

PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

MAY 21, 2019

A meeting of the Planning and Economic Development Committee was held on Tuesday, May 21, 2019 at 7:06 p.m. in the Aldermanic Chamber.

Alderswoman Mary Ann Melizzi-Golja, Chair, presided.

Members of Committee present: Alderman Ernest A. Jette, Vice Chair
Alderman-at-Large Brandon Michael Laws
Alderman Jan Schmidt\
Alderswoman Shoshanna Kelly (arrived after roll at 7:30 p.m.)

Members not in Attendance: Alderman-at-Large David C. Tencza

Also in Attendance: Director Sarah Marchant, Community Development
Director Jennifer McCormack, Nashua Public Library

PUBLIC COMMENT – None

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION

Library Plaza Redesign Preliminary Presentation and Discussion with Director Marchant and Director McCormack

Chairwoman Melizzi-Golja

Thank you we have a quorum. Alderman Tencza contacted me last week and told me he had a family conflict and so he would be unable to attend this evening. We also have in attendance Director Marchant from Community Development and Director McCormack from the Nashua Public Library. Director Cummings is not with us this evening.

As many of you know and you've probably also read about in the paper, the library is working on a re-design of Library Plaza and so this evening we have Director Marchant and Director McCormack with us to talk about how that process is moving. So Director Marchant had to leave the Chamber for a minute but I'm going to ask Director McCormack to come up. Thank you. While Director Marchant is out, I was just wondering for the public, if you might want to just talk about the upcoming public input event that you have planned?

Director Jennifer McCormack, Nashua Public Library

Absolutely, so on Thursday evening at the Library, Thursday May 23rd, we are holding a Public Comment Session. The architects will be there to give a brief presentation. They will have some 3-D renderings of the proposed plans for the public to look at and comment on and that starts at 6:00 p.m.

Chairwoman Melizzi-Golja

Is that located in the auditorium?

Ms. McCormack

No in the large meeting room in the Chandler Wing.

Chairwoman Melizzi-Golja

So Public Comment at 6:00 p.m. and down in the large meeting room in the Chandler Wing.

Chairwoman Melizzi-Golja

Great thank you so much. And Director Marchant has joined us so if the two of you would like to start your presentation.

Ms. McCormack

I am going to start with setting the stage for how we got here. So the Plaza renovation is a priority of both the Board of Trustees and the Mayor. The Mayor was able to identify some funds for us to use for this planning process. There are a number of problems that we hope this renovation will address and then there are a couple of opportunities that we think it presents as well. If you've been to the library recently you know that the grounds out in front of us, the plaza area being the concrete and grassy area between our front door and the entrance to the Court Street Theater and all the way from the public parking lot to Court Street itself. So to us it is a fairly sizable plot, but from the City's perspective it is a fairly small plot of land. The condition of the grounds has really deteriorated. The building opened almost 50 years ago and has never had any irrigation, it is poorly lit, the concrete has deteriorated and the pitch is leading to water infiltration in the building. It is also not an accessible route from our handicap spots on either end; either the parking lot and/or the Court Street end.

There was a lot of excess vegetation which was impeding the sight lines for our security cameras and allowing for a lot of trash and debris to accumulate. And there was some less than desirable activities happening so we tore out a lot of vegetation which didn't improve the aesthetics although it did improve the security camera coverage. We hold a lot of programs out there; there is a weekly concert series and many children's activities. There are some major events like Nashua Goes Back to School, the library holds its summer Reading Kick-Off Event. Both of those attract a couple thousand people every year. But there is actually no power on that side, once you leave the building, once you cross that walkway, there is no power or water over there. So we do a lot of stringing extension cords with mats over them or just telling people they can't have power. And there's actually no irrigation or water over there so any ideas we've ever had for planting improvement are not really feasible.

This sounds like a long list of complaints. There has also been a lot of erosion along the walkway and we've spent some money over the years trying to shore that up. So that's a safety hazard that emerges about every other year. The runoff from the concrete down the walkway erodes it and there have been a couple of minor injuries. So this renovation hopefully will solve all of that and it will do more than that; I think it will improve that space. The plans that we will show, just a couple of slides from the proposal will incorporate an active part of that plaza that will be available for people to use whether they are coming to visit the library or not. So it can be a destination for that neighborhood.

We have a lot of kids use us that are in that Middle School age, they are old enough to be out roaming about by themselves, but maybe not old enough to have a car to go anywhere. So we are talking like 11 to 14 year olds, they could use something to do right in the downtown area that's active. It will improve accessibility which is a major priority for all of us for our elderly users but also just people with mobility issues. It also will provide better connections, so a physical connection between us and the Court Street Theater and kind of that more emotional / mental connection, that the activities that are happening in the 14 Court Street Building, the new artist studios, the Peacock Players, the Nashua Symphony. Those are organizations that we already have partnerships with but improving that space between us will make that connection, I think a little more concrete for the public.

And the last thing I would say is our 50th Anniversary is coming up in September 2021 it will be 50 years since the doors opened. I am working with our Board of Trustees on some plans for some big celebrations. We are considering the installation of a new piece of art for the plaza and we really hope that these plans come to fruition and the construction is done by then; so we, the Board, and the City will have something really terrific to celebrate.

Chairwoman Melizzi-Golja

Great. One thing, how many sculptures are currently there, is it 3?

Ms. McCormack

No, 1, 2, 3 – there is 5 on the front lawn and then there is one in the back and that makes 6. And then the turtle that is currently in Bicentennial Park is moving to be with its turtle brother and sister probably next year, so there will be 7.

Chairwoman Melizzi-Golja

There will be 7, all from the Sculpture Symposium.

Ms. McCormack

I believe so, yes. I'm not sure about the reading pair that is outside our doors. That was purchased I think by the Burbank Fund.

Chairwoman Melizzi-Golja

Right but the rest are Sculpture Symposium Sculptures.

Ms. McCormack

Yes.

Chairwoman Melizzi-Golja

Ok thank you.

Director Sarah Marchant, Community Development

Alright so just kicking it off a little bit, Jen gave you a lot of the background that has been, Director McCormack sorry, that has led us to this point. So we've been working with CRJA Architect, Landscape Architects. The goal of this is we have a team comprised of library directors and the library board, representatives from the Sculpture Symposium, the Nashua Arts Committee, Public Works, Community Development and Great American Downtown and the Downtown Improvement Committee. So we have a pretty broad brush of a core group that evaluated consultants when we went out for RFP and initially chose CRJA to start this project off. I just have two slides here to talk you through tonight just so you have an idea of more of this discussion that will happen on Thursday and how we got here.

So generally when we are looking at something that we are looking for great public feedback on, the best way to get people to tell you what they like and don't is to show them something visual. It is much easier to say "I like this idea" "I don't like this idea" with an image to react to us; then us saying we want to fix the lack of vegetation and we want to have more public space. It's not concrete enough to get good responses from. So based on discussions with that core group of people, CRJA has put together, and knowing some of the goals that the library has clearly stated and some of the needs that we know are out there that have not yet been met, they have put together 2 designs that they will go through with 3D renderings and all kinds of cool things Thursday night. But this is the idea behind what they are looking at. So just to orient you, this is the main parking lot, there's the library here and here's Court Street Theater on the far side, sorry Court Street the road and Court Street Theater on the northern portion.

The idea is to look at this as more of a recreation space, a performance space in the middle and more of a passive space where the terraced areas are up here. In addition to really kind of creating this stronger entrance line and sight line here, and a spot for a food truck; there are so many events and so many people say "Why can't we have a food truck?". But when you have no electricity and no water, it's hard to support something like that. And what you can't see on this image is that there are significant grade changes in this area and we do have a history of a large amount of asbestos in this area that is documented. We are very cognizant of some of the environmental issues and how we can pull all this together reasonably.

