

TOWN OF RYE – HERITAGE COMMISSION MEETING

Thursday, January 18, 2018

6:30 p.m. – Rye Town Hall

Members Present: Acting Chair Mae Bradshaw, James Tegeder, Alex Herlihy and Alternates Anne Arnold and Gail Hughes. Selectmen's Representative Craig Musselman arrived at 7:11 p.m.

I. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Acting Chair Bradshaw called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. Introduction of Members

Members present introduced themselves.

Alternate Anne Arnold was seated for Peter White. Alternate Gail Hughes was seated for Bev Giblin.

III. Approval of Minutes: December 7, 2017

- **Tabled to the next meeting.**

IV. Reports:

- **Treasurer's Report**

Acting Chair Bradshaw noted that Treasurer Peter White did not submit a report for the meeting. However, the Commission has just received another \$450 from the annual fundraising. The Commission has about \$13,000 from fundraising.

- **Requested Resumes**

Acting Chair Bradshaw stated that she has been working on the application for the Certified Local Government. She requested resumes from all members of the Commission to include in the application packet. The resumes should address areas of expertise, past and present positions

on town boards/commissions, and other areas of involvement within the community. She would like to have the application in to the Selectmen before the end of the month. The select chair will be signing the application and Town Administrator Michael Magnant will be the contact person.

Acting Chair Bradshaw explained that the Historic District Commission is looking at expanding the Historic District in town. The process would start with a change of the zoning ordinance over the district. The proposal would have to go to the Planning Board and they would approve the warrant article. The Historic District Commission is having a work session in April to review and discuss guidelines and standards for the district. The Heritage Commission could be a part of the work session. She commented that at the Historic District Meeting this summer they will be holding a public forum for people in the district to discuss and get input on the proposed guidelines and standards. She also noted that the members should think about houses that should be included in the district. She pointed out that the district does not have to be contiguous. The timing of the process is critical with the Certification of the Local Government Program. The town can apply for a grant to help draft the ordinance, prepare the publication of the guidelines and hold a public forum. Before this can go to a vote, it is important to get the residents involved. She is hoping to get this before the Planning Board in October to move a warrant to the election in March 2019. The Historic District Commission will be holding quarterly meetings to move this process forward.

- **L-Chip Grant and Town Hall Update**

Acting Chair Bradshaw stated that at the vote in March there will be a warrant article from John Loftus to tear down the existing Town Hall and rebuild. If that warrant article does not pass, the town will be able to move forward with the painting of the building.

Member Herlihy stated that the Heritage Commission, as individual members and as a commission, should reemphasize to the residents why the building is worth preserving.

Acting Chair Bradshaw stated that one of the turning points is the option of the TD Bank building.

Member Arnold asked if there was going to be any public events for the TD Bank proposal.

Acting Chair Bradshaw replied just the Deliberative Session. The Selectmen say that they can't publicize their own warrant articles. She continued this is something the Heritage Commission could do. The Commission could reserve the Library and hold five or six sessions to talk about the TD Bank building and the current Town Hall building. She commented that this would be a good idea. It would also be a good idea for at least one member of the Commission to appear at the Loftus' information sessions, prepared with information, to do a little pushback.

Member Hughes stated that she was straightforward and said she supported the new building a year ago. That was prior to the bank building becoming available. She noted that she is now

with the Heritage Commission in guarding the Town Hall as best she can. It comes down to dollars and cents, whether the public is going to want a new building or go with what has been here for so many years. She asked the acquisition price of the TD Bank building.

Acting Chair Bradshaw stated that \$540,000 is the purchase price for the 3.5 acres and the building, which is a fair price. There is another \$80,000 on top of that for any interior work that may be needed; furniture, closing costs and expenses to move the offices. The warrant article is for approximately \$600,000. That, coupled with the fact that they have almost all the money to repair and paint the outside of the existing building, is inexpensive. It is certainly a lot cheaper than the 3.1 million being proposed for a new building and it will be a lot faster. She commented that she does not think the 3.1 million covers the cost of moving the staff from the existing building and housing them for 1.5 years while the new building is built.

