

**CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP FOR AN UPDATE FROM HTA
ENGINEERS ON THE DOWNTOWN INFRASTRUCTURE
PROJECT AND PRESENTATION FROM VHB ENGINEERS
REGARDING TE GRANT PROJECT CHANGES**

NOVEMBER 10, 2014 – 6:15 P.M.

Mayor Hilliard opened the workshop at 6:15 p.m.

Bill Davidson from Hoyle & Tanner Associates said there is a lot of work that has been done over the last couple of months.

- The City Hall stairs are close to completion.
- They are working on the stairs near the bakery and should be putting the granite on in the next few days.
- Striping on High Street will be done on Thursday. It should be open to two-way traffic by 11/17.
- They have taken delivery on benches and trash receptacles. They should be installed in the next few days.
- The lights are on in the City Hall block. It is fairly bright.
- The mast arms for the signals at the Hamilton Street intersection should be installed over the next couple of days.

Mr. Davidson said that in 2 to 3 weeks Severino should be wrapped up with the downtown project.

Councilor Witham referred to the pavement line-striping, asking if we are also talking about the short one-way section on Main Street (pending action by the Council this evening). Mr. Davidson replied in the affirmative.

Councilor Witham asked about pole removal, saying it looks like some have been removed but there are quite a bit more to be done. Mr. Davidson said they have resolved some of the issues regarding poles. The ones he is aware of are ones that are located at the signal. PSNH, Fairpoint and the contractor are working together on resolving that.

Councilor Sprague asked about the sidewalk we wanted to be eliminated near Rouleau's.

Mr. Davidson said he believes Mr. Rouleau has talked to City staff about redoing part of the curbing that was installed last year. We had discussed curb cuts, etc. last year and had come to a resolution, and that was what was installed.

Councilor Sprague said we should do nothing more than what we have. We corrected everything at that time and he was satisfied. What is there is what was agreed on.

Councilor Witham said he met with Mr. Rouleau and he explained what he would like to have done. Last fall there were a number of adjustments made to the curb cuts at his property that were to his liking. It would be difficult to make changes at this time and would be cost prohibitive. The curb cut, as it is now, is almost identical to what was there before. He does not feel that a change is warranted at our expense.

Councilor Soldati asked if he wants the curb cut to be lowered.

Councilor Witham said at the section in front of the two garage doors you cannot back out to the road because there is a section of sidewalk there. He was hoping to shorten up that section of sidewalk.

City Manager Belmore said they received a quote from Severino for \$3,400 to create a larger driveway so he did not have any impediment in regards to the curbing. It would also mean creating some sort of swale for a drainage issue.

Councilor Pepin said he has been down to visit Mr. Rouleau on 3 or 4 occasions, and he has never been happy with the layout since day one. His problem is that the bay that is closest to his office is very hard to get in and out of with his vehicles. The curbing is higher than what it was before. In all fairness, he has complained about this from the beginning and was never satisfied with it. We sit here as Councilors and say we want our business owners to be happy in this community, but he doesn't feel that it has always been fair. He doesn't feel that he can vote in favor of this because of the cost involved, but he feels it is something that should have been done earlier. We should have taken a little more effort in the planning stages in connecting with our businesses before doing something like this.

Greg Bakos from VHB said he is here to speak about the TE Project, which is coming on the heels of the Downtown Infrastructure Project. He is here to talk about two change orders they are proposing. This project is federally funded, and any changes have to go through NH Department of Transportation (DOT). Their project is primarily doing sidewalk work within the confines of the curbing and backs of sidewalks that were created under the infrastructure project. His opinion is they have been doing very good work. The two contractors have been working well together and it has been working out well.

Mr. Bakos said the first proposed change is in the High Street/Market Street Intersection, which he will refer to as the landscape node. The sidewalk that goes from the corner of the node at Main and High Streets down towards Rouleau's is obstructed by a light pole and a utility pole. The sidewalk would have to be wider than what is on the plan. The only problem with that is there is some very difficult grading. It is getting unwieldy and out of control. They are recommending taking it out, but maintaining the connection of that sidewalk back towards

Market Street. Pedestrian access would still be maintained from High Street down to the lower sidewalk for both able-bodied and handicapped persons.