So this is a cross-section, here's the plan you were just looking at in the top corner with a red line through the middle and that's what you are looking at. If we looked at it straight through the middle, so if we are standing in the middle here and we are coming out the library door, this gives you a sense of the change in grade. It would be more of a recreation space, a performance space here and then the more passive space and the stronger connections to 14 Court Street. The idea of a process here, there will be a much more in-depth presentation Thursday night, but we really love the community's feedback. I know Jen and her team have gotten a lot through their newsletter and their Facebook. We are paying attention and we are pulling all of those comments in. So we will have a discussion Thursday night, we will take whatever input we can.

From there the architects will go out and refine the designs and will take all the feedback discussions. We will make the changes; we will come up with a much more solid design. Again this one is really to get your feedback on. From that final design, we will then or they will create a full bid package for us. This is being designed very much in phases, it is 4 phases of construction. We understand that we don't have all the money set up initially right now to fund this, we have a small piece of it. But this is a priority project and so we want to be able to make sure that whatever the community wants, that it has a general budget to it and that it is allowed to be phased over time. We know it would be wonderful if we could do the whole shebang but we do have many, many priorities in the City.

So that is the goal here, it is unlikely that you would see the whole plan completed in one fell swoop I think. And the idea is to have the bid documents together, the plan done for the end of the summer, bid documents together for the fall. We always get best bid pricing over the winter so we'd be looking to fund some of the improvements in the next budget cycle anyways. I think we'd be happy to answer questions at this point.

Alderman Jette

Could you tell me what the different colors mean?

Ms. Marchant

In here?

Alderman Jette

Yes.

Ms. Marchant

So that's a surface of the play space and it is meant to reflect the colors that are in the library that are part of your branding.

Ms. McCormack

Right so that's actually an artificial surface, those colors are meant to represent the possibility of introducing actual color into that surface.

Ms. Marchant

So it's the same as the Nashua brand.

Alderman Jette

So it would be some impervious surface like cement?

Ms. McCormack

Well no like AstroTurf something a little softer so kids could play on that. One concept that has been discussed is ... we had a funny – I think Jonathan was calling it like a CrossFit Structure for adults. So if you can picture the monkey bars when you were a kid but something similar for adults. Possibly a playground for young children; we've had comments asking for a basketball court. One suggestion was a small soccer pitch so kids in the neighborhood could kick around a soccer ball. But that's meant to represent actual colors of some artificial surface.

Alderwoman Melizzi-Golja

Will it drain or it totally impervious.

Ms. Marchant

Drainage would be built in, it will drain, it is an impervious surface, it would be a runoff, it would be a soft squishier run off surface that's meant for outside. It will drain, there would be designed drainage included in this. And there's actually quite a bit of LID, Low Impact Drainage, that is part of this proposal so that we are not adding hard catch basin drainage necessarily but being able to utilize a lot of the green and resources that area on the site to better with the drainage. And managing the grades significantly better than we are that the moment.

Alderwoman Melizzi-Golja

I feel like I know the grades in my sleep and the pot holes. Any other questions.

Alderman Jette

I'm not going to be able to be there Thursday night so my initial reaction is or I guess my question is, is there a reason for that as opposed to maintaining some kind of grassy surface?

Ms. McCormack

I think one reason is that library doesn't employ a groundskeeper so the less lawn we have to take care of the better. I guess I'll let Sarah answer more as to the benefits of that surface over grass.

Ms. Marchant

When we went through the goals for the space and what all these collective groups want to see and what we look at the downtown as a whole, there is not a lot of open green space and there is not a lot of recreation space for families and kids. The library has a lot of amazing programs and so does 14 Court Street. There are a lot of children and families going between those two buildings. The idea was to try to find a way to give them a place or space that is a destination on to itself as Jen said, and to try and draw them in, people who maybe aren't using those facilities as well.

So we have very positive results with playgrounds that have some eyes on them, which this space would have. And we think it would just be a benefit to go with the program. The other reason is that it works for the grades, the space is kind of divided into 3. So if you look right here on this edge, this is actually a retaining wall that would be, that you could sit on if you were here, but there needs to be, to make this make this space flat and this space usable for performance or events, you need to fix some of the grades. And so there is a retaining wall here and the other design there is also a wall of some kind here; you kind of need to break these spaces up. This mill space is designed to be able to chaptalize on this big blank wall on 14 Court Street in some ways.

So if you wanted to project movie screens or if you wanted to use that for art in some way. We are also really bringing back in the tie between 14 Court Street and the Nashua Library with the ADA ramps. If you haven't been here in a while, this doesn't connect anymore, at all and the only ADA access is to go out of Court Street and to go all the way down around here and I guess that doesn't even really work. So we are trying to provide a connection and access between the two buildings again as well. And I think for all the events that we looked at that are currently being held there and the space that the library believes they need, there wasn't a reason to make all of this just green space.

Alderman Laws

First of all I love both of you and this is great and I've said to both of you privately I am very excited about this. The library is an incredibly underused asset to the City. Correct me if I'm wrong Director McCormack, the Nashua Library I've heard is the biggest library north of Boston in North America.

Ms. McCormack

I have not heard that, I think Manchester might fight us on that, but it's close.

Alderman Jette

Well Canada is in North America.

Alderman Laws

Yeah, yeah, that's what was impressive about it. I had heard it was bigger than anything in Canada, No offense to Canadians. My only concern would be so over 50 years the ground has shifted to a point where the original design no longer looks the same, right? Is that a possibility to happen again after we invest this money here?

Ms. Marchant

I think the engineering standards today and knowing what has happened with the shifting before, the way the library was designed has some really interesting drainage and the architectural structure right? It kind of looks like it's floating and has a moat around the edge of it. We can take a lot of what we know about how the water flows right now into consideration and with engineering I think it will be a much more durable design. You know, 20, 30 years, I think is a very reasonable expectation; I don't know about 50. But I do think that the engineering standards and what we know, since this building has gone into place will help us design a much more durable structure to be put in.

Alderman Jette

So you are talking about reconnecting the 2 buildings, they were connected, do you know why they were disconnected?

Ms. McCormack

So if you look where that corridor, sort of where Sarah has the cursor, there were 2 stairways, so a stairway there and then another stairway, they were concrete steps and they were deteriorating and sloping, which they were not safe. Additionally they were being used a skateboard ramp. So we had skateboarders all the time and I have nothing against skateboarders but they would start up at that very top right at the door to the Court Street Theater and fling themselves down, all the way down that ramp and jump off that retaining wall onto the plaza, which is terrifying and it really not safe. So I spoke to the Mayor at the time, we identified a very small amount of money, DPW reclaimed some granite curbing from solid waste and just took out those steps and added planters. It was a really quick solution, somebody from Community Development designed some plantings that were meant to be hardy. Some of them have thrived, some have not. So we solved the skateboarding problem and we solved the unsafe stairway problems but we, as a result, also kind of closed down that connection between the 2 buildings.

Alderman Jette

So you disconnected it to solve the skateboarding problem but when you connect it are you going to re-create another skateboarding problem?

Ms. McCormack

Well it might. I think the improved grading will help and we did talk to Jonathan about that and they have a number of techniques that they use to discourage skateboarding, but that is certainly on our list of things to watch out for.

Alderman Schmidt

This design, as far as the playground area, is a really great idea because you can create a surface that is permeable, that water will seep through. Right now there is no edges, kids play and there's somebody reading a book over here, they are in the way. Dividing it up is really going to be a great idea because it'll help people be where they want to be and have another space nearby. But the material that is used for the playground is perfect for kids; it gives, it allows water to go through, it is safer. I think a lot of parents will feel a lot better about their kids playing in that area. There will be a barrier to the parking area, right?

