

JOINT MEETING
COMMITTEE ON INFRASTRUCTURE and
PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

MARCH 23, 2022

A joint meeting of the Committee on Infrastructure and Planning and Economic Development Committee was held Wednesday, March 23, 2022, at 7:00 p.m. in the Aldermanic Chamber and via Zoom teleconference.

To access Zoom, please refer to the agenda or the City's website for the meeting link.

Alderman-at-Large Michael B. O'Brien, Sr., and Alderman-at-Large Melbourne Moran, Jr., Co-Chairs, presided.

The roll call was taken with 9 members of the Committee on Infrastructure and Planning and Economic Development Committee present:

Members of Infrastructure Committee and
PEDC present:

Alderman-at-Large Michael B. O'Brien, Sr.
Alderman Richard A. Dowd, Vice Chair
Alderman Alex Comeau
Alderman Tyler Gouveia
Alderman Ernest A. Jette
Alderman-at-Large Melbourne Moran, Jr.
Alderman John Cathey
Alderman-at-Large Ben Clemons
Alderman Derek Thibeault

Also in Attendance: Tim Cummings, Economic Development Director

ROLL CALL

Chairman O'Brien

While we're here what we are going to do is have one quick meeting to accept the nominations of two people that were chosen to make an additional members of the Task Force so I will now – well it does have it on it. Okay. I'll open it up to public comment but only on the nominations because that is the only thing that is on the agenda. Your name and address. We know who you are but kindly. Thank you. And three minutes. Thank you.

PUBLIC COMMENT – (only for items on the agenda)

Karen Bill

Don't even need it. Karen Bill, 95 Parnell Place here in Nashua. I just wanted to let you know that I'm very interested in being considered as an alternate for the committee. I know that you have chosen the two people however, I think it would also be nice to have someone from outside of the downtown area who is willing to bring some creative solutions and ideas to the table. So that being said, I just want to be on the record and if you decide you want an extra person, you can always call me to be the extra person on the committee also but I would like to be considered an alternate if at all possible. Thank you very much.

Chairman O'Brien

Anybody else in the chamber that would like to speak. Seeing nobody. Anybody on Zoom? We do have one person – Beth Scaer.

Beth Scaer

Beth Scaer, 111 East Hobart Street. I invited a bunch of people to come to give public comment because the agenda said that it was about the barriers. It didn't mention the nominations at all but that's the only thing you're taking comment on tonight?

Chairman O'Brien

Yes. Your comment needs to be on the nominations. Second half of the meeting, we're going to reconvene just so you

understand Ma'am. We're going to recess and then go right into the barriers. So your comments should just be about the nominations.

Beth Scaer

So then you'll have a second public comment.

Chairman O'Brien

That's correct.

Beth Scaer

Okay, so this will be real quick then. Okay.

Chairman O'Brien

Is it on the nominations then?

Beth Scaer

No, no I'm saying this part of the meeting is going to be very quick?

Chairman O'Brien

It will be quick, yes Ma'am. Thank you.

Chairman O'Brien

Okay thank you. Further comment from anybody on Zoom? Seeing no one.

DISCUSSION

- Nomination of 2 additional members to the Task Force

MOTION BY ALDERMAN COMEAU TO RECOMMEND ADDING MICHAEL BUCKLEY AND RUTH BOLAND TO THE TASK FORCE

ON THE QUESTION

Co-Chairman Moran

Alderman Moran

Thank you Mr. Co-Chair. I just wanted to state that Mr. Buckley and Mrs. Boland were both recommended to me by bi-partisan folks within the city. I know Mr. Wingate spoke very highly of Mr. Buckley as well as Miss Boland, and also other members of the Board reached out, and Alderman Comeau connected me with Mr. Wingate. I had many conversations with him and I felt like these two folks were representative of a broad support in their thinking of how this could come about.

In regards to Miss Bill, I personally have no concerns about alternates if that is something that the Committee would discuss.

Chairman O'Brien

I don't know. Right now we're just working on the acceptance so that we haven't really crossed the bridge of alternates. Alderman Cathey?

Alderman Cathey

Two things. One - I believe Miss Scaer may have gotten the first agenda that went out before we made that change to have this meeting and a Task Force meeting. There was a previous agenda that went out just as a Task Force. It did not have the nominations on it. I believe that's where the confusion lies just to clear that up because she said she had the agenda with the nominations. If that's incorrect, then I apologize but I'm going to assume that's what happened.

