

**RYE TOWN CENTER COMMITTEE
MEETING
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 1, 2019
5:00 P.M. TOWN HALL**

I. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Selectman Winslow Called the meeting to order and led the pledge of allegiance at 5:00 p.m.

II. Introductions

There following members were present:

❖ **John Loftus**

- Degrees in Engineering and Transportation
- 25 years' experience in construction design
- Served on the last Town Hall Committee
- Member of the Historic District Commission for 3 years

❖ **Kaitlyn Coffey**

- Background in the Insurance Industry
- Serves as an alternate on the Historic District Commission
- Former member of the Historic District Commission
- Historic homeowner

❖ **Victor Azzi**

- Experience in Planning, Architecture, Engineering, Construction and Higher Education
- Rye Public Library Trustee
- Involved in a number of Town Projects including:
 - Master Plan
 - Rye Town Hall Committee
 - Parsonage
 - Rye Public Safety Building

❖ **Karen Stewart**

- Background in urban and community planning
- Member of the Historic District Commission
- Lives in the Historic District
- Served on the Town Hall Committee
- Mother of two children attending the Rye Junior High School

❖ **Mae Bradshaw**

- Currently the chair of the Historic District Commission
- One of the founding members of the Heritage Commission
- Member of the Capital Improvement Program Committee
- Member of the Budget Committee

➤ **Nina Parrott**

- ❖ Mother of three children; one at Rye elementary; one at Rye Junior High and one at Portsmouth High School
- ❖ Member of Rye PTA and Rye Education Foundation
- ❖ Small business owner

III. Review Committee Charge

Selectman Winslow made the following recommendations:

- The charge will be reviewed in detail at this meeting but should be periodically reviewed (every three to four meetings) throughout the duration of this committee's work, in order to stay focused on the goals of the charge.
- Meeting minutes should go out to:
 - Historic District Commission
 - Heritage Commission
 - Recreation Commission
 - Conservation Commission
 - Library Trustees
 - Police
 - Fire
 - Public Works
- All meetings are open to the public. Public comments will be taken at the end of the meetings, unless someone has something relevant that the committee wants to address.
- Discussion of committee issues to the public such as Rye Civic League, Portsmouth Herald should be referred to the chair.
- Discussion of committee issues outside of the meetings is discouraged, as the discussions are not legal unless there is a quorum of members from the Town.
- Public Meetings without a quorum can still be held as workshops. Voting is not allowed without a quorum
- Uses of any current or proposed buildings is in the Town's charge, however the details of the interior of the buildings is not in the Town's purview.
- All the meetings will be live streamed.
- The chair has the authority to ask any member to summarize the discussion points at any given time, to give to other members the time to speak or to move on to another topic.
- Meeting duration will be one and a half hours, unless there is a meeting issue that the majority wants to continue for another half hour.
- Members are encouraged to attend all meetings. Members can be removed from the committee if they miss 25% of the meetings.
- Each Committee member should familiarize themselves with the ***Rules of Procedure for Committees*** as established by the Board of Selectmen.

Selectman Winslow recommended adopting some Core Principles such as:

- Accommodating the youth and the elderly during this process.
- The Town has not been a very good steward of buildings, so it should not be acquiring additional buildings without a specific purpose. Buildings currently owned without a purpose should be disposed of through a sale or lease.
- Safety issues and concerns should be taken seriously.
- All employees do not have to be under one roof.
- There is a need for a place for the public to meet and gather.

Selectman Winslow gave a copy of the charge to each member and read it as follows:

Rye Town Center Committee Charge

The Town is charged with weighing the various options presented by Plan NH and incorporating those to create a comprehensive plan for a Town Center (as defined from the Old Trolley Barn to Grange Park). The Town shall evaluate the Plan NH Charrette, town owned assets, infrastructure in the Town, prior committee work and studies and work with various other Town Committees to achieve this plan. Further, the Town shall prepare at least (1) warrant article from the overall plan for the March 2020 warrant.

