



City Council Meeting
Minutes
June 6, 2013
City Council Chambers
7:00 p.m.

1. The Mayor called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.
2. Roll Call. Councilors Bennett, Bouchard, Mayor Bouley, Councilors Coen, DelloIacono, Grady Sexton, Keach, Kretovic, McClure, Nyhan, Patten, St. Hilaire, Shurtleff and Werner were present. Councilor Blanchard was late.
3. Agenda overview by the Mayor.
4. **June 6, 2013 Public Hearing**
 - A. Public hearing on the final design of the Downtown Complete Streets Improvement Project, CIP #460. (5-56) (*Public testimony submitted*)

Action: Mayor Bouley opened the public hearing.

Public Testimony

Steve Duprey reminded Council that this project is important on two fronts: Main Street is an economic engine and they have to do everything they can to give their merchants the best chance to thrive; Main Street is the heart and soul of where the community gathers. He stated that he feels that this project will solve a myriad of problems. He suggested staying with parallel parking in front of the Capitol Plaza area and indicated that, since the last meeting, he has been to Portsmouth, Nashua and Manchester to look at their parking and every single one of those cities has surface parking lots noting that he feels that it would be wise to consider in the future or within this project. He further suggested: there be a significant design element in front of the State House Plaza such as a fountain; underground utilities on South Main Street; the city to bid the steam as a number of alternatives – sidewalks only in the core area, sidewalks in the entire project area, sidewalks and the street in the core area. He noted that he is pleased that the city is hiring a public relation firm and urged that the Parking Committee needs to get better signage out directing people to the garages now. He noted his appreciation to the effort that the city has put into this and urged the Council to make this project a reality.

Councilor McClure asked Mr. Duprey to explain the three components he suggested the steam be bid upon. Mr. Duprey responded that if there is not a new steam plant there is still waste steam that comes out of the buildings downtown and it is possible to configure

a steam heated sidewalk by collecting and using that. He indicated that he would bid one alternative in the sidewalks in the core area from Pleasant to Centre Street; with a new steam plant it would generate more steam and more demand and he would bid it with the sidewalks the length of the project area; as a third option he would bid the streets themselves in the core area.

Betsy McNamara, project advisory committee member, noted that she believes this is a transformative project for Concord and its downtown. She stated that one thing to keep in mind is that this project is not just Pleasant to Centre Street, it's Storrs to Storrs Street. She stated that the suggestion to narrow the sidewalk on the west side to put in angled parking is distressing to her because of her firm belief of the big vision of the wide sidewalks and what that would mean for the look and cohesive look throughout the entire corridor. She urged Council not to move forward with that change and stay to course in what the advisory committee recommended in terms of sidewalk width. She expressed her appreciation on the intent on improving accessibility through this project. She asked that Council stick to the plan that the project advisory committee recommended.

Shannon Rogers indicated that she is a new resident to the city and one of her main motivations for moving here was for the variety of infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists as well as the commitment to the downtown revitalization. She pointed out that as a state that is rapidly aging and projects such as this are key in maintaining and increasing the population of young adults and families.

Councilor Nyhan asked what Ms. Rogers likes best about the project. Ms. Rogers responded that she likes the concept of the wider sidewalks.

Will Delker, downtown resident and advisory committee member, congratulated the design team for doing something that is truly impressive in the end and, in his view, what they proposed captures the recommendations that the advisory committee had and adheres very closely to the guidelines that they set when they made their recommendations and report to the Council. He noted that he believes that if this design is implemented they will have a downtown that they can be proud about and that it accomplishes the objectives of a Main Street: a place for the community to gather, to shop, to eat and to greet visitors to the city. He spoke in support of heated sidewalks and explained the committee's recommendations in regards to parking and noted that it is his hope that the Council doesn't fall into the trap that they struggled with of attempting to tinker with the design by a block by block basis. He urged the Council to adopt the plan that the design team proposed.