Ms. McCormack

Yes correct.

Alderman Schmidt

Perfect, thank you.

Alderwoman Melizzi-Golja

Other questions? I have a couple, I'm looking at this, of course you know I'm thinking how I am going to program this, so programming this space every August. No I think first of all it is great and I think re-establishing that connection is wonderful and especially the ramp that is enclosed as part of the plaza and not "oh you have to leave this great space to enter it another way" but you can still be part of the activity if you are using that ramp. And I think Director McCormack, I think you and I had one conversation about this and I know Director Marchant and I have had a couple. I just think providing that space for programs, whatever it may be, a concert or a festival, whatever in the center and then having that other space that is very clearly delineated by not only the wall but the change in surface, as a kid's space is great.

I have one question about the material. So we do the preschool, the daycare, you do the event, you do it usually in February or March, early childhood event. Say the Early Childhood Community wanted to do something when the weather was good, I'm not sure when that would be because May doesn't seem to be the time either. But if they wanted to do something out on that space, will this surface, will they be able to like have paints and have all of those sorts of things out there?

Ms. Marchant

Yes so I mean as long they are water-based absolutely. There is also on the side over here which I think is the most dangerous because of the amount of asbestos that we know is on this bank, but still has possibility. There is kind of an outdoor classroom area that they have been talking about here, with working with the grading here to allow some space as well. As part of the Riverfront Project, we are planning to remove a whole lot of trees along this riverfront to open it up. So there would be a better tie to this area which has a great view of the riverfront here, so yes I think there is room on this space as well. I think that the whole point of the design was based on what kind of an activity you want to do, it might be there. You know there are built in checker tables, chess tables over here, we've talked about other kinds of other things you could borrow from the library and use in this space and ways to repurpose, you know, to use this space maybe not

only just as a playground especially if there's more of that sport court involved, you know using corn hole out there. Or doing other things as well to kind of allow this to be really a community space that people can use for multiple purposes.

Alderwoman Melizzi-Golja

Is the fountain going to remain?

Ms. McCormack

No the fountain is no longer functional and the Board has decided not to invest any more funds in it.

Alderwoman Melizzi-Golja

That's fine I was just looking at this and I was wondering if I missed it or if it was truly gone. And then I guess my only other big question is what are the thoughts about lighting? Up lighting of trees, big lights, low lights?

Ms. McCormack

As part of the plan, so as part of the team doing this design, there is a lighting expert, you know they have a lighting engineer involved. He has presented a few ideas, we haven't really seen a concrete lighting plan; that's one of the values of the plan is better lighting and lighting throughout the space. That's so there won't be shadowed areas where you don't feel safe. You know we didn't talk about this but I'm wondering how many of them would be solar-powered and did that come up and I missed it?

Ms. Marchant

We frown on using solar-powered lights because of the lack of reliability that we found throughout the City. So a part of this is absolutely, especially we talked briefly about the phasing, the idea is to make sure with Phase I Plan that we are addressing the drainage issues around the entryway, the accessibility issues and pulling those electrical and water lines towards that green space. To break it down to the smallest most important first phase, I absolutely think that lighting is a great conversation that is still to be had. The lighting designer plans to illuminate all that space and by pulling the electrical over there and providing for it in Phase I, hopefully we can do more than that. But we will be ready to be able to really illuminate this space in a nice way. I don't necessarily think it will be up lighting; I do think it will be creative use of LED's. There's a lot of great technology out there now, certainly lighting all the walkways, but also providing, they talked a lot about creating a feel of the space through lighting. So that will be included with that.

Alderwoman Melizzi-Golja

You just mentioned pulling the electrical and water, are you envisioning like at each level a place where you'll be able to hook up to water?

Ms. Marchant

Potentially, at least one, probably more, it depends on which space and the budget. But absolutely, that seems to be a systemic problem that we need to solve here and pulling it everywhere is better.

Alderwoman Melizzi-Golja

Right, ok thank you. Any other questions or comments? Well thank you, I think this is really exciting. When we think of the City we always think of Greeley Park but in terms of downtown and south of the river, this is really the play space and the park space and the come and relax space. So I think this is great as we head towards the 50th Anniversary we are looking at really refreshing the space and also considering the new neighbors at Court Street and tying all of that together so it becomes another focal point within the city. Thank you, we look forward to hearing about what comes out of Thursday night.

Memorandum from Planning Board requesting Review and Policy Direction on the Sidewalk Ordinance

So Director McCormack we thank you. We are not allowing Director Marchant to leave. If the record could show that Alderwoman Kelly joined us at 7:30. So the next item on our agenda is a Memorandum which I believe you received from the Planning Board and that is around our policies regarding the Sidewalk Ordinance. Alderman Tencza as the liaison to the Planning Board has been involved in some of this discussion. He and I talked about this briefly and I attended the last part of the workshop that the Planning Board had a couple weeks ago regarding the Sidewalk Policy.

Just so people know what the expectations are, we do not expect to come out with some Resolution to how do we deal with this tonight. But Director Marchant and I thought it would be good to just start the conversation and then find out what information the Committee would like so we can continue that conversation and decide in which direction we would like to go. So I am going to turn it over to Director Marchant. Thank you.

Ms. Marchant

Sure, thank you. So there's a long-standing, as you see in there in your packet, section of the Nashua Ordinances which deal with sidewalks when a subdivision is occurring specifically. So this is not about site plans, it is about subdivisions. It goes back to early 2000's through the last Master Plan where the goal was to build sidewalks and trails in all kinds of appropriate places throughout the City. So the Ordinance generally states that every subdivision requires you to put in a sidewalk in front of it. If you don't think that a sidewalk is needed, you can ask them for a waiver and make a contribution to the sidewalk fund instead. If you make a contribution to the sidewalk fund, it goes to that quadrant fund. And it is used, DPW uses it all the time to build sidewalks in the area around it where they are actually needed versus say on some side street that doesn't have any other sidewalks around it.

I think the Planning Board has done very well with this overall. Every 6 months or so they get an odd lot that say has 2 frontages or 3 frontages or has some weird funkiness to it, you know, a sidewalk across the street on part of it but not on the other part of it where it is just not entirely clear how they should be interpreting the Ordinance. So they were reaching out to you for a kind of policy look at the sidewalk ordinance and how that rule is. Generally as it is stated everybody has to have a sidewalk and the only waiver is to make a contribution in lieu of, or if there are places where they should be waiving sidewalk requirements altogether, which they don't do now. Many people ask for it because nobody wants to make the extra payment. I do think that this has made a huge contribution to use being able to build out sidewalks in the City because there isn't other funds to do this necessarily; lots of priorities, right. And so that is the goal here. There is some information in the packet that was attached, I am wondering if there is more information I can provide to you to help us have a more robust conversation about it.

We have the map from the 2000 Master Plan that is almost 20 years old; so some of this conversation I think does absolutely need to dovetail in and feed into the larger Master Plan conversation. But because the Planning Board kind of runs into a more major conundrum on this every 6 months or so about how they should be interpreting it, they could be just be looking for guidance from you at this point as well.

Alderwoman Melizzi-Golja

So comment, thoughts? I will just while you are gathering your thoughts, I will just comment that recently we used some of the money for the southwest quadrant to build a section of sidewalk that was not there between two other sections of sidewalk along East Dunstable Road. People were walking on East Dunstable down the sidewalk, then the homeowner contacted me and said "they can walk on my grass but they are walking in the road" and where they were walking to was a bus stop on East Dunstable, or the little neighborhood market and the gas station or up to a McDonalds. So he was noticing a lot of foot traffic and concerned that people were in the street rather than walking on his lawn and so he said "I have no problem with the City building a sidewalk there". So we worked with DPW and that sidewalk is going in this spring, they were out measuring in the fall and that will go. So just so you have a sense of where that money might go.

