

PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

AUGUST 18, 2020

A joint meeting of the Committee on Infrastructure and Planning and Economic Development Committee was held Tuesday, August 18, 2020, at 7:00 p.m. via teleconference.

Chairman Tencza

As Chairman of the Planning and Economic Development Committee, I find that due to the State of Emergency declared by the Governor as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and in accordance with the Governor's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, this public body is authorized to meet electronically.

Please note that there is no physical location to observe and listen contemporaneously to this meeting, which was authorized pursuant to the Governor's Emergency Order. However, in accordance with the Emergency Order, I am confirming that we are:

a) Providing public access to the meeting by telephone, with additional access possibilities by video or other electronic means:

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

Meeting ID: 845 8556 1824 – Passcode: 311740

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b) Providing public notice of the necessary information for accessing the meeting:

We previously gave notice to the public of the necessary information for accessing the meeting, through public postings. Instructions have also been provided on the City of Nashua's website at www.nashuanh.gov and publicly noticed at City Hall and the Nashua Public Library.

c) Providing a mechanism for the public to alert the public body during the meeting if there are problems with access:

If anybody has a problem accessing the meeting via phone or Channel 16, please call 603-821-2049 and they will help you connect.

d) Adjourning the meeting if the public is unable to access the meeting:

In the event the public is unable to access the meeting via the methods mentioned above, the meeting will be adjourned and rescheduled. Please note that **all votes** that are taken during this meeting shall be done by **roll call vote**.

Let's start the meeting by taking a roll call attendance. **When each member states their presence, please also state whether there is anyone in the room with you during this meeting, which is required under the Right-To-Know Law.**

Alderman Laws called the roll and asked them to state the reason he or she could not attend, confirmed that they could hear the proceedings, and stated who was present with him or her.

The roll call was taken with 3 members of the Planning and Economic Development Committee present:

Alderman-at-Large David C. Tencza
Alderman Jan Schmidt
Alderman-at-Large Brandon Laws

Members not in Attendance: Alderman-at-Large Ben Clemons
Alderman Thomas Lopez

Also in Attendance: Alderman-at-Large Lori Wilshire
Alderman Skip Cleaver
Tim Cummings, Director of Economic Development

Chairman Tencza

I'm here, I can hear everybody and I am abiding by the stay-at-home orders.

Alderman Schmidt

I am present, I can hear everyone and I am alone tonight.

Alderman Laws

I am here, I can hear everyone and I am alone. Alderman-at-Large Ben Clemons is not here tonight and I don't know where Tom is. Also in attendance, Tim Cummings, Director of Economic Development.

Chairman Tencza

Thank you. Also in attendance are President Lori Wilshire and Alderman Cleaver are here with us tonight. The first item on the Agenda is Public Comment.

PUBLIC COMMENT - None

COMMUNICATIONS

From: Tim Cummings, Economic Development Director
Re: Contract Amendment for Professional Engineering Services related to the Nashua Downtown Riverfront Implementation Project VHB, Inc.

MOTION BY ALDERMAN LAWS TO ACCEPT, PLACE ON FILE, AND APPROVE THE CONTRACT AMENDMENT WITH VHB, INC., FOR PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERING SERVICES TO THE NASHUA DOWNTOWN RIVERFRONT IMPLEMENTATION PROJECT IN THE AMOUNT OF \$500,000, BY ROLL

ON THE QUESTION

Chairman Tencza

Thank you, Alderman Laws. Director Cummings, does it make sense to take these up at the same time, both communications.

Tim Cummings, Director of Economic Development

Yes Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Tencza

Ok so I guess we will for the purposes of the Hearing we will take them up one at a time but if you could present to us on both items at the same time, that would be great.

Director Cummings

Happy to.

Chairman Tencza

And so Director Cummings I will turn it over to you.

Director Cummings

Great, thank you, Mr. Chairman. For the record, Tim Cummings, Director of Economic Development. Thank you for having me this evening. I am before you because there are two Communications and as the Chair just mentioned, they are tied together; they are the same project, two separate contracts. Essentially, Mr. Chair, what we have is and as some of you may know, we have started designing the Riverfront continuation of the Riverwalk that was started back in earnest back in 2003 I believe the original TIF was started. And then somewhere between 2003 and 2007 you had the first phase where we built out a boardwalk along Peddler's Daughter and then continuing it on back east towards Hudson.

With bringing on the Lofts 34, we expanded the TIF and looking to basically use the proceeds from the Lofts 34 Development, the tax revenue, to finish the Boardwalk that we started a while back. So it is scoped out to be about a \$15 million dollar project in and of itself when it is entirely done. It follows the Master Plan that was done back in 2015 / 2016 timeframe. It is Designed Services the contract is for continuation of what we started which we completed the concept phase, which we did a joint meeting of the Infrastructure and PEDC a couple months back now to do a preview of that phase of the project.