Member Hughes stated that the cost is critical. If there is a demolition of the building, where are they going to move the staff? There is a cost associated with that. She stated that the Commission should work on putting together some costs that are realistic that they can stand behind.

Peter Crawford, 171 Brackett Road, stated that the argument might be that it is going to cost 1 million to 2 million to get the existing building to where it needs to be. Adding that to the bank of \$600,000 is almost to their 3 million.

Acting Chair Bradshaw stated that there is no basis for that 1 million.

Mr. Crawford agreed.

Acting Chair Bradshaw stated the reports clearly say the existing Town Hall is sound. She noted that the only reason the architects in the past were talking about 3.9 million for the existing building, is because they were talking about steel posts to reinforce the building. The only reason they were talking about that was because the building was going to be expanded.

Note: *Selectman Musselman arrived at 7:11 p.m.*

Speaking about the acquisition of TD Bank, Selectman Musselman stated that the concept would be to buy the bank and move in two town departments. A structural report would then be done on the existing Town Hall building to figure out a series of improvements that need to be done, rather than an \$800,000 project. He commented that the offices would “hunker down” in the existing building and they could begin to figure out what to do long term.

Acting Chair Bradshaw pointed out that matching grants may be available for some of the work.

Selectman Musselman stated that there is no plan yet. It could be done all at once. His guess is that it would be done in a series of improvements over the years and nothing would add up to 3 million dollars. A historic structures report is needed before a plan can be developed. A

minimum architectural change needs to be done to the first floor of the Town Hall to meet the ADA requirements. This has not been done because it has never been known what will be happening to the existing Town Hall building.

There was discussion on ways the Heritage Commission could promote support for the warrant article to purchase the TD Bank building. There was also discussion on bringing the Town Hall into ADA compliance.

Acting Chair Bradshaw asked if the idea of selling the trolley barn parcel has been explored to help offset some of the expenses for the existing Town Hall building and the TD Bank building.

Selectman Musselman noted that the Selectmen placed a warrant article to sell that property. It is an unusual piece of property so it is unsure what the market value will be. If the warrant article is voted in, the process to sell the property would begin with an appraisal. Once the appraisal is completed, the Selectmen can decide how they would like to proceed with the sale.

Referring to the TD Bank building, Acting Chair Bradshaw stated that the big objection she has heard comes from the people who live in the Historic District who don't want another municipal building in the district. She is not sure what the difference is between a bank and a municipal building.

Member Arnold commented there will be less traffic then when it was a bank.

Acting Chair Bradshaw pointed out that the school will have access to the parking for events at the school. There are a lot of plusses.

Member Herlihy stated there will be a change of a new sign that will certainly look better than the bank sign and that is it. The reason the building looks as nice as it does is because it is in the Historic District. A Historic District Commission was established the year before the bank came in.

Acting Chair Bradshaw stated that she suggested at the Budget Committee meeting that the Conservation Commission come up with some money to buy the land in the back. The town citizens could come up with the money to buy the building. The back land would all be in conservation. People in the Historic District who are nervous about a big building being built on the parcel would not have to worry. It would solve the problem. The vision would be to keep that for conservation but keep it open for walking and maybe extra parking, but not for building.

Mr. Crawford commented that the extra land could be donated to Parson's Park.

Selectman Musselman noted that the leachfield is on the back part of the lot.

Mr. Crawford pointed out that the town could have an easement to allow that to be on a separate parcel and part of Parson's Park.

Acting Chair Bradshaw commented that there could be a covenant not to build and an easement.

It was agreed that Acting Chair Bradshaw would work on putting information together for the Deliberative Session to speak to the TD Bank warrant article.

- **Fundraising Update**

Acting Chair Bradshaw noted that the Tax Office has sold \$800 in Town Hall merchandise.

V. Old Business

- **None**

Next Meeting: February 1, 2018

Adjournment

Motion by Craig Musselman to adjourn at 7:53 p.m. Seconded by Alex Herlihy. All in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,
Dyana F. Ledger