Alderman Schmidt

Was this fund also used for Broad Street.

Ms. Marchant

Some of it was, yes. So it's the 4 quadrants, but yes absolutely.

Alderman Schmidt

It is so welcomed on that very busy street with kids walking, everybody uses that, and it's wonderful, thank you.

Ms. Marchant

Thanks to DPW too.

Alderman Jette

I'm looking at what was attached to the agenda and I am assuming that this is from the revised ordinances, it says "Section 190-212 Land Use".

Ms. Marchant

That is correct.

Alderman Jette

So under paragraph D, subparagraph 1, it talks about waivers and then it says "principal frontage sidewalk required". Can you explain what that is, what is that supposed to be, that thing in the middle.

Ms. Marchant

The thing in the middle is a house so it is saying that the sidewalk is required on the main frontage, but if they have side and rear frontage, no sidewalk is required. So it is a diagram explaining what is intended.

Alderman Jette

And under, this apparently was written in 2008?

Ms. Marchant

Sections of it were, the original was from 2002. And then this section was I think 2006 so the 2008 is I think the larger chapter.

Alderman Jette

So under the figure, so this is evidently an overhead view?

Ms. Marchant

Correct.

Alderman Jette

So underneath that it says "comment" and I'd like you to explain what this means. "An example of a sidewalk waiver is multiple frontage lots". And then the next sentence, "In these situations sidewalk construction

along frontages other than the principle frontage of the lot.” And then the next sentence, “In those situations, pedestrian access is only from one of the frontages. The sidewalk requirements may be waived on the other frontages”. What does that mean?

Ms. Marchant

I think you see some of the Planning Board’s conundrum when interpreting this ordinance. I just want to be clear that this section on waivers doesn’t really give them the ability to actually waive the requirement of providing a sidewalk. It gives them the ability to allow for you to do the contribution in lieu of sidewalks. So “D” and “E” seem to directly contradict each other in some ways which is why we keep running into this. I don’t think that it is entirely clear, the practice has been that if you have a lot that say is on Concord Street and what’s a side street of Concord Street, Cortland, Concord and Cortland, you are on the corner of that; we consider that 2 fronts on the 2 roads and 2 sides. If Concord Street already has a sidewalk you don’t need to pay the contribution for that but if you subdividing the lot into 2, you’d have to pay the contribution in lieu of for the Cortland Street. If there is no sidewalk on Concord Street then, there’s all these situations right, and there’s a sidewalk across the street, they don’t make you pay for the sidewalk on Concord Street. If there is not a sidewalk across the street, then you have to pay for both sides frontages because you just asked me about one little piece of this and if you read “D” and “E” it has a lot more situations that tend to contradict each other.

They have come up with a system that they I think have employed pretty well to try to be consistent and fair. The waivers are not requested for large subdivisions, right? If somebody is out in the southwest quadrant and they are going to build 40 houses out there, they are putting sidewalks in and they are happy to do so and that doesn’t seem to be an issue and there’s no waiver request there. The waiver request largely come in with infill lots, because somebody is subdividing a lot that say is too wide for the area. Somebody originally had two, the lots were merged, and now they want to subdivide it off, there’s only a house on this one, they have a nice big lawn on this side and they are now decided to subdivide this off as it is allowed by zoning.

The way the Ordinance reads, you would have to charge the sidewalk contribution for the house that exists and the new lot that you are creating. So you’d have to do it for the entire frontage. Very frequently they are asked for waivers to not provide any contribution for the house that exists, because they are not changing anything on that lot. But if you think about the larger public purpose, you only get one bite at that apple. You are not going to be able to get a contribution ever again in the future for a sidewalk on that lot. So the idea and intent was originally to kind of do that. So it gets very complicated, I guess that’s the very long answer, I’m sorry.

Alderwoman Melizzi-Golja

And I would just say as you know, as we look at walkability in neighborhoods, again we may only get one bite of that apple if we are doing some infill, you know, in some of our more densely populated neighborhoods.

Ms. Marchant

So I’ll just say that the Planning Board’s perspective has been to say, they have interpreted this with the contradictions to say every lot, everywhere, is supposed to have a sidewalk. And the contribution in lieu of allows you to pay a much reduced rate to contribute to the fund to help sidewalks be in the neighborhoods where they are supposed to be. So they just consider in a totality that you can pay a contribution in lieu of, but that’s the way that they’ve been looking at it. But as I said, there’s contradictions in here where sometimes it appears that maybe they shouldn’t be looking at it as everyone, everywhere has to do it and you can get a waiver back from that to some extent, you know, if they should be looking at it a little bit differently. They haven’t been, they have tried to apply it that way to be fair and consistent.

Alderman Jette

So my initial comments about the comment is that second sentence lacks a verb. I find this a lot in our revised ordinances that it’s difficult to figure out what they mean because grammatically they make no sense. And I know you are here for the larger purpose of the planning part of it but I would, if it’s not too much to ask,

as you see these things, I would think it would be helpful to us if you suggested amendments that we could adopt to make this more understandable. But regarding the sidewalk thing, I mean my own reaction is, I think it's a shame, this happened a long time ago, but it is a shame that the City did not require sidewalks. I understand that there was a period of time where the City was trying to encourage housing and fell into the trap of thinking that it was a good thing to make housing as cheap as possible, so that homeowners could purchase them as cheaply as possible. But you know I think maybe that was the right thing to do at the time, but we are stuck now with large portions of the City that have no sidewalks. The use of our streets by pedestrians is a problem because they cannot safely walk on the streets because of the automobile traffic.

So now, the example you give of 2 lots of a single lot being subdivided and the owner of that property wanting a waiver from having to put in a sidewalk because the new lot, you know the old lot is already there without a sidewalk and now the new lot is going to put in a sidewalk. I think that presumably in the subdivision they are going to be able to sell that lot at a profit and requiring them to put in a sidewalk and maybe shave something off of their profit, my initial reaction is that seems fair that they should be able to do that. But I am thinking we are not professional planners, we are trying to do the best we can but I personally would like to look to you and your Department to suggest to us what the City's position should be from a planning perspective. I know we are beginning to launch into a Citywide Plan. I guess my thought is why are we doing this now, why don't we wait for the plan. But if you feel and the Planning Board feels that they need something now, I'd appreciate it if you came to us and made some suggestions that this is what the Planning Department thinks we ought to do now, this is what you are asking us for now. I don't know.

Ms. Marchant

I think the Planning Board, at this point, this Committee's idea is to just reaffirm that what they've been doing to be fair and accurate in how they've been in interpreting this is fine until we get to the Master Plan, I think the Planning Board would be fine with that. They just want some reassurance because they get quite a few of these requests that they are operating in the correct manner at the moment. What I will just say as some context, there is no other specific section that has a waiver provision. The Planning Board has the right to waive specific things, right, that are laid out in there. This is very odd in how it is constructed; they can waive in certain instances say setbacks, right? Or they have the ability to negotiate over this type of drainage versus this type. This is an incredibly prescriptive waiver process that is unique in the code itself. That was done specifically because the City had this larger public purpose to finish, to provide a much better pedestrian habitat and to be able to fund the priority places through the quadrant funds. So if this Committee thinks that this is really a good discussion as part of the Master Plan and updating the Land Use Ordinance as a whole with these kind of issues, I think they would be fine for you to reaffirm as it's been.

If this is something that you feel like is a priority that needs to be taken up now, absolutely this is something that my staff can look at and try to come up with a better suggestion on. But I think, I don't know if that's the right step to take at this point. And that is what the Board was looking for direction from you on; because if you do want to re-write it, I think they would like to participate too.

Alderman Laws

I agree with Alderman Jette and I would love if the Board would participate in rewriting this. Have you reached out Corporation Counsel about this? My only concern is are we going to get sued by somebody who reads this and is like "there's not a verb in that sentence".

