

## **TOWN OF RYE – BOARD OF SELECTMEN**

**Tuesday, September 17, 2019  
5:30 p.m. – Rye Public Library**

*Present: Chair Phil Winslow, Vice-Chair Keriann Roman and Selectman Bill Epperson*

*Others Present: Rye Library Trustees, Andy Richmond, Library Director, Janet Davis, Clarkson Davis, and Becky Bergeron, Acting Town Administrator  
Members of the Library Trustees include: Chair Karen Oliver, Vice-Chair Karen Allen, Secretary Brian Klinger, Victor Azzi and Jeff Ross.*

### **I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Winslow called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **II. CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS**

- A.** Conservation Commission requests permission to accept and expend a \$5,000 donation made by Tate and Foss Sotheby's International Realty for the Goss Farm Open House and Farmers Market

**Motion by Keriann Roman to accept. Seconded by Bill Epperson. All in favor.**

### **III. TOWN CENTER DISCUSSION WITH THE RYE PUBLIC LIBRARY TRUSTEES**

Chair Winslow gave an update on the status of the Town Center Committee. He noted that there were nineteen people who have volunteered for the committee and the selectmen have to pair that down to six, along with a selectmen's representative. As part of the process, the selectmen have drafted some criteria for selection; member of the Historic District Commission; Library Trustee; resident of town center; parent of a child/children attending Rye Junior High; a person with architectural or general contractor experience; and a young Rye resident who attended the charrette. The Selectmen will be appointing the committee members at their meeting on September 23<sup>rd</sup>. Chair Winslow reviewed the schedule for the committee, which was prepared by Nancy Barba, Barba and Wheelock Architects, consultant for the town. He noted that Ms. Barba was contracted to look at the Town Hall for ADA compliance and organization of office and meeting space. Based on her recommendations, additional space for offices may be needed elsewhere in town. The additional space could be a number of options and that will be one of the things that the Town Center Committee will be considering. He noted that the options include the old trolley barn, the Parsonage, the TD Bank building and the space over the Public Safety Building. The objective is to look at those options, in terms of feasibility and costs, while maintaining a reasonable service level for the town. He also noted that when talking about the

Town Center, it is referring to the area from the old trolley barn to Grange Park, as depicted in the Plan NH Charrette.

Selectman Epperson explained the Selectmen have a mandate from the town with a warrant article to do something with the Town Hall; however, that encompasses the rest of the Town Center as well.

Selectman Roman further explained that Nancy Barba is not going to be proposing an addition to the Town Hall. Her charge is to look at the Town Hall and determine what can be done inside those walls. Plan NH showed things about the exterior of the building; such as, parking and access to the Town Hall. Because both are being done at the same time (review of Town Hall by Nancy Barba and Town Center Committee), both could mesh well together and the Town Center Committee could look at the exterior without interfering with what Ms. Barba is proposing.

Chair Winslow pointed out that Ms. Barba is being asked to determine the amount of square footage that is needed for town office space. If she comes back with 1300sf is usable in the Town Hall just using the bottom floor, then the amount of square footage still needed must be determined. To determine where the town will get that, will be part of the Selectmen's and the Town Center Committee's responsibilities.

Discussion was opened to Janet Davis, on behalf of the Library.

Jane Davis stated that when they went forward originally with a 1.5 million dollar plan for the Library, (defined as adding some space onto the front, renovating spaces and improving technology), it didn't feel that uncomfortable to people. The testing was at an assumption of \$750,000 on a warrant article and \$750,000 private raise. That seemed relatively comfortable to the folks who were interviewed. About half way through the interview process, it was determined that it was likely the Library could not achieve all the objectives intended for less than 3 million. When that number was tested, people got very uncomfortable. At that point, they started asking a lot of questions and wanted more information. Part of the feedback that was causing voters and donors to be hesitant was that they were not sure how it would fit together with the Town Hall and other things that are happening in the center. As a result, it was on the Library Trustees to approach the Selectmen to discuss and look at how it would fit together. One of the major objectives is to consider how this is going to work. What is the logistics for getting together and sharing information? It is important that everyone understands what the other folks are doing so there is no confusion.

