

**TOWN OF RYE
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
MEETING**

**Wednesday, March 24, 2021
5:30 p.m. – via ZOOM**

Members Present: Chair Kaitlyn Coffey, David Choate, Select Board Rep Mae Bradshaw, and Alternates Katharine Brown, Tom King and Stacey Smith

Also: Alex Herlihy and Karen Stewart (*joined the meeting some time during the first presentation*).

A. Call to Order

Chair Coffey called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m. via Zoom teleconferencing.

B. Attestation

Statement by Kaitlyn Coffey:

As chair of the Heritage Commission, I find that due to the State of Emergency declared by the Governor as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and in accordance with the Governor's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, this public body is authorized to meet electronically.

Please note that there is no physical location to observe and listen contemporaneously to this meeting, which was authorized pursuant to the Governor's Emergency Order. However, in accordance with the Emergency Order, I am confirming that we are providing public access to the meeting by telephone, with additional access possibilities by video and other electronic means. We are utilizing Zoom for this electronic meeting. All members of the board have the ability to communicate contemporaneously during this meeting through this platform, and the public has access to contemporaneously listen and, if necessary, participate in this meeting by dialing in to the following phone number: 646-558-8656 or by clicking on the following website address: www.zoom.com ID #816 9680 5188 Password: 164864

Public notice has been provided to the public for the necessary information for accessing the meeting, including how to access the meeting using Zoom telephonically. Instructions have also been provided on the website of the Conservation Commission at: town.rye.nh.us go to the Conservation Commission page and click on the agenda for this meeting. If anyone has a problem, please call 603-379-0801 or email: Becky Bergeron at Bbergeron@town.rye.nh.us

In the event the public is unable to access the meeting, the meeting will be adjourned and rescheduled. Please note that all votes that are taken during this meeting shall be done by roll call vote.

Roll Call:

1. Kaitlyn Coffey
2. Katharine Brown
3. Mae Bradshaw
4. Stacey Smith
5. Tom King
6. David Choate

C. Seating of Alternates

Chair Coffey seated Katharine Brown for Daryl Kent, Stacey Smith for James Tegeder and Tom King for Alex Herlihy.

D. Proposed pavilion project at Star Island presented by Jack Farrell

Chair Coffey opened to Jack Farrell from Star Island.

Jack Farrell, Star Island Director of Facilities, presented the proposal to the Commission. He explained that the idea started because the island is going to try to open this year. There was a lot of concern about where they might find additional space, which could be more easily ventilated to accommodate programs without having to be in small rooms. The original intent was to design and get approval to build this before the season to help alleviate some of the issues they are trying to address. However, reality has set in and there is no way they can get the project done this year. He would still like to discuss this with the Commission, in order to get the view of the HDC before getting deep into a design or the concept at all. Originally, they thought it would be a standalone open pavilion, which would be located on the island lawn to the north, where the grille is currently located. It would be in the open, grassy area where the picnic tables are placed near the summer house. He noted that he has submitted some photos in a historical context. The photos show there was a shed-like structure in the general area where they are intending to put the pavilion. There is some historical precedent for structures in that area.

Mr. Farrell stated that as they realized the timeline was not reasonable to do this project for this year, there was some thought about how this pavilion idea might work in with some of the other ideas that have been considered for different accommodations in that area. He noted that he will be presenting formal plans for a broader concept over the next six months for next year or the year after. The idea would be to have an open pavilion to accommodate visitors with more outdoor space. Also included, would be a more permanent structure for the island grille with bathrooms for transient guests to use. He commented that the first question is how does the Commission feel about an additional building at all?

Selectwoman Bradshaw asked the size of the structure.

Mr. Farrell replied that the concept is 24x40, which would be open on all four sides with a hip roof.

Selectwoman Bradshaw asked the size of the summer house.

Mr. Farrell replied 20x20.

A plan was presented on the screen showing a concept drawing of the pavilion.

Mr. Farrell noted that they are looking for guidance from the Commission. The first idea was for it to be a standalone structure, which would be located where the picnic tables are now. It could be built closer to the road, if it were built into this broader notion of a grille and welcoming area for day visitors.

Selectwoman Bradshaw pointed out that if it is going to have bathrooms, it is going to be a significant structure, as it would need to be handicap accessible.

A photo showing the area being considered on the island was presented on the screen for review.

Member Smith recommended that they be careful about the view. This should be kept in mind in considering where it should be placed and how.

Selectwoman Bradshaw asked if the pavilion could be moved further back along the road. It seems that may not be as obtrusive.

