

Councilor Favolise asked Mr. Lussier to explain what a “duct bank” is. He continued that his second question is whether people downtown should expect any disruptions based on that work. Mr. Lussier replied that a duct bank is a series or bundle of conduits. Nowadays, people use PVC pipes as conduit to run electrical lines or telecom lines underground. Rather than just having one pipe by itself, if a telecom company is putting in conduits, often they will put in a series of them. Say, two or three conduits wide and a couple deep. To protect those conduits, since they are just plastic pipes, they will often form up and encase them in concrete. That concrete is what they call a “duct bank.” Utility companies are required to mark out and locate those facilities for the contractor so they are not damaged during construction. That is the “dig safe process.” That was done. The utility companies located the duct banks based on their records. The work around it is that within the limits of that, where the duct banks are expected to be, the crews are required to either hand excavate within a certain distance for telecom, either 12 or 18 inches, or use a vacuum excavator to dig around it. That way they are not using a big, heavy, hydraulic excavator to dig that and potentially damaging the pipe. If City staff or Casella causes a break to the telecom line, something has gone wrong. And to be clear, he does not think the Downtown Infrastructure Project work is what broke the telecom line Councilor Tobin was talking about.

Councilor Favolise stated that the Committee has frequently talked about the dual downtown uses, with the business owners, staff, and property managers of residential spaces, and then the residents themselves. He asked if Mr. Downing has been interacting more with any of the residents directly. In the past, he had expressed not wanting to wait outside people’s apartment doors to share with them the latest updates, but he wonders if, as Mr. Downing has become more recognized downtown, that has extended to downtown residents as well.

Mr. Downing replied that he thinks it has, maybe not as much as he would like it to, but there is no way for him to force that issue. He continued that notifications go through property owners or property managers. He has been getting calls and emails from people who identify themselves as residents of downtown properties, asking questions about the project, so he is starting to see some of that. He assumes some of the people who stop him on the street are downtown residents, but he cannot say for sure. People are getting to know him more but not necessarily by sight, because it is not like he goes up to people's apartments to introduce himself, but by name, at least.

Councilor Ellis stated that recently, she was at a meeting with several members of the Keene Downtown Group, and they expressed their compliments to Mr. Downing. They said he had been in a lot and had provided a lot of information. She thanks Mr. Downing for all of his work.

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

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

7. Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Greenwald adjourned the meeting at 8:17 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

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