

RYE HERITAGE COMMISSION

Thursday, July 6, 2023, 5:30 p.m.

Rye Town Hall

Commission Present: *Acting-Chair Gail Hughes, Peter White, Alex Herlihy, David Choate, and Alternate Elizabeth Sanborn*

Members Not Present: *Bev Giblin, Frank Lagana, Tim Durkin, Mae Bradshaw, and Selectmen's Rep Bill Epperson*

I. Call to Order

The meeting of the Rye Heritage Commission was called to order at 5:32 p.m. by Acting Chair Hughes with the Pledge of Allegiance being cited.

II. Assign Alternates

Alternate Sanborn was seated for the meeting.

III. Organization of the Commission

- Chair
- Vice-Chair
- Treasurer

Motion by David Choate to nominate the following for officer positions; Alex Herlihy as chair, Gail Hughes as vice-chair, and Peter White as treasurer. Seconded by Peter White.

Member White thanked Bev Giblin for stepping into the role of interim chair when that position became open. He appreciates the efforts of all the members on the commission.

Vote: All in favor

IV. Review of Previous Meeting Minutes

- June 1, 2023

The following corrections were noted:

- Page 3, top of the page it should be noted: **Jenn Madden's and his terms have expired, so he and Jenn Madden haven't been able to vote at the last few meetings.**

Motion by Peter White to approve the minutes of June 1, 2023 as amended. Seconded by Alex Herlihy. All in favor.

V. Business:

- **Treasurer's Report**

Treasurer White noted that the Heritage Commission Fund has a balance of \$32,632. Of those funds, there is an unrestricted balance of \$9,036., along with just over \$11,000 allocated for signs, \$6,000 for the gazebo, and \$5,000 for the Town Hall. The Commission stands in a good strong cash position and the only pending project is the gazebo at this time. Treasurer White pointed out that the Commission budgeted for a 2023 mailer to cover both the printing and postage. He would like the Commission to come up with some ideas for the mailer, so it can be sent out in September or October.

Member Choate commented that the Heritage Fund could be more robust, in terms of the town appropriation. The Town of Stratham has a heritage fund that is used for a number of different things, which is appropriated through town meeting every year. He wonders if there should be money in the Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) for the Town Hall restoration.

Treasurer White noted that he doesn't want to lose the money that the Town appropriated to the Commission to do the mailer. It was agreed that there should be discussion about the mailer later into the meeting.

- **Demolition Review Committee**

Member Choate reported that 474 Sagamore Road was before the Demolition Review Committee. He noted this is a white 1940's cape across the street from the school. The person doing the work is a preservation contractor, who felt there wasn't much in the house worth saving. The Demolition Review Committee requested that they try to save the crystal doorknobs and some of the doors. The proposed home won't be higher than what's there now; however, it will be longer and a bit more modern. The Demolition Review Committee has no further pending applications at this time.

- **Gazebo**

Member Herlihy noted that he and Bill Epperson have been speaking with some local carpenters about the project. He may have more information at the next meeting for the Commission. The intent is to have the project done before the winter season; however, carpenters are really busy and that timeframe may not be met.

- **Rye Advocates**

Member Choate reported that Lydia Tilsley has been working hard on a list of houses (pre-1905) by age and address. The Rye Advocates will be having a meeting later in the month and will be

discussing where this information will be available for the public. The ultimate goal for the Advocates is to have the information on these homes available to any homeowner who wants the historic information on their home. The hope is for homeowners to become more aware and appreciative of the home, so there will be less teardowns and “modernizing” of these homes.

Member Herlihy noted that the next step is to build a website for these documents, so people can search their homes. There are 317 homes that have been documented. In some cases, there is only the address and age of the home. In other cases, there are two pages of information about the home.

It was noted that the next Rye Advocates meeting is July 25th. Anyone who is interested in joining may contact David Choate, as new members are always welcome.

- **Rye Signage Ribbon Cutting Event**

Member White reported that the seven signs have been installed by the Rye Public Works Department. The Rye400 Committee and the Selectmen want to have a ribbon cutting event in front of the sign at the Library. They are looking to the Heritage Commission for a recommendation on dates for the ribbon cutting.

