

# **RYE REGIONAL ASSOCIATION REVIEW COMMITTEE**

**Wednesday, April 27, 2022**

**5:30 p.m.**

**Rye Public Library**

**Present: Chair Linda Toumpas, Vice-Chair Susan Cole Ross, Clerk Ronna Werner, Suzanne Barton and Valerie Fagin**

## **I. Call to Order**

Chair Toumpas called the meeting to order at 5:36 p.m.

## **II. Review of Minutes of March 11, 2022 Meeting**

The following corrections were noted:

- Page 3, 5<sup>th</sup> paragraph, 2<sup>nd</sup> sentence should read: **She noted that she has had a lot of familiarity with this because she has done a lot of social services volunteer work.**
- Page 3, 5<sup>th</sup> paragraph, last sentence should read: **When it comes to confidentiality and privacy, people aren't really talking about how they spent months at the homeless shelter.**
- Page 3, last paragraph, 2<sup>nd</sup> sentence should read: **She pointed out that she did some work with A Safe Place, which is now Haven.**

**Motion by Suzanne Barton to approve the minutes of March 11, 2022 as amended.  
Seconded by Ronna Werner. All in favor.**

## **III. Review Directives from Town Attorney**

The Committee reviewed the guidance sent from the Town Attorney in response to questions raised at the meeting on March 11<sup>th</sup>.

***It's probably best not to completely defund any particular organization since they were voted on by the Town. It would probably require a warrant article to remove them from further consideration.***

Chair Toumpas pointed out that the Committee may come up with a warrant article that will change the process. An agency may have started fifteen years ago, when there was more of a need for that particular service. There are also agencies that have merged with another organization. As the Committee goes through the agencies, they may write a warrant article to present to the Select Board on how some of this is done. Does an organization stay on forever? It might be that they will want to require that every three or five years the organization proves themselves a bit. There should be some flexibility with keeping every organization.

Member Werner noted that they may create a framework of priorities and in three years the priorities may change. As the Committee gets clarity, they may want to emphasize certain things.

Chair Toumpas noted that it appears that an organization can't be defunded. However, it doesn't say the Town can't reduce the amount they receive.

Member Fagin commented that it could be that because of the situation in any particular year, the Town may focus and prioritize needs elsewhere.

Chair Toumpas stated that the needs would have to be with the existing agencies the Town has now, as they have to be approved by a warrant article. Also, a lot of the agencies have been receiving extra funds over the past couple of years to help their organizations through different federal programs that were available.

Vice-Chair Cole Ross commented that she feels there should be a cap on the amount that each organization receives; such as, ten percent of the total amount budgeted for associations.

***The concept of identifying focus areas is reasonable.***

***Directing funding recommendations in either dollars or percentages is reasonable.***

***Identifying gaps in community needs and recommending inclusion by warrant article is reasonable.***

Chair Toumpas stated that she does not feel it's the Committee's job to write a warrant article for an organization. She pointed out that the more that are added on, with just a certain amount of money, the pot will get smaller and smaller to give to an organization. It might not make much of an impact. She also pointed out that it seems the agencies are basically trying to get reimbursed for the money they spent to service the community.

Member Fagin stated that she thinks it is the Committee's job. Once they come up with more of a theme and guidelines for organizations, they might see gaps that might not have been seen. There may be recommendations by the Committee for certain services that need to be brought in.

Member Werner commented that it seems to be in the Committee's purview to have an "ear" as to what's going on in the Town.

Chair Toumpas stated that she feels it might be a conflict of interest for the Committee to write a warrant article. These came because there was a need being filled by the organization. People who came forward to ask for money to be given was in thanks for what that organization did for their family.

Member Fagin explained that when they are looking at everything, they might see there is a need in Rye that has not been addressed. She hopes that part of the Committee is about looking at the

community and finding out what has not been seen. As they are cleaning up things, there may be a piece that has not been addressed. They may be able to encourage some community outreach to come in and serve that part for the community.

