

**RYE TOWN CENTER COMMITTEE
MEETING
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2019
5:30 P.M. TOWN HALL**

Members Present: Chair Karen Stewart, Vice Chair Nina Parrott, Secretary Kaitlyn Coffey, Victor Azzi, Mae Bradshaw, 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 5:31 p.m.

II. Public Input – None

III. Discussion with Scott Bogle, Senior Transportation Planner – Rockingham Planning Commission

Chair Stewart explain to Mr. Bogle the purpose of the Rye Town Center Committee and what has been done to date by the committee:

- Reviewed and prioritized the recommendations of plan NH
- Crafted a vision statement and guiding principles
- Set some strategic planning goals

Chair Stewart read the vision statement as follows:

The Rye Town Center shall be a safe neighborhood with a strong sense of community and connectivity. We envision a Town Center that retains its distinctive historical charm and provides a welcoming and walkable environment, with connects between destinations and multigenerational gathering places. All forms of development and redevelopment will preserve the Town Center's unique and historical small-town identity.

The Committee has been focused on traffic calming and streetscapes. Though the Committee feels that the community welcomed and voted favorably on movement in that direction, the Committee has realized that there are a lot of obstacles that will need to be resolved moving forward.

Chair Stewart told Mr. Bogle that the Committee has a lot of questions regarding "Next Steps".

Mr. Bogle stated that a critical first step would be to hire a surveyor. (He presented the Committee with an aerial photo of the parcel boundaries.) There will also need to be some research done on what benchmarks that might exist on plans on file at the Registry of Deeds.

The aerial photo is fairly detailed. For planning purposes, it gives a sense of where the parcel boundaries end; however, any legal decision could not be made from this.

Selectman Winslow described the area to Mr. Bogle. There are two intersections; one at the Central and Washington Road and the other at Wallis and Washington Road. The idea is to create an entrance to Rye that is noticeable. There has been talk about the possibility of having a round-a-bout at Central and Washington and a T-intersection at Wallis and Washington. The other consideration is to have a sidewalk from the Rye Junior High School to at least the Rye Public Library and possibly to the Rye Town Hall. Then also add a bicycle lane along the same way.

Mr. Bogle recommended that given the speed that the community would want in the Town Center, the vehicle travel lanes should not be wider than 10 feet.

Selectman Winslow asked Mr. Bogle what the Rockingham Planning Commission could do to help the Committee and the Town with this project.

There was discussion regarding traffic counts. Mr. Bogle explained that Rockingham has not done a count with origin and destination in a long time. The one done for the Route 1/101 interchange in Hampton was contracted with RSG. The process was done using Bluetooth receivers. He stated that he could look into the pricing of having it done but believed it to be fairly expensive.

Selectman Winslow asked Mr. Bogle what else Rockingham Planning could do to help the Town, once it gets the survey done.

Mr. Bogle stated that if the Town was interested in going after grant funding there is a federal pool of Transportation Alternative Program grant money for streetscapes and sidewalk projects. Rockingham could assist in the grant writing process. This grant is very competitive and the administrative requirements have become greater over the last eight years. The grant requires a twenty percent (20%) match and only about one of every four applications gets funded. The funding comes from a small portion of the federal highway fund that gets set aside for alternative transportation. Every state gets a portion. New Hampshire gets about \$2.5 million a year. So, for a small project, he advised the Committee that the Town should try to self-fund, with a warrant article versus going after the federal money. With that said, he noted that because Rye has already done the Plan New Hampshire charrette, it puts them in a better position in the application process. The application process is a two-year window. The next process will be opening up next May or June. A letter of intent would be sent by the Town in June. There will be an application workshop during the summer with the application due in September. There is a minimum project size of \$400,000 with a maximum of \$800,000.

Chair Stewart explained that the vision is to have designated lanes for bicyclists, pedestrians and vehicles. Also, there is talk about reengineering the intersections. She asked the sequence in order to execute this plan.

Mr. Bogle pointed out that once the right-of-way width is determined, there may be a sense of wanting to narrow the travel lanes for traffic calming effect. Since the existing sidewalk is setback with a green strip, that may be continued if possible. The minimum width for a bike lane is four feet. If it is next to a curb or guardrail, it is five feet. Mr. Bogle recommended having the bike lane on both sides of the road. He did not recommend having a counter-flow lane with two-way bike traffic on one side of the road. He doubted that there was enough width to have a separated cycle track, where there is some kind of a barrier. He believes it would end up as a sidewalk, either curbed right next to the road or set-back a few feet, with a green strip then the five-foot shoulders and the ten-foot travel lines.

Mr. Bogle continued the round-a-bout at the intersection of Central and Washington Road is something that Dave Walker at Rockingham Planning could give initial measurements on and give a sense of what could fit there. He certainly could do the first-cut assessment. Rockingham Planning could also look at some of the round-a-bouts done in recent years to give the Committee a ballpark figure on the possible costs.

Mr. Bogle informed the Committee that New Castle has been working on a long-term project to extend sidewalks all along Route 1-B. They received a Transportation Alternative Program grant about eight years ago. The proposal was to run the sidewalk from the Wentworth to New Castle Commons. They got to Wild Rose Lane. They raised private funding to go from Wild Rose Lane to the Commons. They hired CMA Engineers to give them the initial figures on the costs of the project.

Selectman Winslow asked who would actually do the design for the project. Is this something that Rockingham Planning does or would the Town hire an engineering firm?

