

MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC WORKS AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS

March 26, 2024 – 3:00 p.m.

Committee Members present: Councilor David A. Witham, Chairman
Councilor Kenneth Vincent, Vice-Chairman
Councilor Martin Pepin
Councilor Denis Messier

Administration/Staff present: City Manager, Bob Belmore
Finance Director, Scott Smith
Director of Public Works, Michael Bobinsky
City Engineer, Amber Hall
Director of Development Services, Michelle Mears
City Clerk, Kristen LaPanne

Others present: Ken Scarpetti and Doug Anderson, National Guard
Developers

Councilor Witham called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF JANUARY 22, 2024

Councilor Messier made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 22, 2024 meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilor Pepin and passed 4-0.

PAPER ROAD BEHIND NATIONAL GUARD SITE / FIRE STATION

City Manager Belmore provided the Committee with information regarding the City Council's vote to release and discharge a paper road back in January 2021 that was intended to run from Maple Street near the Fire Station back around and behind the LL Field and the National Guard property. There is also a section off Blackwater Road, some of which is paved, along the backside of the National Guard property leading to the little league field. Manager Belmore informed the Committee that the developers are interested in obtaining this road that connects to Blackwater Road and runs along the rear of the National Guard property. He said that according to the survey that Ameresco did for the solar field, it may already be on that property and nothing will need to be done. The developers are going to have their own survey done, and if that shows it is on the National Guard property they are all set, if not it will need to be reconciled with the Ameresco survey, and we may want to consider approving their request for a lot line adjustment. He added that there is also a Superfund site monitoring testing well that was discussed, and he confirmed that the Developers are willing to provide the City of Somersworth with an easement to continue to allow access to the well for testing and maintenance as needed.

Councilor Witham flagged the water line that follows along the road being discussed which is used to feed water to the Fire Station and the Little League Baseball Field. There was a brief discussion regarding the need for an easement depending on the conveying results as Councilor Witham also mentioned that the road, we are discussing has the only street access to the ball field's parking lot and that if the road way is decommissioned, the City would need to determine an alternate access road. Councilor Messier stated that he would be in favor of the lot line adjustment if it were needed and the City's request for an easement as deemed necessary. Ken Scarpetti and Doug Anderson stated that they would allow the City an easement to utilize the road for continued access to the little league ball field and they would like to keep it in the same location.

The Developers also inquired about the water line along the road, they asked if the City would recommend that they hookup the development's water main at that location. City Engineer Hall confirmed that engineers would need to take into consideration the age of the pipes and they would determine the best location for the development to hookup to.

Manager Belmore provided the Committee with the proposed layout and designs of the townhouses, he noted that it has also been determined that the main facility is not going to work which was a concept design presented to Council. Councilor Messier stated that he was under the impression that once the Council voted to sell the property, that it was out of their hands and the owners could do what they wanted. Manager Belmore clarified that the Developers were looking to provide transparency to the Council of their plans. The Committee agreed that the proposal remains within the scope of the initial proposal and they do not feel it needs to go to Council for review.

The Developers added that they are also looking to increase the number of units from 24 to 30 while still maintaining a significant amount of greenspace. Councilor Witham stated that he supports the new plan and he is in favor of the increase in units. The Committee unanimously agreed.

MAIN STREET WATER LINE PROJECT – NH DOT POSITION

Councilor Witham commented that the roadblocks they have been experiencing with the NH DOT pertaining to the Main Street water line replacement project remain in place. City Manager Belmore provided the Committee with the letter he wrote to the NH DOT Commissioner as well as their rejection letter that followed. Manager Belmore stated that there is still a lot more work that is needed. He also noted that staff believed the Town of Wolfeboro did a similar water line project on a State road's travel lanes and he had asked that City Engineer Hall reach out to the project engineer. Engineer Hall confirmed that she has not heard back from the Town's contracted engineer, however, she did reach out to and spoke with the Public Works Director of Wolfeboro who shared that they did not run into the same type of road blocks that Somersworth is experiencing. Councilor Witham questioned if Wolfeboro is in a different district and if they have a different engineer at the NH DOT than the City has. Engineer Hall confirmed that it is a different district with a different NH DOT engineer.

