

DRAFT MINUTES

CITY OF NASHUA
CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS COMMITTEE

March 21, 2022
Room 208
5:00PM

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 PM by Scott LeClair, Chair of the Planning Board and Capital Improvement Committee, via Zoom at 5:00PM, and terms of the virtual meeting were reviewed by the Chair. Mr. LeClair explained the Committee's procedures, stating that the Committee is operating under the Governor's Executive Order via Zoom and explained how public access is available by telephone/Zoom and how to contact City staff in the event that connection is not possible.

Introduction of Members Present: (Roll Call)

Scott LeClair
Charlie Budris
Bob Canaway
John Griffin
Rose Evans
Ald. Jette
Matt Sullivan

Staff: Marcia Wilkins

Absent: Larry Szetela, Ald. Comeau (Alt), Mayor Donchess

Review and Acceptance of Minutes

March 14, 2022 Meeting Minutes, Motion to approve as written, Bob Canaway, Seconded by Matt Sullivan. All those in favor, motion passes unanimously.

Presentations

Community Development Division- Matt Sullivan, Director

We are trying to get into the habit more regularly of resubmitting projects year to year that may have been included in the prior year CIP. The reason being is that we'd like the voting and ranking in a given year CIP to reflect the larger context of other projects and how specific projects they compare to others with in the same year and to typically describe that, We often submit a project in a year that receives a score, subsequent years come in and new scores are actually given. It's impossible to compare the different years scoring, so we trying to get into a

system that projects that are in one CIP and not funded, are then resubmitted to provide context against all the projects and have a one for one comparison. And so, both the projects for Community Development, both the Railroad Square CMAQ project and the Spruce St Connector, were submitted and rank as part of the FY2022 CIP process. For context before I overview them the Railroad Square project received a B1 ranking, and the Spruce St Connector which was presented later in the CIP process last year received an A1 ranking. Both of these projects are NHDOT partnered projects, and so what you are considering this evening is a share of the total project costs, that being the local match funds. I will briefly overview the two of these projects.

Railroad Square CMAQ – Hopefully everyone if familiar with the location, adjacent to Canal St/Franklin St/Main St. The project generally, is to do an intersection modification that better accommodates merging traffic from the Franklin St and Canal St sides. Alderman Jette, I think you have expressed some interest in this project and have had some discussions with Engineering about how the configuration may evolve. This is relatively early in the process and so the cost estimate we have is based on a very conceptual design for that intersection. But the total project costs is 1.5 million dollars. With 80% of the funds coming from the Congestion Mitigation Air Quality Program, and that is 1.2 million dollars. The local match comes to \$308,000 dollars being contributed to the project. The expected construction year is not complete clear at this point in time. We have a memorandum with NHTA, the New Hampshire Department of Transportation to work towards actually completing detailed engineering designs. Like many DOT partnered projects it has maintained its location on the DOT projects list. We are moving forward and want to be prepared with these matched dollars when the project ultimately moves forward with construction. So again with any early project submission we don't have a detailed project design we do have a place with NHDOT working towards a more detailed design.

Any Questions on this one?

Alderman Jette: Are the numbers you talk about is that for the design or is that the whole..

Matt Sullivan: that is the whole project.

Alderman Jette: I see

Matt Sullivan: and your question might be are we sure that is adequate at this point in time? NHDOT, works with the City to evaluate that number and we may receive an amendment to the cost but today that is the most accurate number.

Alderman Jette: I'm puzzled, that if we haven't designed, I'm thinking that I had mentioned the possibility of doing a roundabout to avoid the stop lights, you know they stop traffic, so thinking about last summer and the bottleneck. Hopefully the barrier plan, if that passes, it will illuminate the barriers between Water St, Water Park, Franklin and Canal, so hopefully that won't be such a bottleneck. I was thinking that with a roundabout there would be less of a bottleneck but the problems with roundabouts is the pedestrian traffic. They don't allow pedestrians to cross, I guess without know how many traffic lights you will need or what kind of change in the construction, how do you come up with that number?