Now we need to enter into preliminary design, that's essentially the middle design portion, then we will have final design and that will be another contract which I am hoping to get before this body sometime in mid to late fall; all with the goal of trying to get under construction for next Spring. So what you have is a \$500,000.00 contract, though it is not necessarily using \$500,000.00 of new monies. There was monies left over from the concept plan phase which we will be rolling over into this phase as well. All of the funding is being paid for through the TIF and the funds are available.

I will leave my comments there, Mr. Chairman on that particular contract. I will continue on with the second contract with Hayner Swanson. They were originally a sub-contractor to VHB. During the concept phase it was decided to have them contract directly with the City for a few reasons. One to help with project management, two they are surveyors, they are going to continue doing their survey work. But ultimately what we foresee them playing a big role in is contract administration. As you may or may not know, John Mancore provided the similar type of service for the Broad Street Parkway where he basically was the consultant or the project manager for the City of Nashua for that project during the construction. We would be looking for him to play a similar type role when the time comes for this project. So this secondary contract that I just referenced is all keeping into the spirit of what I just described. Thank you.

Chairman Tencza

Thank Director Cummings. Any questions regarding either contract; questions on clarification? OK. Tim did you want to say something else?

Director Cummings

Yeah, I just wanted to quickly touch upon process because I don't want this to get lost. So typically these types of contracts have never been referred to Committee. I understand we referred them to this Committee this time around and I am happy to be here. I just want to make sure, particularly for newer members of the Board of Aldermen to know that the typical process – we have a TIF, we have TIF Advisory Committee and then the way the TIF was set up is actually once it gets recommended to the Full Board of Aldermen then it is the Full Board of Aldermen that has to adopt the contract. So I just wanted to clarify that as the rationale for why the document was originally sent to the Board of Aldermen with no type of referral because that's been our past practice and that's actually set out in Ordinance when we set up the TIF originally back in 2003. So thank you, sorry.

Chairman Tencza

No problem, thank you for that clarification. So I am not sure moving forward President Wilshire will require but we appreciate you being here tonight to explain it to us and give any member who wanted to ask questions about this contract an opportunity to do so. So we appreciate it. Questions or comments by the Members of the Committee or anyone in attendance? Seeing none, then I'll ask the Clerk please to call the roll first on the first Communication.

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

Yea: Alderman Schmidt, Alderman Laws, Alderman Tencza 3

Nay: 0

MOTION CARRIED

From: Tim Cummings, Economic Development Director

Re: Contract Amendment for Professional Engineering Services related to the Nashua Downtown Riverfront Implementation Project Hayner/Swanson, Inc.

MOTION BY ALDERMAN LAWS TO ACCEPT, PLACE ON FILE, AND APPROVE THE CONTRACT AMENDMENT WITH HAYNER/SWANSON, INC., FOR PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERING SERVICES RELATED TO THE NASHUA DOWNTOWN RIVERFRONT IMPLEMENTATION PROJECT IN THE AMOUNT OF \$118,730, BY ROLL CALL

ON THE QUESTION

Chairman Tencza

Ok the Motion is to accept and place on file by roll call. Director Cummings, anything in addition to add to this? OK he has indicated "no". Members of the Committee, any additional comments, or questions for Director Cummings? Seeing none, the Clerk is there, I would ask him to call the roll, please.

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

Yea: Alderman Schmidt, Alderman Laws, Alderman Tencza 3

Nay: 0

MOTION CARRIED

UNFINISHED BUSINESS – None

NEW BUSINESS – RESOLUTIONS - None

NEW BUSINESS – ORDINANCES - None

TABLED IN COMMITTEE – None

Chairman Tencza

I will call for Public Comment one more time, although I will note for the record that it doesn't appear that there are any other appear in our Zoom Committee Room.

PUBLIC COMMENT - None

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Chairman Tencza

Director Cummings, you wanted to bring up briefly with the Committee regarding Main Street, the closing or the narrowing of Main Street and how that is going. And have a brief discussion on future years?

Director Cummings

I did Mr. Chairman. Thank you so much. So I just wanted to start the conversation tonight. I think this will be an on-going conversation for sure but one I thought would behoove us to begin now. We are looking to possibly continue with the narrowing of Main Street beyond this outdoor dining season, looking to do it maybe next year. We are starting that conversation in earnest. We are requesting some additional funds to pilot some different types of barriers that we would be using. We will be going before Finance Committee I believe actually this week, or if it's not this week shortly.

