

**RYE HERITAGE COMMISSION**  
**Thursday, October 5, 2023, 5:30 p.m.**  
**Rye Town Hall**

**Commission Present:** *Acting Chair Gail Hughes, Treasurer Peter White, David Choate, Selectmen's Rep Bill Epperson, and Alternates Mae Bradshaw and Elizabeth Sanborn*

**Members Not Present:** *Alex Herlihy, Bev Giblin, and Frank Lagana*

**I. Call to Order**

Acting Chair Hughes called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m. and seated Alternate Elizabeth Sanborn.

**II. Presentation by Tom Pearson & Roger Philbrick re: a monument**

**Tom Pearson** presented the proposal for a town monument to honor the founding families of Rye. Mr. Pearson noted that the idea has been before the Select Board, who suggested that this be presented to the Rye400 Committee. The Rye400 Committee was not in support of the monument because it didn't give recognition to Native Americans. Mr. Pearson spoke in regards to the reasons why Andy Stecher and the members of the Rye400 Committee do not support the proposal for the monument. He also spoke about his reasons for wanting to honor the founding families. Mr. Pearson went on to describe the monument as being four foot wide and five foot long. The bottom foot would be buried into a cement base. The monument will be polished on the front and rear. Mr. Pearson spoke about possible locations for the monument; including, the Town Hall Annex and Public Safety Building properties.

**Diana Pearson** spoke in support of honoring the founding families.

Selectman Epperson explained that Mr. Pearson presented this before the Select Board. However, there are two different issues. It's entirely appropriate to honor the founding families of Rye. The other issue is that they were not the first ones here. The indigenous population were here first. Selectman Epperson commented that to Andy Stecher's point, he's not sure that particular aspect can be overlooked. He also commented that there should be a coordinated effort by all to do what is right. Selectman Epperson noted that he supports this effort; on the other hand, the Rye400 Committee is totally justified in bringing the indigenous population into the conversation.

Vice-Chair Hughes noted they are recognizing the names of the founding fathers, not the people who were here when the founding fathers came. She thinks that is the important aspect of all of

this. She does not think the fact that there were indigenous people here originally is a factor in what is trying to be done.

Selectman Epperson commented that some people would say there wouldn't be a Rye without the indigenous population. He says there wouldn't be a Rye without the work and dedication that these families put into Rye.

Member Choate pointed out that one group that has not been consulted is the Town Center Committee. This committee is in the process of planning a redesign of the Town Center. Any new monuments are being looked at in terms of where they should be located. He also pointed out that the Historic District Commission would want to review this proposal. His main concern is that the Town Center Committee should be involved, as they are looking at all the monuments in the Town Center. That committee may have another idea of where this monument should be located.

Alternate Bradshaw suggested that the proposal go before the Historic District Commission next, as they will have to review the proposal before a permit to put in the monument can be given. Alternate Bradshaw commented that her first reaction is that this will become very controversial. She knows that Alex Herlihy feels very strongly about the indigenous population and it be woven into the story of what is Rye. If Alex was at the meeting, she thinks he would say that this is going to offend a lot of people if it doesn't incorporate the indigenous people.

There was discussion about how to incorporate the indigenous population onto the monument; such as, listing the things that the founding families learned from the indigenous population, as suggested by Mr. Pearson. After a lengthy discussion, it was agreed that the proposal should be presented to the Historic District Commission and the Town Center Committee. The Heritage Commission agreed to revisit the proposal in the future, if needed.

**Leigh Yeaton-Derochemont** pointed out that the Parish of Rye was established in 1726 and the names are from that point forward.

### **III. Rye400 Committee Monument Discussion**

**Andy Stecher**, along with **Deb Toohey**, Rye400 Committee Members, spoke to the Heritage Commission about their proposal for a monument to commemorate the Rye400 Celebration and the events that brought the community together in 2023. The Rye400 initiative was to focus on all parts of history, starting from the beginning, which included indigenous aspects. Part of the original concept was to also leave something behind for future generations to recognize and appreciate what this community has actually done. The Rye400 Committee is proposing a monument that recognizes the fact that the Town took 2023 as a year to come together as a community and celebrate Rye's history. The monument will not be specific to any particular group. The Rye400 logo is being used, as it became part of the identity. The location being proposed for the monument is near the crosswalk going from the Library towards the Church, which is town land. The granite for the monument is being donated by Greg Bauer, who will

also move it into its location. The monument is 6ft tall and will be embedded into the ground about a foot with a width of 3ft. It will be a beautiful bronze marker, with the Rye400 logo in the center, at about 5ft once placed.

There was discussion about the monument proposal and the location being proposed. The Heritage Commission agreed that the proposal should be brought to the Town Center Committee and the Historic District Commission. The Heritage Commission did not have any issues with the proposal.

#### **IV. Business:**

- **Gazebo – Discussion Estimates**

Treasurer White noted that Tim Foss, who is a resident and a carpenter with very good references, is going to provide an estimate for the gazebo work by October 25<sup>th</sup>. The request is to receive his quote and discuss this at the November 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting.

Alternate Sanborn pointed out that at the August meeting, it was said that the Commission would have the estimate by September, so everyone could digest the information over thirty days to make a decision at this meeting. She asked if the Town Center Committee has even considered the location for the gazebo. She noted that the Commission has just recommended that two different projects go before the Town Center Committee. The gazebo project absolutely has to go before the Town Center Committee. She commented that not voting on the gazebo is an incredible disappointment and is just another reason to abandon the project.