The Town will consist of not more than 8 members, including a Selectman's representative, and shall be appointed by the Board of Selectmen for an initial term ending September 30, 2020. The Town will participate in multiple discussions with the Board of Selectmen over the term and make a final presentation at a Selectmen's meeting. Staff members may be appointed as non-voting members of the Town. It is the Selectmen's intent to sunset this committee after completion of its charge, unless the Selectmen vote to continue the Town.

Rye Town Center Committee shall follow the Rules of Procedure for Committees established by the Board of Selectmen.

Town of Rye Board of Selectmen

IV. Elect Chairman

John Loftus volunteered for the position of chair.

Mae Bradshaw stated that she was too busy and she felt that John was also. She recommended having someone that at least "looks" neutral. She recommended either Nina Parrott or Karen Stewart.

Nina Parrott stated that this is her first committee and she does not feel comfortable taking on the position at this time.

Karen Stewart stated that she was interested. However, where she lives in the Town Center, she felt that it would seem a little bit weighted. She stressed the importance of having someone new and fresh and more neutral.

Selectman Winslow pointed out that it would be the same for anyone that lives in the Town. If they live in Town and were on any committee, as long as they are neutral, it would not be an issue.

Mae Bradshaw recommended that the chair should be the member that is the least known for having taken strong positions on what is going on. She stated that they are coming to this as a new enterprise. She feels that all the members are free of prejudice and bias; however, not everyone is going to believe that.

John Loftus disagreed. He stated that his agenda is to get as much public input as possible. He added that he is offering his experience of running a ship, keeping the ship on course and on time.

Motion by Mae Bradshaw to appoint Karen Stewart as the chair of the Town Center Committee. Seconded by Nina Parrott.

Victor Azzi stated that he is interested in being the chair. He stated that he would make a good chair. He added that his experience and opinions are not prejudice. It would help to have someone that is very familiar with the properties in the Town Center. He recommended that the members look at qualifications for the success of the committee and find someone that has knowledge and experience in the areas that this committee will be dealing with.

Selectman Winslow pointed out that the position of the chair is more of an administrative position and they are talking about two things. One is skills and one is competence. The position would be for someone to set back, listen and guide, not direct.

Mae Bradshaw explained that when she nominated Karen it was because she lives in the Town Center and is a stakeholder. She has been on the Town Hall Committee and the Historic District Commission, so she understands a lot of the issues involved. She has the personality to be a fair, level person, who would control the meetings so that people get their say, but not dominate.

Nina Parrott stated that working with Karen on other projects, she has found her to be very organized and level-headed. She has nothing but positive things to say about Karen.

Karen Stewart stated that she would be very honored and pleased to take on this roll with the support of the members. She would accept the leadership and consensus building of the Town 100%; however, she would expect that all the members be equally participating in the process.

Selectman Winslow called for a vote.

**Vote: 4 in Favor; Bradshaw – Yes, Parrott – Yes Coffey – Yes, Stewart – Yes
Motion passed.**

**Motion by Mae Bradshaw to appoint Nina Parrott as vice-chair. Seconded by Karen Stewart.
4 in Favor; Bradshaw – Yes, Parrott – Yes, Coffey – Yes, Stewart – Yes
Motion passed.**

**Motion by Nina Parrott to appoint Kaitlyn Coffey as committee Secretary. Seconded by Mae
Bradshaw. All in favor.
Motion passed.**

V. Next Steps

Chair Stewart stated that the timetable is aggressive. She asked the members to talk about how frequently the committee should meet. She pointed out that there is a lot of information to get through.