Matt Sullivan: Ya, it's a very rough estimate, and I share your concerns as well where we don't have any kind of detailed or conceptual design its challenging for me to speak to what numbers, Alderman Jette we get that number from NHDOT they are supplying it to us based on some understand that they have. I am not sure exactly how they get their process to a plan that has not yet been created. I can't answer your question. I would be more than willing to get a supplemental information out to the committee for your consideration. What I will say is that it tends to come from the City's submission to NHDOT we develop an initial cost estimate for the project for it to be submitted to the project list. What that was based upon I can't say.

Spruce St Connection TAP project, Transportation Alternatives Program project and for this one visual aids will be helpful. I will bring up the TAP concept plan. Last week there was an overview plan in your packet of how the Spruce St Connector does fit into the larger context and connectivity. This project at its basic level is a connection between the proposed improvements to the Nashua Riverwalk and the Nashua Heritage Rail Trail particularly the Heritage Rail Trail East that is scheduled for construction in 2023 extending to the Hudson NH town line. This will be a 10' wide multi-use path with a 5' green space on each side and it's an investment into the community. Substantial work has been done to redesign the streets to accommodate multi-modal trail. It will take the existing path and leads it through to the Temple St intersection and crosses onto Howard St, then begins on Spruce St as a multi-use path, follows that along to make a connection south onto the Heritage Rail Trail East. Those proposed improvements are to be constructed in the year 2023. Like the prior project this is a mix of funding sources the total project cost is 1.5 million dollars, with 1.2 coming from the Transportation Alternatives Program and a 20% match of \$302,477 and the first year of funding is an engineering study in 2023 and then it goes long term with construction into year 2029.

Bob Canaway: Does Spruce St become one way with this plan?

Matt Sullivan: The proposal is not to make Spruce Street a one way, it will restrict the travel lane.

Bob Canaway: There is parking on Spruce Street Right now

Matt Sullivan: There is parking on Spruce Street and that will be removed. That's a great questions, so we will lose that on street parking along Spruce St.

Bob Canaway: It looks like the rail continues down further towards, I forget what it's called but are we looking to continue the trail down through there.

Matt Sullivan: That's correct, that is exactly the path of the trail, Yes. That is the scheduled 2023 construction and we currently have CMA engineers working on that larger design right now.

Bob Canaway: So will that continue down and meet up again to the Heritage Trail?

Matt Sullivan: Yes that is correct. It is an incredible job by the City and other folks. I can't take an ounce of credit for. Securing easements and working with the current property owners and actually make that connection. It is a long pedestrian multimodal connection.

Bob Canaway: Now we just need the Railroad Station down there, (chuckles)

Matt Sullivan: Well, yes that would lovely, sometime yes.

Alderman Jette: What are you looking at, did you send us something? (Directed at Bob Canaway)

Matt Sullivan: Let me pull up a map that was in the packet last week, just so we know... The existing Riverwalk improvements are shown in blue here along the river the scope of the path is the dashed line, down to the Heritage Rail Trail this is the section that will be under construction in 2023 and that leads all the way out to the Henry Hanger Building location and the contemplated Rail Station in the Crown Street location. Does that may a little more sense, after looking at that?

Alderman Jette: Yes I am somewhat familiar with that. And what you're talking about tonight is

Matt Sullivan: It's this portion right here, Yes.

Alderman Jette: So is that within the right of way? On Spruce St.

Matt Sullivan: it is indeed yes

Alderman Jette: So when you talked about securing easements?

Matt Sullivan: so when I'm talking about that, that's really along the Rail Trail.. this runs back lot on many properties and so there were a tremendous amount of easements needed to get this in

place. If we were to look at the tax map these would be individually owned parcels easements that were secured by the City over a long process.

Scott LeClair: Matt? Is that piece of that new path from the Riverwalk to Temple is there lighting proposed as part of this project? I guess Spruce St has street lights, right but that piece right there

Matt Sullivan: Here?, ok, Scott I'm not sure but I would wager that there is in fact lighting proposed there because that can be a dark area, and there would be lighting associated with the Riverwalk project. As to how this is lit we have not yet explored that. You know one of the questions that I have and I need more information on, is when the Riverwalk project is ultimately constructed how or what will this termination look like at this point and so with a construction date of 2029 there will be a period of time where this is not completed, so I'm not sure if we are seeking additional fund to do this, this point in time prior to the connection to the south. But certainly I would think that this would be completed in accordance with whatever design standard is being done for the Riverwalk Project.