It is something that has been an internal conversation that the City Administration has had for about 4 or 5 / 6 weeks now as we have been trying to assess the situation, try to figure out how best we can take on this additional project. We have had to balance other considerations. Currently right now the barriers are rented, they were deployed by a third-party contracting firm. You know, we've been assessing how we would do it internally if we were to do it again. What type of barrier we could use, how to store them, public safety has been the overriding concern to make sure that they were safe, but then aesthetics as well. We heard loud and clear that if we could improve on the aesthetics, I think that would be well-received.

Ultimately, we were looking at it and time was of the essence; it needed to be functional. You know, I think we satisfied that requirement, but obviously we do need to improve upon what we did if we are going to do it again. So I wanted to start that conversation tonight; ultimately a piece of Legislation is going to be necessary. We are going to have to file an amendment to the Resolution that was approved back in May. Essentially what I am envisioning is two sets of barriers that are going to be rolled out, to be piloted for the next month or so, month and a half. One would be on Main Street of about 200 linear feet; that would be a different type of concrete barrier but still a Jersey Barrier. That's the Finance Committee approval request because that is over \$25,000.00. Then we have an additional barrier that we are looking to put on one of the side streets. It is more of a water tank type structure that is about \$20,000.00. It is about 50 linear feet.

Once we get those up and running and we have an opportunity to see how they perform, internally the City Engineer, Department of Public Works, Assistant Director of Public Works, the Director of Community Development, myself and the Mayor have been meeting to discuss this. We will be seeking input from the public as to which direction we go; whether we should continue to do it in general. Part of the reason why we did this though is it seems to be very much what the community has expressed a sentiment towards.

So we thought we would start the planning process now. I would love to just open it up for a round-table type of conversation with the Planning & Economic Development Committee of the Board of Aldermen and then go from there.

Chairman Tencza

Any thoughts, concerns? Alderman Schmidt?

Alderman Schmidt

Thank you. Can you give us some idea of the feedback you've gotten so far, how the restaurants themselves are feeling and if you are getting anything from the amount of people they are seeing? How much of a benefit it is to them? Thank you.

Director Cummings

I'm sorry, Alderman Schmidt, I missed the first part of what you said. But the general feedback has been very positive both by the business operators and the general public. I can't quantify how much we've heard in terms of feedback. We've had almost unanimous positive feedback. We have heard concerns certainly, usually those concerns raised are about things we can address to tweak it to make it better, but no one in outright opposition per se. And I'm sorry the first part of your question.

Alderman Schmidt

I was just looking for some idea of the feedback you are receiving. No matter what you do, you know some people will find it totally wrong and unacceptable. But I think, when I've been down there, I've seen happy people, I've seen more business, I've seen people being safe outside. And if we can continue this, I haven't seen a lot of problems with the road itself, the road design that we are using. Have you got any feedback on that?

Director Cummings

No, actually it's been positive. I think we early on made some adjustments. That was well-received. I do think we may need to look at the timing of the lights a little bit as we continue. You know it's an evolving – you know traffic is evolving right? The flow of the movement constantly needs to be monitored and watched, you know, depending on people's behaviors and depending on what is going on. And so we are trying to do that. Overall though, I think everyone likes it; the cars have slowed down. We've heard a lot of people comment about how much the cars have slowed down, how much they appreciate that.

I have heard from some of the business owners say to me that particularly one business owner say to me that he owns multiple restaurants and one of the restaurants that he has, this is the only restaurant that is turning a profit in all of his other locations. So I thought that was good; I have asked some of the operators to provide me some numbers. I have a suspicion that they are doing better this year than they did last year at this time. A year over year performance metric I am looking to get from a couple of the operators. I know this conversation came up at the Downtown Improvement Committee last Friday. They are interested in seeing it continue. They commented about the real strong concern that they have about when these barriers go away on November 15th, just how much that's going to change the environment and the energy that they see and feel right now. And how when the barriers go away it is going to be much quieter, it is going to have a potential feeling or tone that may be kind of depressed and they are very concerned about that. So they are thinking even now, can we do something in terms of lights or anything to infuse the energy that people are feeling right now. You know, most of them are commenting on just how active they see the outdoor dining during lunch time and how they have never seen that type of performance during the day and it is continuing on at nighttime. So to see that just dissipate in mid-November which we all understand the reasons why we need to do that, mainly you know snow removal, it is still going to set a tone that the Downtown Improvement Committee wants to (audio cuts out). So anyway I hope that feedback is helpful.

Alderman Schmidt

Thank you. That's all I had.

Chairman Tencza

Thank you, any other questions or comments? Alderman Laws?

Alderman Laws

So I want to echo what Director Cummings said. The feedback that I've heard anecdotally is that someone works downtown in the service industry; people love it. The mix went from 70 / 30 people who loved it to people who were complaining about the traffic narrowing to now it's just 100% positive which is great. It seems like the sentiment is catching up with the reality. But Director Cummings you just touched on my primary concern which is more of an interest which is where does DPW stand on this and how is this going to affect snow removal?

