

**RYE TOWN CENTER COMMITTEE
MEETING
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 09, 2019
5:30 P.M. TOWN HALL**

Members Present: Chair Karen Stewart, Vice-Chair Nina Parrott, Secretary Kaitlyn Coffey, John Loftus, Victor Azzi, Mae Bradshaw, John Mitchell, and Selectmen's Rep; Phil Winslow.

I. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Stewart called the meeting to order and led the pledge of allegiance at 5:30 p.m.

II. Meeting Minutes – October 1, 2019

The following corrections were noted:

- Page 4, Paragraph 6; Victor Azzi's comment: He added that his experience and opinions are not ~~prejudice~~.
It should read: He added that his experience and opinions are not prejudiced.
- Page 8, Paragraph 7; Mae Bradshaw's statement: The thinking should be about each individual building; as well as, moving the monument and the grass ~~not~~.
It should read: The thinking should be about each individual building; as well as, moving the monument and the grass knoll.
- Page 9, Paragraph 2; Chair Stewart's statement: If it seems ~~relative~~, the committee will come up with its core principles of its vision.
It should read: If it seems relevant, the committee will come up with its core principles of its vision.

Chair Stewart suggested adding the following to the meeting minutes distribution list:

- Rye Water District
 - School District PTA
 - Rye Congregational Church
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- Page 7, Paragraph 4; Mae Bradshaw's statement: ...because the Town has already decided that it is not going to be maintained as a ~~resident~~.
It should read: because the Town has already decided that it is not going to be maintained as a residence.
 - Page 9, Paragraph 2; Chair Stewart's comment: So, the ~~Town~~ will key of the charrette report.... It was meant to said; So, the Rye Town Center Committee will key of the charrette report.

**Motion by Phil Winslow to approve the meeting minutes of October 1, 2019 as amended.
Seconded by John Loftus. All in Favor.**

III. Review Committee Charge

Secretary Coffey read the charge as follows:

Rye Town Center Committee Charge

The Committee is charged with weighting 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 Committee 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 Committee shall prepare at least (1) warrant article from overall plan for the March 2021 warrant.

The Committee 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 Committee 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 Committee. It is the Selectmen's intent to sunset this Committee after completion of its charge, unless the Selectmen vote to continue the Committee.

IV. Define Guiding Principles/Priorities for Work

Chair Stewart asked for the members preliminary thoughts.

Member Loftus recommended having Police Chief Walsh and Public Works Director McCarthy come in to talk to the Committee as soon as possible. He stated that he was looking at the area on a GIS map. The width of the street on GIS is 60 feet. The utilities, such as the storm drains and the water lines, are on the library side of the road. In the safety part of the charrette, the pedestrian and vehicle traffic was discussed. The recommendation was to reduce the lines to 10-11 feet, versus the 12 that they are currently. He pointed out that reducing the lines to 10 feet and adding a bike line and a sidewalk on one side, would be approximately 36 feet in total. His concern is that it will be very wide. Then if there is parallel parking, there will be a need for an additional 9 feet. From Lang Road to the end of the library property, there is room for 10-11 parallel parking spaces. He explained that the basis of the Plan New Hampshire charrette committee was to bring economic vitality to the center of Town, like a public restaurant or coffee shop. The parallel parking would benefit that.

Chair Stewart reported that she received a tally of the conversions from the charrette from Robin at Plan New Hampshire. She stated that she would make copies for the members. She asked for this conversion to be continued (as it is a key issue), after the review of the core principles.

Member Bradshaw reminded the members that they had talked about developing a couple of plans at the last meeting. She stated that after reviewing the charge again, she would like to recommend developing one plan focusing on the town owned properties. She suggested that the

Committee should not get sidetracked with buildings that the Town does not own. She added that she understands that there may be a very tempting offer on the table, but they can't develop a plan for a March warrant article based on such an ambiguous arrangement.

Selectman Winslow disagreed by stating that they are dealing with a timing issue. The owner of the TD Bank building is considering a trade. He is willing to move forward, if the Town goes to the voters in March with the offer. The reason behind the TD Bank building is to gain additional office space to be able to reconfigure the Town Hall building. The trade offer is something that needs to be discussed.

Member Bradshaw suggested that the Selectmen should update the charge.

Chair Stewart pointed out that the Town already had the opportunity to purchase the property and declined. If the Committee goes into the hypothetical, they would be on shaky grounds.

Member Parrott stated that in order to be fair, the Committee should remember that the year it was voted down, there were a number of articles on the warrant regarding the Town Hall. It was very confusing. She feels the voters just said "no" to all of the ideas. She suggested that it may be a different temperament now.

Member Azzi recommended including all of the buildings in the geographical area, whether the Town owns them or not. He added that it should be the responsibility of the Committee to come up with one plan to propose to the Selectmen. The plan could include the TD building or exclude it, but it should be considered.