Scott LeClair: Ok, so this is conceptual at this point right?

Matt Sullivan: Correct. It is already there and my question is how folks would make this connection naturally to the crosswalk, my expectation is that we would have to provide some improved pedestrian measures despite the fact that there is an existing path, I think we would want to improve that to some extent. Your point Alderman Jette is well taken that this path to some extent is already there.

Scott LeClair: So that concludes those presentations and we can move on to the Voting.

Matt Sullivan: Indeed

Scott LeClair: I guess I will let you run that part of the meeting

Matt Sullivan: We want to follow a process that we followed last year. Last year we were on Zoom we had to pivot to the Excel based sheet. I hope that everyone came this evening with a sense of their project rankings based on the information that was sent out last week. We will start with Scott with each project because he is remote, than we will do a verbal vote after Scott has voted. And Marcia will read "all those voting A please raise your hand"; all those voting B, until we have a complete count. I will input the votes as we go along here so find the natural breaks so we can find the A1, A2 and so forth, ranks. Are there any questions?

Alderman Jette: Being a new member here, can we go over the categories?

Matt Sullivan: It's important to start by saying these are very subjective criteria. Projects receiving an A vote are considered essential by the voter, these are critical for life safety reasons and must be done as soon as funding if available. One of the things you'll note when you review the CIP, 80% of project receive one A vote from a member. And that tends to be that we have a tremendous back log of Capital Projects and that all the projects are critical in some regards. And I would urge us to look beyond the health and safety welfare standard and think about the other goals of the Master Plan that speak to connectivity, redevelopment opportunities. I think that there is other criteria that could raise a project up to another level. I would even add with biased that the Spruce St Connector is an A project that is essential for those pieces of public infrastructure function properly. How you define essential is ultimately up to the voter. I think in that way that the definition that is in the bylaws, speaking to something that is dangerous is perhaps a bit limited in context with other projects that we will look at tonight. Where I think there is some broadness in essential is that last piece that speaks to providing facilities, or services critical to a community project. Many of the projects that the committee looks at fall within that category. A, B rating is something that's desirable, the department has demonstrated

will clearly benefit the community in some way, but perhaps the timing is not critical, there's a need for more funding sources to be identified. Its desirable but we do not have adequate information to raise it to a top level. Or there is no public health safety welfare need. C rankings are probably the most challenging for me personally, it's a project that clearly there has been work and effort put into it but can clearly be postponed based on budget reductions or the lack of funding. I think if we go back to the project list from last year, a C rating is used the least frequently. This is a category that we would potential modify. A D rating is something that is deferrable, clearly from the definition it's something that the committee feels strongly that should be pushed off to the side until further research and investigation is done. It may be a project that information was not adequately available at the time of the presentation. I would say that there are a few projects that fall into this category. Most departments have done adequate investigations by the time they bring a project to the committee. We did have some last year and I expect we will have some this evening.

Bob Canaway: Matt, just on that one.. You pulled out the last part of essential.. Critically needed community program, the way I think about D is that last part as well, the question of planning, which I would agree, I don't think I have ever seen a project that didn't meet the level of planning necessary, I don't think you would allow it to come forward, but it's that timing that is what defines that category to me.

Matt Sullivan: It's tough for me to look at this and not pick on an individual projects that perhaps we've seen in the past, but yes I think you are absolutely right there are projects that we'll look at this evening that there is a department preference to do something but maybe there is not the community need. I believe we will see that in the next 45 minutes where we actually do our votes. I certainly have some on my list. The E rating, Other I hesitate to even go into it, it's something that we're not prioritizing it. I don't believe that any of the projects that you've seen fall into that category, frankly they should not get to you. In my opinion if they fall into the not prioritized category these are things that do not meet the definition of the capital improvement. One that I will call out, just because we will be ranking it highly, based on the need is the City Clerk's request for voting equipment was very much on the line of the dollar figure perspective. It is sort of an equipment item, clearly we need those new machines its right in that sweet spot of is it a capital improvement or not based on the need at just north of \$50,000. I felt it necessary to bring to the committee because it met that single criteria, perhaps it would fall into an E rating, I don't know, I expect that it will receive favorable recommendation. I'm not sure that any of that helps you at all, because it is a very subjective exercise. But that's the way I contemplate the criteria when I review projects.