Mr. Farrell pointed out there are some constraints towards the lighthouse. To the left of the road is the softball area; much beyond, gets close to the Caswell Cemetery. He pointed out there are a lot of sensitive areas. The views of the summer house from the hotel could be impacted, as well as the westerly view from the porch. Mr. Farrell explained that the proposed area is a little nook off by itself. His thought is if this is going to include a more permanent and attractive situation for the grille, it would be closer to the pier and not out in the open of the lawn. There is already a pumphouse near the pier and some sizable rose bushes, so there would be some screening. The pumphouse could be incorporated into this to make it look neater and more organized.

Selectwoman Bradshaw stated that she would not be keen on building a permanent facility for bathrooms and cooking in that fragile spot. She understands the intent is to have more meeting space out in the open; however, people seem to be content meeting out on the grass and down in the stone village. This seems to be one of those places where the kites are flown from and games are played. It is a quieter spot than it would be if it became a public bathroom and permanent cooking site.

Mr. Farrell stated that over the years he has been involved with Star Island, there has been discussions about what was called a “welcome center”. This pavilion might be part of that idea. It would be nice to have a gift shop and bathrooms. Sometimes when people are just on the island for a short time, they don’t know where to go and wander into the hotel rooms where guests are staying. The idea is to have a dedicated place for transients to be welcomed to the island and learn about it a bit with basic facilities. In the off season, it would provide storage and a place to put supplies and equipment that get delivered to the island and need to come off the pier. The concept is to have a multipurpose boat shed that would also house the grille. He

commented that he would be inclined to keep the structure right up tight to the pier and keep the grassed area as open as possible.

Member Brown asked the distance to the pier.

Mr. Farrell replied 10' or 20'.

Referring to the photo on the screen showing the pier, Selectwoman Bradshaw stated that a better location for a visitors' center is the peak of lawn. When people are walking down the pier from the boat, the natural inclination is to move to the left because everything is in that direction. That area might not be as obtrusive to the photography sites. She continued that it wouldn't have to be huge. She asked if there could just be one bathroom.

Mr. Farrell replied he would have to look into that. In regards to her comments, he stated that he does not agree with it being a less obtrusive spot. There is already an area that is disturbed at the intersection of the road and the pier. The closer it is to the hotel, the more impact it will have on the look of the hotel from the pier. To have it off to the side makes more sense to him.

Selectwoman Bradshaw asked if the pavilion could be done for the summer with it being boarded up in the winter to be used for storage.

Mr. Farrell pointed out this was one of the thoughts.

Member King asked the height of the pavilion.

Mr. Farrell replied that the walls would be about 10' high. The whole pavilion to the top of the roof may be 16' to 18'.

Selectwoman Bradshaw asked if there are any other options for locations.

Mr. Farrell pointed out that the proposed location has already started to evolve into an area where people sit and hang out. Also, it is not really utilized for much else and it is close to the pier. It seemed like the correct place.

Member King stated that siting it in a low spot is a great idea to help lower the whole structure. This is probably one of the better locations on the island from that perspective. He recommended keeping the roof low profile, as much as possible, and keeping the structure to grade. He thinks Selectwoman Bradshaw's idea of a building that could be more open in the summer and closed down in the off season would preserve the optics. It really becomes a matter of finding something that looks appropriate to the time period with the architectural details. He commented there are not a lot of places it could be put. It seems like that would be a good place because it lowers the overall profile and keeps it looking like a one-story building.

Mr. Farrell noted they have done buildings before and the thoughts of this Commission have been to keep them looking like something that would be found in the fishing era; shingle style or

boat shed style. It would be a simple building. He commented that the best thing to do would be to have a concept and stake it on the ground, so people could go out to take a look.

Chair Coffey pointed out that another option would be an aerial photo showing the placement, along with the materials for a concrete plan. The next step might be finetuning some of the details for the Commission.

Mr. Farrell agreed.

Member Bradshaw stated that she'd like to hear Brandee Loughlin's thoughts about the possibility of building a new building on a historic island and what kind of impact that might have on receiving future grants.

Brandee Loughlin, NH Division of Historical Resources, stated that things have to change over time. Part of the Division of Historical Resources' job is to ensure that the change is managed thoughtfully. The Commission has come up with some good questions and good suggestions for feedback for the Star Island folks to take back and come up with a plan that is sensitively placed and designed. She wouldn't say that any new construction is a problem, as long as it is done carefully and sensitively. She feels the Commission is on the right track to helping the Star Island folks get there.

