

**RYE TOWN CENTER COMMITTEE
MEETING
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2019
5:30 P.M. TOWN HALL**

Members Present: Chair Karen Stewart, Vice Chair Nina Parrott, John Loftus, Secretary Kaitlyn Coffey, Victor Azzi, Mae Bradshaw, (by phone) Member John Mitchell

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 9, 2019

The approval of the minutes was moved to the next meeting on October 23rd.

III. Review /Adopt Vision

Chair Stewart stated that she sent out a document by e-mail that she and Member Mitchell had been working on. She explained that they took the document that Member Azzi presented at the last meeting and worked on streamlining it to make it a little more aspirational. She stated that she drew on Member Azzi's work to create a tighter, higher level vision, that the Committee can refer back to as they work. She asked for comments from the Committee members.

Member Bradshaw noted that the Vision Statement seems to focus on the shorter term, but it doesn't exclude the Committee from giving something broader as Member Azzi suggested last week.

Motion by Kaitlyn Coffey to adopt the Vision Statement as written. Seconded by Mae Bradshaw. All in favor.

IV. Review/Adopt Guiding Principles

Chair Stewart explained that the guiding principles are all elements that she and Member Mitchell captured from past discussions, the charge from the Selectmen, and the Plan NH findings.

Member Bradshaw asked for clarification on the third item referring to meeting with town staff and volunteer committees.

Chair Stewart clarified that the Committee would not be interviewing all the town staff, but as was discussed at the last meeting, they would be asking certain department heads and other committees to meet with them as needed.

Member Bradshaw recommended that item three state that the meetings will be by the invitation of the chair of the Committee.

V. Review/Approve Committee Timeline

Member Parrott presented the Committee with a draft of the proposed timeline. The discussion included:

- December 4, 2019 - Invite the Budget Committee come to the meeting
- December 18 2019 - Final Draft of the Committee's recommendations and a copy of the warrant article sent to Janice for the Selectmen to review.

After further discussion, Member Parrott stated that she will meet with the Janice to get all the official dates and to get on the agendas where needed.

VI. Review Strategic Planning Goals

Chair Stewart explained that the goals that are listed are from prior discussions, the charrette findings and public participation and comments.

- Safety and accessibility
- Quintessential historical nature
- Maintaining multi-generational focus on any planning that occurs
- Reviewing town buildings to make sure that they are efficient and functional

Motion by Mae Bradshaw to adopt the Strategic Planning Goals as set forth, subject to the Committee being able to act on them, as they are being developed. Seconded by John Loftus. All in favor.

Chair Stewart elaborated on her ideas regarding the goals and what the Committee could do. Such as:

- Safety
 - Traffic counting gateways at the entrances of the Town Center.
 - Changing intersections to slow traffic
 - Adding bicycle lines and sidewalks
 - Narrowing the travel lanes for vehicles

She explained that these are all things that came from the charrette and there may be more ideas that will come up at the meeting with the department heads.

She suggested that for each one of the goals the Committee should come up with some actionable measurements and action items for the Committee. The action items could be anything from homework, to review, or to invitations that are issued to people to come before the Committee.

Member Parrott recommended just focusing on the first two goals; that being, safety and accessibility and quintessential historical nature, for the first phase of this process. She

suggested that after the warrant article is done, if time permits, the Committee could take a look at some of the other goals.

Chair Stewart stated that Administrator Bergeron is going to research the deeds to the three private properties that are on west side of Washington Road between the Rye Junior High School and the Library in regards to the rights-of-way.

Member Mitchell recommended that the Committee would probably need to have a survey done in order to proceed with the idea of putting in sidewalks.

Member Bradshaw pointed out that a survey could cost up to \$10,000.

Member Loftus pointed out that a survey would also be necessary to find out information about the utilities, drainage and fire lines in the area. A survey of that scope would probably cost more than \$10,000. Member Loftus pointed out that there will also be a need to bring in an engineer in order to have the plan laid out. (ADA sidewalks need to fit the grade.)

It was suggested that this may have to become part of a warrant article moving forward.

