

CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP

The City will hold a Local Concerns Meeting for the NHDOT Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Grant project. The intent of the meeting is to collect input from the public relative to the existing conditions, concerns, and project goals. The Engineering Firm will review the existing site conditions, contemplated improvements, and proposed construction schedule.

May 4, 2020 @ 6:30pm via Zoom

Mayor Hilliard opened the workshop at 6:30pm by welcoming Guest Speaker Derek Caldwell, P.E. PTOE, Project Manager from Sebago Technics.

The presentation is on file. Following the presentation, Council had the following questions.

Councilor Witham using this platform shared his displeasure with how slow these Federal Grant Programs are. As Derek pointed out we applied for this back in 2017, we were awarded it in 2018 and here we are in 2020 and we are really just kicking this off. It pains him that this process takes this long. The good news is, is that we are actually at the starting line apparently we weren't even in the race yet. He understands the scope of the project. There are a couple things that immediately he wants to comment on. First of all, if you were to look at accident data for the corridor that we are looking at intersection number one that is identified in the presentation the High St and Blackwater Road intersection is perhaps our worst intersection in terms of crash data. In terms of its functionality it doesn't work well. He is glad that it was highlighted that it is our oldest signal control and cabinet, being installed back in 1973. Serving on the City Planning when we had development on that corner, most recently the CVS development, we worked with the developer potentially queuing Indigo Hill Road before Blackwater Road because there is not enough space there to have dedicated turn lane. However, review of the cabinetry the signal control said we could not do that because the control was too old. As part of the project he wants to make sure that we are able to control the legs of intersection independently to allow for better traffic movement. These comments are in terms with priority. His second priority is in terms to traffic preemption. He has had a number of communications with the City Manager over the years with regards to the preemption system throughout that corridor not working effectively and we have held off major expenses to repairs it knowing this CMAQ Grant project was coming. He sort of kicked himself for holding off because we have been operating in a failure mode for quite some time. Getting this up and running is clearly imperative to this corridor. If you watch traffic flow during peak traffic volumes it is difficult at best because the preemption system is not working properly. Third, in terms of his priority for this corridor and it wasn't talked about in the presentation, but he would like to make sure that we are at least considering what he thinks now is a Federal highway requirement of the reflective borders on the signal heads. That has been done in the Dover area at weeks crossing and the State has done it in the Route 108 corridor. He is hopeful that we can incorporate that reflective border on the signal heads as part of this project. His fourth comment is with regard to actual cabinetry, and is low on the list, but if he had his choice between a painted cabinet and stainless cabinet he would encourage us to go with stainless cabinet and it is just because they are not prone to graffiti and other vandalism. His last comment which was mentioned in his presentation and he is pleased to see that is video detection versus in loop pavement monitors for traffic. We have found here in the City that the in pavement loops are problematic as you suggested the video detection is far better, particularly when it comes to road resurfacing.

Mayor Hilliard announced that Derek had the option to respond to any of the comments. But, first there is a housekeeping matter. He asked that Derek close the presentation because he is only able to view three Councilors.

Derek responded that the reflective borders on signal heads will be either incorporated with this project or the City can pursue State and Federal fund options that are dedicated specifically for this.

Mayor Hilliard announced that before he proceeds with any other further questions we do have a housekeeping matter and that is under emergency order #12 executive order number 2020-04 we do need to take attendance for all workshop meetings.

Attendance was taken by roll call vote. Councilors Pepin, Vincent, Dumont, Austin, Michaud, Witham, Gerding, Cameron and Paradis were present and they were by themselves.

Mayor Hilliard stated that we also have several department heads in the room he allowed the City Manager Belmore to state who is in the room and present with us. City Manager stated that Deputy City Manager/Finance Director Scott Smith, Fire Chief/Emergency Management Director George Kramlinger, Director of Planning and Community Development Shanna Saunders, and Deputy City Clerk Kelly Gagne. Just note that we are all a minimum of 6ft apart or greater.