Becky Lougee, Merrimack County Savings Bank, indicated that she has looked at the plans and pointed out that the crosswalk in front of the bank has disappeared. She noted that there is a lot of activity surrounding the bank in regards to customers and employees and inquired as to why this crosswalk disappeared within this area.

Rick Watrous noted that he feels that the Council is about to make a huge mistake explaining that he feels that this project has many unexplored aspects that could adversely affect Concord for many years to come. He indicated that he personally

doesn't know anyone that says downtown needs wider sidewalks and less parking; he stated that he feels that wider sidewalks will become cluttered with accessories that will require money to be maintained. He noted that he feels that the plan is worse for bicyclists and further noted his concern with only two lanes on Main Street. He urged Council not to approve this project.

Councilor Werner asked Mr. Watrous what improvements he feels are necessary to revitalize downtown and whether he feels that downtown has a tired look. Mr. Watrous responded that he feels that it does need a facelift but doesn't feel that this particular plan accomplishes that in a productive way. He noted his concern with the city not maintaining things currently and questioned how they will maintain all that this project represents.

Karen Page, Flag Works owner, noted that this project cannot be everything to everyone and feels that no one has more stake in this project than the downtown merchants and property owners do. She noted that she has yet to hear that there are not enough benches, not enough gathering spaces or wide enough sidewalks on Main Street; what the merchants hear about all the time is the difficulty in finding adequate parking. Her wish is that added parking was looked at for downtown and is upset with some parking being taken away. She thanked the Council for considering putting five more spaces back into the plan.

Councilor Coen asked Ms. Page for the reason she chose Main Street as a location for her store. Ms. Page responded that they chose the area to be more visible near the intersection of Pleasant and Main Streets.

Roy Schweiker noted that he feels that the city is spending so much money in downtown on this one project and asked how are they going to justify spending any more when the neighborhoods haven't had any money in years. He noted that parking is an issue; has concerns with pavers and bricks; doesn't feel that the State House Plaza needs more features; has concerns with the wider sidewalks becoming cluttered; has concerns with hiring a PR consultant; doesn't feel the need for buried utilities.

Councilor Keach asked Mr. Schweiker if he feels that he should vote no or yes. Mr. Schweiker indicated that his recommendation is to vote no for burying the utilities and to include bids for alternatives for heated sidewalks as suggested in earlier testimony.

Tim Sink, Greater Concord Chamber of Commerce, thanked the Council for the attention that they have paid to this project. He explained that the Chamber has weighed in on the level of detail that's being discussed this evening and that their role has been, to this point, serving as a cheerleader and assisting in seeking some of the grant and funding opportunities that are out there to lessen the burden on the taxpayers. He encouraged Council to be bold with the final decision and to stick as close as possible to the design team's recommendation. He stated that the Chamber is going to continue to support this project and to work with the city any way they can regardless of what decisions are made.

Allan Herschlag highlighted several excerpts contained within the Tiger grant's project description of the grant application and expressed several of his concerns. He also noted his concerns in which he feels that there wasn't enough public input related to this project. He relayed his concerns in regards to losing parking; concerns with accessibility; and concerns with merchants paying for this project. He stated that he would love to see the downtown flourish with parking and traffic patterns that meet the needs of those shopping and working downtown and pedestrian and bike lanes that are safe and convenient to access and use. He noted that he feels that this is a project that was never given the time needed to develop a plan for Concord. He asked how the Council vote to move forward with this project if they know that there is just as much of a chance that this project will fail as it will succeed and not knowing how they are going to pay for this project. *(Full written testimony on file at the City Clerk's Office)*

Kristen Allen, Clinton Street resident, spoke in support of the advisory committee's unanimously supported plan. She stated that she feels that it is really important, to the long term vitality of Concord, that the downtown be accessible to a variety of people. She noted that she is not in favor of head in parking.