Member Azzi stated that there is some history dealing with the same three properties. During the design and building of the Rye Public Safety Building, a sidewalk from the end of the sidewalk in front of the Safety Building to the Junior High was proposed. At that time, the Board of Selectmen did not want to spend the money for the installation and the maintenance of the sidewalk. Member Azzi stated that he has talked to a surveyor, Jim Verra, that has a lot of data on properties in Rye. Member Azzi offered to talk to Mr. Verra again to get an idea of the costs involved in having a survey done.

The Committee agreed that it would be a great idea.

Member Azzi recommended that in the meantime, the Committee should decide what it is that they want to accomplish on Washington Road.

Member Loftus stated that he based his ideas on the outcome of the charrette. He started on the east side of the road, added five feet for a bike lane, 22 feet for the vehicle lane, and 5 feet for a bike lane, then there is 6 inches for a curb and a bumper zone of 4 feet and the sidewalk. The minimum width for an ADA sidewalk is five feet. He pointed out that near the Lang Road intersection there is not enough room to get the width that is needed, so there is a choice between the sidewalks or the bike lanes.

The Committee agreed that the sidewalks seem to be the better choice.

Member Azzi stated that in order to maintain the semi-rural character of the Town, he felt that curbing is not necessary and that it is too formal. There are no curbs anywhere else in town. He referred to what is in front of the Public Safety Building. There is a sidewalk with a grassy strip and then pavement.

Referring to the Plan NH report, Chair Stewart asked if the Committee is in agreement that they would like to see a sidewalk from the Junior High to the Library. She asked where else they would like to see a sidewalk. Plan NH recommended from the Town Hall to Lang Road on the west side of Washington, which includes properties on Central Road. More deed reviews would be needed.

VII. Public Safety/Public Works: Review Charrette Recommendations Related to Safety and Set Priorities/Questions for 10/23 Meeting with Department Heads

Chair Stewart stated that one question that she has will be for the Fire Chief. How does he feel about having a sidewalk that goes right in front of the Public Safety Building?

Neither Member Azzi nor Member Loftus felt that it would be an issue. The sidewalk would be beyond the curb cut.

Member Coffey suggested that they ask Chief Walsh if he has traffic counts for Washington Road using the new unit that the department just purchased.

Member Loftus stated that he had spoken to both Chief Walsh and Mr. McCarthy regarding intersections. Neither one of them seem to have an issue if it is a rotary, a T intersection or a Y intersection. Chief Walsh brought up that it could be an issue for an ambulance, because they are raised and bumpy. Mr. McCarthy has no issues with them due to plowing.

Member Bradshaw suggested writing up some questions to ask the department heads.

Member Loftus recommended letting them talk and that will trigger questions from the Committee. He added that he sat with Mr. McCarthy a few weeks ago. Mr. McCarthy was bringing up things he would have never thought about. Member Loftus stated that he also had ideas and questions that Mr. McCarthy had not thought about. It is the best approach to gathering information by having a “give-and-take” exchange.

Chair Stewart suggested taking some time to discuss what the Committee would prefer to see aesthetically. She added that when she reflects on a historic downtown, she feels that a T intersection with green space is more appealing and welcoming.

Member Parrot stated that roundabouts can be made appealing, as well.

Member Loftus stated that there is probably not enough room at the Wallis/Washington intersection for a roundabout. It would probably do better as a T intersection, which will probably be less expensive.

Member Azzi said that he feels that a roundabout would be a good idea for the Central/Washington Road intersection. He stated that a roundabout is a safer intersection. It is a traffic calming device. Collisions are rare and less damaging because vehicles are forced to slow down to get around them.

Member Loftus stated that he has looked at the possibility of a roundabout at the Central/Washington intersection and feels that it would fit. The engineering will be substantially

more because of the requirements of the angles, and ingress and egress. Looking at the three roads coming together, which are Washington and Central, there is not much of a differentiation in the arch on the circle of the rotary. People would be coming in at almost the same arch as they would be leaving. The plus side of a rotary is that it does not stop traffic, so there is no backup. The traffic just slows down and doesn't stop.

Chair Stewart questioned the situation of bike and car interface. She added that she remembered the landscape architect from Plan NH saying that the roundabout sounded like "overkill" for this area.

