

TOWN OF RYE – BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Work Session

Friday, April 26, 2019

1:30 p.m. – Rye Town Hall

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

Others Present: Public Works Director Dennis McCarthy, Public Works Foreman Paul Paradis, Rockingham Planning Executive Director Tim Roache, DOT Commissioner Victoria Sheehan, NH Parks and Recreation Director Phil Bryce, DOT District 6 Engineer Brian Scott, Senator Tom Sherman and Police Chief Kevin Walsh.

I. CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Winslow called the work session to order at 1:30 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. WORK SESSION DISCUSSION

Chair Winslow noted that Rye has the longest seacoast in New Hampshire. The State is very aggressive in promoting the seacoast. Rye has a lot of out-of-state residents visiting and every year it is increasing. The town has a lot of parking, traffic and crowd safety issues. The intent of the work session is to discuss ways the Town can work with the State to help improve those concerns.

III. WORK SESSION – Discussion with DOT Commissioner Victoria Sheehan, Division of Parks and Recreation Director, Phil Bryce. (Arrived at 2:00 p.m.)

1. Restrict RV parking on Ocean Blvd.

On the town warrant in March 2019:

Shall the Town of Rye investigate, through the N.H. Department of Transportation, ways of legally restricting parking of large campers and recreational vehicles along portions of Route 1A (Ocean Boulevard), the parking which currently possess safety issues along this corridor. This article was recommended by the Selectmen and Beach Committee. Town vote was 1265 to 361 in favor.

The Selectmen's request to DOT is to restrict campers and RV's that are over 20ft in length from parking on Ocean Boulevard. The request for signage would be for "No parking of vehicles over 20ft". The area for consideration is from North Hampton town line to the Rye Harbor State Park exit. Foss Beach would be okay for parking because the sides of the road are wide enough for vehicles to pull off the road while leaving room for pedestrians. The restriction would begin again at Washington Road, north, to Concord Point and to Wallis Sands State Park. The area referred to as "The Ledges" is okay, as it is big enough and is one-hour parking. The parking restriction could also be seasonal, as it is only twelve weeks during the summer that are an issue.

Victoria Sheehan, DOT Commissioner, noted that typically DOT does not preclude certain types of vehicles, with the exception of highways which restrict bicycles and pedestrians. DOT treats all users of the system the same. Also, DOT does not typically do things on a seasonal basis, with the exception of seasonal speed limits because DOT has given specific authority to do that through the legislature. Ms. Sheehan stated it comes down to the enforcement piece for people who continue to park in restricted areas. She pointed out that there are wide shoulders in certain areas that could accommodate the vehicles. It is important that there is a location for these vehicles to go. The DOT's mission is to provide access. They have to be sure they are providing adequate parking for RV's so their access to Rye Beach is not shutoff entirely.

Chair Winslow noted that the best avenue for RV access is at Wallis Sands State Park. There is usually plenty of parking.

Ms. Sheehan agreed to consider the request and research whether DOT has the jurisdiction to restrict parking. She thinks it may be acceptable where the town is willing to provide other areas for RV access to the beach; however, they need to understand what can and cannot be done right now.

2. Jenness Beach State Park staffing

There is a need for staffing at Jenness Beach State Park, during peak hours, to manage the traffic backup, particularly when vehicles are trying to find parking and the lot is full.

Police Chief Kevin Walsh submitted photos showing the backup of traffic at Jenness State Park during a recent past summer season. He noted that the peak times during the summer are on hot days between the hours of 11:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. Many times, there are vehicles backed up from the parking lot onto Ocean Boulevard. He noted that RV's park in the lot and many times block the access point to the beach. He asked if the amount of staffing for the parks could be reviewed to be sure it is adequate to handle the volume at that particular location. He suggested that when the lot is full, the staff could be roping it off and moving the traffic along. He also asked that the management of the RV's be considered to determine if the rules are being followed. Are they parking too long or taking more than one parking space?

Selectman Roman noted that the more staffing that can be provided the better. The area is becoming very crowded and something is going to happen safety wise. There are more people going to the Jenness area than Wallis, probably because of the businesses that are there which is great for the economy. The Town needs help managing the traffic, pedestrians and bicyclists. She also noted that when the parking at Jenness is full, vehicles are speeding down Perkins Road because it is right in front of the lot. Whatever staffing the State can offer during peak times would be greatly appreciated to help enforce and control the parking. She also suggested that the staffing close the lot when it is full and keep the cars moving. She stated that they have been monitoring Jenness and the area. When Jenness is packed, there has always been parking available at Wallis Sands.

Chair Winslow noted that they are asking for staffing for thirteen weekends a year between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.