The committee decided to meet every week on Wednesdays at 5:30 pm

VI. Public Input

Steven Borne, 431 Wallis Road and member of the Rye Civic League, provided the Town with binders that were made for Plan NH containing information and history from prior town committees and projects. The binders are on loan from the New Hampshire Room at the Rye Public Library. He guided the committee through a review of the contents of the books. The first one contains the History of the Rye Town Center, put together by Alex Herlihy. There are maps and diagrams for Plan NH. The Rye Congregational church is looking to expand their role in the community. Which may include a skating rink. There is also information from a visit that was done in 2002 from Plan NH.

Mr. Borne pointed out that there has been a tremendous amount of work and about \$400,000 spent on the Town Hall plans. The second binder contains as much of that information as possible. The Civic League put together the chronological history of the work/study progress on the different town owned buildings. All the space needs studies are in this binder.

The third binder contains the report from the Historical Structure Study done on the Town Hall building by Ground Roots. The 2012 AG Study is also in this binder.

Selectman Winslow explained that Nancy Barba has been hired to review the space needs of the Town offices in Town Hall. She will be giving that information to the Town by December.

Member Azzi expressed concern that the information will not be available until December, with the committee being expected to come up with a warrant article in December.

Selectman Winslow commented that Mr. Azzi has made a very good point. They are up against a very tight timeline. The warrant article could be just about the sidewalks and nothing about Town Hall, for this year. Selectman Winslow also pointed out that at the last Selectmen's meeting, Dan Philbrick approached the Board regarding a building swap between the Parsonage and the TD Bank building. The Board of Selectmen are not prepared to address this issue until this committee has a chance to provide a recommendation.

Member Bradshaw asked Selectman Winslow for clarification. She asked if the committee was to come up with two comprehensive plans.

Selectman Winslow answered that he would like to wait until they get the information back from Nancy Barba regarding how much space is needed.

Member Bradshaw agreed with Selectman Winslow that the information is important. But as the committee projects forward, does the Board of Selectmen want the committee to assume that the Board may be able to negotiate a swap with Mr. Philbrick, which would involve the Town owning TD Bank and giving up the Parsonage?

Selectman Winslow replied this would be appropriate. He added that he was disappointed that Plan NH did not give recommendations for the Parsonage; other than, the suggestion that the Parsonage work closely with the Library. The Library Trustees do not have any interest in the Parsonage. He explained further by pointing out that the Town has a building that is in a substantial state of disrepair. The last estimate was \$500,000 to renovate the building for residential use.

Member Azzi clarified that the Library Trustees are not interested in the Parsonage as part of their vision. However, as a resident of Rye and a member of the Committee, he believes that the Parsonage and its location is of special interest and of value to the Town of Rye. He added that he does not see it being given away, sold or traded.

Selectman Winslow noted that the use of the Parsonage needs to be determined.

Member Azzi pointed out that there is a history around the acquisition of the Parsonage. The implementation of one of the things learned from a listening session, was that the Town wanted a place for seniors to live in the center, within walking distance to the Library, Town Hall and the Cemetery.

Member Loftus asked how many apartments are in the Parsonage.

Selectman Winslow stated there are eight.

Member Loftus asked how many of the residents were former residents.

Selectman Winslow answered that in the beginning two were former residents, six were not.

Member Azzi suggested that the demographic of the residents of the Parsonage has changed over the years.

Member Bradshaw stated that who lives in the Parsonage is not relevant, because the Town has already decided that it is not going to be maintained as a resident. The Town has already decided that they are not going to be a landlord. All the residents that are currently there will be gone by the March election and the space will be sitting there empty. The issue is to figure out how to occupy that space for the best interest of the Town Center.

Steven Borne pointed out that the fourth binder is the report from Plan NH. He added that the work on the Parsonage, with the Parsonage Committee, is also included in these binders. As well as, the Public Safety Building and the Trolley Barn.

Mr. Borne summed up by saying that there are three Master Plans in Town; the Rye Public Library, Rye Recreation and the Town's Master Plan. All these documents are included in these binders as well.

Member Loftus recommended using an Excel spreadsheet to index the information that will be coming into the Town as this process moves forward. By indexing the information, it will make it easier to revisit documents as needed.