Member Azzi stated that it might be; however, it still warrants some study and evaluation before the idea is dismissed as a possibility.

Member Mitchell stated that he is not against the roundabout but he is concerned about the green space or the pocket park. What will each scenario take away from that? His concerns have to do with the visual aesthetics.

Member Bradshaw stated that the proposed plan is to move the monument to the garden area behind Town Hall.

Member Coffey asked if there would there be room to keep the garden park if there were a rotary or a T.

Member Azzi stated that the circle of a small roundabout is a foot in diameter.

Member Loftus stated that it takes up a lot more room than one thinks. There are codes that must be followed, as to where the roads enter and exit. He added that it is not as simple as a T intersection, but it is something that should be studied both ways.

Chair Stewart pointed out that with the T intersection. It would be at the end of Central Road. Would that effectively calm traffic on Washington Road?
The Committee agreed that it would not.

Member Parrott suggested moving the monument into the center of the rotary.

Member Azzi stated that by doing that, there would be enough room for benches and a gathering space there as well.

Member Loftus pointed out that a lot of times with a small rotary, the island part or the inside of the rotary is paved because trucks have to be able to get around it and they sometimes cannot stay in the road.

Member Azzi stated that rotaries are designed to accommodate large vehicles. There are two levels of pavement. A larger vehicle can ride in closer to the center.

Chair Stewart summed up by stating that it sounds like the action item to take away from this meeting is to hear what the department heads have to say about roundabouts and T intersections and then decide which one the Committee wants to pursue.

Member Parrott recommended that this be done at the beginning of the meeting so that the Committee can spend most of their time discussing the issue in order to decide if it is feasible.

Member Bradshaw suggested that the pocket park could be part of the total discussion. It doesn't have to be a separate discussion.

Chair Stewart recommended that the Committee discuss the Wallis/Washington Road intersection and the Lang/Washington Road intersection with the department heads as well. As they all go hand-in-hand. These all are entrances and exits to and from the Town Center.

There was discussion regarding the Plan NH recommendation for the Wallis/Washington Road intersection. The recommendation was to "T" the intersection and to have the continuing traffic flow on Washington. The turn off would be onto Wallis Road.

Member Azzi recommended that for future meetings there should be a large map of the area as it is currently and with the changes Plan NH proposed.

Member Coffey suggested that they could use the Plan NH PowerPoint and project the maps from that.

Member Azzi pointed out that Plan NH also had some large drawings.

Member Coffey asked if photographs of the area would be helpful.

Chair Stewart asked for further input regarding traffic calming measures.

In regards to speed, Member Loftus reported that he drove from the monument to Wallis/Washington at 30 mph and then again at 25 mph. There was only a 4 second difference. He added that raised crosswalks will not stop the traffic, but will definitely slow traffic.

Member Coffey stressed the importance for the Committee to address the Lang/Washington Road intersection.

Member Azzi asked Member Loftus to clarify his idea regarding parking along Washington Road.

Member Loftus explained that his idea would be to have parking only from Parish Road to the Library, but only if there was a coffee shop or restaurant there.

Member Azzi recommend that there be no parking on Washington Road. He pointed out that there used to be parking on both sides of Washington Road. As time passed, it was eliminated. In a campus area, there are pedestrians moving from one place to another. Having parking is not reasonable, as it causes congestion and safety issues. Mr. Azzi reported that he made a count of all the existing parking spaces in the Center. He included the Public Safety Building, the Rye

Public Library, Parsonage, Town Hall, Rye Junior High School, and the area in front of the church. There are 280 spaces for parking. In addition, there are 97 spaces behind the church.

There was discussion about creating small town charm by having tree grates, street lamp lighting (gas lights) and holiday decorations.

VIII. Public Input - None

Member Loftus recommended having public input at the beginning of the meeting and allowing one minute for each person to speak.

The Committee agreed.

IX. Other Business - None

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by John Loftus to adjourn at 7:01 p.m. Seconded by Nina Parrott. All in Favor.

Respectfully Submitted.
Dyana F. Ledger