Member Bradshaw noted that Dominique Hawkins is writing new guidelines. It might have been helpful to hear about this. New construction for the Commission is new business and is uncharted waters.

Dominique Hawkins, Design Preservation Partnership, stated it's really about the impact of the new construction on the historic context that should be focused on. For example, it should not be positioned where it would block the view of the hotel from the pier. Something that allows the historic resources to be the dominant features of the site is critical in thinking about where it should be placed and how big it should be. The materials and form of the building can then be considered.

Mr. Farrell thanked the Commission for their time. He will bring back a proposal to discuss in more detail.

E. Update on guideline project with Dominique Hawkins

Chair Coffey noted that the Commission is in the process of updating the Historic District Guidelines. They also have funding from the Certified Local Government (CLG) Grant. She asked Brandee Loughlin to give an update on the funds.

Ms. Loughlin stated that she is new to the CLG Program, as she took over for Nadine Miller last fall. She understands that this grant is for developing design guidelines for Rye's existing Historic District. In the process of doing that, the Commission has had some discussions about the possibility of expanding the district in a variety of potential ways, with the guidelines being designed in order to be applied to whatever the expansion or overlays might be. She continued

the biggest constraint right now is timing. Expanding the district would need a town vote because it is a change to a zoning ordinance, which can be a long process and would not happen this year. These funds need to be spent as part of this project. It is likely the expansion could not be done before the deadline for expending these funds. She pointed out that the Commission could certainly start to think ahead, which has been done with the most recent application that was for a workshop for the community about the value of preservation. Ms. Loughlin stated that she thinks the Commission has a great strategy laid out. She just does not know if the expansion will be able to be done during the “guideline phase”. She thinks starting with what was originally intended and moving forward with expansion after the guidelines are wrapped up, is probably the best way to go. It does not mean that the Commission can’t use this as an opportunity to lay the foundation for the expanded guidelines. It makes sense to look at the bigger picture; however, it is a big bite in the short time that is available.

Ms. Hawkins explained that she spent some time in town and walking around the district. Normally, she knows when she is at the edge of the Historic District. She could not figure out the end in Rye, unless she was looking at the map. There are about thirty properties being regulated, half of which are noncontributing in the current district; yet, there is all this wealth of great historic stuff everywhere. She noted that the guidelines can be written to just regulate the thirty properties or they could look at the possibility of expanding what gets regulated at some point in the future. In doing so, the Commission would probably want to be a little more relaxed in the requirements than they would be for the current thirty properties. If the guidelines are being written for one hundred and thirty properties, to entice that extra one hundred people, telling them what color they can paint their house does not go over well. She would like to write guidelines to have shelf life. That is the resolution that the Commission has to come to. Just hold on to the thirty and make the most of the core district or expand the district? If it is going to expand, how much control is the Commission willing to give up to protect more buildings?

Member Choate noted that there is a group of people from each historic preservation board called Rye Advocates who have been talking about this very issue. There are approximately 280 homes that are built before the 1900’s. Rye Advocates is starting a campaign to contact these people and get them thinking about the history of their homes. He continued there has been a fair amount of resistance with expanding the district formally; however, there are others that really feel it should go further down Washington and Central Roads. The group is going to try to sensitize the community; however, it is a long-term project. After the pre-1900 buildings are completed, they are going to focus on buildings from 1900-1950. He is not sure how this will tie into the guidelines; however, he does not think people want to be contacted with guidelines because their house has been designated as historic. The group is trying to get people to realize on their own volition that the house is important and they should do things to preserve its history.

Ms. Hawkins stated that some people will always be resistant because they just don’t want to have any part of it. However, if it is demonstrated that it is going to be regulated to a lesser extent, there will be more people who are interested. If it is written down and they have a degree of expectation as to what is going to happen, they will be more receptive. In her opinion, once the district expands the Commission has to reduce the regulatory control.

Member Smith asked if the district could stand as it is now, with the regulations that are in place, with a secondary type of district with regulations that are less onerous. She asked if there could be two different types of Historic Districts.

Ms. Hawkins replied that can be done, but it gets really messy in the regulatory process to make that happen.

Member Bradshaw stated that she sees the guidelines as being an educational tool. She thinks the guidelines can be written in a way that explains the ideal for these homes and instructs them as to the best materials. It would be used as more of a guide when approaching people and trying to build support.