Ms. Marchant

Corporation Counsel has been involved many times over the years in determinations, discussions around the ordinance. I don't have a fear that we are going to get sued at this moment. You do have the prerogative to update your ordinances when you feel like they are no longer serving the best purpose and it is the Board of Aldermen's job to do so with the Planning Board's support. If you feel like this is something that we should take up now, I can tell you in this time of increased activity and strong financial markets, this is when people are trying to subdivide and build and do a lot of work. So it comes a lot. If we were in a more of a downturn economy-wise, this isn't so much of a factor, because there's much less activity.

So it's up to you how you want to present it, but the Planning Board rarely comes across something that is constantly frustrating them and the applicant and so that's why they kind of turned to you.

Alderman Laws

Your last sentence there is going to bother me, because I don't want to create any more frustration for anybody than they have already got, because I know how complicated this stuff can be. But it seems to me that this not particularly urgent, we are not in any legal jeopardy right now and it is already going to be worked out in the Master Plan within the next hopefully couple of days, right, that comes out? So it just doesn't seem like it is something that we necessarily need to act on now. If the frustration is something that is unnavigable then I mean maybe we should work on it. Since the economy is doing so well, it doesn't seem like it's something that is going to be deterring anyone from subdividing any land right now. If we were in a downturn I can see it being something that might be something that might deter somebody from investing in the City but I don't think that's a real issue right now.

Ms. Marchant

Agreed.

Alderman Laws

Am I wrong?

Ms. Marchant

You are correct.

Alderwoman Melizzi-Golja

But I think to your point if I understood you correctly, we are going to see more subdivision so this question may be coming before them. So there may be more opportunities to be frustrated. Am I correct.

Ms. Marchant

You are correct.

Alderwoman Melizzi-Golja

Not that it's a barrier to people subdividing but as people start subdividing and in fact I just saw a property driving over here today that's going to be subdivided. So those folks come forward and it's well do they have to put a sidewalk or not or do they pay the waiver into the quadrant fee? So I think it's not stopping development but it is providing another time for the Planning Board, who I think tries to be very, very fair in this, to say "OK are we doing the right thing". And I know just in the past year and a half, they've had at least 2 workshops on sidewalks; looking at where it the closest one and all of those sorts of things.

Alderman Schmidt

The problem is mostly where there's infill, is that right.

Ms. Marchant

Correct.

Alderman Schmidt

And the problem is probably also that is there a sidewalk already there, if it's in the middle of a street, a piece of sidewalk in the middle doesn't make a lot of sense.

Ms. Marchant

Correct.

Alderman Schmidt

How often do they need to make this decision; how often is this used?

Ms. Marchant

Probably since the beginning of this year, since January, I think they've had 4 waiver requests. I do think if you reaffirm that what they've been doing assuming that everybody has to have frontage and calculate it that way, that they will feel good about the decisions they are making that way. But pretty much everybody is going to ask for a waiver, because just to be clear, it's a really good deal. What we charge is \$50.00 a linear foot and in some of the information you were provided, it costs more around \$150.00 to actually construct one and places we might not want a sidewalk in the middle, like you said here and there's no sidewalk on either side. I think people would just prefer to keep the money themselves, reasonably so than having to pay for this. So people always ask, because they have the right to ask.

Alderman Schmidt

I think I agree with you, I think they are doing a fine job if the process is working right now. And I think that when we do the update on all of this, it would be the right time to make the changes. Thank you.

Alderman Laws

You took the words right out of my mouth.

Alderman Jette

If what we are charging for a waiver is 1/3 of what it would cost them to put a sidewalk in, does that make any sense? Who would not opt for the waiver? I mean if we are trying to encourage people to put in sidewalks, should we look at is that cost of the waiver, is that in the ordinance?

Ms. Marchant

It says, "The Planning Board has the authorization to establish a fee schedule". And the fee schedule that they've established is \$50.00 per linear foot, they haven't looked at increasing that. They have not looked at increasing that.

Alderman Jette

So I don't want to do anything to interfere with what the Planning Department feels are the goals here. And I may be completely wrong about this, but I am thinking why doesn't the Planning Board increase the fee? If it's 1/3 of the actual cost, why don't they triple it so that it's commensurate with what it costs because I don't know if I'm wrong, but if I'm a developer and I can pay you \$50.00 a foot and then let you put the sidewalk in for \$150.00 a foot, why wouldn't I do that?

Ms. Marchant

So just to clarify, they will require the sidewalk if you are putting in a brand new road, they will not give a waiver, if there's a place where there's a sidewalk that is required and needed, they are not giving waivers. And most people don't ask for them because they are trying to produce a good product that needs a sidewalk anyways. So you will notice any of the large subdivisions that have gone in, they all have sidewalks and that's the way it goes. The waiver is for instances for where it is maybe not the best place to put a sidewalk because there wouldn't be some on either side.

I think the Planning Board has talked about this briefly, but it is adding 3 times the cost on to somebody who is subdividing really a single lot or someplace that they don't feel like having the sidewalk built is in the best interest of the City. So they have not made a decision to increase those fees, they just looked at them, they talked about this, they acknowledge that, but I do think that is part of the larger policy discussion that will come with the Master Planning Process as well.

So if you look at it in the larger picture I think where they actually see it being applied, they are just not sure that that really balances out.

Alderman Kelly

I was just interested in what the cost to put in a sidewalk per foot was?

Ms. Marchant

Sure and these are from last year, from City Engineer Dookran that a sidewalk with vertical granite curb, which is what we require is \$126.00 a linear foot. A concrete sidewalk with vertical granite curb is \$140.00 a square foot. We do allow waivers of the street construction standards, which would allow you do to sloped granite curb, which would be like \$10.00 less in each instance per linear foot. So those are last summer's numbers. I think I said this a couple of meetings ago in a different context, but things are much more expensive this summer than they were last summer, in general.

So building a sidewalk is expensive and those are the City numbers, versus having somebody else do it. And the Planning Board is not waiving these in areas where there is a new road being constructed. They are absolutely requiring them in those instances.

Alderman Melizzi-Golja

I guess from a big picture look, waiving the sidewalk and collecting the fee of \$50.00 makes sense if we don't need a sidewalk there. But I guess at a higher elevation because this money is being used to put in sidewalks where we know we need sidewalks, I am wondering if it may not be time to relook at what that fee schedule is. And I hate to put this out there, but I know I've been involved in some just kind of general conversation in the Mayor's office about pedestrian and bike routes. So I think that is another part of this as we start looking at what are we doing for pedestrian/bike plan? How does that dovetail with where we have existing sidewalk or need existing sidewalk? And I think that's a piece that the Planning Boards needs also so that they know like this property is being subdivided and when you look at our pedestrian plan, this is where this property falls so this is what the long-term future vision is for this property as part of a bigger neighborhood. So I think that is something that we also have to consider as we put all of this together.

I think in the past we haven't really focused much on pedestrians, it's been like "Oh you want to go for a walk in your neighborhood, fine". But pedestrians actually walking to get somewhere, besides getting their steps in, I think is you know how neighbors are starting to look at what's going on. "Can I walk down to a bus stop" or "Can I cut through a subdivision to get to my place of employment rather than driving there every day". So think that's another part of the puzzle that needs to be incorporated into this conversation and with the Planning Board.

Ms. Marchant

Absolutely, I mean the plan that you saw here that was attached from the 2000 plan is certainly not enough of a basis for the Planning Board to move forward with a lot of things in today's day and age. And a bike/ped Master Plan, a piece of that plan, doing some of that work, is absolutely something that is on the table for discussion. It would give the Planning Board a lot more guidance along this issue and I think would be very helpful in many, many aspects of the work that many of us are doing here. So I would very much echo that and I think the Planning Board would be extremely appreciative of a plan to base decisions off of.