Phil Bryce, NH Parks and Recreation Director, commented that he would have to check the state parks' regulations with regards to the parking of RV's and campers. He noted that the State proposed to the community changing the flow of the traffic into the Jenness Beach lot. One of the reasons the traffic backs up is because people stop and unload at the bathhouse. The change would start the traffic at the

other end and have people pull through into the parking lot. However, that was “shot” down. The State thought this was a great solution. He noted that Jenness Beach is small. A lot of people are going through the State Beach to access the town beach. He noted that the people are not all paying the State’s meters, which pays for the staff. He continued that in regards to staffing, they were fifty percent staffed last year for the maintenance crew at Hampton. It is always a challenge to get staffing every spring. The State has increased the lifeguard wages for this season to help attract more lifeguards; however, it is always difficult to find staffing. In regards to enforcement, they have been relying on the Forest and Lands staff to help with issues; such as, dogs on the beach, particularly during the off-season. The meter patrol primarily enforces non-paid meters. They have not done a lot with illegal parking. He will have to look at the rules regarding the oversized vehicles. Some changes may need to be made to the rules to allow enforcement. He noted that the State has entered into an agreement that allows the Town to enforce the State’s rules in the state parks. New Hampshire does not have park rangers like many other states. He noted that enforcement takes a lot of training, in order to confront people. He would be concerned about the safety of the staff. He has been speaking with the Parks Director about part-time staff who are trained to handle enforcement situations. He pointed out that it was disappointing that the traffic pattern did not change, to at least try it out; however, the community did not want to address it in that way.

There was some discussion about having a sign posted for when the lot is full and another sign to redirect the traffic to Wallis Sands.

Mr. Bryce agreed to work on the idea of the sign and to have the staff start implementing use of the cones for when the lot is full.

3. Perkins Road/Ocean Blvd (Dunes) realignment

Selectman Roman noted that a committee was formed to talk about the safety issues at the intersection and along Perkins Road. The committee made a recommendation to work with the State to restripe the end of Perkins road to make it a ninety-degree turn (onto Perkins) and reduce the width. Currently, the measurement from line to line is over 30ft. The suggestion is to reduce it down to 22ft. If this works, next year the proposal would be to remove some of that pavement. The intent of this idea is to slow down the vehicles that are turning onto Perkins. There are many safety concerns for pedestrians parking on Perkins, which is a narrow road, and walking down to the beach.

Chief Walsh noted that if the intersection is reduced in width, it is not as inviting. A lot of times, the crosswalk at Jenness is the trigger for the traffic backup. Someone who is not patient enough to sit in that traffic will take a right onto Perkins Road because it is wide and inviting. If it is reduced down to a standard intersection size it might not be as inviting.

Brian Scott, DOT Engineer, asked what the minimum radius would be for that corner. The larger vehicles going out onto 1A need to be able to make that turn without going over the yellow line.

Mr. McCarthy replied that the town has been using 25 to 30ft radiuses.

Mr. Scott commented that he will look at this idea. He suggested that the Town try traffic barrels to see how it will work. He noted that there have been parking issues in front of the store. That corner should have an island to prevent people from parking on the roadside and to prevent people who park at the store from pulling out too far. Also, if it was extended down to the crosswalk, people who are crossing 1A would have a safe place to land on the other side.

Mr. McCarthy explained that the Town is installing bollards on Perkins Road along the right-of-way line for that reason. The town does not have the authority to do it along the State right-of-way line. He noted that if the State is willing to work with the Town on this, it might be a great way to keep the traffic corralled in that area.

Mr. Scott replied that they could work with the Town on that.

Senator Sherman noted that he will help with working with the businesses in that area.

Ms. Sheehan pointed out that DOT is willing to work with the Town on this but it might be more expensive than the Town was anticipating.

a. Is there a current ROW map for Ocean Blvd?

The Selectmen noted that having this information would be helpful in controlling encroachments into the right-of-way.

DOT has a survey for the Ocean Boulevard corridor which shows the state's right-of-way. Mr. Roache agreed to provide the link for the information to the Town.

4. Ocean Blvd drainage issues

Mr. McCarthy spoke about the drainage line that runs from Perkins Road to East Atlantic Avenue. The drainage then runs into a drainage ditch that runs under the town's Locke Road box culvert, back into a state box culvert, into the marsh and under Harbor Road Bridge. The drain line has been impacted by a driveway culvert that was approved and installed a number of years ago. Its invert is actually higher than the discharge point so this drain line stays surcharged all the time.