Member Herlihy stated there is the existing Historic District and there are two areas waiting for the Historic District to expand; southwest from Washington Road to Fern Avenue, which would incorporate 14 structures, and down Central Road to end of the cemetery. He thinks this is a logical extension. He would not do anything now. Just let the Rye Advocates' letter go out and play out for a while.

Ms. Hawkins pointed out that writing the guidelines is a current project. The Commission needs to come to a decision as to whether they are going to regulate exactly as they are or if they are willing to adjust what and how they are regulating. For the existing district, its probably less complicated, if there are willing property owners, to expand with a couple of properties here and there. If properties across Rye that are not contiguous are going to be captured, the Commission would first need to develop some sort of regulatory process to capture them and regulate them. The Commission would then need to get information out which justifies why those properties are specifically being regulated. An ordinance would need to be passed listing the properties that would be regulated and why.

Member Bradshaw commented there is a town in N.H. where they have an historic overlay district over the whole town.

Ms. Loughlin noted that the town maintains a list. It's a difficult system because the list has to be updated regularly, as buildings age and change. She thinks they find it difficult to explain to people why their home is being regulated and not their neighbor's home, even if they are both older and maybe just twenty years apart. It can definitely be done, but it can be tricky. She would need to do more research before giving a recommendation. She does not have a problem with the Commission considering how these guidelines will be applied in the future in looking towards an expansion and planning for that with the guidelines. She thinks there would be a lot of value in that idea. Part of the value would be transparency to property owners for the potential expansion.

Speaking to Ms. Hawkins, Member Choate asked if she is going to look at the Historic District Ordinance and recommend things that should be changed or missing.

Ms. Hawkins replied that is not part of her charge. However, if she sees things that are glaring or hear of something that is not reflected in the ordinance, she will point it out. Referring to writing

the guidelines, she stated that they can always speak to the ideal and that can be encouraged. If they cannot meet the ideal, the Commission can step back and say what they will accept. She always encourages historic quality material, so historic preservation is being encouraged to the extent possible, while still being realistic as to an alternative.

Member Bradshaw clarified that each subject would have an ideal and an acceptable alternative.

Ms. Hawkins confirmed.

Member Smith commented that she thinks there will be much more cooperation. It will be easier for the Commission and better for the homeowner.

Member Bradshaw stated that it really goes along with what the Rye Advocates are working on, which is education and encouraging preservation. It's the right kind of guidelines for the Commission to be in sync with them.

Chair Coffey stated this will allow the Commission to accomplish what they want to without having the guidelines become obsolete very quickly. If someone who is in the Historic District is not able to afford the ideal, it will give the next reasonable choice to guide them.

After discussion, it was agreed by all members that the regulations should be written with the ideal scenario and an alternative that would be acceptable to the Commission.

Next Steps:

- Zoom meeting with HDC Members to discuss details of materials to be included in the guidelines. Ms. Hawkins will send a list beforehand for the members to review before the meeting.

F. Introduction of Rye Advocates Committee by Alex Herlihy

Member Herlihy gave a quick update on the work of the Rye Advocates Committee.

G. Vote for 2021 Member Recommendations

Motion by Mae Bradshaw to recommend to the select board David Choate as a member of the Historic District Commission. Seconded by Katharine Brown.

Roll Call: Katharine Brown – Aye; Karen Stewart – Aye; Stacey Smith – Aye;

Tom King – Aye; Mae Bradshaw – Aye; Kaitlyn Coffey – Aye

Motion passed

Chair Coffey noted that Alex Herlihy will not be continuing as a full sitting member, so there is an available seat.

**Motion by Katharine Brown to recommend Stacey Smith as a full sitting member.
Seconded by Mae Bradshaw.**

**Roll Call: Katharine Brown – Aye; Karen Stewart – Aye; Stacey Smith – Aye;
Tom King – Aye; David Choate – Aye; Mae Bradshaw – Aye; Kaitlyn Coffey – Aye
Motion passed**

Chair Coffey noted there are now two alternate seats available.

H. Approval of Minutes – *Tabled to next meeting*

- 1/5/21
- 1/7/21
- 1/19/21
- 1/26/21

Adjournment

**Motion by Stacey Smith to adjourn at 7:18 p.m. Seconded by Kaitlyn Coffey.
Roll Call: Katharine Brown – Aye; Karen Stewart – Aye; Stacey Smith – Aye;
Tom King – Aye; David Choate – Aye; Mae Bradshaw – Aye; Kaitlyn Coffey – Aye
Motion passed**

Respectfully Submitted,
Dyana F. Ledger