

TOWN OF RYE BEACH COMMITTEE

Monday, July 17, 2023

5:30 p.m.

Rye Town Hall

Committee Present: *Chair Mary-Ann Sullivan, Mary Connolly-Mitchell, Joan Zofnass, and Selectmen's Rep Tom King*

1. Call to Order

Chair Sullivan called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Approval of Minutes – 6/19/2023

Motion by Joan Zofnass to approve the minutes of June 19, 2023 as written. Seconded by Mary Connolly-Mitchell. All in favor.

3. Discussion of member & alternate candidates

Chair Sullivan explained there were six inquiries for membership on the Committee. There was another inquiry that came in a couple of times before, but that person did want to make a monthly commitment just yet. At a previous meeting, the Committee voted to have a small email list of people who expressed interest in being a member. Those people would be emailed about Beach Committee events. There are now four good candidates who are interested. To be fair, the candidates will be taken in order.

Interested candidate, **Gail Garrison, 214 South Road**, noted that she has been in Rye since 1997 and is an avid beachgoer. She works for Connecting Point Marketing Group in Rye and has been there for four years. Her daughter is a marine biologist in Gloucester, Mass., specializing in North Atlantic Right Whales.

Speaking to Ms. Garrison, Chair Sullivan commented that if she is interested, she will go over how to formally apply. Chair Sullivan explained that the Committee looked at the order in which people inquired, in order to be fair. She pointed out that any of the four who are interested are great candidates. She also pointed out that the candidates met the Committee at the last meeting and have all officially applied. At this time, the Committee has one member and two alternate positions open.

4. Vote to recommend candidates to Select Board

The Committee agreed to recommend to the Select Board to appoint Tom Mack as a member, and Doug Beatie and Mike Hammond as alternates.

5. Beach access at F Street

Chair Sullivan noted that Selectman Epperson wrote to her about his concern about F Street beach access.

Member Zofnass explained that the build up of the sand was due to the storm in the spring. At one of the houses on F Street, the entire seawall was damaged. Greg Bauer went out to address the sand. The sand came up to the three houses on F Street and there was a fair amount of sand on their decks, as well as the driveways. Every year, there is damage to that roadway. There are nine houses that get billed to plow and add more sand. There was also an obstruction with a dumpster on that road; however, that is now gone and the roadway is clear.

Selectman King noted that the right-of-way for F Street is thirty feet and it was down to a few feet. In the sand that was brought in to backfill the seawall, someone planted seagrass plugs, so there is less than an eight-foot-wide area for access.

Member Zofnass commented that there are two houses just at the entrance to the beach. The people who own the house to the left of the walkway has decided to put seagrass in so people can't put their chairs in that area. In front of the seagrass, the homeowners have put chairs.

Selectman King noted that the Select Board has directed the DPW Director to contact the owner to give them a chance to remove the seagrass. DPW is then going to bulldoze through that area to open an eight-foot-wide path. The concern is that even with just an eight-foot pathway through that area, if the Town owns thirty feet, it needs to be certain that the other twenty-two feet is not lost. The Select Board and DPW is working through this situation to see if it just all needs to be taken out. Selectman King pointed out that in the 80's and 90's several beach accesses were lost to adverse possession because the Town didn't actively use them. He also pointed out there are not many beach accesses left and it needs to be a high priority. The neighbors are probably not going to be happy, but the Town will probably have to be as aggressive as needed to protect the Town's rights. This is happening all over the beach area and the Town can't allow it to happen anymore.

Chair Sullivan commented that she can understand the property owner's point of view because there are beachgoers who abuse their property; however, in fairness, there are only so many beach access points. The access points from Sawyers up through Sunrise, and Pirates' Cove are some of the easier access points. Foss Beach has access points but they're not easy access points. It's very important to respect the rights of property owners, but also respect the access points so people can have fair access to the beach. She suggested that the committee members be aware of the access points, so they can keep on top of this issue.

Selectman King commented that it's hard to know where the boundaries are because there's nothing definitive anymore. By just looking at the area, it's hard to know if someone really has encroached. Perhaps the Beach Committee should recommend that the Town do an inventory of the access points, and do a survey to define and mark them. Part of it is a legal question of how much people can do before they can claim the area through adverse possession. He suggested the Committee conduct a site walk at each access point.