Number two - I spoke with Mr. Wingate about a plethora of things and he also recommended Mr. Buckley. He even said himself that he would not want to be on the Committee but he recommended Mr. Buckley because he felt like as a restaurateur he probably had the most reasonable, sensible voice. So just to echo Alderman Moran's comments about getting that recommendation. I did also get that recommendation from a member of Main Street.

Alderman Jette

Mr. Chairman so I've been listening to the Senate hearings on the nomination of the candidate for Justice of the Supreme Court. So I have about 50 questions I'd like to ask. I will yield my time.

Chairman O'Brien

I saw them too. Some of it was crazy but thank you for bringing that up.

Alderman Comeau

Yes, thank you Mr. Chair. For those of you who might not be as familiar with these two people, would it be possible to ask each of them to come up for a minute or two and give a brief minute or two about their background?

Chairman O'Brien

Yes, thank you. That was the Chair's intention as soon as we complete it with some of the comments. Seeing any other comments?

I will now invite Mr. Buckley to come up and if you could just give us a brief hello and a little historical background of yourself and that will be it please.

Michael Buckley

Yes, good evening. As you know, my name is Michael Buckley and I run Michael Timothy's Dining Group and we have MT's Local and Surf on Main Street. MT's for 27 years and Surf for 20 years.

You know I've obviously been at quite a few of the different meetings that have been held for various things. Lately it's been the barriers and I always try to bring a position that considers all points of view. I like to think big picture and think about the overall health of the downtown, and the city, and the vibrancy and where it is going in the future but I also try to really bring in the consideration of the taxpayer, the fellow retailers, and all the people that do business in the downtown. So you know, I think people have asked me to be on the board and I'm happy to give my perspective, give my point-of-view. You can call it advice but it really is just an opinion. It's up to all of you to take all the information you get and consider your constituents and come up with the best solution for the city as a whole. So I'm happy to do that. I feel it's been an honor to do business in this town. Everybody has worked really well with me and obviously you see what I'm doing down at Surf right now. We wanted to get that done before the Performing Arts Center got up and running because we're planning on being down here for a long time. So I do have a vested interest. Is there any questions?

Chairman O'Brien

Any questions?

Co-Chairman Moran

Thank you Mr. Chairman. Hi, Mr. Buckley. I actually was looking for you last week at the end of the week. I, too, talked to Mr. Wingate for a long time. Probably should have just put him on here. We all talk to him anyway. I just wanted to clarify something he said that you said, so I just want to make sure your words are what I'm hearing and not his saying

what you said. He said you were for four lanes of traffic, not two and I just wanted to clear that to make sure either way.

Michael Buckley

So I did at the last Infrastructure meeting, I did present my points of view and one of them was if it's possible to have the barriers, eliminate the bike lane, and still have the barriers - maybe not as ample seating as was there but preserve four lanes, I think that would be beneficial to everybody. Maybe also in the spirit of compromise help facilitate this thing moving forward. So yeah I do think that if there's a way to do it, that would be the best solution because I know that was brought up at I think it was the December 8th meeting with the Fire and Rescue and Police. So yes if there is a way to do it and get the four lanes, I think that should be something that's considered. It's not my decision. All I can do is say "hey what do I think".

I think Tim has done some work to decongest certain parts of it. I know that is a huge concern for some people. So I'm trying to take into account other people's opinion and say, "Well is there a way we can make it work?" So I think it should be looked at. I don't know if there is but I think it should be looked at very seriously.

Co-Chairman Moran

Okay. Thank you so much.

Chairman O'Brien

Anyone else for further questions? Okay. Thank you Mr. Buckley. Now I'll invite up Ruth Boland. Would you like to come forward?

Ruth Boland

Hello. I'm Ruth Boland. I own the League of NH Craftsmen Fine Craft Gallery. I have a vocal cord injury so this is the way I sound. I apologize. We've been there for 12 years. I also have a background I worked for BAE Systems for 38 years in finance and contracts. I'm happy to be on this Task Force. I believe in compromise, and negotiation, and just moving things along. So if I can help, great.

Chairman O'Brien

Would you be able to take questions?

Ruth Boland

Sure.

Chairman O'Brien

Any questions by members of the Board?