**Motion by Elizabeth Sanborn to vacate the gazebo project, return the funds that were raised and move on to other projects. Seconded by Mae Bradshaw.**

Treasurer White commented it's really embarrassing to return funds that were raised two or three years ago. He would rather execute the plan. He pointed out that Alex Herlihy has the energy and wants to get this done. There is still a quote coming from someone who has seen the project, is interested in the project, lives in Rye and has great references from other residents he has done work for. He thinks the Commission is foolhardy to make a decision when they are close to getting all the information to make the right decision.

Acting Chair Hughes pointed out that it has been three full years.

Alternate Sanborn commented that early on, she was a supporter of the project; however, it's become an albatross.

Selectman Epperson recommended that the Commission wait another thirty days in consideration of Alex Herlihy and the work that he has done on this project. At that time, the Commission will have an estimate.

Acting Chair Hughes called for a vote on the motion to abandon the gazebo project.

**Vote: 3-3 Opposed: David Choate, Bill Epperson, and Peter White**  
**Motion failed.**

**Motion by Bill Epperson to extend the progress of the gazebo project to the Heritage Commission's next meeting in November. Seconded by Peter White.**

Member Choate suggested that the estimate be emailed to all commission members when it is ready on October 25<sup>th</sup>, so there is time to review it before the November 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting. Member Choate agreed to speak with a member of the Town Center Committee before the next meeting in regards to the gazebo.

Acting Chair Hughes called for a vote on the motion to extend the gazebo discussion to the November meeting with a vote up or down at that time.

**Vote: All in favor.**

- **Update on Pulpit Rock Tower**

Member Choate reported there's a 1772 Foundation, which is in the grant cycle right now. He reached out to Beverly Thomas with the NH Preservation Alliance to see if the Town could get money for either the Town Hall or the Pulpit Rock. The grant funds can't be used for municipally owned property, so the Town Hall is out. He noted that Patricia Weathersby, Friends of Pulpit Rock Tower, and Bev Thomas are talking about whether funds are available from the 1772 Foundation to help with some of the needed repairs; such as, the roof.

Member Choate read from the minutes of September 7<sup>th</sup>:

*Chair Herlihy reported that he has spoken with Patricia Weathersby, Friends of Pulpit Rock Tower. She received a letter that Fish and Game has been looking at the Tower and reconsidering whether they really want to sell it.*

Alternate Sanborn noted that when the Governor gave the dedication to Rye for its 400<sup>th</sup>, it also mentions the Pulpit Rock Tower. It's sort of protected because it's mentioned in the proclamation. She likes the fact that the Tower is in Rye, but the Town doesn't have to own it.

Member Choate pointed out that there's still three more years left on the lease.

Alternate Sanborn commented that it sounds like the Friends of Pulpit Rock Tower are getting tired of the Tower, as a group. She thinks that they will look to the Heritage Commission as it being something the Commission stewards. She thought this was the sole mission, until there was discussion that the Commission would have to buy it out. She thinks it would be good for Fish and Game to still have the Tower. It wouldn't mean that the Heritage Commission wouldn't help out or supersede the Friends group.

Alternate Bradshaw noted that the Town voted very clearly that if the Tower was taken, the Town would also need to have \$135,000 with the Tower for an endowment, so things could be

done like fix the roof. No where is there \$135,000 being offered with this tower. She also noted this will have to go back to the Town for a vote. She doesn't see why the Town would vote to take the Tower with the need for a new roof and not \$135,000 that they asked for six years ago.

Alternate Sanborn explained that Fish and Game is now saying they would still own the Tower.

Member Choate suggested that they have Becky Mitchell from the Stratham Heritage Commission come to a meeting to talk about how they operate. The Stratham Heritage Commission gets an annual appropriation of \$50,000 to be used for preservation projects as part of the budget. He would like to find out how that works.

The Commission agreed she should be invited to a meeting.

Treasurer White noted that one of the things that Alex Herlihy is trying to champion is to make the Tower into a mini World War II museum, which would have a whole other initiative associated.

- **Historic Graveyards – Update full list with addresses**  
*No update – To be addressed at a future meeting.*
- **Restoration of Town Hall Auditorium – discuss scenario**  
*No discussion at this time.*
- **Fundraising for last quarter**

Alternate Bradshaw noted that the Friends of Town Hall were willing to partner with the Town in redoing the Town Hall. There has been no activity and the group keeps asking what project they can fundraise for with no real answer.

Treasurer White pointed out that the Friends of Town Hall have raised over \$10,000.

Member Choate noted that the Town of North Hampton is always spending money on Centennial Hall. They just received another grant for the Hall's second floor.

Treasurer White commented the grant for the stairs was never done. That would be a standalone project.

Alternate Bradshaw pointed out that the window project can't even get finished. Every time the Select Board is asked, they say that nothing is being done with the Town Hall right now.

Selectman Epperson commented the stairs could be done because that's a standalone project.

There was some discussion about fundraising for the restoration of the staircases in the Town Hall.

**Motion by Elizabeth Sanborn for Treasurer Peter White to prepare a fundraiser for the end of the year for the Town Hall staircases. Seconded by Mae Bradshaw.**

**Vote: 5-1 Opposed: Gail Hughes**

- **2024 RHC Budget**

Treasurer Peter White will be working on the 2024 budget submissions, which are due this month. He recommends the same budget that the Commission has had for several years in the amount of \$4,800. He noted that eleven percent of the budget is still remaining for 2023.

The Commission agreed to the budget of \$4,800.

**V. Other Business**

Alternate Sanborn expressed concerns on how the Heritage Commission procrastinates on projects and doesn't act. She suggested listing assignments to members who will be held accountable for reporting back to the Commission.

**Adjournment**

**Motion by Mae Bradshaw to adjourn at 7:13 p.m. Seconded by Elizabeth Sanborn. All in favor.**

Respectfully Submitted,  
Dyana F Ledger