The Committee agreed the recommendation would be a good idea and a letter should be drafted to the Select Board. They also agreed it would be a good idea to map the beach access points for public knowledge and to help keep track of the areas. The Committee will begin visiting the access points after the summer season.

6. NH DOT pedestrian crosswalk & beach access

Chair Sullivan explained that one of the things that is happening in Rye right now, is there have been a lot of meetings where people are upset about the speed of vehicles along Route 1A. There was discussion at a Rye Beach Precinct meeting and the Rye Civic League is holding a meeting for August 16th, 7:00 p.m., at Rye Public Library. As a Beach Committee, they don't have purview over speeding; however, they have thought about crosswalks in the past, as it's part of beach access. Crosswalks is a very tricky issue because there is a lot of criteria on what is and isn't a crosswalk. She continued that the curve coming from Sea Road and crossing to Sawyers is probably not going to meet the criteria for a crosswalk. However, she wonders if the Committee should look at the situation so it can be discussed at the next meeting, as beach access is in the Committee's purview.

Member Connolly-Mitchell commented that more of a problem can be created. She pointed out that the crosswalk at Pirates' Cove is not there anymore. She also pointed there are people crossing there every single day, especially on the weekends, and it's dangerous. There's a pizza place in this area, Kook's, and the Surf Club. She can't believe the State hasn't replaced that crosswalk.

Member Zofnass noted that in Marlborough Head, and Swampscott, Massachusetts, they put in color boarded crosswalks, which makes everyone very sensitive to the crosswalks. Instead of just two white lines, it's colorful, and people slow down because it's noticeable. She thinks it would be a wonderful idea, particularly on South Road, Sea Road, and continuing up that area.

Selectman King pointed out that Dover did this for their 400th Anniversary. The crosswalks are pink and green, and it catches the eye.

Member Connolly-Mitchell noted the only visible crosswalk now is at Jenness Beach.

After some discussion, Selectman King noted that he will speak with the DPW Director about what can be done with the crosswalks. The Committee can also reach out to the State

Representatives to get them involved, as Ocean Boulevard is a state road. The Committee agreed that the areas of Cable and Wallis Sands should be addressed, as it's a matter of safety, not just about beach access.

The Committee discussed other areas that should possibly be considered for crosswalks. They will discuss this further at a future meeting.

7. Debris from fireworks

Chair Sullivan noted that the fireworks seem to be set off on the rocks, not so much the beach itself. The Beach Club cleaned and did an extra sweep of the beach after their fireworks. In the middle of Sawyers, in the location of the rocks, there was firework debris the day after the fireworks display. She is not sure if this was from the Beach Club, but she imagines it's happening all along the beach.

Member Connolly-Mitchell pointed out that the Surf Club does fireworks at the entrance to Pirates' Cove.

Chair Sullivan noted that the debris is on Route 1A and also blows over to Eel Pond. She's not sure who the debris belongs to.

The Committee agreed that they should reach out to the clubs to see which ones are doing fireworks and where they are doing the event. There was further discussion about the carry in/carry out policy and the possibility of having trash cans at every beach, along with more dog waste receptacles. It was agreed to discuss this again at the August meeting.

8. Other/New Business

Selectman King noted the bike racks are up at Wallis Sands Extension. He asked if there are other bike racks.

Chair Sullivan replied there's one at Cable and one at Wallis Road Extension.

Selectman King asked who decided where the bike racks would go.

Chair Sullivan replied DPW.

Selectman King pointed out that if the bike racks were being used, people wouldn't be able to get on the beach. The bike racks were put parallel to the access where the pavement drops off in the sand. The bike rack sets at an angle vertically. If there was a large bike parked there, it would cut the area from the porta-potty and the bike down to about three feet.

There was further discussion about moving the bike racks to a different location at each beach, so the entrances are not blocked. The Committee will keep this in mind as part of their recommendations.

Adjournment

Motion by Mary-Ann Sullivan to adjourn at 6:41 p.m. Seconded by Mary Connolly-Mitchell. All in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,
Dyana F. Ledger