Mr. Bogle stated that Rockingham Planning does not have engineers on staff. He could do plan level estimates for the Town, drawing on rules-of-thumb and recent projects. But in order to get actual preliminary designs, the survey will be needed. Before the Committee puts out a warrant article for funding for construction, it will need the preliminary design and the survey. The Town would have to hire an engineering firm to do that work.

The Town of Stratham is another example of this type of project. Mr. Bogle will send the Committee information on that project.

Mr. Bogle also suggested that if the Town wanted to apply for TAP funding, the opportunity to do that will be next summer. So, if the Town already has engineered plans, a conceptual design and cost estimates by the winter or spring, they would be in a good place. Also, the Town would be in a better position to receive TAP funding if the voters have already approved the 20% match on the project. Typically, the warrant article needs to gross appropriate the total cost of the project, and then say this is contingent upon the Town receiving a Transportation Alternative Programs grant from the State of New Hampshire, which will reimburse the Town 80% of the cost. Mr. Bogle recommended that if the Committee goes after the TAP funds, they should focus on the bike, pedestrian and traffic lanes and streetscaping; not

the round-a-bout or the T-intersection. All in, the Town would probably be looking at a million dollars with the two intersections. Mr. Bogle promised to send all the application materials from the last application process with a couple of sample applications to review. He also promised to send PowerPoint slides from Tom Jameson the TAP Coordinator. Rockingham Planning would help with the application, which is fairly straight forward.

IV. Other Business

Chair Stewart suggested that the Committee still go through all of the recommendations from the Plan New Hampshire documentation. She explained that she put together a table in order to capture everything that came out of Plan New Hampshire. She stated that for the purpose of being thorough with the charette, the Committee should state its opinion as to its support or lack of support, or lack of consensus, for each recommendation. She referenced the table and stated that some of the ideas are very clear that the Committee supports and some are not. She gave some examples such as:

- Traffic calming gateways
- Narrowing the car travel lanes
- Adding bike lanes
- Keeping all design aspects with the historic district
- Signs in Parsons Field
- Village path loops to connect spaces
- Places to play to support health and wellness
- The Library expanding into the Parsonage building
- Parsonage garage as a Café
- Use the second floor of the Town Hall for public gathering
- Build an office annex between the existing Town Hall building and the parking lot
- Sell the trolley barn for funding
- Inventory of all the Town owned spaces and buildings

Member Bradshaw reported that the Historic District Guidelines are currently being rewritten and a letter of intent will be filed for a CLG grant in order to hire a professional to finish them.

Selectman Winslow stated that Scott Bogle gave the Committee some input. He suggested that the Committee jumps on one of those recommendations. He feels it is appropriate for them to contact either CMA or TEC (from Hampton), to find out the cost and the timeline. If the Committee could get a survey done and a conceptual plan, they could then go to the warrant with the cost. They should include information about the Transportation Alternative Program grant, but if that is not awarded, still get approval to move forward. Selectman Winslow stated he would like to call Craig Musselman of CMA to ask him if this is something he would help them out with.

Member Azzi stated it would be appropriate to get one proposal. At this juncture, the Committee is looking for a planning level study, not a design. They should not going to get into the technical details. Simply, are the ideas feasible and affordable? The estimated costs will come at the planning level; however, there are a couple of other steps before they will have the real costs of construction. The real costs will come from the bid process with the contractors.

There was discussion regarding the structure of the warrant article regarding the TAP funding. The TAP funding will only cover 80% of the streetscape, sidewalks, bike and travel lane work, not the round-a-bouts.

Member Azzi recommended crafting the warrant article in parts and breaking out the costs.

Some of the members were concerned that the public would pick that method apart by picking and choosing what the like and dislike about the plan. They felt that the Committee needs to sell the overall plan.

Member Azzi recommended asking the Town for the funds to proceed with a detailed design based on the planning level.

Member Bradshaw reminded the Committee that in order to apply for TAP grant funding in May, they will have to have the exact details and costs of the project.

Member Azzi explained that if they invite planning proposals from two firms, they can submit those proposals with the application. The proposal for the design could be what the voters decide on in March.

To clarify the process, Chair Stewart stated that the Committee is looking at a phased-in process. First the survey and the planning level plan, then based on that information, the cost of the design and engineering.

Member Parrott stated that the worst case would be that the warrant article just asks for the money to get the survey and the engineering for the planning level. The best case would be that the Committee presents the whole project with the total cost and is asking for the Town's approval. She added that her understanding of what Member Azzi is saying is that the warrant article should be asking for the funds for the design and then wait until next year to do a warrant article for the construction phase.

Member Parrott stated the public relation piece is very important to the process. She recommended the Committee spend a large amount of time on PR plan.

A member of the public reminded the Committee the TAP grant program has a two-year window, so if it is not applied for next summer, the Town will miss this cycle. As a voter, she would not be opposed to just being presented with the TAP related portion of the project.

Member Parrott reminded the Committee of their timeline:

- December 1st – draft of the warrant article
- December 8th - presentation to the Select Board
- December 12th – presentation to the Budget Committee (if approved by the Select Board.)
- December 23rd – Select Board Meeting if there were any revisions

In summary, Chair Stewart suggested that in order to have the coverage on all of the information in the charette and to give the Committee's position, she feels that they should go through each item.

The Committee agreed.

Chair Stewart stated that she will review the table she had put together to make sure she had captured everything and will send it out the members as reading material and homework.

Member Bradshaw recommended that the members send their responses to Chair Stewart before the next meeting.

V. Approval of Meeting Minutes - Tabled

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mae Bradshaw to adjourn at 7:11 p.m. Seconded by Nina Parrott. All in Favor.

Respectfully Submitted.

Dyana F. Ledger