Alderman Laws

So I was going to comment on that as well and I'm glad you did and your response is satisfactory to me. My concern would be if we adjust the fee schedule right now, they are already frustrated and we are just making it a little bit more complicated, because now the conversation is going to get a little more heated between them and developers, right? So why don't we encourage them to wait until the Master Plan comes out and this all gets rectified before we start messing around with finding another sweet spot. That would just be my suggestion.

Alderwoman Kelly

I'm just visiting and I am not a City Planner or anything like that, but the question that comes to my mind is if you are on a road that doesn't currently have sidewalks, my thought would be that the point of this is to slowly get them there. So at what point are we just propelling the same thing of "well Main Dunstable doesn't have sidewalks so you don't need to put in a sidewalk" so then it becomes a City issue where we have to put in the sidewalks.

Ms. Marchant

That's a great question, it is somewhat chicken and egg. So I think the Planning Board looks seriously when somebody comes before them with a subdivision on if they think it's needed and in the best interests of the City. Part of that review has comments from engineering and the City Engineer also sits on the Board. So if there's a time where they think it fits in, then they are going to require it. But they also, we are also not a huge fan of having a chunk of sidewalk that's not attached to anything else, because in theory we are supposed to maintain it which adds a lot of year-over-year costs. And that is one of the reasons why this sidewalk fund was created, to direct funds from your neighborhood into the same neighborhood to hit those high priority sidewalks first and slowly be able to build it out backwards. So it was an attempt at a solution to not end up with a checkboard of places where we are in the road and off trying to maintain.

Alderwoman Kelly

I imagine you might have this in your Strategic Goals, but do we have a plan in terms of how to prioritize areas where sidewalks go first?

Ms. Marchant

It's this plan which is why I think the idea of a bike/ped Master Plan which could break this down a little bit further and provide a lot more clarity, even in you know such as these types of roads, these are, or we need sidewalks here first and these types, I think there could be a lot more guidance that could be part of a plan that would help them make decisions.

Alderwoman Melizzi-Golja

Two questions, Master Planning is probably two or three years out?

Ms. Marchant

I think ... you mean being completed?

Alderwoman Melizzi-Golja

Yes.

Ms. Marchant

I hope two at the max.

Alderwoman Melizzi-Golja

Bike/ped plan?

Ms. Marchant

I think part of it would be part of the Master Planning process. A more in-depth bike/ped surface level one that would be better than this, an in-depth bike/ped plan I think is an active conversation with adding bike lanes, I'm working with the Regional Planning Commission and some others right now. So we might be able to get a more in-depth one done before that. And I think that the cost of that was significantly less than clearly a whole Master Plan.

Alderwoman Melizzi-Golja

I guess my thought is from my perspective, the bike/ped plan to me seems to be really important not only because it's part of the Master Plan but also because having that gives some real concrete information to the Planning Board and some direction. I know sometimes we have conversations here about how we see developing and the Planning Board members aren't always part of those conversations or even hear the detail, there may be a conversation over a cup of coffee somewhere that isn't captured. So I think we sit here and the Aldermen sit with a perspective of what we want at a high level, but that always doesn't clearly communicate to our Land Use Boards

The thing I would like to see as coming full circle to what information could we use, I think we are all comfortable with this. But I think like other conversations we've had, it is possible to at least get something in terms of the bike/ped plan that will provide better guidance for the Planning Board. And I don't know how everyone else feels about that but that to me seems to be the priority. It might also give them some comfort in how they are doing their job, which I think they are doing very well. But at least give them another piece of information that they can hold on to to say "Yes we are taking the City in the direction it wants to go". Any thoughts/comments.

Alderwoman Kelly

I would agree with that. I think besides potholes, bike lanes is probably the number 2 thing we hear about when we are out and about, Beer with the Mayor or Coffee with the Mayor; people are really interested in how that's going to develop and I'd love to be able to walk my daughter to school. So I think having that information will help guide us.

Alderman Jette

So I'm looking at Mr. LeClair's, Chairman LeClair's memo and it says "The Planning Board seeks guidance from the Planning & Economic Development Committee if the current Ordinance is still viable from a policy perspective, given the nearing build out status of the City. The Planning Board questioned whether the Ordinance could be made clearer, and more specific relative to corner or triple frontage lots and whether it could be applied to every lot with no waivers". So it seems to be asking something pretty direct of us and I guess I would like to suggest that we, you know, personally my response would be to Director Marchant, "What does the Planning Department, what guidance would they like to see us give to the Planning Board". Again we are not the planners, I mean we are on the Planning Committee, but we are not professional planners. Is this something that you could say to us "these are the" I mean I've pointed out one little area where I think the Ordinance needs changing or amending and I'm wondering whether you or your department could come back to us with some recommended amendments to the ordinance for us to consider.

Ms. Marchant

I would go back to the first sentence "Is it still viable from a policy perspective" and what I've kind of heard tonight is that it is and that we would like to take this up as part of the larger Master Plan process. I don't feel comfortable coming back with some edits about verbs that are missing. I think that if we were to come back to you with edits to this ordinance, I think that it is a much larger discussion about the overall policy

perspective. Should there be a waiver provision written in here? Should there be a contribution in lieu of? And clarifying the entire subsections; because there are so many pieces that do not align well, I don't feel like it's something I could come back one page of typo type corrections where in other places there might be. I do think that this is a much larger discussion and I do think that the public will want to have a good say in it. If that's something you think you want to undertake I am happy to support that; but I just think it's not a quick easy discussion. I do think that the Development Community will want to be here and have a say at how this is looked at and how it is applied. I think the Planning Board would like to be involved in the discussion. And like I said, I'm happy to do that, if that's what we want to do, but if you want to do that as part of the Master Plan process, I think that's fine as well.

Alderman Jette

So help me understand what Chairman LeClair is looking for, is he looking for us to do that to say that we are happy waiting for the Master Plan. Is there a problem now, there seems to be, but you seem to be saying "no things are fine the way they are until the Master Plan gets done".

Ms. Marchant

I think that the Planning Board has acknowledged that there is frustration over this and that they don't feel like it is clear cut. I think they have come up with a system that they try to apply as fairly and evenly as possible. They acknowledge the problem; if this Board feels like they are doing fine with how they are interpreting this the best that they can and that this is something you would pick up later, I think the Planning Board will be fine with this. If you feel like this is a priority to move forward with this discussion to break this down more, they will also be on board with that. I don't think they are you know out of the last say 10 waivers, probably 8 of them were pretty clear cut for their process and they could figure this out.

These double frontage, triple frontage lots, just cause a lot more discussion back and forth and they try very hard to apply it as fairly as possible. If what they have been doing is again, from a policy perspective standpoint, something you are comfortable with, they are OK with having that reassurance knowing that this is going to be taken up as part of fixing larger with the Master Plan. If you feel like we are not investing in our sidewalks the way we want to be at this moment and this is something that we should pick up, then that's something else. And they are OK with either, they are just looking for some guidance, they are not the policy board. In other non-city towns, they would have the jurisdiction to just be like "We don't think this works, we are going to hold public hearings and try and make this work". That's now how it set up here in Nashua; you are the policy board, you make the policy decisions and they implement a lot of those in large part.

Alderman Jette

So just to follow up, I guess I don't feel confident saying that things are fine the way they are, I don't know how things are. I think we got this a week ago so I'm really not sure what they've been doing and whether or not I feel what they are doing is OK or not. They evidently think there's a problem because they brought this up. So I think we ought to spend some time researching or finding out from them exactly more about how we can help them.