Charlie Budris: Mr. Jette, you have made very good comments about our process here, over time it has worked very well. I've been doing this 37 years, and I had the same questions when I started, you were right in bringing that up and hopefully this helps a little bit.

(Insert Excel Spreadsheet of Project Scoring Sheet)

Alderman Jette: Do we get to talk about it? My question is when the Airport guy was here, he said that I'm here but we're still talking and that I'm going to go back,

Staff: This was the cost that he got from the FAA, he did redo his submission

Matt Sullivan: So he was in communication with us after that meeting and he ultimately did not receive new estimates. My understanding is that they did not get final estimates from them

Staff: He said that it's still really a questimate even though these were the funds from the FAA.

Matt Sullivan: Let me see if I can pull up his email quickly.

Bab Canaway: Alderman Jette, just to answer your question, typically before we vote if anyone has anything to talk about or add, that's the time that we typically do it. So we don't usually lobby for, but sometimes we lobby, (laughter)

Matt Sullivan: in the email you sent me he did say that there were new numbers for Taxiway A,
Staff: Yes this was the new number.

Matt Sullivan: OK, can we look back to this one, cuz I want to make sure we are all operating with the right number. Is the new number on the sheet that you sent out?

Scott LeClair: The sheet she sent out has a number of 128,900.

Matt Sullivan: Ok so that is the most recent number.

Bob Canaway: Chris went through probably 5 or 6 different projects, and there is two here, so I'm assuming one of them was to relocate the taxiway and one was terminal building,

Staff: Yes those were at a later date

Scott LeClair: Yes we would not vote on those tonight.

John Griffin: Mr. Chair if I may, the reality is that the airport has not come to the general fund for operating cost, since I've been here. What they do is we're literally pay 5% of the big bill. So Chris is very good as far as assessing and they let us know. Capital Improvements in the last couple of years has total something like 1 million dollars, so whenever Chris Lynch comes in we know that 20 percent 30 percent is gone from funding, but so they usually use these meetings as here is what the Airport needs, and 5% of the bill. Don't be awed by the magnitude of the cost. One of the issue that I have if it's a worthwhile project whether it's essential an A B, I'm going to say it an A. That's just my instincts, as Matt said at the very beginning very subjective. So you certainly should ask questions for refinement without the benefit of the people that make the presentations. Because they make great presentations and they are limited to the top three. That happened when I first got on (the committee) everyone came in with, you know, every item and you had the trouble of, what do you really need? Like Charlie said we have advanced the dialog, and then it's just the funding, for the project is invisible because the report comes out almost after the budget has been filed. That's why one of the grades is depending on funding and we're not supposed to look at funding. Those are just my thoughts, and the other thing is I have only 15 minutes before I have to leave for the public hearing.

Matt Sullivan: let's rank Franklin St

Voting and Ranking resumed.

Staff: Infrastructure Improvements Citywide, for \$500,000 Scott?

Scott LeClair: A

Staff: How many A'?

Matt Sullivan: Do we need to dive into this one? What this project is, because the title is a little vague.

Alderman Jette: Yes, that would be good.

Matt Sullivan: I just want to make sure because this one, when I was doing my ranking I forgot what this one was. So it's obviously on the streets its crosswalks, curbing, lining up infrastructure improvements. It is a general contribution towards regular construction improvements predominately maintenance of infrastructure not new.

Voting and Ranking resumed.

Alderman Jette: Now these citywide put some money in the pot, types of projects really don't seem to be appropriate for a capital improvements.

Matt Sullivan: without more specific programming, you're saying? You don't have a very clear sense of how these money's are being spent.