Member Coffey pointed out that at the last Selectmen's meeting, she felt that the Board wanted the Committee to discuss what could potentially be in the best interest of the Town. She stated that the trolley barn was brought up. Is that obsolete? Should it be sold? What are the needs of the Town? The Committee should give their recommendations of the overall direction.

Selectman Winslow stated that he agreed with Member Bradshaw that the Selectmen should revisit the charge, given the new information about the TD building.

Chair Stewart agreed that would be helpful. She pointed out it is still hypothetical, however.

Member Parrott recommended that the Committee back up. She pointed out that in the charette there was priority on space needs, safety and intergenerational town activity. She suggested that the Committee set a plan with a timeline of when they will discuss each issue. She felt that the safety issues should be the first priority for a warrant article.

Selectman Winslow noted that maintaining the quintessential historical character of Rye is an important element.

Referring to the Plan New Hampshire tallies on conversions at the charette, Chair Stewart stated that the historical nature of the Town's center was the most prominently cited benefit of the Town, along with the Library and church. Also, the quaint, quintessential New England feel was a benefit.

She recommended that the Committee incorporate these core principles into their vision statement, in order to create their warrant articles, and tackle this vision by priority.

Member Loftus stated that he feels having the Police Chief and Public Works Director come in to talk to the committee will help with this process. He agreed with member Azzi that the Committee should look at the whole picture, not just the town owned buildings. He pointed out that there are a lot of privately-owned homes and buildings in this area that will be affected and they need to be considered during the process.

Chair Stewart agreed.

Member Bradshaw suggested the Committee making a list of what they see as the issues that might need input from other departments. The departments could be scheduled at different meetings in order to get their input.

The members agreed that the guiding principles should be as follows:

- Retain historical character of Rye Town Center
- It should be safe, attractive and welcoming
- Functional
 - Provide governmental functions
- Accessible
 - Bringing the community together

V. Craft Vision Statement for Center of Town Plan

Member Azzi offered a draft of a vision statement that could be the start to the Committee's Vision Statement. He pointed out that a lot of the language came from the 2004 Town Master Plan.

Chair Stewart thanked Member Azzi with starting off the discussion. She pointed out that there was a lot that the Committee could work with from the draft.

Member Mitchell suggested that part of the guiding principles should be a vision of the future, which is outside the current charge.

Member Bradshaw stated that the Committee must stay focused on the charge, in order to produce the results within the timeline.

Member Loftus said he does not understand why the Committee needs to be tied to such a narrow scope. The draft that Member Azzi has started does not have to be the final vision. It is just a starting point.

Member Parrott agreed. She added that the priorities of the charette must be the focus.

Member Azzi reminded the Committee that the planning is a journey and not the destination. They should always be planning for the Town, rather it is for the next three years or five years. The Town should always be revisiting the plan and correcting the course moving forward. The Committee should not be expecting to accomplish everything. They should not think that other people expect them to propose all the changes that need to be made to the Rye Town Center. The Committee and the residents should be satisfied that the Committee is setting the course for the Town to follow in the planning.

Selectman Winslow suggested that in order to attain a written document outlining the guiding principles, that one of the members compile the points discussed at this meeting. He requested that another issue be added to the guiding principles, which is to be sensitive to the taxpayers' concerns. He stated that the draft document from Member Azzi is excellent. He asked that one of the members wordsmith it as well.

Member Mitchell stated that he would be willing to do this for the Committee. He clarified that he understands the process to be the guiding principles listed in bullet form. These are the boundaries of what the Committee is looking to accomplish. These give the foundation for the bigger vision. Then the Committee will break down the pieces. The Rye Town Center Committee will be guided by these principles. Member Mitchell also suggested that the Committee could incorporate the guiding principals into the vision statement, as bullet points, in order to give structure to the project. He acknowledged that the select board's charge needs to be taken into consideration, in order to stay on track. He pointed out that there isn't a lot of time.

Member Parrott pointed out that even if the Committee starts with the list of guiding principles, during the process of talking to the other departments, other issues will come up that may come to the front. She stressed that they need to start with what they know now. Moving forward there could be changes.

Chair Stewart stated that the Committee does not have to have a formal list of guiding principles right now, but know that they do have some principles that have been articulated in this conversation and in the charette report. She asked if there are any priorities from this group.

Member Coffey stated that the functionality piece is important. She explained that some of the other pieces, such as the historical character and the gardens, could be done by volunteer but the big-ticket item is the functionality.

Member Parrott agreed by pointing out that you need the functionality before you can create gathering spaces. The logistical items need to be worked out.

Member Coffey added that safety would be the second issue.

Member Loftus recommended using the matrix from the charrette, which shows what the public saw as the priorities.

Member Coffey noted the historic piece can be incorporated into anything.

Member Parrott agreed. She stated that the Historic District Commission will have to approve anything in the town center.