Mr. Bakos said they are also proposing a shift in where the stairs would be located, a little further into the node making them more centrally located. Removing the sidewalk would allow us to eliminate the concrete retaining wall.

Mr. Bakos said the proposed change order would actually reduce costs by about \$40,000. Offsetting the savings, the City now wants to make those stairs granite. They have not gotten a price on that yet. They feel that what they are proposing is a better design as well as a savings in money.

Councilor Sprague asked if anyone knew the telephone pole was going to be there when this was designed.

Mr. Bakos said he thinks that pole is one of the new ones. The light pole was always planned there, but they had recommended moving it on the other side of the wall

Councilor Sprague said he remembers at the foot of the sidewalk there was going to be an area with some benches.

Mr. Bakos said that would still be there, with a green slope going down to it.

Councilor Sprague said his concern is if a car loses control in that area there would be nothing between the vehicle and people sitting on benches.

Mr. Bakos said with that section of Main Street now being one-way speeds coming up to the stop sign should be low. Granite curb is considered to be a barrier for traffic going 25 mph.

Councilor Soldati said she likes this change because she was a little nervous about a sidewalk on that side. She feels it will be safer for pedestrians.

Councilor McCallion said this part of the project has always scared him. He doesn't think we have enough room to accomplish the original plan. That is probably the biggest reason for this change. He wondered if we will gain space at the bottom. Mr. Bakos replied that we would not.

Councilor Witham agrees with Councilor Soldati. If we are going to lose a sidewalk, this one seems to make sense. He doesn't think the portion of sidewalk that is proposed to be eliminated is crucial to pedestrian traffic in the downtown area. If it is going to save us money, that is even better.

Councilor Witham moved to add approval of the change order under New Business, Other, on tonight's agenda. There being no objection from Council, Mayor Hilliard added this under New Business, Other, Item D.

Mr. Bakos said change order two is a condition that resulted from re-grading the road up on High Street. The proposed sidewalk would be significantly lower than the old condition where the sidewalk was butting right up to the granite retaining walls along people's frontage. Now where it is going to be significantly lower the base of those granite stones is exposed. Their solution is to add a second curb at the back of the sidewalk, which is basically making up grade. That curb would be coming from City stockpile. It would look rustic, and would look good with the granite in the back. It provides a space between the curb and those granite borders. The area in there could be landscaped, hardscaped, it can be treated in different ways. The main intent is to make up some grade in the back.

Councilor Witham said he met with a couple of folks in this area. He thinks there are three properties that this affects with the granite wall between Highland Street and just south of Grove Street. In talking with one couple, the talk of using granite from our stockpile as opposed to new granite had some appeal because it would be more in character with the retaining walls, which are very beautiful. The bigger discussion point was what the in-fill would be. He wasn't in favor of landscaping because that is a narrow stretch to mow and would be difficult to maintain. Maybe hardscape is a better alternative. What he would ask is that we should work with the property owners to find out what their preference would be for the in-fill. He feels that is important.

Mr. Bakos indicated the additional cost of this change order is in the \$12,000 range. The \$12,000 does not consider putting hardscape in that gap.

Mayor Hilliard, without objection from the Council, placed the approval of change order two under New Business, Other, Item E on tonight's Council agenda.

Councilor McCallion asked if butting one up to the other and having it look like a step was considered. There would be no maintenance with this.

Mr. Bakos said they did not consider this. He felt that it is an interesting idea. The granite wall as well as the granite that is available from the City is very irregular. He is afraid those two may not match very well. They do not want those steps to stick out into the sidewalk because a sidewalk plow would hit them.

Councilor Messier asked what would be considered hardscape?

Mr. Bakos replied it could be crushed stone, concrete, cobbles, etc.

Councilor Sprague asked why the road got dropped that much.

Bill Davidson replied that in that area not only was the sidewalk up higher, there was also a grass slope that went down to the curb. That is basically reversed now.

Councilor Soldati suggested lining the whole length with holly. You would not have to worry about weeds, and it is an inexpensive shrub that would add to the beauty of the area instead of putting in a layer of concrete.

Mayor Hilliard closed the workshop at 6:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane M. DuBois, City Clerk