Councilor Messier inquired about the current location of the water line. Engineer Hall responded that the water line runs through the center of the Main Street and she added that NH DOT is requiring that the City relocate it completely off of the road way and into the road shoulder where they would encounter a wetlands area as well as potential issues with easements, utility poles, etc.. Councilor

Witham added that it would require easements, cutting of trees, and more. Councilor Messier commented that if the City decides to dispute the NH DOT decision, he believes it would delay the completion date. Councilor Witham suggested that the City could decide to complete the project up to Nadeau Street and in the meantime dispute the decision and flag the discrepancies between the districts.

There was discussion pertaining to the age of the pipes and potential limits or restrictions that may prevent the City from replacing a section of the Main Street water line that would need to be considered. Manager Belmore suggested that City staff work to gather more information from Wolfeboro and that they have a more thorough conversation with the NH DOT Commissioner's Office about the discrepancies that are holding up the project. He mentioned that the project's design is complete and is ready to go out to bid.

Councilor Witham noted the three options that he sees available to the City regarding this project; 1) scale back the project, 2) hold off on the project and continue to dispute the NH DOT's decision, or 3) provide more funds for additional engineering to move the water line. Messier and Witham shared that they would prefer options 1 or 2.

City Manager Belmore stated that he can work to schedule a meeting with the NH DOT to see if they would reconsider their decision. The Committee unanimously agreed and do not wish to move the water line in the wetland area as proposed by the State or to spend more funds on engineering. The Committee consensus was to replace the water line in the City's section of Main Street and stub it at the beginning of the State portion of the Road, not replacing the water line in the State's portion unless they lift their objection.

HIGH STREET SIDEWALK RECONSTRUCTION UPDATE

Public Works Director Bobinsky provided the Committee with a memorandum regarding the status of the High Street sidewalk reconstruction from West High Street to South Street. He outlined the schedule of the project sharing that the preliminary design has been completed and the potential timeline of the project's construction is scheduled to begin in mid-August 2024. Director Bobinsky mentioned that once the project is complete, City staff will need to come back to the Committee to request additional funds and authority to repave High Street from West High Street to South Street. He added that the sidewalk reconstruction will also require temporary easements from residents.

The Committee received an update regarding a sewer service issue that has been discovered at 173 High Street which serves two properties. Director Bobinsky confirmed that the sewer service is reported to be failing under the retaining wall which is adjacent to the sidewalk to be reconstructed. He noted that CMA Engineers provided an estimate of \$11,000 to move the pipe to the opposite side of the existing retaining wall and permanent trench patching. Additionally, Director Bobinsky noted proposing to install a sewer stub which would prevent the need to tear up the reconstructed sidewalk if the property needed to replace their service line in the future.

Councilor Witham inquired about the removal of certain trees that are in bad health. City Engineer Hall confirmed that there are three trees in question to be removed. Director Bobinsky reported that the total project budget is estimated to cost \$960,450.

Engineer Hall mentioned the property located at 274 High Street, she reported that the front door of the property is less than four feet from the City's right-of-way and that CMA Engineers has proposed to eliminate the curb reveal and to place it flush at the existing shoulder elevation.

WINTER MAINTENANCE OF THE "HILL" DISTRICT SIDEWALKS

Councilor Witham reported that this discussion was requested by Councilor Gibson and referred to this Committee. Public Works Director Bobinsky stated that Department of Public Works staff used to plow as much as they could on the hill streets especially when the Hilltop School was active. He noted that over the last couple of years, staff clears some areas when it is possible. He noted that Noble Street, Hamilton Street, Highland Street, Beacon Street, and Mount Vernon Street are not able to be cleared due to the condition of the sidewalks and proximity of houses to the street.