The Heritage Commission discussed some times and dates. It was agreed to recommend that the ceremony be held any weekday in August at 5:00 p.m.

Member White also reported that the licensing agreement with Jenn Madden, associated with the sign at her building (old Trefethen Market), has been signed and the paperwork is completed. Member White pointed out the Heritage Commission has over \$11,000 restricted for signs. The thought is that having some signage at the cemetery would be an appropriate next step for the Sign Committee.

Member Choate asked if the money is restricted to only historic signs, as there was some discussion about having signage at the Town Hall Annex.

Member White explained the funds are restricted to the Heritage Commission’s determination of an appropriate allocation for heritage of the Town of Rye.

Alternate Sanborn commented that she doesn’t think the annex would be appropriate.

Acting Chair Hughes agreed.

Referring to the cemetery, Member Herlihy pointed out there’s a little green building with a lot of history. The signs could also tell the history of the sixty-plus graves. There could also be a diagram for people to find relatives who are buried in the cemetery. He noted there is plenty of room on the side of the building to put the text that would be on the sign. This is an idea that is in the early stages of discussion and planning.

The Commission agreed the signs for the cemetery is a good project.

- **August 19th Rye 400 Event**

Acting Chair Hughes commented that she is concerned about the Commission's stock of hats, umbrellas, and bags. The Commission has quite a bit of money tied up in that stock and it needs to be promoted. The Rye400 is offering their own products, which could be a conflict with the Commission's.

The Heritage Commission will have a table at the Rye400 Event and will be promoting their own products. The Commission discussed times for manning the table:

- **11:00 – 12:00** – *Elizabeth Sanborn*
- **12:00 – 1:00** – *TBD*
- **1:00 – 2:00** – *Gail Hughes*
- **2:00 – 3:00** – *Peter White*
- **3:00 – 4:00** – *David Choate*
- **4:00 – 5:00** – *Alex Herlihy*

It was agreed to schedule a work session to discuss on how the table will be run the day of the event. The work session was scheduled for Monday, July 31st, 4:00 p.m. Acting Chair Hughes agreed to take an inventory of stock before the workshop. She will reach out to Member Lagana for help with inventorying.

Agenda items for the work session:

- Signage
- Cash box
- Logistics – (10x10 space) location – canopy/umbrella for shade – tables/chairs
- Product
- Setup/tear down
- Staffing of table

VI. Other Business

- Member Herlihy noted that two articles for Stroll Magazine has been submitted with input from Mae Bradshaw and David Choate. The articles promote graveyard adoptions and house plaques. The magazine might be out before Rye Day.
- Member Choate questioned the CIP and noted there is nothing in the plan about restoration of the Town Hall.

Member White stated that Selectman Epperson told the Heritage Commission that the Town is taking a year off from further work on the Town Hall. There is no warrant article planned for the renovation of Town Hall in 2024.

Member Choate pointed out there is no plan for Town Hall in the CIP for 2025 through 2029.

Member Herlihy commented the Heritage Commission's job is to be the advocate for the renovation of the Town Hall.

Member White noted there's still the Friends of Town Hall and other parties who are interested in advancing the work. The question is whether the Heritage Commission would like to move forward with a mailer to raise money for a town hall project.

Member Herlihy spoke about the possibility of a building plaque for the Town Hall to be on the side of the property facing Central Road.

Motion by Alex Herlihy for the Rye Heritage Commission to request that the Selectmen accept a gift from the Heritage Commission for a plaque for Town Hall that will say "Methodist Episcopal Church 1839", and "Town Hall 1873." Seconded by Elizabeth Sanborn. All in favor.

- **Heritage Fund**

Member Choate commented that his idea is to have a more robust budget in the Heritage Fund. He suggested that the Commission have Becky Mitchell come in to speak with them about what is done in the Town of Stratham and how their money is used for heritage.

Member White pointed out that the Select Board is going to ask why they need more money when the Commission has \$32,000 sitting in its fund.

Member Choate replied that the Commission will present a project. At this time, he agrees the Commission needs to plan a mailer.

The Commission agreed to discuss the mailer at a future meeting.

Adjournment

Motion by Elizabeth Sanborn to adjourn at 6:36 p.m. Seconded by Peter White. All in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,
Dyana F. Ledger