Co-Chairman Moran

I have more of a statement. So one of the other reasons why I reached out to Ruth too is that she also represents the arts and culture component of downtown, which is a piece of how we make this downtown thriving. I thought her experience would be unique into this entire Task Force.

Alderman Dowd

Yes I'm sure working for BAE in finance and contracts you certainly were in a position to do compromises in quite a few situations. So that's good to hear.

Ruth Boland

I'm hoping it will be a little more pleasant than some of the situations I was in at BAE.

Chairman O'Brien

Any other questions of members? Okay, seeing none. We have a pending motion recommend adding Michael Buckley and Ruth Boland to the Task Force. I'll call the vote.

MOTION CARRIED

Chairman O'Brien

Well I welcome you to the Task Force and to the others, please come forward. You get to sit in the cheap seats.

While everybody is getting seated, I would like to say, and I'm sure I hope I speak on the same behalf of the Co-Chair but I will recognize the Co-Chair. We asked you to come in of your own time, to donate your time to come in and sit on this Task Force. I really appreciate that on behalf of the citizens on this particular project. So I really want to thank you for your dedication and your commitment to community service. Co-Chair do you want to add more?

Co-Chairman Moran

I echo those statements and I think putting everyone together, we're all neighbors, and I think we can come to some compromise giving everyone's unique perspective on this matter.

COMMUNICATIONS - None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS - None

NEW BUSINESS – RESOLUTIONS - None

NEW BUSINESS – ORDINANCES - None

TABLED IN COMMITTEE

O-22-008

- Endorsers: Mayor Jim Donchess
Alderman-at-Large Michael B. O'Brien, Sr.
Alderman Patricia Klee
Alderman-at-Large Melbourne Moran, Jr.
Alderman Thomas Lopez
Alderman-at-Large Ben Clemons
Alderman Derek Thibeault
Alderman-at-Large Gloria Timmons
Alderman-at-Large Lori Wilshire

RELATIVE TO SEASONAL ROAD CLOSURES AND ELIMINATION OF CERTAIN ON-STREET PARKING FOR EXTENDED OUTDOOR DINING AND OTHER NON-VEHICULAR USE

- Tabled at March 9, 2022 meeting

GENERAL DISCUSSION - None

PUBLIC COMMENT

Beth Scaer

Beth Scaer, 111 East Hobart Street. My comments or my concerns about the barriers going back up as you've heard many times but I don't think we can say it enough, there is a lot of concern about first responders being able to get through the traffic, the heavy traffic that can build up. You know that is fire, ambulances, police. Fire and Police services reported delays of significant - enough to cost someone their life. And also the Nashua Library took a community survey and they reported the top three things that people did not like about Nashua. One of them was traffic on Main Street. So that is quite interesting and the last one is what about – I know climate change is a big concern. All those cars sitting in traffic letting their engines run. That's a serious problem if you're concerned about climate change. Thank you.

Laura Colquhoun

Laura Colquhoun, 30 Greenwood Drive. I just want to say that you should have had more actual Nashua residents instead of businesses on this Task Force. I am with Beth as far as public safety. Nobody's willing to tell us that if somebody dies who can somebody sue, the City? Because I'll tell you right now if I had a loved one that didn't make it to the hospital in time, I would want to sue somebody, I think number one if this Task Force had more people on it that were actual residents instead of the businesses that could actually put into this, I think it would have been better. Thank you.

Karen Bill

Karen Bill, 95 Parnell Place, Nashua. I do agree with Laura. As I said earlier, there should have been a little bit wider of a net cast for residents of Nashua because Nashua goes to the Tyngsboro line and there are probably several people who would have loved to have stepped up and to the other end to Hollis. These people are all coming downtown. So I think it would have behooved you to include - be a little more inclusive versus exclusive of who doesn't fit the downtown mold and I don't think it's too late to add people quite honestly. You could decide that tonight amongst your own group. Again, I would like to be one of those people.