Member Coffey said that she would do the indexing of the correspondence as it is received.

Steven Borne, Rye Civic League, stated the Civic League could post each document individually and create a hyperlink for people to access the document easily.

VII. Other Business

Member Bradshaw revisited Selectman Winslow's recommendation of having "core principles" adopted by the Town. She commented that it would be good for the Town to come to some consensus about some of the issues.

Member Loftus pointed out that change sometimes has a rippling effect. He expressed concern that it may limit the results on the outset, that will shut out ideas.

Chair Stewart explained that they don't want to be boxed in but recommended having guiding principles. For instance, everyone can agree that safety is important.

Member Azzi stated that the core principles need to be in support of the vision of the Town for the Rye Town Center.

Member Loftus reminded the members that at the charrette, they went around to each table and asked for two priorities. He stated that he would like to see that metric. He suggested that be the starting point.

Chair Stewart agreed and said that the Town should review the charrette findings and how they came to their findings.

Mr. Borne stated that everyone on the Committee should make the time to read the Plan NH report and watch the video. The key take-away from that is that the Town's people are reluctant to support any endeavor without a plan. Any group in town that is trying to raise money is going to be hampered if there is not an overall plan.

Member Bradshaw recommended adding the Board of Selectmen, Plan NH applicants that worked on the Town and the Schools to the minute's list.

Selectman Winslow explained that the Select Board gets copies of all the Boards' minutes.

Chair Stewart asked for ideas on how to structure this project and if there is a logical progression.

Member Bradshaw suggested each member individually review the Plan NH report and come back with questions. There may be questions that need to be answered by some of the department heads. The thinking should be about each individual building; as well as, moving the monument and the grass noel. There should also be questions about who, how and how much it will cost to accomplish the objectives. Ms. Bradshaw expressed the importance of not only promoting a project, but of developing the how and how much.

Member Azzi recommended developing a plan first. Then evaluate the costs of each piece of that plan.

Member Bradshaw stated that she feels that it is important to know the costs of an idea, if it is going to be included in the plan. She stressed that she does not want to start making "wish lists" for everyone that are way out of reach.

Member Loftus stated that in any kind of construction project, it is better to hire professional subcontractors. There could be a number of issues, such as asbestos, that need to be addressed.

Selectman Winslow pointed out that the charge of the Committee is to have a warrant article for 2020. He recommended that the committee go through each one of the recommendations of the charrette report and prioritize them.

Member Parrott suggested matching the recommendations to the list of what the people at the charrette said was priority. She reported that one thing that she keeps hearing is a multi-generational meeting space and safety.

Chair Stewart summarized that what she is hearing is that everyone can agree to familiarize themselves with the charrette report before the next meeting. Next week will be the first real meeting and will be the priority setting meeting. So, the Town will key off of the charrette report, prioritize the recommendations, while considering the public's priorities, and match that to what the committee is charged with. If it still seems relative, the committee will come up with its core principles or its vision. Chair Stewart also suggested having outside experts, such as Chief Walsh, come in to talk about traffic issues.

Member Bradshaw agreed and added that October would be a good month to address safety issues, by bringing in the Police and Fire Chiefs, as the space needs report will not be back from Nancy Barba until December.

Member Loftus recommended getting a plan of where all the utilities are, such as water lines.

Member Bradshaw stated that the Parsonage may be the perfect spot for a coffee shop, a community center or small shops for Rye artists.

Member Loftus stated that he visions the area that is now asphalt beside the Parsonage, as a courtyard or a park. A place where people can walk or ride their bikes to. A place where the community can gather. He added that there is also a parking issue on the road, between the Safety building and the Library, which needs to be addressed.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Phil Winslow to adjourn at 6:30 p.m. Seconded by Mae Bradshaw. All in Favor.

Respectfully Submitted.
Dyana F. Ledger