Director Bobinsky referred to a memorandum he provided and he commented that the addition of those streets would add 1.6 miles to City staff routes and would add approximately 1 hour to the route per clearing. He noted that the time to clear the proposed streets would take from the Downtown area of Market Street and Main Street, he added that generally staff make 3-4 passes to clear sidewalks.

Councilor Witham inquired about residential complaints. Director Bobinsky responded that they have not received complaints in a several years since they stopped clearing the sidewalks at the closure of the Hilltop School. Councilor Witham commented that there are a number of sidewalks that are not cleared along side streets because the need is not there. Councilor Messier agreed and stated that he does not believe that there is a need to add the hill streets to the sidewalk plow route.

Councilor Vincent made a motion to not add the "hill" district sidewalks to the City's sidewalk plowing route. The motion was seconded by Council Pepin and passed 4-0.

CITY PROJECTS ON NH DOT 10-YEAR TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Public Works Director Bobinsky reported that project officials from the NH DOT have notified City staff of two projects on the State's 10-year plan which has funding possibilities that would allow the projects to advance sooner than was originally planned. The two projects include constructing a new sidewalk on West High Street from Cemetery Road to High Street and the reconstruction of the intersection on High Street at Indigo Hill Road and Blackwater Road.

Director Bobinsky stated that the West High Street sidewalk project can be moved up to FY 2025 for the project's design and construction to begin in FY 2026. Through the State's LPA grant funds, they would fund 80% of the project and the City of Somersworth would be responsible for a 20% match, Director Bobinsky noted that the City would be responsible for an estimated \$200,000. He confirmed that if the City agrees to move forward with the project, a City-State agreement would be required for NH DOT to move forward on the project. Councilor Witham commented that if the project is able to be advanced and the City can receive State funding, he is in favor of this project being moved ahead.

Director Bobinsky spoke about the High Street, Indigo Hill Road, and Blackwater Road intersection, he mentioned that project engineering and design is scheduled to begin in FY 2025 with construction

to begin in FY 2026-2028. He reported that this project also requires a 20% match from the City of Somersworth, and with the total project cost estimated to be \$3,000,000, the City would be responsible for approximately \$600,000.

Councilor Messier confirmed that he is in favor of this project. Councilor Witham noted that the intersection is a high traffic area and he expects that to increase with the former National Guard Readiness Center development.

Councilor Pepin inquired about funding options for the City's project costs responsibilities. Finance Director Smith responded that the funds could be taken from the City's Fund Balance or through bonding. There was a brief discussion pertaining to the City's match responsibility with regards to the design of the Indigo Hill Road and Blackwater Road intersection and if that would be required for the design phase, and if so, he would like to see a cost estimate for the design phase of the project.

Councilor Witham stated that the City has a healthy fund balance to cover the City's cost match of the projects as opposed to requesting a bond for the projects. City Manager Belmore noted that utilizing the Transportation Fund for engineering is another option.

The Committee has no objections with moving the two projects forward ahead of their original planned timelines. Director Bobinsky confirmed that he would continue with State conversations and report back an update to the Committee.

MISCELLANEOUS

Councilor Witham inquired about the signal lights at the intersection of Indigo Hill Road and Blackwater Road off of High Street, he mentioned previous conversations regarding the light signal being programmed to allow cross traffic a green light at alternating times as it has been a problem intersection. City Engineer Hall confirmed that she is awaiting a quote and that it is possible to program the exclusive phase for cross traffic, and she also noted the possibility of having a dedicated left turning lane for cross traffic programmed with a signal light. She added that the current controller can accommodate the changes with a few other needs for the update.

Councilor Messier requested an update regarding the installation of the solar lights on Memorial Drive. Engineer Hall confirmed that the lights have been delivered to the vendor and are being assembled. She is still waiting to hear of an installation date.

Councilor Messier also inquired about the patch work on West High Street due to concern that it will not last with the weather. Public Works Director Bobinsky confirmed that West High Street will be repaved later in the Spring and he will be having follow-up conversations with GMI next week.

ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Pepin made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Councilor Vincent and passed 4-0 by voice vote. The meeting adjourned at 3:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristen LaPanne, City Clerk