Director Cummings

Thank you. So DPW has worked with us hand-in-hand as has been a cross sector collaboration of Departments in the City to be able to pull this off. Part of the reasons why the barriers that were chosen that we are looking to pilot was based off of internal discussions that the Department of Public Works brought to us and said you know these are barriers are better than others. Let's look at this, let's look at that, how about we do this. And so we are very conscious of the operational concerns, you know, I am not saying today that we are going to have to take on that responsibility but more often than not, we are probably going to have to drop the barriers next season or we are going to have to be understanding that we are taking on that cost and outsource it to a third party. And making sure we can do it as efficiently as possible; storing them as well. You know, if we are going to own them now, we need to make sure we can store them, how we store them. These are all the logistics type of conversations we are having with DPW and of course, public safety has been a big driver of the conversation as well.

So they are on board with everything that has been discussed thus far. We have been working lock step with (audio cuts out).

Alderman Laws

Thank you, Chairman, thank you Director Cummings.

Chairman Tencza

Any other questions or comments for Director Cummings? President Wilshire?

Alderman Wilshire

Thank you. Thank you, Tim, for your work on this, this is so important to our City, an economically thriving downtown is really what we need. Couple this with the other things we are hoping to go in down there, we are going to see a really resurgence of our downtown, people wanting to be there. It's great to drive down there, even at lunchtime and see people sitting out, it's wonderful. So kudos, thank you.

Director Cummings

Thank you.

Chairman Tencza

Director Cummings, I just have a question for you. There's only I think one side street is blocked off, maybe two. One that really affects the restaurants down on East Pearl. Is there a possibility of expanding this to other areas or is this the kind of footprint of this summer the best that we are going to be able to do going forward.

Director Cummings

Absolutely not. If there's an appetite to look at other side streets, we have constantly said we'd be happy to do that. Some areas we just can't do. For instance, on East Pearl, the corner of East Pearl and Spring Street, that area that intersection is just too tight to put barriers down beyond the Spring Street / East Pearl Street Intersection. The truck radius, trucks can't make the – it's the 18 wheelers that can't make the turns in that area too well. So putting outdoor dining in that area really doesn't work. Same thing on West Pearl Street, with I believe it is Elm and West Pearl, same type of conversation, can't really continue the barriers on West Pearl due to sight distance type issues.

We are thinking about, as I said earlier, we are looking to put out barriers on Main Street, 200 linear feet of a different type of barrier. But what we are going to do is you take the barriers that are currently deployed now and we are looking to put them along Factory Street. The thought process would be is to maybe narrow Factory Street in a similar fashion. I say that because with the Riverfront Plan actually specifically there's talk about redoing that area, possibly adding parking which would take away a travel lane. So if we could do some tactical urbanism now to get people start to think in that way where there's only one or two lanes of traffic instead of the four, that would be a side street that we would be looking to put on a road diet. But there are certainly others and we'd be welcome input from the community as well as the people, the operators in that area specifically if there's an interest.

But to answer your question, pretty much part and parcel the whole of what you saw this year is what we would be looking to do next year, not necessarily take on anything new.

Chairman Tencza

Alright, thank you; any other comments or questions for Director Cummings?

Director Cummings

So if I could just two additional points, I want to make sure I hit home. One, if we do do this, I want to make sure folks know that this is a semi-permanent type of solution. There is going to be a conversation at some point of well do we do this permanently. By doing this you have a few years, to decide. But ultimately, I want to make sure you will be opening that conversation at some point and there's more than enough time to plan. But I want folks to be aware of that.

The other thing I want to make sure folks are aware of is, right now we are very fortunate to use GOFERR funds; that was for this year. Come next year, this bigger more expansive, I shouldn't say bigger and more expansive that's inaccurate. This project that we did this year, to do it again next year in a similar fashion we are going to have to use a different source of funds because GOFERR wouldn't necessarily be available to us. I just want to make sure folks understand that. But we can have those conversations as we further refine the plan if there's an interest.

Chairman Tencza

Great, thank you very much. We will move along in our Agenda then. Well I guess we will take public comment if there's anyone who would like to speak? OK hearing and seeing none, Remarks by Aldermen? Anyone?

REMARKS BY THE ALDERMEN - None

POSSIBLE NON-PUBLIC SESSION - None

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION BY ALDERMAN SCHMIDT TO ADJOURN BY ROLL CALL

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

Yea: Alderman Schmidt, Alderman Laws, Alderman Tencza 3

Nay: 0

MOTION CARRIED

The meeting was declared closed at 7:30 p.m.

Alderman-at-Large Brandon Michael Laws
Committee Clerk