The other thing is when we were here for the Parking Study and Director Cummings had presented the e-version of this is where the barriers were, this is where they're going to be, really difficult for people to grasp. I was speaking with some Aldermen more than one about this. It's really difficult for people to grasp looking at a PowerPoint presentation, a barrier here, a barrier there and it's a lot. What has been done in the past in several administrations within the city is they bring 20 x 30, 40 x 60 dry mounted actual photos. Put them on easels around the room so people can walk around, they can actually look at them with or without their reading glasses, they can see them, they can actually understand it, and if they had a specific question about one area, they can study that one more instead of them just going on an overhead. It's very difficult to really grasp it all and have questions because then you're going on slide #3 what about this one? So if I can recommend, I think that for all meetings going forward that those enlargements be presented so people can look at them and maybe jot down questions if you have them numbered or something because I'm sure there will be more public comment as well. Those are my thoughts, and requests, and thank you so much.

Chairman O'Brien

Thank you. Anybody else from inside the chamber? Seeing no one.

Matthew Gouthro

Matthew Gouthro, 104 Fawn Lane in Nashua. I agree with the past two speakers concerning the net that was cast for people to be on this Task Force. I believe we should have more Nashua residents on here. I understand this is part of a visioning workshop that took place during COVID in which many of our residents didn't get a chance to participate in. So, I understand what's happening here. This has nothing to do with COVID. It really has nothing to do with dining downtown. It has everything to do with what's happening in terms of changing the landscape of our Historic Downtown District. You want to turn it into a pedestrian mall and that's fantastic but you know what, you have nowhere to reroute that traffic. Traffic is a major issue. Nashua is not a biking city unfortunately. Nashua is not a very big pedestrian city, but people do have cars and we do have to get to places. We need to drive to the pharmacy. We need to drive to the drugstore. We need to drive to other businesses and some of those businesses will suffer as a result of the reduced parking that you're going to have in downtown. So I wish you would have more of a voice of the true stakeholders, which are the residents of Nashua in terms of what we're paying for taxes to make this happen. You guys are taking 10's of thousands of dollars of our tax dollars and you're implementing it into these projects and we would like to see that.

You know up until this point, a lot of these meetings weren't even happening in public. We had to ask for the minutes for these meetings and kind of shrugged and said, you know what we really don't have those meetings. The last meeting that I attended in December you said we were going to have a Task Force going forward and the last meeting that we had last month all of a sudden you presented all the findings that were ready to go with this. I just think that we need to have the residents bless this before you guys ago ahead and make these radical changes.

Alderman Comeau

30 seconds

Matthew Gouthro

So I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this. I don't think what I'm going to say is going to change your minds any because I think you've already thought this out and what you're going to do but I appreciate you allowing me to say something about this. Thank you.

Chairman O'Brien

Thank you. Anyone else on Zoom or in the chamber? You may come forward.

Cheryl Roy

My name is Cheryl Roy. I live on Hill Street here in Nashua. I agree with everything all of these people just said. They took the words out of my mouth that I had written down. I believe the taxpayers of this city should have a big voice in what's going on here. It's our money that is paying for this and we've had no say in it. I disagree with the way this has been handled totally. Police and Fire have expressed their concern about emergency getting downtown. That's a concern to me as well. As far as I'm concerned, conversations about coming down to two lanes should have ended once they said that. That's a danger to all the citizens in this city.

Other store owners have expressed opposition. The traffic is a nightmare. The barriers are very unattractive to an otherwise historic downtown and I hate to see that change. So I hope you vote no on this. Thank you.

Chairman O'Brien

Thank you. I'll recognize Lou Juris.

Lou Juris

Good evening. Lou Juris here of 56 Haines Street, Nashua. So the idea of having the expanded dining and sectioning off parts of the Main Street is to keep people in the city and keep monies, their time, and energy flowing downtown to enjoy these summer/early fall evenings during the day. This is part of a longer term plan where you're going to have more housing, possibly a hotel. You have the Performing Arts Center. Well people are going to spill out and want to hang out down there. It's possible in the future that maybe we can on the weekends close the street – the portion of the Main Street but until then, things are changing. People aren't going to hang out in their backyards in some of these other neighborhoods. People don't come to Nashua to necessarily drive down Lund Road, or Spitbrook Road, or East Dunstable Road. They want to go to the city center. That's where the action is. So maybe we could market it if it's not being done already. Market it to some of the businesses that offer goods and services while people are down there. Maybe it can be done on social media but it's a draw for the city. It's a draw for residents outside of the city.

