

RYE HERITAGE COMMISSION
Thursday, November 2, 2023, 5:30 p.m.
Rye Town Hall

Commission Present: *Chair Alex Herlihy, Vice-Chair Gail Hughes, Treasurer Peter White, David Choate, Selectmen's Rep Bill Epperson, and Alternate Elizabeth Sanborn*

Also Present: *Carlo Colesanti*

Members Not Present: *Bev Giblin, Frank Lagana, and Mae Bradshaw*

I. Call to Order

Chair Herlihy called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Members of the Commission introduced themselves. Treasurer White introduced Carlo Colesanti who was present to observe the meeting.

Alternate Elizabeth Sanborn was seated for Member Frank Lagana for the meeting.

II. Approval of Minutes

- July 6, 2023; August 3, 2023; September 7, 2023; and October 5, 2023

The following correction was noted:

- In the October meeting minutes, under the Treasurer's report, it stated that the Heritage Commission has spent 89% of the 2023 budget. It should be corrected to state that **the Commission has 89% of the 2023 budget remaining with 11% being spent year-to-date.**

Motion by Alex Herlihy to approve the minutes of July 6th, August 3rd, September 7th, and October 5th, with the correction to the October 5th meeting minutes. Seconded by Gail Hughes. All in favor.

III. Business:

- **Treasurer's Report – Peter White**

Treasurer White noted that he does not have an updated Treasurer's report because the Finance Administrator was in a budget work session with the Select Board during the day. However, he has last month's numbers and there have not been any significant disbursements over the last

month. The Commission has \$33,045 in cash and there's lots of room in the budget remaining. He noted that last month was status quo, in terms of the budget.

Treasurer White presented an invoice from Alph Graphics for \$105.65 for a QR Code which was designed for the hotel sign at the beach to give more information about the hotels of Rye. The code has since been added to the sign. Treasurer White also presented an invoice in the amount of \$150 for the cookies and lemonade that were purchased for the Memorial Day Parade. He has reimbursed Mae Bradshaw for this expense and is now asking to be reimbursed by the Commission.

Motion by Alex Herlihy to pay the invoices as presented. Seconded by Bill Epperson. All in favor.

Treasurer White reported that the 2024 Heritage Commission Budget was presented to the Select Board. They approved the budget for \$4,800., which was the same as 2023.

Motion by Alex Herlihy to accept the Treasurer's report for the month of November. Seconded by Gail Hughes. All in favor.

- **Decision on Gazebo Based on Estimates**

Chair Herlihy noted there has been two estimates given on the gazebo. He reminded the Commission that everyone is familiar with the facts of higher labor and material costs. He summarized the high estimates: 1) \$18,000., and 2) \$19,000. He continued that another carpenter was interested in the project; however, he can't get to it until spring, so he is out of the picture. Chair Herlihy noted that the two high estimates are way beyond what Heritage has for funds, or can even imagine getting from other sources.

Chair Herlihy continued that over the last year, the chair of the Rye400 Committee, Andy Stecher, has met a lot of people from being in that position, including carpenters. Mr. Stecher has a lead on possible sourcing for labor and materials for this project at a more reasonable rate. Chair Herlihy requested that the Commission delay making a decision on this project to get further information.

Treasurer White noted that the Rye400 Committee is also willing to contribute some money towards this project. It's unsure how much they are willing to contribute, but this is new information to consider.

Alternate Sanborn pointed out that a vote was taken last month to move it to this month, and the vote was 50/50. The Commission is now kicking it down the road a few more months because the December meeting is a Christmas party, so it will be January. She thinks the Commission should abandon ship.

Chair Herlihy pointed out the he has met with endless people about this project.

Selectman Epperson commented that he voted to extend the vote for one more month, but he thinks they should pull the plug and get rid of the gazebo.

Vice-Chair Hughes concurred.

Alternate Sanborn noted that everyone on the Commission has invested time on the gazebo. In her opinion, the gazebo is an eyesore and is a burden on the Commission. There are so many other projects the Commission can do. She would rather return the donations or ask the donators to apply it towards something else that everyone can be enthusiastic about.

Member Choate commented it's a challenge. He did not anticipate that the costs of restoring the gazebo were going to be so high. However, before the Commission pulls the plug, he would like to have a specific alternative to tell people what the Commission will be working on instead. One thing that comes to mind is some sort of monument park. He's not sure what the specific project would be; however, it would be a lot more saleable if they say they are not going to do the gazebo.

Chair Herlihy pointed out the fact that there's new information coming from the chair of the Rye 400 Committee. Mr. Stecher has asked the Commission specifically to delay the decision for a few days to see how this plays out. Chair Herlihy also pointed out that Mr. Stecher had said last year that as the Rye 400 Committee was raising money, they would be willing to support the gazebo. That was at a time when the Heritage Commission was trying to get rid of it. Chair Herlihy commented that he supports waiting just a few days, or a week, and then notifying the Commission.

Treasurer White noted that the Commission has \$6,500 of its own funds for the project and a commitment, although it's not sure how much, from the Rye 400 Committee.

Member Choate noted that if the Commission does wait, Mr. Stecher has to get a price from someone as soon as possible. That price will have to be married with the Commission's \$6,500 to see if the Rye 400 is willing to come up with the difference. He doesn't seem any harm in waiting a week.