Vice-Chair Cole Ross commented that she can see that for different categories, if there's a category that is missing. She agrees it would be a conflict of interest for the Committee to create a warrant article. That would involve getting a petition signed and getting twenty-five signatures. She is not sure if the Committee should be the ones acting on that. However, if the Committee sees a gap, at that point they may want to discuss what they would like to see done around that gap.

Member Barton stated that if an association is in need of money and are not asking, it is not the Committee's job to find out who is not asking. If they are in need of Rye's money because they are contributing services to the community, it is up to them to ask.

Member Werner suggested having a write-up in the Rye report about who the Town is giving to. She likes the idea of educating people who read that report and it's connected to voting.

The Committee agreed this is a good idea.

***Recommending changes to the request package sent out by the Town is acceptable.***

***Ultimately, your recommendations must persuade both the Select Board and the Budget Committee to make changes.***

#### **IV. Review Committee Charge and Develop Mission Statement**

##### **Committee Charge:**

***The Regional Association Review Committee is charged with analyzing all funding requests received from Regional Association organizations that were previously established by warrant article. The committee will evaluate each request in terms of relevance, proportionality and benefit to the residents of Rye. Further the Committee will make recommendations to the Select Board of additional agencies which may also provide significant support to the residents of Rye, for consideration. The Committee will prepare a final report with recommendations to the Select Board no later than July 1, 2022.***

***The Committee will consist of not more than 7 members and shall be appointed by the Select Board for an initial term ending July 31, 2022. The Committee will participate in multiple discussions with the Select Board over the term and make a final presentation at a Select Board meeting. Staff members may be appointed as non-voting members of the committee. It is the Select Board's intent to sunset this committee after completion of its charge, unless the Select Board votes to continue the committee.***

***The Town of Rye Regional Association Review Committee shall follow the Rules of Procedure for Committees established by the Select Board.***

**V. Discuss Letter of Intent to Associations**

Vice-Chair Cole Ross stated that they could put in the letter that the organizations should speak to the issues that they may be addressing. She pointed out that there are some agencies that seemed to overlap. However, when she read them more carefully, she realized that the agencies are doing different things and there wasn't much overlap.

Chair Toumpas commented that she doesn't know if anyone in town ever went back to any of the agencies to request more information.

Member Fagin stated that Selectman King brought the Committee together. Instead of just assuming that the agencies were going to be funded every year, there would be a pause in order to evaluate the applications and see if it's an organization that still serves the community. There may be other needs that are not being met that would be highly recommended or there may be some that are not doing what they were doing in previous years. She thinks Selectman King wanted help with that.

Member Werner commented that she thinks Selectman King was surprised when this came up, as he was new to the Select Board. There was no committee and no process. No one had ever gone back to these agencies with any questions because there wasn't anyone to do that.

Vice-Chair Cole Ross pointed out that they could frontload it. Referring to the request letter, she noted that it says "if it is more than what was approved in 2021, give reasons for the increase." She suggested adding "especially addressing number of Rye residents served, increased need or outcomes that can be documented." She continued that if they want to have an annual gift, they could add to the letter a sentence asking for them to address diversity or pandemic need.

The Committee agreed.

Chair Toumpas pointed out that the letter is left a bit ambiguous in how the agencies benefit the Town of Rye and its residents. She further pointed out that some agencies did put this information.

Vice-Chair Cole Ross noted that one or two included their outcomes. When she read the outcomes, even if it was all of Rockingham County, she could see the impact on Rye.

Member Werner stated that if the letter is amended, it will be less work if the agencies are responding to specifics being asked in the letter.

Member Fagin commented that she thinks it will help the agencies get more specific about their role in Rye. This may show up in ways that it's not showing up now.

