

FINAL

LEBANON CITY COUNCIL
MINUTES

Wednesday, May 4, 2022, 7:00 p.m.

Remote Via Microsoft Teams: LebanonNH.gov/Live

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Tim McNamara, Assistant Mayor Clifton Below, Erling Heistad, Karen Liot Hill, Christian Simon, George Sykes, Douglas Whittlesey, and Devin Wilkie

MEMBERS ABSENT: Karen Zook

STAFF PRESENT: City Manager Shaun Mulholland, Deputy City Manager Paula Maville, Deputy Finance Director Alesia Williams

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Mayor McNamara called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.
2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Councilor Whittlesey led the Council in the Pledge.
3. **PUBLIC FORUM:** Mayor McNamara made the Public Forum announcement.
4. **OPEN TO PUBLIC:** No one came forth.
5. **RECOGNITIONS:** NONE
6. **ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES:**
 - April 20, 2022 (Regular Meeting)
 - April 21, 2022 (Special Meeting-Housing)

Councilor Heistad MOVED to approve the April 20, 2022 (Regular Meeting) and the April 21, 2022 (Special Meeting-Housing) minutes as written and presented in the May 4, 2022 City Council agenda packet.

Seconded by Councilor Whittlesey.

**The Vote on the MOTION was approved by those present (8-0).*

7. **APPOINTMENTS:** NONE
8. **PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS:** NONE
9. **OLD BUSINESS:** NONE

10. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Discussion & Set Public Hearing for June 1, 2022: Authorize appropriation for Mechanic Street Sidewalk Segment 2. *(Pages 30-42, agenda packet).*

Included in the agenda packet:

1. April 25, 2022 Memo from Jay Cairelli, Interim DPW Director re: Supplemental Appropriation Request
2. March 30, 2022 Plan for Mechanic Street Proposed Sidewalk

City Manager Shaun Mulholland came before the Council and reviewed the Supplemental Appropriation Request for the Mechanic Street Sidewalk Segment 2.

BACKGROUND

The Slayton Hill Road/Mechanic Street intersection sidewalk project (Segment 2 of the attached Map) is a subcomponent of a larger 1.3-mile roadway corridor project between the intersection of Mechanic Street and High Street, and Interstate 89, Exit 19.

The estimated total cost of the project is \$425,000. Two hundred ninety thousand two hundred Fifty Dollars (\$290,250) has been approved under the “Community Project Funding Request Process for the 117th Congress”. The difference of One hundred Thirty-Four Thousand Seven Hundred Fifty (\$134,750) will be through utilization of unassigned fund balance.

Normally, under this circumstance, the City Manager would have received a grant approval letter, and all the documentation, but all he has at present are comments from Congresswoman Kuster’s office telling him the City has received the grant and there is an appropriation listed in the Federal Register for this, but we do not have the grant agreement, what the grant requirements are, or all the details we would normally have. We have been told it is not going to run through the State through the LPA program, rather it is supposed to come through the Federal Highways Department, which is the most likely agency to provide these funds. However, this is not clear yet. We were told that some time toward the end of May, or early June, we would receive that documentation from the appropriate Federal Agency.

It is expected this project will go out to bid in January/February 2023, with construction beginning in the Spring of 2023 and completion in the Fall of 2023.

Mechanic Street proposed Sidewalk - conceptual Plan of segments 1, & 3



ACTION:

Assistant Mayor Below MOVED, that the Lebanon City Council hereby schedules a public hearing for Wednesday, June 1, 2022, beginning at 7:00pm in Council Chambers, City Hall, and remote via the City’s Virtual Platform for the purpose of receiving public input and to take action to appropriate \$425,000 for Mechanic Street Sidewalk Segment 2 Improvements; and to authorize the transfer in the sum of \$134,750 from unassigned fund balance.

Seconded by Councilor Liot Hill.