Alderwoman Melizzi-Golja

Just for people who don't have this in front of them, the Planning Board question whether the ordinance could be made clearer and more specific relative to corner and triple frontage lots and whether it should be applied to every lot with no waivers. So those were the two things they questioned. I am wondering Director Marchant if we table this discussion and come back at our next meeting with maybe some examples of times items have come to the Planning Board that they have to look at that relate to these specific examples, the corner and triple frontage lots. If Mr. LeClair and/or someone else from the Planning Board would like to join him and we could have a conversation. I know I came away from the sidewalk workshop meeting with them saying, "We are doing this and we feel like we are doing it consistently but we want to know that someone else thinks we are doing this consistently and that we are OK and if people feel we are doing it and we are consistent and it is in keeping with what the City wants, then we'll keep doing it until there is a Master Plan".

But I think, to your point Alderman Jette, if we had some more information then maybe we could better determine “OK this is fine let’s leave it” or “No after looking at it a little more in-depth maybe we really do need to have further discussion and bring in the bike/ped plan and maybe really open this up and look at it and when we do come to Master Planning, there will be a piece that can more easily slide in to that”.

Alderman Laws

I was just going to suggest that if we invite Chairman LeClair I feel like it would clear up a lot of the confusion about what’s going on because we are interpreting his letter and trying to decide what he thinks is important, when we could just ask him. So I’d support tabling it, 100%.

Alderwoman Melizzi-Golja

Well before we do that, I gave my interpretation of what I think we need. Is there anything else anyone would like Director Marchant to bring to us, just so I don’t want her to get her at the next meeting and someone say “Oh I wish we had…” and I know it’s hard to anticipate that. This is something we are not used to talking about but besides some specific examples?

Alderman Jette

I don’t want to upset the chain of command but I am thinking would Mr. Houston be a good person to have here?

Ms. Marchant

Absolutely.

Alderwoman Melizzi-Golja

Alright so I would say whoever you would like to bring and invite Mr. LeClair and certainly if other members of the Planning Board would like to come, if we know, so we can notice the meeting as there may be a quorum of the Planning Board here also. I think we have enough seats to accommodate everyone. Does that work for everyone. Ok so I do I have a motion to table?

**MOTION BY ALDERMAN LAWS TO TABLE THE DISCUSSION REGARDING THE SIDEWALK ORDINANCE UNTIL THE JUNE PEDC MEETING
MOTION CARRIED**

COMMUNICATIONS

From: Scott LeClair, Chair of Planning Board and Board Members
Re: Request your Review and Policy Direction on Sidewalk Ordinance

There being no objection, Chairwoman Melizzi-Golja accepted the communication and placed it on file.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS - None

NEW BUSINESS – RESOLUTIONS**R-19-134**

Endorser: Alderwoman Mary Ann Melizzi-Golja
 Alderwoman-at-Large Shoshanna Kelly
 Alderman-at-Large Michael B. O'Brien, Sr.
 Alderman Linda Harriott-Gathright
 Alderman Patricia Klee
 Alderman-at-Large Brandon Michael Laws
 Alderman June M. Caron
 Alderman Jan Schmidt
 Alderman-at-Large Lori Wilshire

ADOPTION OF STRATEGIC PLANNING GOALS**MOTION BY ALDERMAN JETTE TO RECOMMEND FINAL PASSAGE**ON THE QUESTIONAlderwoman Melizzi-Golja

Director Marchant kindly copied the Strategic Planning goals and we will pass those around. The Strategic Planning Committee is under the Planning & Economic Development Committee. Originally 4 years ago maybe before I was Chairing PEDC, so it must have been 2 terms ago, they had met and at that time the Committee was made up of Division Directors. As they met and started talking about strategic planning it was determined that rather than having city employees involved in doing the strategic planning, the Committee should really be made up of representatives from the elected boards in the City. So there was new legislation and that happened, it was accepted. Then, at that point, there was the election and as the new Chair of PEDC we began meeting. As Director Marchant can tell you that was often difficult getting a quorum because we had Chairs and Representatives from many of the boards in the City who had their own busy agendas. But we had Fire, we had Police, we had Department of Public Works, Library, Board of Ed, the Airport, then we had Infrastructure Committee Chair or their representative, the Mayor's Office representative, someone from PEDC and Budget and the Library Board of Trustees. I think I got all of them.

And Director Marchant and Director Cummings gave of their time to guide us through this process and we I think like many of us when we go through these processes, we start and we think we are going and then it's like "Oh wait, I'm doing this all backwards, let me take some steps back". And so we did that a couple of times and our board members changed and we got to finally the resolution that you see before you with the strategic planning goals. I will just tell you that up until the last meeting each of these goals had bullets under them and then we looked at them and I think through our own personal growth with Director Marchant's support, we all realized, "Wait those bullets are very prescriptive and we don't want to be that prescriptive, we really want to encourage all of the Division heads to look at these goals, keep them in mind but not say this is a must do for your Department". So if you are thinking, "Well why isn't there a goal with 3 objectives", we went from a goal with 8 objectives to a goal with 2 or 3, to "Wait, why do we even have objectives? They should be writing their own". So that's the kind of overview of what the process felt like. I am going to let Director Marchant more eloquently talk about what the purpose of this is and how this document should be used and how we envision it being used across the City.

Director Marchant

I think that was a great intro and about the evolution of the process; it is a 30,000 foot view. Because there was all these different boards and commissions involved, the idea was to really lay a very high level framework from which then we hope and I believe there is some commitment by many of them to take these forward and look at our budget and how we do business within each of the divisions or the sections of the City within this context and this frame. To kind of start pulling that down and creating the goals and objectives in looking at how we do business through that process and to keep this as a very high level document.

So that's what you have here, you know looking at every book and other strategic planning processes and how we do things, it seemed that the best role for this Committee was really to stay at that high level and to allow the individual Board of the Library Trustees, or the Airport, or the Mayor, or the Police Commissioners, to really set the agenda, the bullet points, the objectives, the action. And then to bring that forward to you through the budgeting process; so that is how we got here and why we are here and I think that there are some pretty strong positions that the City can take that we can fit the work we do generally with under.

Alderwoman Melizzi-Golja

So with that, comments, we are open for discussion. I will also say that the Mayor and I had a conversation about this and again I felt like we hit our target because it was high level enough that it gives everyone the opportunity to then develop their own objectives as they are putting a budget together. I think the one comment that was made several times across our putting this together, was that different divisions will be at different stages every year as they do budget prep. So one year someone might need a higher percentage than someone else, but it is how you are making it all work together. It doesn't assume that everyone is just going to get a flat, across-the-board increase in their budget. And I think that makes sense in terms of what the priorities are at a given time in the City and where people are currently in meeting those priorities and how much support they may need going forward. So the Number "8" was added as we got into the process, "The City being a good steward of its natural resources and environment"; which that could apply to DPW, it could apply to the School Department, it could apply to the Airport Authority. There is not one department in the City that is not involved in some way with natural resources. So that's just an example of how we were looking at those. People could choose some of those that applied to address with their budget and people would be shooting towards the same target but from their unique perspective. Again, if people want to have further conversation about these, start tonight and table or whatever the preference is of the Committee. Questions or comments?

Alderman Laws

It looks good to me. I wasn't there for your conversations; I trust both of you first of all and it makes sense to me. I appreciate the fact that you got rid of the bullets to be honest and left it to be more broad. I support this.

Alderman Jette

I was just going to ask, I was going to try to look it up, but the Strategic Planning Committee, how does that fit into our scheme of ordinances?

Alderwoman Melizzi-Golja

I can't remember where it is but it's listed almost as a sub-committee of PEDC. And it is made up of members, as I said of Budget, Infrastructure and PEDC. It kind of functions as needed and it is specifically for this purpose.

Alderman Jette

So the Strategic Planning Committee, is that the Committee that kind of looks at whether we should be planning on buying a new fire truck?