Jim Rosenberg stated that Council has the opportunity to make the most significant improvement to the city. He commented to Council to make sure, before the final proposal is adopted, that they do not adversely impact the flow of traffic on Low Avenue.

Councilor Werner asked Mr. Rosenberg as to his view on the parking situation. Mr. Rosenberg replied that the current amendment of some additional angled parking is an appropriate step and an example of flexibility that Council has shown. He stated that he feels that the current angled parking is very difficult to navigate and wishes the configuration was a little bit different so that it could accommodate the parallel spots. He stated that it's important that Council does as much to permit traffic for the businesses as much as possible.

Kevin Curdie commented that he feels that the buildings downtown look old and tired and putting planters, benches, etc. is not going to change the look of these buildings. He wondered if there was a way to promote downtown's historical value by signs for the buildings, Bicentennial Square and Eagle Square.

Tonya Rochette noted that this is needed for multiple generations and investing in this opportunity would not only help strengthen the city's ability to revitalize the downtown but also sustain this for years to come. She noted that as much as she believes in supporting the retail, restaurants and cultural outlets, she also wants to ensure that the city doesn't overlook the other businesses that are downtown; there are other businesses located in upper stories and the city is looking to attract more businesses to the upper stories which are currently underutilized. She indicated that they need to be populated with young businesses and entrepreneurs; she stated that, in her opinion, parking isn't going to help these sort of businesses, having an attractive location with full buildings will make the city more attractive and make people want to come and open businesses. She noted that it will create a space for encouraging professionals to come work and play and a place in which they should be trying to increase the utilization of the downtown to

more than just during the shopping hours. She pointed out the need for improved signage to parking. She hopes that Council sticks with the original intent of this to be an accessible downtown for everybody to come and enjoy.

Michael Hermann, Gibson's Book Store, indicated that there are certain elements that have been identified as key elements of this plan and Council needs to ensure that they happen including: maximizing parking; look into surface parking lots; heated sidewalks. He pointed out that it's an interesting time for them because they are expanding when this is happening but feels that this plan needs to be done.

Councilor Coen questioned why Mr. Hermann decided to keep his store on Main Street rather than another location in the city. Mr. Hermann responded that he is a big believer in Main Street; Main Street is an economic engine, a place where people gather; it's walkable and a good place to be for an independent business.

Councilor DelloIacono asked Mr. Hermann if he feels that there is currently a parking problem downtown. Mr. Hermann responded yes. He stated that nobody complains about a parking problem in Portsmouth because people are prepared to park and walk because there are interesting and entertaining places to walk by. He noted that they are not going to be Portsmouth but one thing that this project can help to do is generate that excitement on the sidewalks and make it more interesting to walk.

Councilor Nyhan asked whether Mr. Hermann has felt that he has had an opportunity to have input in this project. Mr. Hermann responded yes.

Kate Putnam noted that she feels that approving this is a great thing for Concord because it has a lot of potential. She indicated that she trusts everyone to make the right decisions to make Concord better. She pointed out that people have to park farther away in Portsmouth and Boston and that doesn't deter visitors within those cities.

Sue McCoo, Capital Craftsman and Viking House, noted that one of her customers had to drive around the block twelve times before finding a parking spot.

Althea Barton, Penacook resident, urged Council to approve the plan as it was presented to them and not to try to add more spaces. She stated that she understands the issues of the merchants. She stated that this whole process is a social experiment and feels that one of the best things in the plan is the signage which will lead people off the highway and deliver them to a parking garage.

Rich Woodfin, business owner, resident and advisory committee member, urged the Council to accept the plan as it was presented.

Councilor Coen asked Mr. Woodfin why he located his business on Main Street. Mr. Woodfin responded that the business has been there for thirty years and the location works for them.

Matt Elliott, advisory committee member and resident, pointed out that more importantly than adding five more spaces, more effort needs to be put into making sure they do everything they can to put as many signs up strategically as possible to let people know that there are three garages in the city. He urged Council to accept the committee's plan as presented.