Chair Toumpas pointed out that the letter, as it is now, is just generic. It doesn't talk to each organization. If an agency is requesting a higher amount than previously, they should say what happened and what was different in what they did for Rye. She continued that if they aren't really serving the Town of Rye anymore, they can't be defunded but it could be said that they will receive less money, as this was set up to benefit the residents of Rye.

Member Werner stated that once the letter is amended, it will be enlightening to see which agencies respond in a way that is germane to what is being asked for.

Member Barton noted the education piece is important, as well. Unfortunately, in some areas of society, statistics haven't changed in the 20 years that she has done volunteer work; for example, domestic violence. No matter how much money is put into that the statistics have not changed.

Member Werner stated that they should say in the annual report that addiction, child abuse, domestic violence and mental health knows no geographical, no ethnic and definitely no socio-economic.

Referring to page 3 of the letter, Member Barton pointed out that verbiage is very important. The word "customers" should be "service users", "clients" or "patients".

Member Werner commented that education on these issues to the Town's elected officials and the broader town's people is a really good thing. Rye is not immune to anything. She thinks they can accomplish defining the letter and write a meaningful report about why the Committee is doing what they are doing.

## **VI. Other Business**

### Discussion about Mission Statement:

Vice-Chair Cole Ross asked if the Committee needs a mission statement. She thought that most committees worked off their charge and that's all they could work off.

Chair Toumpas explained it wasn't so much a mission statement. It was to address what this is about and why it's being done. It was trying to find a directive.

Vice-Chair Cole Ross stated that creating a mission statement might change the charge. She thinks the Committee is to just hold to the charge.

**Motion by Suzanne Barton for the Committee's Mission Statement to be the Regional Association Review Committee Charge. Seconded by Susan Cole Ross. All in favor.**

The Committee discussed how to handle the rewrite of the letter. It was agreed that Member Werner and Vice-Chair Cole Ross would work on a draft to be brought back to the Committee for review.

Member Barton volunteered to put some stats together for the information piece, which can be used in the article for the Town Report.

Committee review of association request:

The Committee started review on the request letters received for the 2022 budget. The review is being done to prepare for recommendations for the 2023 budget. It is anticipated that letters for the 2023 budget will be received by the Town starting in late July/August.

Highlights:

**American Red Cross**

- Explained their statistics
- Services provided include – blood drives, first-aid training & baby sitter training
  - 1,423 Rockingham County Residents trained last year in first-aid, CPR and baby sitter training
  - 12,182 pints of blood was collected last year
  - 422 blood drives in Rockingham County last year
- Called in for fires & other disasters
- 124 Red Cross volunteers in Rockingham County
- Rye - 3 people were served last year.
- Rye, Hampton, Stratham, Portsmouth & Exeter - 25 people were served
- Request is for \$2,500 (2022 budget)
- Serves a purpose in a broader sense that would impact people in Rye

**AIDS Response Seacoast (ARS)**

- Serves 395 people in 2 counties – Strafford & Rockingham
- Increased need as they receive less federal & public support
- Request is for \$1,800 (2022 budget)
- \$10,000 in direct services to 3 - 5 Rye Residents

**Big Brothers/Big Sisters**

- Outcomes – reduction in drug abuse, violence in kids & violence from kids, reduction in truancy – positive impact on schooling
- Request is for \$3,000
- 2 children served with 1 on a waiting list
- 3 volunteers served from Rye

**VII. Next Steps**

- Review the draft letter of intent at next meeting.
- Committee members to work on ratings for each charity as homework.
  - Categories are: Number of Rye Residents served; Need/Relevance; and Proportionality (rating 1 – 5)
- Question to ask Attorney Maher: If an organization merges with another, and is not the same as when it was originally approved by the voters, can they be defunded?

**VIII. Set Date for Next Meeting**

- A date for the next meeting is to be determined.

**Adjournment**

**Motion by Susan Cole Ross to adjourn at 7:16 p.m. Seconded by Ronnie Werner. All in favor.**

Respectfully Submitted,  
Dyana F. Ledger