

**Rye Heritage Commission  
Meeting  
March 3, 2022, 5:30 PM  
Rye Town Hall**

***Present: Chair Phil Walsh, Vice-Chair Gail Hughes (arrived at 5:37 p.m.), Peter White, Alex Herlihy, David Choate, Karin Nelson and Selectmen's Rep Bill Epperson***

**I. Welcome/Call to Order:**

Chair Walsh called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m. and led the pledge of allegiance and introductions. He seated Karin Nelson for Frank Lagana and David Choate for Gail Hughes. Chair Walsh welcomed Karin Nelson as an alternate member and thanked her for volunteering to serve on the Commission.

- **Review and Approval of February 3, 2022 Minutes**

- It should be noted that Karen Nelson should be: **Karin Nelson**

**Motion by Alex Herlihy to approve the minutes of February 3, 2022 as amended. Seconded by David Choate. All in favor.**

- **Treasurer's Report**

Treasurer Peter White reported that the Heritage Commission's account has \$7,814 in restricted town hall funds, \$6,160 restricted for the gazebo, and \$5,271 of unrestricted funds. The account total is \$19,246. The budget is on track for this year. He would like the Commission to discuss the grants that they are going to pursue. He would also like to discuss the next mailer.

Member Herlihy noted the Commission has an excess of inventory in stacked in boxes on the second floor of the Town Hall in the DPW Office. The Commission needs to find public events where the inventory can be sold. They may also want to consider moving the inventory, as it is taking up office space.

**Motion by David Choate to accept the Treasurer's Report for February. Seconded by Bill Epperson. All in favor.**

**Note: *Gail Hughes arrived at 5:37 p.m.***

David Choate was unseated for Gail Hughes and reseated for Bev Giblin.

- **Demolition Review Committee Update**

Member Choate reported that the Demolition Review Committee received one application for 10 Shoals View Drive. The property has a cottage that was built in the 1920's. The couple who owns it wanted to expand a bit and modernize the cottage. However, if the renovations are going to cost more than 50% of the value of the home, the cottage has to meet all of today's codes, which basically necessitates tearing it down and rebuilding. It seems to him that there should be some grandfathering for properties that don't meet the zoning, but the owners just want to modernize them. Along with the 50% requirement, there is also the requirements from FEMA. He noted that the owners of this cottage were heartbroken because they wanted to save the cottage. This is an example of how the regulations force people to do things they don't want to do. He pointed out that the building the owners are putting up instead is going to be attractive and somewhat symbolic of the old building. Member Choate commented that the value is in the land for this property, not the building. It should be based on the value of the entire property.

Member Choate continued that the next one the Demolition Committee should be getting is 10 Wentworth Road. According to the architect, they were going to try to find a way to add on, but they couldn't make it work. The house is now going to be torn down and they are going to rebuild.

Member Choate stated that he went to the ZBA to speak to the issue of tearing down 1595 Ocean Boulevard, which is one of the iconic seaside cottages. These people also wanted to save the house, but what they want to do is more than 50% of the value. He continued that he tried to speak at the meeting about the iconic nature of the home from the Demolition Review Committee. He was told by the acting chair that he couldn't speak because he didn't have standing. Member Choate noted that Tom King spoke to the town attorney who said that this is wrong. A memo is being prepared and circulated to all the board chairs explaining that people have the ability to speak, even if they don't have standing. Member Choate stated that it occurred to him that the ZBA let the Conservation Commission speak because they had an "interest in the property" as it had to go before RCC. However, it also has to go to the Demolition Review Committee.

There was some discussion about Rye Beach Village District establishing a Heritage Commission and an adjunct Demolition Review Committee. Member Choate suggested that the Heritage Commission Members who live in Rye Beach should go to the Commissioners to discuss the possibility of establishing a Heritage Commission within the Rye Beach Village District. Member Nelson agreed to follow up on this idea.

