

CITY OF MILFORD  
COUNCIL WORKSHOP MINUTES  
April 19, 2023

The City Council of the City of Milford convened in a Workshop Session on Wednesday, April 19, 2023, beginning at 6:04 p.m.

PRESIDING: Mayor Archie Campbell

IN ATTENDANCE: Councilpersons Dan Marabello, Mike Boyle, Andrew Fulton, Todd Culotta, Brian Baer and Jason James Sr.

STAFF: City Manager Mark Whitfield, Police Chief Cecilia Ashe, and City Clerk Terri Hudson

ABSENT: Councilmembers Nirmala Samaroo and Katrina Wilson

No one was signed up to speak during the public comment session. Mayor Campbell proceeded with the Council Workshop.

*Downtown Streetscape Plans*

KCI Technologies Incorporated was hired by the City to design the Downtown Streetscapes Project and prepare the concept renderings. Planning and Landscape Architecture Practice Leader Associate Richard Hoehn and Senior Landscape Architect Wisa Kompayak were in attendance to present the plan remotely.

Southwest Front Street, Park Avenue, Denney Row, North Washington Street areas, along with associated parking lots were reviewed.

Mr. Hoehn referenced the exhibits from the Milford Rebirth Plan and talked about the vision for downtown that was included in the plan for accessibility to the waterfront improvements. They were tasked with focusing on the streets previously described. They reviewed accessibility, streetscape improvement possibilities, how to introduce special paving, street furniture, street trees, signage, pole banners and lighting, etc.

They were also tasked with looking at parking situations to determine if they can reorganize and consolidated to allow more room for streetscape possibilities.

The northern portion includes Park Avenue, Washington Street and Denny Row and to consider low to high level improvements. It was their feeling that higher-level improvements were needed. The primary suggestion was to convert some of the streets to one-way streets. Holding the existing street dimensions does not allow much opportunity to improve the overall streetscape atmosphere. Making them one-way, narrowed the street section down a little bit and gain some width to use as a tool to improve the streetscapes.

They suggest making Park Avenue and Denney Row one way to Front Street and holding the north curb line dimension. Narrowing that allows some room on the south side of Park Avenue. That allows the bypass to be clean against the exterior ramp around the northside of the Art League Building, gain parallel parking on one side of the street, create some room for buffering of this municipal parking lot from the street.

At the backside of Park Place Restaurant/waterfront is where they store their existing trash cans and grease trap equipment. They were looking for enough width to allow pedestrians to pass by that area while introducing some potential closure or screening of that equipment.

It is also suggested the parking lots be bordered by low brick walls and more in the historic flavor of the town and align with the proposed brick streetscape of the sidewalks.

He referenced one of the municipal parking lots that one of the existing entrances would be closed off and allow additional on-street parking. That pushed everything a little bit further west and provided a nice, wide pedestrian zone along Washington Street.

That would allow some park-like sitting areas and opportunities for amenities in that area.

They also recommend that Arena's relocate their existing dumpsters that are currently distracting from the beautiful mural on the wall due to the presence of the dumpsters.

It was pointed out that both Park Avenue and Denny Row are already one way, though Mr. Hoehn said they would still be taking away a portion of their width to allow these improvements to be made.

Various elevation views were also shown.

Mr. Hoehn continued by discussing the south part of the study's focus on Front Street from Church to Walnut Streets which also included the narrowing of roadways. When a concern was expressed about emergency vehicles maneuvering on the tighter street widths, he shared that his task was to identify some improvements mostly at a conceptual level, then advance to an engineering level at which time another RFP would be needed. At that point, their high-level recommendations would need to be adjusted and more technical work, such as turning radiuses and templates considered to make sure that all vehicles can get through that streetscape.

He commented on the public open house held on March 8<sup>th</sup>. At that time, the community liked the brick sidewalk improvements, wider sidewalks, the street tree introductions, and the reconfiguration of the city-owned lots. Negative comments received included the proposal was not plan-specific and speeding traffic in this downtown area. By narrowing these streets, Mr. Hoehn thinks that would improve with fewer cross-sections and slow down traffic. Residents also do not like the overhead wires downtown and want them installed underground.