Brent Todd spoke on behalf of Concord 250 indicating that he cannot think of a better birthday gift to the City of Concord than a newly refurbished and revitalized Main Street. He thanked everyone for all of the time and effort put into this.

Andrew Hatch, downtown retailer, noted his concern with parking and wondered if there is any conversation around allowing a certain number of the on street parking spots to be far more aggressively timed so that they are a bit more like a drop off/pick up spot such as 15, 20 or 30 minutes spots. He stated that he doesn't know enough about the aesthetic change that the five new parking spots are going to create and is concerned that so much work has gone into the crafting of an elegant design. He pointed out that whether it's five new spots or twenty new spots, they will still be underutilized in many people's opinion on parking. He stated that he is in support of the project and the proposal as it stands.

Councilor Coen asked Mr. Hatch what is it about Main Street that attracted him to locate his business here. Mr. Hatch responded that it's never been in his business plan to depend upon that a car can park close to his business to remain in business because he needs many more customers than can ever consider to be in close proximity to his store to make it a viable business.

Patrick Page, Flag Works owner, indicated that parking was a non-issue when he bought his property in 2002 and feels that the city has been taking away parking over the years. He stated his is a destination store and people travel there and need to be able to park to make a purchase.

Councilor Coen asked if it would be beneficial to Mr. Page's business if there were 15 or 20 minute parking. Mr. Page responded yes but that it wouldn't be beneficial for everyone on Main Street.

Councilor Grady Sexton inquired as to whether there has been any discussion among the merchants about the issue of the employees of the businesses using and utilizing the spots on Main Street and the problem with this. Mr. Page responded that this is always being discussed because on his block the other business owners will point out if an employee or a tenant is using the spaces out front.

Mayor Bouley asked what Mr. Page's feeling is on the overall project. Mr. Page responded that he wants the overall project to happen noting that he feels that Main Street needs a facelift.

Mike Cashion, Villari's Martial Arts, indicated that he has adjusted his lifestyle to fit Main Street. He stated that the economic climate that has been going on is not that great but feels that it's more of an opportunity than an issue noting that NH is in a much better

standing than other states. He noted that there are open spaces downtown and this is great grounds for negotiating great leases in the downtown. He spoke in support of changes in the downtown.

Leslie Thomas indicated that she is in favor of all of the plans that Council has made and noted that Concord does need a “wow” factor such as a water feature to draw more people and families downtown.

Robert Baker stated that since 1958 merchants have wanted parking downtown and over and over again the city has built parking garages. He noted that there are an incredible amount of parking spaces that are underutilized and sit idle in the garages. He understands that everyone wants convenient parking but how long do they keep using the same mantra that if they only fix parking on Main Street then the stores will succeed. He indicated that the complete streets is about multi-modal transportation and transportation is about moving people. He asked what if Main Street was safe and could accommodate both vehicles and bicyclists then they could get more people, more wallets and more feet downtown. He asked Council to do this about transportation and not once again just about parking.

Susanne Smith Meyer, resident, noted that, by rolling in the improvement piece, they have kind of lost track of what the complete streets grant is all about. She indicated that there are some components that she feels that the Council has the ability to compromise but the integrity of the complete streets, the intermodal piece, the roadway, the sidewalks is what’s critical. She believes that the “wow” factor will be the facelift that downtown sees. She pointed out that maintenance needs to be considered when considering trees and other features; she wondered how the steam would be integrated with the trees. She stated that she feels that the improvement items has complicated a lot of the issues and maybe increased the costs. She added that she doesn’t feel that, at this stage in the game, it’s wise for the Council to start tweaking designs and to separate the improvements from the purity of what complete streets was really all about.

Kim Murdoch indicated that she has, never once, not visited a store, restaurant or gone to a performance because she couldn’t find a place to park. She agreed with Mr. Hatch’s suggestion with the possibility of having 15 to 30 minute pick up/drop off spots.