- **Fundraising Subcommittee Update**

Chair Walsh stated that he has spoken with Member Giblin and the fundraising events have been tabled for the time being due to Covid. When discussions do begin, it will be something likely for the fall and closer to the end of the year.

## **II. Old Business**

- **Rye Signage Subcommittee; Next Steps**

Member Herlihy noted that an article will be in the Rye Magazine in April about this subject. It's also in the Rye Civic League News.

- **Town Hall Monumental Windows Update**  
*No updates*

- **Gazebo**

Member Herlihy has not been in touch with Bud Jordan. Selectman Epperson agreed to reach out to Mr. Jordan.

Member Choate suggested that they contact the Rye Driftwood Garden Club to see if they will take on the landscaping around the gazebo. There has also been some discussion about a placard for the gazebo, which could tie into the signage project.

- **Mailer**

Chair Walsh stated that the Commission has been debating whether or not to do a mailer. Given the return from the last few annual mailers, it might be wise to target those who have given yearly to the Heritage Commission and ask if they would kindly continue their contributions.

The Commission agreed.

Chair Walsh will draft a letter that can be sent.

## **III. New Business**

- **Members Reappointment; Peter White and Alex Herlihy**

Chair Walsh noted that both Peter and Alex have agreed to stay on the Commission.

**Motion by Phil Walsh to recommend to the Select Board the reappointment of Peter White and Alex Herlihy as members to the Heritage Commission. Seconded by Gail Hughes. All in favor.**

Member Choate noted that the Demolition Review Committee has two members whose terms are expiring; Jay Longtin and Bev Giblin. Jay has expressed an interest in remaining on the committee. He pointed out that Bev has not been able to attend meetings, as she has a lot going on in her life and travels quite a bit. He is not sure if she wants to remain on the on the Heritage Commission or Demolition Review Committee.

Chair Walsh agreed to reach out to Member Giblin.

**Motion by Phil Walsh to recommend the reappointment of Jay Longtin as an alternate to the Demolition Review Committee. Seconded by David Choate. All in favor.**

- **Town Master Plan Discussion**

Chair Walsh sent a copy of the Master Plan to the Commission and highlighted the section that would be related to the Heritage Commission. He asked the Commission their thoughts.

Referring to Chapter 9 of the Master Plan, Member Herlihy stated that he saw some things that he really liked, especially in the last fifteen points. It even mentioned starting an Agricultural Commission, which a lot of towns have in New England. It talked about zoning and being consistent on historic preservation with the other boards. He noted that Chapter 9 was written in 2013.

Member Choate reviewed a few sections in Chapter 9. He noted that a Heritage Commission goal that stood out was; *“A professional planner to be engaged to review and revise the zoning ordinance to address the historical and cultural resources and to resolve potential conflicts with preservation goals.”* He also noted from the Master Plan; *“All land use boards will encourage adaptive reuse of historic buildings rather than demolition and new construction.”* Member Choate pointed out other sections of Chapter 9 that he found interesting.

Chair Walsh suggested that the Heritage Commission articulate a handful of points that could be constructed to go into the next version of the Master Plan. He recommended suggestions that would articulate that the Commission is trying to be proactive.

Member Choate suggested having a separate meeting just to go through the Master Plan.

Member White asked if the goal is to update the Master Plan or to have some special initiatives that the Commission wants to “cheerlead”.

Chair Walsh replied it could be both.

It was noted that the Long Range Planning Commission is handling the update to the Master Plan. Selectman Epperson commented that any revision the Heritage Commission wants to make on Chapter 9 would be appropriate. The Long Range Planning Committee is under the Planning Board. Revisions could be submitted to the Planning Board Chair. It was agreed to hold a meeting/workshop on March 24<sup>th</sup>. Chair Walsh will set this up through the Selectmen’s Secretary.

➤ **Next Meeting: April 7<sup>th</sup>, 5:30 p.m. (Town Hall)**

**Motion by Peter White to adjourn at 6:31 p.m. Seconded by Bill Epperson. All in favor.**