Referring to "confusion", Selectman Epperson commented this is what killed the Town Hall six times in a row.

Chair Winslow explained there is a CIP process that looks at all major expenditures in town. All departments are going to be competing at one time or another. The voters are going to have to make some decisions. The broader the decisions are that are given to the voters, the bigger the chance they are all going to be voted down. The challenge is going to be to come in with a focused selection of warrants that require money and are possible to pass.

Victor Azzi asked what the Selectmen see as the work product of the Rye Town Center Committee.

Selectman Roman stated that she would like to see a variation of what the CIP looks like. She would like to see the center of town, (including the Library and Town Hall), and a plan for what the Town Center would look like in 20 or 30 years. To back up from that, the priorities will be determined. Is the Library a priority? Is the Town Hall a priority? The items would be prioritized, just like the CIP; which years would each thing be done, how much will each cost and which things should be funded all at once in a full warrant article? Which things could the town fundraise? Which things should have a capital reserve fund? The committee will start that process and the Selectmen will have to work very closely with them to get that plan.

Mr. Azzi stated the product is a plan. The CIP document is a resource document for that plan. All of the available resource information has to be captured for consideration in the development of the plan from the Rye Town Center Committee recommended to the Board of Selectmen.

Karen Oliver stated the most troubling aspect of the committee's charge is setting Plan NH as the parameters. It seems more narrowly focused.

Selectman Epperson stated Plan NH gave some ideas on what they thought was acceptable or conducive to the Town Center. This committee could go beyond that; however, they do not want people on the committee reinventing the wheel.

Jeff Ross stated the recommendations of Plan NH are just one small part of what they did. What Plan NH heard, and what they suggested, involved traffic calming and addressing the Town Hall issue. However, the big picture of Plan NH was to continue to enhance the historic character of the Town Center. The other thing they said was to make anything that is done in the center have multigenerational value and benefit. They also said to make it more functional than it is now. He continued there were things recommended that might make the Town Center less functional. Those are the kinds of details and discussions the committee should be having. He would hate the focus on the big picture to be lost. He noted that the formation of the committee and its process is critical.

Mrs. Davis reiterated the study showed that people would not likely give as much if they did not understand how the Library fit into the puzzle. The group seemed to feel comfortable with both a warrant article amount and private philanthropy if they understood the puzzle. She continued that at this moment, the Library is planning to organize a campaign chair. Director Richmond and his team are working on specific language and case content to say how the new spaces is going to be used, how it improves the lives of the citizens and how someone can give to make a difference. She continued that what is very important right now, is solving the problem of the fact that if the Library was to go out solo it would be very hard to reach the number that is needed. In regards to the idea of a capital fund, there might be an opportunity to campaign together toward that fund. It could inspire bigger giving all across the board. She asked if there would be an openness to that.

Chair Winslow stated he would be more amenable to that once the report is received back from the Town Center Committee. He suggested that they may want to talk with the Conservation Commission because they are looking for additional funds also.

Selectman Epperson stated that he sees a laundry list of things that could be done, with costs to get those things done. The CIP is a six year plan. If the costs are broken out over the years, with a plan, it will be easier to sell than doing it all at once.

Selectman Roman stated that she believes the Library and Town Hall are going to be on top of the list, as far as priority. If those were the two top priorities, the committee, (in working with the Library and the Selectmen), can look at what would be reasonable and what the taxpayers would be willing to pay. How can whatever they are not willing to pay be fundraised? That is what she envisions as being part of the plan. However, it is not so much on the committee but for the Selectmen with the Town Hall and the Library Trustees with the Library. She thinks that will all be part of the process but will shift from the committee to the selectmen and the Library.