Alderwoman Melizzi-Golja

No that's Capital Improvements. This Committee is really only about setting up Citywide goals that drive Citywide budget practice and goals for the City. So here are the Citywide goals, they are adopted, so the Board is saying these are the things we think are priorities and these are the goals; the 8 goal areas you should have. The Mayor then can say, "Yes and these dovetail with these goals of mine" and the Division Directors and the elected boards then say, "OK this is what we are committed to, these are the things we say are priorities". And I believe we meet every 2 years to re-evaluate these.

And just so people know, this is the first bite at the apple, prior to this, this Committee had not functioned even though it was on the books. So I anticipate in 2 years this will be refined just as we move forward and priorities change. But just so you know, this is the initial document, so I will save you time going back and looking for “What does that the last Strategic Planning Goal set look like”; it wasn’t there, this is the initial one.

Alderman Jette

I don’t want to prolong things; you know this looks fine to me. It looks like a mission statement. But there is a Committee that is looking at, for example, it ought to be a priority for us to have another pedestrian bridge across the river somewhere or another vehicle bridge cross the river somewhere. That’s what Strategic Planning does?

Alderwoman Melizzi-Golja

Those would be sub-goals in here under whoever would be doing.

Ms. Marchant

Probably the Capital Improvements Committee; and the Capital Improvements Committee hears from Divisions and Commissions and Boards directly about what they feel the Capital Improvements in the City need to be. They prioritize those on an annual basis.

Alderwoman Melizzi-Golja

Those items that are you talking about are, as Director Marchant said, the Capital Improvements Committee, they get input from the Division Directors. Those are the things that you will see have an A1 rating or a B1 rating and we get those and it is fed into the budget. I think you have probably heard some of us say some of those things have been going to Capital Improvements for a number of years. Even though they have high ratings and I will give you an example. I know you all got the invitation for the shade canopy that is going to be going in at Roby Park. That has been to Capital Improvements and has gotten a high rating, but when you take that against a new roof for the Police Station or the Fire Station, those things, if they are both A1, we need to put the roof in. So that’s where those things go. So the motion was for final passage. Any other questions or comments?

MOTION CARRIED

Alderwoman Melizzi-Golja

Thank you and I thank you in many ways because these Committee members are very hard to get together and they thank you. And if you meet any of them, please thank them because they worked very hard and gave of their time so we could get this done. Director Marchant thank you so much, I guess we will see you in June.

NEW BUSINESS – ORDINANCES – None

TABLED IN COMMITTEE

**MOTION BY ALDERMAN SCHMIDT TO TAKE FROM THE TABLE O-19-042
MOTION CARRIED**

O-19-042

Endorsers: Alderwoman-at-Large Shoshanna Kelly
Alderman-at-Large Ben Clemons
Alderwoman Mary Ann Melizzi-Golja
Alderman Tom Lopez
Alderman Jan Schmidt

DESIGNATING THE SOUTHWEST CONSERVATION AREA AS CITY CONSERVATION LAND

- Tabled 4/16/2019

MOTION BY ALDERMAN JETTE TO RECOMMEND FINAL PASSAGE O-19-042ON THE QUESTIONAlderwoman Melizzi-Golja

Alderwoman Kelly, thank you for being here this evening, I know you had another meeting so we appreciate you joining us.

Alderwoman Kelly

Sorry I missed the last one. So this piece of legislation is sort of the last step in a lot of work that's been done by this commission and I believe it started before I was on the Commission, looking back as far as I could minute-wise. This has been a labor of love in terms of finding the parcels, going out and looking at the parcels, coming up with a maintenance and stewardship plan. That has been happening over the last year to two years. Now it is just designating it and giving it a name and saying we are behind conserving this land. I know that Brian was a big part of this; we just dedicated a bridge to him recently. He as a big part of making sure that these conservation lands happened in our City. So that is the background I've got on this, but if you have questions I can try to answer them.

Alderwoman Melizzi-Golja

Just for people who may be listening, could you roughly describe where the parcels are that we are putting together here?

Alderwoman Kelly

Yes actually they are right in my neighborhood. I am looking at the map right now but they are off Buck Meadow, there's, 1, 2, 3, 4 pieces right by BuckMeadow; along Ridge Road as well. And then some are across Ridge Road going right up against Lovewell Pond. I think there are 7 parcels that we are putting together for the entire southwest conservation land.

Alderwoman Melizzi-Golja

And so it's abutting existing conservation land also?

Alderwoman Kelly

Yes it is.

Alderwoman Melizzi-Golja

Any questions or comments?

Alderman Jette

What's the number?

Alderwoman Kelly

It's O-19-042 and there's a map connected to it; the public can look at it too.

Alderman Jette

I looked at it before, I'm just trying to look at it right now.

Alderman Schmidt

Do you know how many acres are going to be ... and they will be contiguous right?

Alderwoman Kelly

That's a great question. I can't tell by looking at the map myself. I can ask and get you an actual acreage. If I could put it up there you would see that there are quite a big pieces.

Alderwoman Melizzi-Golja

While Alderwoman Kelly is bringing up the map, I know one of the things we often talk about is light pollution and I know many of you know Alderman McCarthy enjoyed seeing the night sky. And these conservation lands certainly provide an area where people can go and see the night sky with minimal light pollution. So we think about conserving the land, but it's also providing an opportunity at night to see what is in the sky.

Alderman Jette

This area is mostly in my Ward and it's a great area; I was out there, a bunch of us were out there Saturday to dedicate the bridge to Alderman McCarthy. It is a beautiful area, it is great that we are doing this. But I believe that this land has already been deeded to the City and it has deed restrictions on it that make it conservation land. What is the purpose, what is this doing to add to that? Is it just naming it the Southwest Conservation Area or is there something else that gives an advantage to this, that we are doing tonight?

Alderwoman Kelly

I think it is identifying it as one large piece together. I know that the Northwest Quadrant, the Northwest Sanctuary has a similar step process in terms of "Ok here are all the pieces, they are together". And I think it is just for ease too right? Being able to say the Southwest Conservation Land is a lot easier than C15 or C13, when we are talking about stewardship or maintenance or anything like that. I think they have plans to put in signage and stuff like that too, so I think that helps in that area as well.

So I did pull it up on the map here. So what we are talking about is – this is Ridge Road here and it is all backwards because it is turned around – here is BuckMeadow, so this is kind of where we were over the weekend dedicating and they all kind of connect to each other in some place or another. But it's a decent amount of conservation land. As you point out, it has already been acquired and deeded so again, final step.

Alderwoman Melizzi-Golja

Any other questions or comments? So the Motion was to recommend final passage.

MOTION CARRIED

PUBLIC COMMENT – None

REMARKS BY THE ALDERMEN

Alderwoman Melizzi-Golja

Just two things, as I said the announcement is going to formally be made at Roby Park tomorrow about the Shade Canopy which Alderman Pressly is actually the person who started that. She had heard some concerns and contacted me and said "We need to do this". So I actually called her when I was made aware of this gift and she was very excited so I want to publicly thank her for all of her efforts in moving this forward.

The other thing is we did do the rededication of the bridge and unveiling of the plaque on Saturday in the Conservation Land off of BuckMeadow. Later in the day was the opening of the Artist Studios and although Alderman Gidge wasn't able to be there, I think we all need to acknowledge his efforts in making that a reality. So again to publicly thank him for moving that forward and making sure it got done. Hopefully he will be joining us soon so we can personally thank him around the horseshoe.

POSSIBLE NON-PUBLIC SESSION - None

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION BY ALDERMAN LAW TO ADJOURN
MOTION CARRIED

The meeting was declared adjourned at 8:48 pm.

Alderman Jan Schmidt
Committee Clerk