****The Vote on the MOTION was approved by those present (8-0).***

- B. Braver Angels Presentation relative to facilitating difficult discussions and polarized political issues. *(Pages 43-44, agenda packet)*

Included in the agenda packet:

1. Braver Angels Politics Offerings for Elected and Public Officials, Their Staff, and Their Constituents

Available but not Included in agenda packet:

1. Braver Angels website <https://braverangels.org/what-we-do>

BACKGROUND

Braver Angels was created in 2016. The organization is a national citizens’ movement to bring liberals, conservatives and others together at the grassroots level - not to find centrist compromise, but to find one another as citizens. Through workshops, debates, campus engagement, and more, Braver Angels helps Americans understand each other beyond stereotypes, form community alliances, and reduce the vitriol that poisons our civic culture.

The City Manager recently attended an ICMA (International City Manager’s Association) conference where a presentation by Braver Angels of New Hampshire was made. Although the City of Lebanon seems to have an appropriate temperature of civil discourse, there is value in learning about a program of this nature to foster healthy public policy discussions in our community.

Braver Angels offers training relative to facilitating healthy discussions on public policy matters. The City Manager would like to propose developing a core of city staff and elected/appointed officials to be trained in facilitation of difficult public policy matters.

Mr. Douglass Teschner came before the Council and reviewed the history of the Braver Angels Program, what their purpose is, which is initiating discussions on polarized political issues, and some of the topics they cover as a volunteer service to the public and legislatures. He also informed the Council that he has connections to the Upper Valley and lives in Grafton County; had served on the State’s Legislature for 12 years; his work with the parliaments in Rwanda and Morocco; his service as a Country Director for the Peace Corps where he worked in Ukraine (2010-2014); and, the work he did in West Africa during the Ebola Epidemic where he and his staff worked with the CDC to end the epidemic.

Mr. Teschner spoke about polarization issues taking place in the country, noting the Braver Angels pledge, as individuals, is to try to understand the other side’s point of view, and even if we do not agree with it, we engage those we disagree with to look for common ground and ways to work together. In

politics we support principles that bring us together rather than divide us, noting their core values are respect, humility, honesty, and responsible citizenship.

Braver Angels newest initiative is called Braver Politics and they did a pilot called a Red/Blue Workshop at the NH State House, which was about relationship building.

Braver Angels is rolling out some new workshops. One of the newer workshops in the Braver Politics series is called “Managing Difficult Conversations with Constituents and Colleagues,” and was piloted using moderators. They are also providing training for both the Town Clerks, as well as the Supervisors of the Check List regarding ways on how to manage difficult conversations with voters and constituents. (The Council did receive a list of the workshops that Braver Angels rolled out specifically for this Braver Politics Initiative. These are no cost workshops.)

Assistant Mayor Below, Mayor McNamara, and Councilors Heistad, Liot Hill, Wilkie and Sykes all agreed it would be great to have Mr. Teschner/Braver Angels come to Lebanon and do one of these workshops and noted the issues they would like the Braver Angels to help them address. In particular, they would like to participate in the Braver Politics series called “Managing Difficult Conversations with Constituents and Colleagues,”

Mr. Teschner noted they would also like to work with School Boards, because they have been really divisive as well.

Councilor Liot Hill felt it would be good for the Council to explore the options on the list, noting that while the City does not have much Red/Blue issues, it does have issues that cause tensions and conflict in the community and questioned if Braver Angels could explore the following topics:

1. The changes/perceived threats to neighborhoods that surround the housing issue.
2. The relationship with the Police, noting that over the last two years the City has had conflict from members of the public who want to either fund and/or defund the LPD.

Councilor Wilkie concurred with Councilor Liot Hill, noting that while the City does not have quite as many of the traditional Red vs. Blue issues he was curious if there was a way these issues could be conducted in a nonpartisan, unpolarized fashion, because there may be other battle lines that do not fit neatly into the political partisan spectrum.

Mr. Teschner noted there are two possible ways to do this: 1. Through Town Halls, and 2. Having constituent conversations, which he felt could be easily adapted for those needs. He suggested putting together a committee to meet with him and the City Manager to find a way on where we can go.