Mr. Scott explained that DOT was out there about a month ago with DES explaining what is going to be done. The proposal is to remove the twin culverts in the location of the old driveway, open up the channel and lower the new driveway channel, if possible. The person that installed it does not live at the property anymore so DOT has volunteered to fix the issue. He commented that the drainage system is probably in total disrepair and needs to be replaced. That will be a large project for the district which will require a lot of resources and planning. He noted that if this is going to be done it should be done next year because all of Route 1A is due for resurfacing next year.

Mr. McCarthy noted that the town also ties into that drain line. The town would have certain responsibilities and would work with DOT. If the idea is to get it done before the resurfacing, it would be good to know so it can be considered for next year's budget.

Senator Sherman noted that towns have the capacity to impose a five-dollar surcharge on registration fees, which may be increased by the State to ten dollars, to be used for transportation projects. The City of Portsmouth has just started imposing this charge on registrations. For many towns, this has been a huge benefit for town transportation projects.

There was some discussion on a possible timeline for this project. It was noted that DOT will be inspecting every culvert on Route 1A this summer. The goal is to replace everything that needs to be

replaced, which may delay the resurfacing of 1A for a year. It was also noted that DOT is now committed to a three-year paving cycle.

5. Satellite Parking

Ms. Sheehan stated that she is very familiar with the concept of satellite parking. Many parks across the State have issues with parking so they have been trying to look at alternatives. She continued that people are not really willing to use a shuttle service, unless there is something to force them to do so. A shuttle can become very complicated in determining how it is going to be promoted, who will use it, what it will cost and how much is going to be charged to cover the expenses.

Mr. Bryce noted that the new bathhouse at Jenness has been designed for the parking that is there now. He would be concerned about having the parking that is there now and also shuttling people in. There would be a question as to whether the facility could handle that many additional people.

Selectman Roman explained there has been some discussion about how the parking on the side roads is getting out of control during the summer months. There has been some talk about limiting parking on some of the town roads and have a shuttle in order to replace any parking that might be lost. The idea is it would be a balance of about the same number of people.

Ms. Sheehan commented that if the shuttle parking lot has more capacity, the Town could end up with more visitors. Implementing this idea can become very complicated and challenging.

6. Town use of meeting rooms at Seacoast Science Center

Chair Winslow noted that the Town uses the schools for voting and for major meetings. Because of the issue of children's safety, the school board has asked the Town to look at another place for voting and meetings. Selectman Roman came up with the idea of the Seacoast Science Center.

Mr. Bryce explained the State owns Odiorne Point and the building. The State has a contract with the Seacoast Science Center to manage the facility on the State's behalf. This idea would need to be run by the Attorney General's office. Both the State and the Seacoast Science Center would have to agree to the use with the Attorney General's okay. He does not believe the State has ever used a facility like that as a polling place. He agreed to check with the State to see if it can be allowed.

7. Extension of sewer line from Portsmouth to North Hampton

On the town warrant in March 2019:

*To see if the town will vote in favor of expanding the City of Portsmouth sewer line, at no cost to the Town of Rye, in pursuant to inter-municipal agreement to be negotiated between the Rye Sewer Commission and the City of Portsmouth, in order to provide public sewer service from the City of Portsmouth from Rye/Portsmouth boundary US 1, ending at the Rye, US 1/Washington Road intersection.
Town vote was in favor by 89%.*

Chair Winslow stated the town has been faced with the fact that there is not a lot of low-cost housing and property in Rye is very expensive. As such, the Town is seeing a reduction in the number of students in the schools. The thought is that if a sewer line was run from Portsmouth to North Hampton, along Route

1, the area may be expanded for condos and Workforce Housing, in the hopes of bringing more school aged children into Rye.

Selectman Epperson pointed out that the Town also has issues with drinking water, the Coakley Landfill and Berry's Brook. Parts of that area along Route 1 is developable on sewer. The warrant article was passed, with no cost to the Town or the State, for the sewer to be brought in so the property will not be overburdened with more septic. The problem is DOT is now repaving Route 1 and there is a moratorium on any alterations for five years. The Town is asking if there is a possibility of doing this on the shoulder or another way to help relieve some of the issues Rye is facing. He asked if DOT would consider a plan if the Town came up with something that would be considered acceptable.

Mr. Scott agreed.

Ms. Sheehan stated that if it is outside the pavement, they will entertain the idea. DOT does not like to have utilities down the center of the roadway anyways. Along the shoulder, or off to one side, is the ideal location. DOT is spending a lot of money on this roadway and that is why there are restrictions on cutting into that pavement.

Mr. Scott noted that DOT would want an engineering plan for review.