One business owner did not want to see any reduction in the overall parking in the downtown area, and did not want to see Park Avenue closed, though closing that street was not suggested, it was mentioned it be closed on special event days. Other concerns involved access to other downtown parking lots.

Another comment from a dog owner said the existing brick pavers hide heat index and end up burning their dog's feet.

Overall, they thought Park Avenue should be two-way, on-street parking/traveling should be flipped, though he again explained it helps with accessibility along the northern side of the Art League and provides a better buffer (referred to drawing).

Another suggestion was that a three-way stop sign should be added, concerns about the tightness of the parking lots were expressed even though they were designed to meet minimum standards for general circulation.

Other issues were the width of Park Avenue and Denny Row for food and alcohol delivery trucks, and he would like to include the emergency vehicles as were mentioned earlier in this meeting.

All of those are viable concerns but should be vetted at the next stage of the project.

One idea is if a truck were unloading, signage could be placed when the deliveries were scheduled and remain during a certain time frame. Parking would not be allowed in those areas so that trucks could pull over and allow parking to go past that.

Another comment was that Southwest Front Street should be two-way and not one-way. One person stated that if we introduce the roundabout that may eliminate large semitrucks from cutting through the downtown though Mr. Hoehn

believes it may only defer that practice but not eliminate. He thinks pass-thru traffic would still come through, but making a full turn will be more difficult and could be avoided.

There were also mixed feelings about the roundabout, though a few people liked it.

It was noted that the parking lot on Southwest Front Street has one exit and entrance that are used by delivery trucks. That parking lot is not wide enough now. Mr. Hoehn explained it is presently designed to accommodate vehicles and vans, without the need for accommodation. If bigger trucks were planned for the next phase of designs, templates would be needed for the turning radius, and adjustments would be needed that would result in the loss of some additional parking.

Mr. Hoehn referred to the schematic showing the existing loading zones but suggests the businesses work with their delivery staff and schedule early morning or evening deliveries.

A question was asked about the current stop sign replacement downtown and the light at NW Front and Walnut Street that backs up left-turning traffic up, though that occurred prior to the stop signs being placed there. Mr. Hoehn stressed that the roundabouts would help facilitate movement. Roundabouts help vehicles to keep moving.

Some councilmembers agreed the roundabouts would keep vehicles flowing.

A lengthy conversation followed regarding the pros and cons relating to roundabouts/traffic circles.

Turning eastbound trucks turning from Northwest Front Street onto Walnut Street and the many issues involved were also discussed.

Planner Pierce stated they wanted comments from council and confirmation the turning movements and parking lots were adequate. There are also some loading zones for some downtown businesses, but this study will be used for the next phase before any construction begins.

Councilman James asked if Walnut Street is part of a different presentation from Front to Front Streets. It was agreed that was not included though many of the businesses that attract visitors are up and down Walnut Street.

According to Planner Pierce, the streets that were identified are those Mr. Hoehn talked about. The priority was Northeast Front Street and the TAP project, and these were next in line. The brick sidewalks that already exist would simply be maintained in the other areas of downtown.

The bridge artwork project will be a focal point according to the City Manager.

Councilman James asked not to lose sight of that area because it is a big part of the riverwalk, and beautification should be a priority there.

City Manager Whitfield said these streets being discussed are owned by the city. The other streets are DeDOT maintained and involve a much longer process before they grant the city permission.

When asked about Southeast Front Street that has recently been made two-way, the plan calls for it to be reverted to one-way to provide enough space for landscaping/streetscaping.

Underground electric service in the downtown area was considered and several Councilmembers recall the possibility years ago but was prohibitive due to the accelerated costs. Mr. Whitfield shared that the electricity could be easily buried by our crews. But the excessive cost is related to the burial of other utilities.