Mayor McNamara spoke about the Council’s particular role as elected representatives, noting there is definitely a need to have those macro conversations.

Councilor Sykes was particularly intrigued with the topic of “Having Difficult Conversations with Constituents and Colleagues,” and gave examples. He spoke about having difficult situations with colleagues from across the aisle (at the State level) , and was interested in learning how to take the next step in closing the gap to get something concrete established.

Mr. Teschner stated the design of that particular program (“Having Difficult Conversations with Constituents and Colleagues”) is how to diffuse a conversation when people are coming at you hard, and how to let people walk away feeling better by being heard without feeling attacked. Taking this to different solutions is beyond what the scope of this workshop would be, but it would certainly make people feel better about the kind of conversations they are having, particularly when they are difficult.

Councilor Wilkie noted the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) Commission is planning some Listening Sessions in the community starting in June and invited Councilors to attend. He will let them know when/where these will be taking place.

Mr. Teschner informed the Council about Braver Angel’s website events and noted their ground rules/moderators to frame discussions. Town Halls used to be very common, but now people have not been holding them anymore because they have become so divisive. He was excited about running Town Halls where ground rules were established from the beginning, and offering a moderator who is trained in the Braver Angels method. Maybe this could be a model for the DEI Listening Sessions or other future events.

Mr. Teschner suggested first starting the “Having Difficult Conversations with Constituents and Colleagues” Workshop with the Council and go from there.

ACTION

No Action is required by the Council; however, the Council may ask the City Manager to move forward with developing a core group of city staff and elected/appointed officials to be trained by Braver Angels to facilitate difficult public policy matters.

11. City Manager Report:

City Manager Shaun Mulholland updated the Council on the following projects:

- Miracle Mile
- Forest Avenue Sewer Line Project
- West Lebanon Rail Trail Extension
- Debt Management Policy Update for Wastewater
- Deputy City Manager hiring process
- Director of Planning Department hiring process
- Next Reiteration of the REAL training from ALC (used in racial equity tool)
- Traffic Beautification Projects
- Feasibility of potentially building a Greenhouse at the landfill
- Strategic Plan thoughts – looking for feedback from the Council on the categories
- Seminary Hill School concept status
- Housing meeting with Hartford, VT

12. COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES TO OTHER BODIES:

Councilor Liot Hill spoke about upcoming DEI events taking place at the Lebanon Opera House and at other locations in the City.

13. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS: NONE

14. NON-PUBLIC SESSION:

- RSA 91-A:3.II(a) “The dismissal, promotion, or compensation of any public employee...”

ACTION:

Councilor Liot Hill MOVED that the City Council enter into Non-Public Sessions for the purpose of discussing:

- RSA 91-A:3.II(a) “The dismissal, promotion, or compensation of any public employee...”

Seconded by Councilor Whittlesey.

Roll Call Vote:

Assistant Mayor Below, and Councilors Heistad, Liot Hill, Sykes, Whittlesey, Wilkie, Simon, and Mayor McNamara all voting Yea.

None voted Nay.

Absent from vote was Councilor Zook.

****The Vote on the MOTION was unanimously approved by those present (8-0)***

The Council went into Non-Public Session at 7:54 PM

The Council briefly discussed the City Manager’s performance evaluation using the OPTM360 Evaluation Tool

***Assistant Mayor Below MOVED that the City Council go out of Non-Public Session at 9:05 PM.
Seconded by Councilor Simon.***

Roll Call Vote:

Assistant Mayor Below, and Councilors Heistad, Liot Hill, Sykes, Whittlesey, Wilkie, Simon, and Mayor McNamara all voting Yea.

None voted Nay

Absent from vote was Councilor Zook.

****The Vote on the MOTION was unanimously approved by those present (8-0)***

15. ADJOURNMENT:

Assistant Mayor Below MOVED for adjournment.

Seconded by Councilor Wilkie..

****The Vote on the MOTION was unanimously approved by those present (8-0)***

The meeting was adjourned at 9:07 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Dona E. Gibson
Recording Secretary