There being no further public testimony, the Mayor closed the hearing.

June 6, 2013 Public Hearing Action

5. Public hearing on the final design of the Downtown Complete Streets Improvement Project, CIP #460. (5-56)

Action: Councilor St. Hilaire moved to approve the downtown complete streets improvement project design as presented by the city’s design team to City Council on May 23, 2013 with the following modifications: 1) elimination of the interactive fountain on City Plaza at the State House; 2) addition of a permanent informational kiosk at City Plaza in front of the State House; 3) conversion of the proposed angle parking spaces back to parallel

parking spaces between Warren Street and the bump-out at Capital Plaza; 4) removing the aerial utilities from the Food Coop to Thompson Street (staff look at other alternatives such as behind the building, underground, etc.); 5) authorize to include in bid alternatives the heating of the streets and sidewalks to have a snow melt system; 6) authorization for the city's design team to make modifications to the project design to achieve accessibility where possible; 7) authorization for staff to pursue a comprehensive way-finding signage design and implementation package for the entire corridor which will be implemented upon construction; 8) authorize city staff to work with media outlets regarding the placement and type of dispensers for their product. The motion was duly seconded.

Mayor Bouley indicated that everything that Councilor St. Hilaire has listed is exactly the tentative votes that were taken up until this moment except for number three which basically goes back the design team's plan of parallel along the western side of the street.

Councilor DelloIacono indicated that he spent a lot of time researching this for the last few weeks downtown visiting with merchants and talking to customers. He stated that he supports this motion and supports taking the angle parking and putting it back to parallel parking on the west side.

Councilor Kretovic noted that she has been thinking a lot about this project and recalled Caardvark closing up business in 2004 and the parking in front of this location hasn't changed in nine years; this brings to mind that there is something else going on that is preventing them from being successful. She stated that the city has to keep the young entrepreneurs and young professionals here because for some reason they are not generating that next generation of entrepreneurs. She indicated that they have to do something explaining that it goes way beyond parking. She isn't implying that parking isn't important because it is but it's only one element of a bigger economic picture. She voiced her support of Councilor St. Hilaire's motion.

Councilor Blanchard stated that she will not be railroaded into voting for this project because her colleagues have supported the projects in Penacook. She indicated that she feels that the complete streets project is not comparable to Penacook; this has been the most difficult decision she has had to make since being on the Council. She noted her concern with spending millions of dollars without knowing how they will pay for the gap in the capital costs which could be anywhere from \$450,000 to \$1.7 million or how they will pay for the maintenance and replacement costs when the project is finished. She further noted her concern that it appears will be on the backs of the taxpayers who already have a tremendous property tax burden and/or on the merchants in which many are hanging on by their fingernails. She indicated that she has to be considerate of those who will be most negatively impacted so therefore she cannot vote in favor of this project not because she doesn't like the project but because she doesn't like the process.

Councilor Werner commended everyone who spent countless hours and worked to develop a truly transformative plan. He noted that he is glad they are moving back to parallel parking because those five spaces they are talking about represent .02 percent of all the parking that's available in the corridor end to end. He stated that he will be enthusiastically voting in favor of the motion.

Councilor Shurtleff stated that he will be voting for this plan. He explained that one thing they have learned out of this whole experience is that Concord is not made up of bricks, water and asphalt; it's the people that make this city so great. He stated that it's good to see them moving forward to make this positive change.

Councilor St. Hilaire noted how gratifying it has been to see all the people show up to the hearings. He pointed out that somebody had made a comment of how there wasn't enough adequate amount of input into this and noted that he disagrees with this statement. He stated that this is one of the most important projects that this city has probably embarked upon and has also been one of the most transparent projects. He stated that all the opinions really reflect everybody's desire to have Main Street succeed. He indicated that to do this project means doing something that's beneficial to downtown Concord and beneficial to Concord as a whole.