Alderman Jette: Yes if you say St Andrews park, I would rather they come up with a list of what they are going to do and this is what it is going to cost. How do we know, well you know better than I know.. I have trouble with “where is that money going to be spent?”

Matt Sullivan: There was a specific project identified and it was the playground off of Harris Rd, behind Dube ball field. That is St. Andrews Park, I actually tend to agree that perhaps they should be more specific so that we can provide a better vote. So I think that might be some really good feedback actually to Park and Recreation to get a better score it might behoove you to focus the funds more than with a city wide request.

Rose Evans: I do know that is how the items were placed into the capital program in the past, this year they consolidated all of their playgrounds that were slated for renovations.

Matt Sullivan: I think flexibility is good but having a list within that funding what are the two to three things that is going to be done with that money. That would make is a little bit clearer for the committee next year.

Bob Canaway: So I don't understand budgeting process when it leaves here, if it came to the Board of Alderman as Citywide Park and playground improvements like would it stall there?

Matt Sullivan: Ya, I think it would, that would be my sense that the Alderman would not support it if it is general in nature, I think they would want to see more specific targeted investment.

Bob Canaway: Well maybe like with the Police they put 3 projects together were they were separated before, maybe we will see that here with Park and Rec.

Voting and Ranking resumed.

Staff: Court Improvements Park and Rec, I'm not sure, what this is

Matt Sullivan: Want me to clarify with this one is? Tennis, Basketball and Pickle ball courts for rehabilitation. Converting courts to other sports, paving, sealing, and painting, netting fencing and lighting updates. Not a lot of specificity, there is a need to rehab.

Bob Canaway: I have a question and I hate getting caught up on process while we're in the process, but like, so we don't seal the courts unless this gets funding? So Sealing prevent deterioration which allows the courts to last longer, I mean it's a question that will get handled over there with the Alderman. Parks and Rec must have a maintenance program?

Matt Sullivan: Yeah, and there are alternative methods to securing this funding. Right, it could be through the escrowing process that Rose is referring to.

Bob Canaway: But Matt my question revolves around let's say we don't rely, we just make sure we keep what we have, like part of it is I rank this really low, and even some of the Street stuff, because we can't take care of what we have why the hell are we spending 600,000 to put something new in.

Matt Sullivan: Great questions, so I think if this request were a new facility request, I'm with you, I don't support a lot of the new infrastructure just because we see how much is needed for maintenance of existing. I think that there will be alternative ways to secure the funding to do this work because it has to be done. It simply cannot be deferred for 5 to 10 years, it will have to be done at some point in time.

Bob Canaway: Yeah, that how I kind of feel about it. Like a court you can't use, might as well not even be there, actually is worse than not even being there, so it might as well be a grass field or something.

Matt Sullivan: My assumption, and again I was not able to attend the presentation but my assumption is that the 200,000 would allow for a more comprehensive approach to what the current budgetary constraints would. Perhaps they would be able to get out and do all if not all would allow them to make a huge dent in the work that they need to do.

Voting and Ranking resumed.

Scott LeClair: Does anyone feel like they want any changes to the ranking?

Alderman Jette: Mr. Chairman, so I'm looking at the West Hollis St and I'm looking and there is one vote that is a C, so I don't know who voted the C, but reason that I put such a high priority is and I think I said before that even before I became an Alderman I was hearing a lot of complaining about the West Hollis St, having a lot of problems the traffic, the amount, speed and noise of traffic. People can't get out of their driveways or the side roads. Every time I talk to Director Fauteux about it, she has said that they need a corridor study. Until they do a corridor study, its stopping an analysis of that road and what can possible be done to ameliorate that condition. The other thing is the rail trail that comes in from Ayer that comes into Nashua at Gilson Rd, and it stops there and supposedly it is supposed to continue and pickup at Mines Falls Park near Stellos Stadium. So they've talked about trying to figure out some way of continuing that with another lane, you know a bicycle lane. I've looked at the map and a lot of the rail road or what use to be the railroad right of way still exists. When you look at the tax map, you'll see this they are long rectangular sections that are privately owned but it's not being used. Wouldn't that be a possible way of connecting the rail trail but you need a study. So when we talked about Spruce St about connecting the Main St Riverwalk with the Heritage Trail to Hudson, I'm thinking the other end we, it would be good to find some way of connecting the downtown Nashua, well right now, often times I live at Ledgewood hills and I can take my bicycle and go to my office on Factory St., I cross West Hollis St to Wellesley, to Shore Dr and then I'm at the Stellos Stadium and YMCA parking lot than I connect to the Mines Falls Park and I can ride traffic free, all the way into the mill yard. I'm thinking there are people in Nashua that want to do the same thing and go all the way to Ayer. So the lack of the corridor study, is an impediment that I would you know.