Councilor Vincent questioned about video that is going to be replacing the current wire underneath the intersection. The intersection at Washington Street to High Street it is terrible, absolutely terrible. You come up from Washington Street to High Street and if you get the light you're lucky, normally you're hitting the gas to go about 50 to get through it because it changes rapidly to let the other side go. His question is that he understands that we wanted to make that so we had yielding to the turning traffic coming in front of us. With that being said the video is going to assist us in having more rapid delivery of the light especially if there is no one on the High Street side while you're coming up from Washing Street. Is that correct? He also asked if there was a certain time that this would take place such as twenty seconds or is it rapid. Derek explained the program options.

Councilor Gerding asked a question as to the reasoning as to why Indigo Hill Road intersection wasn't coordinated with the other lights or as part of this project. Is there a reason why we wouldn't coordinate that intersection with the rest of this project? Derek stated that the distance from Stackpole Road to Indigo Hill Road is too far with many driveways and side streets that coordinating it would be too difficult. It is more beneficial to have that run on its own cycle.

Councilor Witham stated that was a great question from Councilor Gerding. There was a point in time, oddly enough nor that long ago maybe 20-25 years ago, that the light at Indigo Hill, Blackwater, and High was the last signal until you got to what was then a traffic circle at weeks crossing. There were no signals between there, when those signals were put in that copper cable was run and ignored the previously existing intersection. He clarified for Councilor Vincent that he was mentioning the signal up at Washington Street and West High Street that is not part of this project scope.

Councilor Dumont stated that he has the issue probably wrong but the intersection at Indigo Hill Road and Blackwater Road it is designed very poorly because the traffic that is coming from Indigo Hill Road crossing High Street onto Blackwater Road, the line of vision is not clear. He would suggest that most accident calls are due to that. That piece being independent he doesn't agree with that. Then he moved up High Street, West High Street and Hamilton Street, which used to be known as five corners. On any particular day it is the most congested that the City has it is backing traffic up all the way to Memorial Drive area. It also infringes on the freedom to go into the West High Street corridor. That is the funnel of traffic that collects the cars that go off into Maine. Air quality is part of this issue and idling cars is a problem with air quality.

Councilor Paradis has two questions, the first being what is the average time like a before and after view knowing the time from exit 9 through High Street, that will be an important information to pass along. Her second question asked was who has access to the video. She stated that Derek had mentioned it being a censored thing to be able to count traffic.

Derek stated that regarding the first question the travel times, that as part of this we are proposing to measure the traffic travel times once the new equipment is in place. We could measure them before but we know it is going to be an improvement anyways. There is going to be two parts; the first is once we have all the new

video detection up and the coordination implemented we will take travel times then. The second part is that with the video system you will be able to constantly record traffic volumes so then after a shorter period of maybe two weeks you can go back out there and retime the system to meet those traffic demands and get a before and after travel time for that. In regards to the second question access to the video would be determined by the City and their IT independently. The system is proposed to go back to the City's central server. That would be all in the hands of the City of who sees it and who doesn't if. It is not recorded, but it can be they could if they want to.

Councilor Vincent thanked Councilor Witham; he thought it was part of the upgrade. If we timed all these other lights to be green are we then going to have a backup at that intersection at Washington Street. With the upgrades to the ones that we are proposing is it going to be able to coincide with Washington Street is that upgradeable. Derek answered that yes that is always a concern doing these projects that you are just pushing any issues down the road, unfortunately there is not money to fix everything. As far as that intersection we are not doing it as part of this project, but in the future the equipment out there is relatively new, so adjustments could certainly be made there in the future. The scope for this project doesn't include that intersection at all.

Councilor Witham stated that he finds it interesting that we ended up focusing on the one intersection that isn't a part of this project as being the big bad ugly place. He happens to think that it is the best flowing intersection within the City but he thinks he is in the minority. He alerted Council that there was money in the State's ten year highway plan for a complete redesign and redo of the Washington Street, West High Street, and Hamilton Street intersection. It was being supported by Strafford Regional Planning Commission and by action of the Council, maybe not the current Council, we asked for that to be removed from the State's ten year highway plan because we thought the intersection operated fine and did not need any level of improvement. Maybe as a body we have shot ourselves in foot, but he thinks moving forward we could discuss it at a Public Works & Environment meeting using budget money to have it evaluated by an engineer.

No Public Comments were submitted.

With no further questions or comments from Council, the Workshop adjourned at 7:05pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kelly Gagne, Deputy City Clerk