Council had asked that their rules be reconsidered and that residents be permitted to speak on any topic, and not restricted to agenda items. Because only a few people have made comments since this was permitted, and council does not believe this change would have much of an impact.

Councilman Culotta said that if the presiding office is consistent on keeping comments to two or three minutes, he does not believe it will be a problem. He thinks the voting public should have a voice in a public meeting if they are not attacking council or are rude.

Councilman Fulton referenced a few municipalities that allow open comment on any topic. The person speaking was using offensive words and the mayor had the person thrown out or escorted out, and the person sued them for an infringement of rights and won in court. He recommends keeping comments on agenda items.

Councilman Marabello noted that there was never any problem when this was permitted back in 2007-2008-2009 and suggested trying it. It can always be reversed if needed.

It was agreed that Solicitor Rutt provides a long account of rules when speaking publicly and it is repeated at every meeting. In addition, it will require the Mayor to control the situation.

Chief Ashe cautioned Council, that from law enforcement perspective, we would be extremely limited to being able to escorting someone out because their comments were offensive. She agrees that is getting into the first amendment rights, and Council becoming victims of a crime. She stressed it would be highly unlikely that she would get up and escort somebody out of here because they made three minutes of comments. She wants to set that ground rule so Council is aware of how she would or would not proceed.

Council agreed there could be a person that could talk about things they shouldn't, but also feel that should not prevent others from being allowed to speak.

Councilmember Fulton said that council is voted in to represent the desires and wishes of our constituents.

Councilmember Baer suggested restricting comments to city business instead of leaving it open to any topic that council has no authority on. Councilman Marabello said they need to sign up which includes the topic they desire to speak on.

It was agreed to move forward with removing the limitation to agenda items but restricting the discussion to city business.

City Clerk Hudson will prepare a resolution restricting items to city business and restricting each person to two minutes on a per person basis and no borrowing of another speaker's time. She will add it to the April 24<sup>th</sup> agenda for Council action.

#### *FY 2004-2008 Capital Improvement Plan Review*

City Manager Whitfield said he wants Council to confirm that all projects included in the plan are valid, the associated timelines are within Council's expectations, any projects that need to be removed, and are there any projects that need to be added and were missed.

He reminded Council that the allocation of dollars will be added when each operating budget is planned. Some of the funding could end up being funded through grants or other funding as well, including bond bill funding.

Finance Director Lou Vitola stated that Council should recognize most of the CIP though some is different.

He commented that the CIP starts on page fifteen of the packet and then very briefly reviewed each of the pages. He also explained the last eleven pages is the detail that Council is familiar with. The six pages in the middle have the same content and projects as the last eleven pages but some like-projects are summarized in the green rows. They represent the lumping of a handful of similar projects, and the sole purpose of that activity was to give Council the opportunity to only have to go through six pages and not eleven.

He also referenced an updated version that includes links in it, that will allow toggling back and forth between different pages. That will be emailed to Council.

Director Bill Pettigrew provided a review of the IT Department's capital improvement plan.

Director Tony Chipola gave a summary of the Electric Department's capital improvement plan.

A synopsis of the capital projects in the Public Works Departments was presented by Director Svaby. Departments included water, streets, sewer, and solid waste.

Director Rob Pierce reviewed two capital items in the Planning Department.

Chief Cecilia Ashe provided a synopsis of the capital improvement projects for the Police Department.

Parks and Recreation Director Brad Dennehy concluded with a presentation with a rundown of his CIP items.

A debate followed regarding the upgrades that are needed to the Armory building and the fiscal responsibility of the tenant.

When questioned about whether the current tenant can purchase the building, City Manager Whitfield explained that the State requires the City to maintain ownership and maintenance though a long-term lease can be considered for grant purposes.

Mr. Whitfield informed Council the CIP will be on the next agenda for approval and adoption by City Council.

The Workshop Session of City Council concluded at 8:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Terri K. Hudson, MMC  
City Clerk/Recorder

*See FY 2024-2028 CIP attached*