Scott LeClair: Sure, are you thinking you want to see if people want to change their vote? It would take three of us to change the vote, essentially.

Bob Canaway: So I guess the question I have is at a B-2 does that mean it's not going to get funded?

Scott LeClair: Historically the way it works, is this is just part of the funding process.

Essentially the Aldermen you guys and fund a D if you want to. This is a recommendation.

Alderman Jette: I'm part of the Budget Review Committee and I keep trying to get people to look at the Capital, look at your work. Because every year we deal with these escrows, so at the end of the year where there was money that was not spent and the Mayor comes up with, I shouldn't say it. The Administration often times come up with pet projects completely ignoring the rating of the Capital Improvements Committee just because, ok we've got this money that we're going to apply it to this pet project. I've argued against it and I'm trying to get them to come back and look at your ratings.

Scott LeClair: Ok, I'm all set with my vote, but if there is anyone else? Matt can you bring the sheet back up, so I can see it.

Matt Sullivan: I would be willing to upgrade my B vote to an A, but that only one of the votes that you need. And I certainly don't want to undermine other votes, I didn't feel strongly that this was a B level project. I think it may rise to be a priority of the Mayor perhaps.

Bob Canaway: I'll explain why I voted C on this project, Alderman Jette what you said makes a lot of sense. I saw this as a we're not sure what we're going to do, the synopsis: sidewalks, crosswalks, bicycle accommodation, lighting and traffic calming measures are needed along the West Hollis Street corridor to improve safety/efficiency and so on, a traffic signal or other measure is needed. They didn't know where any of this stuff was going to go. They didn't know if the light needed to be at the Land Fill or somewhere else, for me I felt that the study needs to be done before the improvements, and I didn't get that from their proposal.

Alderman Jette: But that's why we need the study. We can't just put up a traffic light without having a study to back it up.

Bob Canaway: I agree with that

Rose Evans: Is this 200,000 for a study?

Bob Canaway: its 500,000, its 200,000 this year and 300,000 next year

Rose Evans: for a study, it says construction

Bob Canaway: it does say construction

Bob Canaway: Alderman Jette if this was a study for 100k than I would probably make that an A or B. but this being construction without a plan and maybe they have a plan, but you know, maybe the study was done in prior years, but it sounds like it wasn't.

Alderman Jette: They tell me that there is no plan, and they can't do anything without it.

Matt Sullivan: My expectation is that there may be a funding source made available over the next 6 months. Whether that will be potential Arbor funding (?) I do believe that the study will be done over the next year regardless of the funding source, Bob, I understand that, how can we rank a project when we don't know what it will cost. I'm in support of this long term objective.

Bob Canaway: My Mom lives at Ledgewood and we tried to fix the problem by painting lines to keep the traffic you know with the turn lanes.. if you are right Matt, I could change my vote to a B but I'm not going any higher.

Voting and Ranking resumed

(Refer to the attached Spreadsheet for voting and ranking of each project)

Motion to accept the voting and ranking: Charlie Budris, Seconded by: Rose Evans

Roll Call Vote:

Scott - Yes

Charlie- Yes

Matt -Yes

Alderman Jette-Yes

Bob Canaway -Yes

Rose Evans -Yes

Motion passes unanimously

Other Business

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by Alderman Jette, 7:03 PM. Seconded by Charlie Budris, all members' present voted in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

Scott LeClair, Chair

Date