Councilor Coen explained that what he has noticed over the past few years is that small and large cities are investing in their downtown areas which he feels is a very good sign. He stated that this is not a unique project just for Concord but has been successes in other cities. He indicated that the city is reformulating the Parking Committee to look at and how they can work with the downtown and surrounding areas for improving the parking and signage. He stated that the city does have plenty capacity but it's just not being utilized properly and is something that they should be able to work on. He stated that another thing that he finds exciting about this project is that it's going to give them an opportunity to get the upper story buildings going in a direction where they can have housing and/or businesses moving into the area. He indicated that he is excited about this project and feels that it will work; Council has shown sensitivity towards the merchants with having a PR program together and working closely during the construction phase is critical. He added that he feels heated sidewalks is a must.

Councilor Keach stated that he will be voting in favor of this motion noting that it's an important project, it's an expensive project and is not a project without risk but he is fairly confident that it will have a substantial return on investment. He noted that he feels that it's an investment in the community that will pay dividends going forth.

Councilor Patten stated that he shares Councilor Blanchard's thoughts because it is a lot of money and is concerned as to not knowing where it's coming from. He noted that downtown does need some help and is pleased that the sidewalks are going to be more accessible and that merchants voiced their concerns in regards to parking. He stated that he will be voting for the project, with some reservations.

Councilor Nyhan indicated that he shares Councilor Blanchard's concerns with some of the finances of this but he was however struck by some information that Council received Monday evening in which they were informed that the city's credit rating just increased from AA to AA+ and it's a reflection of this Council in which, over the past five years, has had a balanced budget and has exercised tremendous financial restraint, strength and leadership. He stated that any uncertainties that he had in particular about the ongoing operations and maintenance financing of this project, he is very confident that this Council will come up

with a way to make it happen that's not going to be an impact on the taxpayers and will do it creatively and thoughtfully.

Councilor McClure noted that she is impressed with the process that they have gone through and emphasized that she heartily agrees with Councilor St. Hilaire's and Councilor Coen's comments adding that, one of the things that struck her tonight, she has not seen so many young people testify until tonight with so much emotion and passion about what they are doing. She stated that this is a sign of how great a project this is going to be for the city.

Mayor Bouley stated that the city's downtown is the heart of the city and everyone wants a healthy heart; they envision a downtown as a vibrant place for entertainment, shopping, dining and community events; they envision it as a great place to live, to do business, to meet people, to walk around, to see art and local history, to hear music and concerts, to enjoy the holiday festivals and events. He indicated that this has been the most scrutinized project that he has been involved with and process has been very important to him. He stated that he set out envisioning a process where everyone had an opportunity to participate and thanked the community for being patient and participating. He noted that there is no magic bullet where a single aspect of this project that will turn the downtown around, it is the project as a whole from Storrs Street to Storrs Street. He indicated that they must act with courage and not with fear and to not let fear stop them and prevent them from growing or bettering the heart of the city; if the focus is on fear it will cause procrastination in decision, blaming and excuses that prevent them from realizing the collective goal to be vibrant and vital. He admitted that he is afraid too and is sympathetic to the local retailers and their concerns but at the same time, they can't be paralyzed by their fear of not moving forward. He concluded that there are many more positives about this project than there are negatives and they will be improving the downtown not for today, tomorrow or the next day but for generations. He stated that he will be voting for this project and encouraged the Council to vote with him and encouraged that the community embrace this project.

There being no further Council discussion. Councilor Coen requested a roll call vote.

The motion passed 14 to 1 on a roll call vote with Councilor Coen, DelloIacono, Grady Sexton, Keach, Kretovic, McClure, Nyhan, Patten, St. Hilaire, Shurtleff, Werner, Bennett, Bouchard, and Mayor Bouley voting yes. Councilor Blanchard voted no.

Adjournment

The time being 10:12 p.m., Councilor moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was duly seconded and passed with no dissenting votes.

A true copy; I attest:

*Michelle Mulholland
Deputy City Clerk*