Chair Winslow pointed out that if a resident in a voting booth, if it has been properly communicated, understands that 25% of this is being covered by private donations and they are being asked to come up with 75%, they might be more willing to do that.

Brian Klinger stated in thinking back to when the Library did its last expansion, about 20 years ago, that was not progressing favorable with the people of Rye, until the Selectmen made an agreement that the Library could raise 50% of the money privately and supported putting 50% into a warrant article. Once the town saw that the whole project was not going to go on the tax bill, it became much more feasible.

Mr. Ross stated it will be about messaging, communicating and marketing. This is more effective if it is done in sync with clear, identifiable, overarching purposes.

Chair Winslow noted that the Selectmen are precluded from promoting a warrant article. The Selectmen have to find a way of promoting it using their reflections, and word-of-mouth presentations, so there is a really good job of ground roots communication on this process. If the Selectmen can't do it, maybe others can be solicited to help.

Ms. Oliver stated that one of the things that came from Plan NH was how many people showed up and were really interested. Many times on committees, volunteers are requested and everyone takes a step back. However, with Plan NH over 100 people showed up. People were really interested and what they want is a voice. They want to be able to have a say in what they want for their town.

Chair Winslow noted there will be a representative from the Library Trustees on the Town Center Committee, so there will be that communication link. In turn, he would encourage the Library to keep communication open with the selectmen.

Mrs. Davis stated that the Library will continue to work on their machine; gathering materials, messaging, timeline and list of prospects. At the same time, as the Town Center Committee is

getting ready with their report, the Library would look to that to be important input, especially to the case and especially to the number that will be presented. The Library will be putting their infrastructure together. She hopes this will run along with similar infrastructures for other projects. The access to one another and encouragement for all the different projects to work together will be very helpful.

Chair Winslow reiterated that the Selectmen do not want to do anything until there is a plan.

Mr. Ross stated that because the Library Trustees are ahead of the curve, one of the things they can do is set up a pilot program. The Library could be doing some of those things and reporting to the Town Center Committee to provide them with a model for some things they may want to do.

Mrs. Davis stated there are about ten interviews left to complete, which are with some of the more critical people. She thinks it is an important time now to at least reach out to those people to let them know it is all moving along and it's going to be a coordinated effort.

Chair Winslow noted that he does not see the Town Center Committee being focused on money collection. The committee will be focused on the plan.

The group agreed.

Ms. Oliver asked about Rye's Master Plan.

Selectman Epperson explained that Victor Azzi wrote the original Master Plan. The plan does not have any legal basis at all. It is to run concurrently with zoning and planning regulations. He noted that towns do not have to have a master plan. They have to have a vision statement. Rye's vision statement reflected what the town was trying to do over the course of fifteen or twenty years. The Master Plan is being redone one chapter at a time. Over the last four years, the Planning Board has revised four or five chapters.

Mr. Azzi stated the town has worked through several cycles over the past several decades on the Master Plan for the Town of Rye. In the meantime, there is discussion about a very small part of the town, which is the Rye Town Center. The town needs a master plan for the Rye Town Center, which is a subset of the whole town.

Ms. Oliver asked if the Town Center Committee is going to come up with a master plan for the town center.

Selectman Roman stated that it would not be called a master plan but it would be the same concept. A master plan is very broad. She was thinking it would be more of a CIP plan, which is sort of a spreadsheet of projects and costs with the year to be done. It has aspects of the master plan, in terms of the overall vision, but with more details. Likely, when they get through all this and there is a plan everyone seems to support, that would then instruct the Master Plan to probably change in some aspect. She does not think the Master Plan is going to control this process; however, this process might affect amendments to the Master Plan.

The group agreed to keep communications open and to meet again in a few months.

**IV. OTHER BUSINESS**

**None**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion by Bill Epperson to adjourn at 6:30 p.m. Seconded by Keriann Roman. All in favor.**

Respectfully Submitted,  
Dyana F. Ledger