Selectman Winslow stated that safety should be equal to functionality as to priority. Having the functionality of the buildings would be helpful. It would be nice to have the understanding of the function of the buildings; however, there are some mechanical issues that need to be dealt with. The functionality is a bigger nut to crack. The Town needs to know what the office space needs are going to be and what buildings that will include. These are issues that the Selectmen will need to come to grips with. If they can provide information that can help with the decision-making process, with the recommendations of this Committee, it would be great.

Member Azzi stressed the need to answer the questions: What does this Town plan to do with the town offices? Where will they be? Will they be in one building or several buildings? As to functionality, do things work better for the town offices when they are all in the same building? These things need to be decided before sidewalks and walkways start being built.

Chair Stewart stated the Committee should not lose track that there are many more users of the Town Center than just town employees. There are children going to school and people using the library and the church. So, there are other populations to be considered, even not knowing where the town offices will be located.

Member Bradshaw stated that she thinks safety should be the first priority.

Member Azzi noted these are not competing priorities. All these issues are important and are not competing with one another.

Member Loftus suggested that the Committee stay focused on the big issues. Traffic is an issue and was a main concern of the charrette. The historic feel of the Town is covered by the Historic Commission.

Member Bradshaw suggested starting out by talking about the trolley barn. She reported that she has had a number of conversations with the Planning Department about the use of that building. They are very positive that that building would work fine for their department. There are only three and a half employees in that department and there is adequate space to house them in that building. That would relieve congestion on the first floor of the Town Hall right away. The plan could start; year one, refurbish the trolley barn and move the Planning/Building Department to that location. That would leave space in the Town Hall to just keep statuesque for now. Next step could be to address the upstairs space, the Parsonage, etc. She suggested phasing in the project over a period of years.

Selectmen Winslow clarified that the select board needs to look at the whole scope. The intention is to take all the options and decide if it should be used as additional space. If so, how many square feet will be gained and at what cost? Without the information from Nancy Baber, it will be really hard to come up with a plan. The Board of Selectmen are hoping to have the information back by the end of the month.

Chair Stewart suggested the Committee table the discussion about building usage until they have the information on square footage.

Selectmen Winslow recommended following Member Loftus' idea about have Police Chief Walsh and Public Works Director McCarthy come into the next meeting to discuss Central Road, in regards to the sidewalks, walkways and bike lines, Grange Park and the Washington and Central Road intersections.

Member Parrott said that she thinks that it is important to have Chief Walsh and Mr. McCarthy come to the next meeting to talk about their priorities regarding these areas. Information from them regarding costs and other restraints, will help the Committee to prioritize what they want to pursue. She added that it is important to get benchmarked dates on the calendar.

Motion by John Loftus to extend the meeting by fifteen minutes. Seconded by John Mitchell. All in favor.

Chair Stewart asked if there is an agreement that the Committee should focus on streetscapes and traffic calming. She added that she could arrange to have the department heads come in to talk to the Committee about their thoughts and costs.

Member Parrot offered to do up a calendar of benchmarks for the Committee.

VI. Public Input

- **Cathleen Hodson, 616 Central Road**, stated that she is in attendance because she is passionate about the residential historic town center. She grew up in a town in Massachusetts, where the town center was ruined, so she is very caring about preserving Rye's lovely town center. She added that she supports all recommendations for safety.

VII. Review Plan NH Recommendations – Not discussed

VIII. Next Steps

Chair Stewart pointed out that one of the meetings coming up is on Wednesday, October 30th, which is Halloween Trick or Treat night from 5 to 7 pm. She asked if that meeting could be rescheduled.

The Committee agreed she should ask Janice about rescheduling the meeting for Tuesday the 29th at 5:30.

Chair Stewart also pointed out that Wednesday, November 6th, the ZBA will be having a meeting in the court room starting at 7:00 pm, so the Committee will have to finish on time or a little early.

Chair Stewart outlined the action items:

- Member Mitchell will be editing the vision statement and incorporation the guiding principles.
- Chair Stewart will work with Janice to schedule the department heads to attend the next meeting.
- Member Parrott will put together a benchmark calendar

IX. Other Business

Member Parrott suggested that the Committee look through the safety list and formulate some questions for the Police Chief and Public Works Director. She added that it would be a good use of everyone's time.

Selectman Winslow recommended inviting Fire Chief Cotreau to attend at the same time.

Chair Stewart commented that the Committee should familiarize themselves with the Plan New Hampshire proposal for the actual traffic and road reconfiguration. The Committee should come to the meeting prepared with questions.

Selectman Winslow stated that this meeting was one of the better starts to a Committee that he has attended. He encouraged the members to not get discouraged.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mae Bradshaw to adjourn at 7:04 p.m. Seconded by Nina Parrott. All in Favor.

Respectfully Submitted.
Dyana F. Ledger