Chair Herlihy agreed.

Treasurer White summarized that the Commission has \$6,660 in restricted gazebo funds. There is \$11,448 in unrestricted funds that the Commission controls. There is also the commitment from the Rye 400.

Selectman Epperson stated that he will give one week to get the estimate. If the Commission can give the \$6,500., and whatever the Rye 400 Committee wants to give, then he would be okay with moving forward.

Motion by David Choate to give Chair Herlihy until 5:00 p.m. on November 10, 2023 to notify the Commission via email that the combination of the funds the Commission currently has, plus the funds put forth by the Rye 400 Committee, are adequate to cover the costs of the restoration of the gazebo. Seconded by Peter White.

Vote: 4-2 Opposed: Gail Hughes and Elizabeth Sanborn

- **Rye Advocates**

Member Choate reported that the Rye Advocates are holding a meeting on November 7th. The Advocates are still working on trying to get histories and information on historic homes. They are also trying to keep better track of sales of properties and trying to reach out to the new homeowners.

- **Demo Review**

Member Choate noted there have been a couple of applications for demo review. One application was for 691 Brackett Road for a beautiful barn that unfortunately, hasn't been maintained for twenty or thirty years. Steve Bedard from Bedard Preservation looked at the barn and he concurred that it's too far gone to save. The owners are going to try to recapture some of the timbers. From the road, it should look pretty close to what is there now.

Member Choate also noted that the other application for demo is the teardown of the Abeniqui pro-shop, which has a lot of interesting architectural features. He commented that the teardown is part of the expansion project; however, it's too bad that the building is coming down.

- **Timeline for the Town Hall Auditorium Renovation**

Chair Herlihy pointed out that there is no interest in funding anything for the Town Hall right now, or at least for the next year. However, the Heritage Commission should continue to have discussions about what they have been talking about all along. The Town voted to save the building. He thinks a lot of people voted to save it, not for it to be two floors of office space, but to have it be office space on the first floor and the auditorium restored. This leads to thinking about the stairways and an elevator, which will require multiple sources of funding. This might not have to go to the taxpayers; except, if there is a lot of leverage from other funding, perhaps the balance. He also pointed out that there are plaques in the Library that show sections of the building that were privately funded for the expansion. To get the final amount of money, the taxpayers were asked and they were more than willing because of all the other money the Library brought in through fundraising. This may be the way the Town Hall plays out.

Selectman Epperson commented that there's a proposal for the Town Hall that was done a few years ago. He doesn't think there have been any substantial changes and it's still the desire of everyone in town to do that proposal. In the CIP there's an estimate for the Annex for 2025. It was noted that there's no money in the CIP for the renovation of the Town Hall building and/or the second-floor auditorium.

- **Fundraising Flyer**

Treasurer White noted that at the last meeting, he was put in charge of putting together the 2023 fundraiser, which was drafted and submitted to the Commission. The feedback was to hold the fundraiser until a decision was made on the gazebo. He pointed out that if the fundraiser is not sent out, the Commission loses the money in 2023 and the ability to use the funds.

There was some discussion about restricted funds received for the Town Hall, which is \$5,440 at this time.

Motion by Alex Herlihy to move forward with the fundraising flyer regarding the historical stairways in the Town Hall, as that's part of the overall restoration of the second floor. Seconded by David Choate for discussion.

Member Choate expressed his concern regarding wording in the last paragraph of the flyer. It was agreed to edit the wording.

Alternate Sanborn spoke about holding the flyer until the gazebo decision is made, which is going to be done in a week. She suggested having a conditional move ahead before the end of the year, but give time for the decision on the gazebo project. She spoke about whether the Commission's focus would change, and whether the funds could be allocated to another project, if the gazebo doesn't move forward.

There was some discussion about asking the people who donated to the gazebo if they would consider moving their donations to the Town Hall restoration, if the gazebo doesn't go forward.

Amended motion:

Motion by David Choate to proceed with the annual appeal for the historical stairways in the Town Hall with a slight amendment to the language in the last paragraph. Seconded by Alex Herlihy. Vote: 4-2 Opposed: Gail Hughes and Elizabeth Sanborn

Member Choate spoke about putting money in the budget every year to go towards the restoration of the Town Hall. After some discussion, he suggested that the Commission spend time gathering information on restoration costs for the Town Hall, so it can be considered for future budgeting. The Commission agreed.

- **Pulpit Rock Tower Update**

Chair Herlihy reported that Fish and Game owns the Pulpit Rock Tower and they've been leasing it to the Friends of Pulpit Rock Tower. At this time, if the Heritage Commission wants a new Friends, with the help from the existing Friends, the Commission will have to opportunity to

take on the lease of the structure. The work of managing the Tower would be done by the new Friends Group, as part of the Heritage Commission.

Selectman Epperson pointed out that Fish and Game wants the Heritage Commission to pay for the upkeep of the Tower.

Chair Herlihy noted that most of the work on the Tower has been done. He would like the Commission to think about what they'd like to do and this will be discussed at a future meeting.

- **Louise Tallman Award**

There was discussion about who should be awarded the Louise Tallman Award for 2023.

IV. Other Business

None

Adjournment

Motion by Peter White to adjourn at 6:31 p.m. Seconded by Elizabeth Sanborn. All in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,
Dyana F Ledger