

A special meeting of the Board of Aldermen was held Monday, July 24, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. in the aldermanic chamber.

President Lori Wilshire presided; Vice-President Michael B. O'Brien, Sr. recorded.

Let's start the meeting by taking a roll call attendance.

Alderman O'Brien called the roll.

The roll call was taken with 10 members of the Board of Aldermen present: Alderman O'Brien, Alderman Sullivan, Alderman Lopez, Alderman Jette, Alderman Clemons, Alderwoman Kelly (via zoom), Alderman Gouveia, Alderman Thibeault, Alderwoman Timmons, Alderman Wilshire.

Alderman Klee, Alderman Moran, Alderman Comeau, Alderman Dowd, and Alderman Caron were recorded absent.

PUBLIC HEARING

R-23-134

AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO ENTER INTO A FEDERAL AID PROGRAM PROJECT AGREEMENT WITH THE STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FOR THE PURPOSE OF IMPROVEMENTS TO THE WALNUT STREET OVAL INTERSECTION AND TO ACCEPT AND APPROPRIATE \$2,061,847.26 FOR THE PROJECT

Dan Hudson, City Engineer

Good evening. Thanks everyone for coming out tonight. Before you is a request to enter into a municipal agreement with DOT which is standard for all projects that have DOT funding. This one is for the Walnut Street Oval Project. The goal of that project is to improve traffic flow, better connect Veteran's Memorial to Main Street, provide pedestrian accommodate safety, and expand access for downtown residents and businesses. This project is an 80/20 funding share with the DOT and Federal Highway where the Federal Highway will pick up 80 percent of the project costs and the city will bear 20 percent of the cost.

The city previously authorized a bond resolution via R-22-038 that addressed both West Pearl Street and also Walnut Oval project in the terms of a match. So the match has already been appropriated but we do need to enter now into this agreement with DOT so that we can begin the design of the project.

The DOT has a specific process that needs to be followed for these projects through their project administration program. There will be a full public involvement process as part of that as things development. I know there's been some studies in the past and we have some ideas about where we may go with this but we'll basically be starting and then over and it will be an opportunity to re-vet everything to come to the preferred alternative for the project. With that, I'd be happy to address any questions.

Alderman Lopez

Can you describe the general intent of the project? I know increasing the downtown flow and all that stuff was mentioned but is this the street reversal for East Pearl?

Dan Hudson, City Engineer

So yeah we do envision that will be part of it. Back in 2015, there was a downtown circulation study that was done and talked about reversing West Pearl as you referenced. Right now, it's not easy to do that to come off the parkway and go down Central and go straight across to West Pearl. Actually you can't because currently the one-way pattern comes at you. We do believe that the outcome of this project the intent is to make that route downtown more streamlined, more intuitive so that people will use that route more. I do think that's something that will come out of this project. Again, we'll look at a bunch of alternatives but that was one of the primary goals of this project was to improve the connection of Main Street. That's the logical way to do it.

Alderman Lopez

Can you tell me about pedestrian safety features that might be part of this or if that would be something else? I know there was a woman who was hit in the oval last year and a lot of the Clocktower that's particularly pointed to their

belief that there was inadequate lighting. There's business in unusual places so people will try to cross naturally. Is that all within the scope of this? Will we be looking at pedestrian travel and safety?

Dan Hudson, City Engineer

Yes this certainly is. We'll be looking at the complete overall so all the – there's kind of four major quadrants on the oval but that will be part of it to look at where those pedestrian demand routes are and then provide safe crossings. Anytime you do a pedestrian crossing, you want to (inaudible) so that will be part of it. We hope we'll also evaluate RPFs and that type of thing to further enhance safety as well as some traffic calming measures so as you go through, maybe you're at a lower speed than currently what we are so any crashes with pedestrians are less likely to be damaging. So those will definitely all be parts of this study.

Alderman Lopez

Okay. Thank you.

Alderman Jette

Okay well normally I wouldn't take up the time during the public hearing but there's no public here.

President Wilshire

You're fine.

Alderman Jette

Thank you. So just for the public who might be watching just to clarify, this resolution just authorizes the Mayor to enter into an agreement with the State to accept the State's portion of this money. We haven't made any decisions about what this project is going to end up looking like. We haven't gone that far down that road yet sort to speak.

Dan Hudson, City Engineer

Yes I think that's fair to say. As I said, we'll be going through a complete project process so there will be ample opportunity for people to provide input both residents, business owners, other stakeholders. We've done those previous studies so that's history that we can look back to and build up. No there's no pre-determined outcomes here. We'll go through a process and see what comes out the other end but the intent is to accomplish those things that I know which was make a better connection to downtown as well as improve pedestrian safety, bicycle safety, and all those sorts of things.

Alderman Jette

Okay, thank you.

Alderman O'Brien

Thank you Madam President and follow up to Alderman Jette's questions. Tonight's meeting with the budget is supposed to be about the financing to which to get the financing for this particular project approved and that is accepting this particular bond. What the finished project, how many lights, crosswalks, all different things comes under the perusal of a different committee which probable, I assume, may go to Infrastructure. You're a member of Infrastructure so as you know our custom, that's when we will come into the nuts and bolts of such technical things of what we're going to be dealing with in the future. I just want to set that so you know what the ground rules are this evening.

Alderman Jette

Thank you.

President Wilshire

Alderman O'Brien did you want to take over the public hearing?

Alderman O'Brien

Thank you Madam President. On that note, I'll accept Testimony in favor of R-23-134 Authorizing the Mayor to Enter into a Federal Aid Program Project Agreement with the State of New Hampshire Department of Transportation for the Purpose of Improvements to the Walnut Street Oval Intersection and to Accept and Appropriate \$2,061,847.26 for the Project.

TESTIMONY IN FAVOR - None

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION - None

TESTIMONY IN FAVOR - None

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION - None

Alderman O'Brien closed the public hearing on the Resolution R-23-134 at 7:11 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION BY ALDERMAN CLEMONS THAT THE JULY 24, 2023, SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF ALDERMEN BE ADJOURNED BY ROLL CALL

A viva voce roll call was taken which resulted as follows:

Yea: Alderman O'Brien, Alderman Sullivan, Alderman Lopez, Alderman Jette,
Alderman Clemons, Alderwoman Kelly, Alderman Gouveia,
Alderman Thibeault, Alderwoman Timmons, Alderman Wilshire

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Nay:

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MOTION CARRIED

The meeting was declared adjourned at 7:13 p.m.

Attest: Alderman O'Brien, Clerk