Discussion Summary:

- Point of contact for the town is the Town Administrator Michael Magnant.
- Brian Scott will reach out to DOT's traffic engineer in regards to whether RV's and campers can be restricted from parking along certain parts of Route 1A/Ocean Boulevard.
- Phil Bryce will follow-up on Jenness Beach staffing, signage, and control of the traffic and parking lot at Jenness Beach.
- Victoria Sheehan, with the help of Senator Sherman, will reach out to the property owners near the intersection of Perkins Road/Ocean Blvd to discuss the parking and traffic issues in that location.
- The Town will work on the idea of traffic barrels at the end of Perkins Road.
- Dennis McCarthy will continue to work with Brian Scott with regard to the drainage issues on Route 1A.
- It was agreed that the satellite parking idea would be put on hold at this time.
- Phil Bryce will follow up with the AG's office on the request for the use of the Seacoast Science Center for town voting and meeting space.
- Bill Epperson will work on getting an engineering plan for the sewer extension for DOT's review. Brian Scott will walk the corridor (Route 1) with the engineer before engineering plans begin.

Request from the State to the Town:

- Phil Bryce asked that the select board consider, once again, entering into an enforcement agreement for the state parks. He expressed his appreciation to Chief Walsh and the Police Department for helping to enforce the State's rules and regulations at the parks.

Chair Winslow asked if there is someone at the entrance of the Rye Harbor State Park to collect funds.

Mr. Bryce noted this has not been a very viable spot for the State. They are actually looking at paving the lot and installing parking meters.

Selectman Epperson asked why this cannot be done along Route 1A.

Ms. Sheehan explained that DOT does not typically install parking meters on state routes. Any revenue that is generated from parking meters, specifically on DOT land, has to go to transportation. It is hard to advocate for that when a lot of the parking revenue typically ends up going towards enforcement of those parking meters. Also, individual parking spaces have to be striped with parking meters. That means all the ADA Regulations have to be complied with and parking would not be allowed close to crosswalks, which would be a significant reduction of parking in Rye. That is why this idea has not moved forward in the past.

Selectman Roman stated there is a lot of concern about taking away spots. That is why the select board is trying to have a discussion about satellite parking. She noted that the Town has a lot of spots for parking. There are actually more spots for parking than beach when it is high-tide. She is not okay with someone getting hurt because they are trying to accommodate more spots. She would be fully supportive of any ideas from DOT that would address safety.

Ms. Sheehan explained that one of the things that keeps folks travelling through that area at low speeds is the fact that it feels tight because of the parking on both sides.

Selectman Roman commented that all cars are not going slow.

Senator Sherman stated it is true that the wider the road, with less parking and congestion, the faster people will go and they are going fast now. This is one of the reasons he is trying to get the Town to consider a seasonal speed limit. The Town can make a request to DOT to lower the speed limit along the corridor. The Town would just be responsible to pay for the signage.

Mr. McCarthy asked if there would be any funding opportunities with the state and federal for 'Complete Street' solution to that area.

Ms. Sheehan replied that a 'Complete Streets' type project would be eligible for federal funding; however, funding is limited. She noted that the town can work with Rockingham Planning, through the ten-year plan process, to advocate for a project.

Mr. McCarthy explained that a 'Complete Street' would have a dedicated sidewalk, bike lane, traffic and parking. It may even possibly be one side that would have parking. He thinks that is the solution.

Selectman Roman thinks they should look into this. She hopes that they would have the support of the State, as the Town has four state parks.

Ms. Sheehan noted there is scoring criteria that DOT considers. Community support and project readiness are two of the things they are always looking at because money could be allocated for a project and not be spent in a timely fashion. This would be a disservice to the other communities that are vying for those same dollars. She reiterated that they are very limited in their funding, given all the wants and needs. She explained that project readiness means the design has been taken to a point where the feasibility of the project has been validated. DOT wants cost certainty and information on temporary or permanent easements. The more pre-work the Town can do, the better.

Mr. Roache encouraged the Selectmen to consider implementing the surcharge on the registration fees, as suggested by Senator Sherman. It is a great way to start building a reserve for projects. He noted that they are not going to be able to do 'Complete Streets' in one shot. However, the Town can work with Rockingham Planning on coming up with a strategic approach.

IV. OTHER BUSINESS

- A. Fundraiser request – Plan NH Charrette Group requests permission to hold a fundraiser and/or promotional event at the Recycling Center on Saturday, 5/4/19 from 8:30 – 10:20 a.m.**

Motion by Keriann Roman to approve the fundraiser request of the Plan NH Charette Group. Seconded by Bill Epperson. All in favor.

- B. Town Hall Painting – Final Payment Authorization**

Motion by Keriann Roman to make the final payment in the amount of \$29,565. Seconded by Bill Epperson. All in favor.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Keriann Roman to adjourn at 3:45 p.m. Seconded by Bill Epperson. All in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,
Dyana F. Ledger