I want to say that the plan that was put together two weeks ago was very thorough by the Economic Development Director Tim Cummings and also the Mayor did a good job. In a traffic study, it was all laid out, all laid out. The cops were there. The Fire Department was there. Yup they had some concerns. They're always going to have some concerns. They have concerns about everything. That's part of their job is to review this stuff. So on the whole, it's more of an advantage to have this and it's going to lead into something more permanent. Again I understand some of the frustrations but maybe we could do some additional artwork down there and do some additional paintings on the barriers. On the whole, the city will be better off.

You're also competing against Lowell and Manchester that have AA ball teams.

Alderman Comeau

30 seconds

Lou Juris

There is also the City of Boston which is what we orbit basically and there is a lot going on in town right now. There is a lot of transformation, so not to do this and not to continue on a bigger plan will not serve the city as well as it should and I think we should consider this moving forward and continue on a more expanded downtown. Thank you.

Chairman O'Brien

Thank you. Anybody else for public comment?

Charlene Selesky

Charlene Selesky, Nashua, NH, 9 Hill Street. I spoke before and I'd just like to reiterate my feelings again. I don't feel it's up to the taxpayers of the city to expect the burden of what's happening to downtown. I asked before and suggested before that bring things in for families. Bring things in for children. There's nothing. Nashua is not a destination, it's a gate city. I've lived here for 44 years. I've loved living here. I've loved raising my kids here. I have grandkids. I'm three generations also but I don't see the city growing in the direction that accommodates everybody. I only see a few individuals that are making it work for them. So I would just like to say again. I don't want to see the barriers up. I want to see safety. I want to be able to walk downtown. I really enjoy what I can do in town. The other day I went to get donuts at Crosby's - the Bailey's Irish Cream ones. There was money in the meter, I came out, I had a ticket because I had to wait to get into the store. So it costs me \$10 more for my two donuts. That's fine, it was worth it. I'm just saying that you know it's costing everybody everything and we all know a lot is going on in Boston with what they can do on Hanover Street and their North End and they're upset and all of that, but again we have all suffered with the pandemic and it's over. I work in a restaurant and I know what it's like, so I'm not blaming anybody. I'm not saying your success isn't worthy. I'm happy for anybody that has it, but I want to see it continue for all people and not individuals. That's all I have to say. I'd really like to see it on the ballot come November. I really would whether this should continue or not. Thank you for your time. Thank you for your interest.

Chairman O'Brien

Thank you. Anyone else for public comment? Seeing none, moving on to discussion by Aldermen - remarks by Aldermen but however keep in mind we're going to get right into the meat of this. So let me clearly say we have citizens on the board. They're not night owls like Aldermen so please thank you.

REMARKS BY THE ALDERMEN

Alderman Cathey

Thank you Chair. I saw that the ordinance was on the agenda. Is that something that we need to untable and then retable as part of the official meeting?

Chairman O'Brien

That's correct.

Alderman Cathey

Okay. I saw that we skipped over it, so I wasn't sure how we do things generally so I just wanted to clarify.

Chairman O'Brien

It will be taken off the table at some point in the future meeting when we come to an agreement.

Alderman Cathey

So it doesn't get taken off the table tonight and then retabled?

Chairman O'Brien

No.

Alderman Cathey

Then why is it on the agenda?

Alderman Dowd

Technically if you're going to discuss the agenda, then you need to take it off the table and retable it at end of meeting.

Chairman O'Brien

Yeah that's right. We do that in Budget. That's correct.

Alderman Cathey

So we'll untable it?

Chairman O'Brien

Yes but not this meeting. The next one following. We're going to adjourn very shortly.

Alderman Cathey

My clarification question would be why is it on the agenda if we're not even addressing it if I may Mr. Chair?

Alderman Clemons

I might be able to answer Alderman Cathey's questions.

Chairman O'Brien

Yes, please.

Alderman Clemons

The reason it's on the agenda is it has to be listed on there because we did table it. So anytime we have a meeting and something is on the table when we table it, it's on the agenda as tabled. It doesn't mean that we have to take it up, but it has to show that whatever legislation is on there we tabled it and its there.

Alderman Cathey

Okay. That clarifies. Thank you. I appreciate it.

Alderman Clemons

You're welcome.

Chairman O'Brien

Thank you Alderman Thibeault.

ADJOURNMENT

**MOTION BY ALDERMAN DOWD TO ADJOURN
MOTION CARRIED**

The meeting was declared closed at 7:32 p.m.

Alderman Alex Comeau
Committee Clerk