

RYE TOWN CENTER COMMITTEE

Wednesday, February 10, 2021

5:30 p.m. – Via Zoom

***Present: Chair Karen Stewart; Kaitlyn Coffey; John Loftus; John Mitchell; Victor Azzi; and
Selectmen's Rep: Mae Bradshaw***

I. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Stewart called the meeting to order 5:30 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. Attestation

Statement by Karen Stewart:

As Chair of the Rye Town Center Committee, 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 through dialing the following phone number: 646-558-8656 and Password: 458741 or by clicking on the following website address: www.zoom.com ID #816 0474 3297

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 board at: town.rye.nh.us go to the Board of Selectmen page and click on the agenda for this meeting.

If anyone has a problem accessing the meeting please email the Town Administrator 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 attendance:

- Kaitlyn Coffey
- John Loftus
- John Mitchell
- Victor Azzi
- Mae Bradshaw
- Karen Stewart

Note: The Members stated where they were located and confirmed that they were the only ones in the room for the meeting.

III. TAP Application Update

Chair Stewart reported that she sent an email to Town Administrator Bergeron with an attached confirmation from the contact at the State Department of Transportation that manages the TAP Grant Program. It confirmed that they have received the Town's letter of interest. They have asked about the length of the project. They agreed that it was approximately 2,500 feet. One of the next steps is that the Town Administrator will have to attend a mandatory meeting, for all prospective applicants, in order to get an understanding of how the grant process works. Chair Stewart stated that if there is an opportunity for her to also attend, she will do that.

The Committee worked on clarifying the language in the application. There was detailed discussion on the scope of the project; i.e., the crosswalks will not be raised, they had eliminated the sidewalk to the Town Hall and the pocket park, due to the budget. These items would be possible future projects.

Note: *Member Tilsley joined the meeting at this time.*

Selectwoman Bradshaw reminded the Committee that they need the breakdown of the costs from CMA.

Chair Stewart asked Members Coffey and Loftus to speak about the letters of support that the Committee has received.

Member Coffey reported that she has received three; one from the Rye Fire Department, one from the Rye Heritage Commission and one from the school principal.

Selectwoman Bradshaw asked if they were a part of a regional plan and if they had Rockingham Planning Commission's support.

Chair Stewart stated that they have been supportive and encouraging of the project, but she does not know if there is a larger plan in play. She added that she felt that Scott Bogle would do a friendly review of the application. She will ask if Rockingham would write a letter of support. She will also ask Town Administrator Bergeron and Tom Jameson if it would be beneficial to have the letters of support from last year updated.

Selectwoman Bradshaw asked Member Azzi if he could contact Jim Verra regarding the feasibility question on page 13 of the application. Member Azzi agreed to do that. This question is in regards to the width and the center of the road and right-of-way in the area at the Lang Road and Washington

intersection. After further discussion, it was decided that the width is there; however, there will have to be compromises in this area due to the narrowing of the right-a-way between Doctor Joseph's house and the Coffeys' stonewall.

Selectwoman Bradshaw clarified that they need to write out what the issue is and what the solution will be in the feasibility section of page 13. Another area in the application that needs to be addressed is; "Improvements over existing safety conditions". They also asked if there was a corridor study or road safety audit of the area.

Member Loftus recalled that the safety issues were addressed by CMA. He also recommended that they contact Scott Bogle at Rockingham County to ask what the State means by corridor study.

Chair Stewart stated that she will contact Mr. Bogle and will be in touch with Member Loftus if they need additional information. Town Administrator Bergeron will have to provide the financial readiness piece of the application. Chair Stewart suggested that the mandatory training meeting will help with how to respond to that section. Overall, that are certain things that the Committee will not know until they have the design. Mr. Bogle will be instrumental in deciding how much information is needed on the application.

Member Loftus recalled that Phil Corbett at CMA stated that they would provide enough information for the Committee to make the application. He recommended starting with Mr. Corbett.

Chair Stewart commented that she will check with him first.

IV. Town Center Traffic (all modes)

Chair Stewart reminded the Committee that she has decided to talk about things that they could be working on in the short-term while waiting on the grant. Traffic in the town center was one of those areas.

Member Tilsley noted that there is information on bikes and pedestrians on Washington Road in the road shoulder study. She asked if there was anything in the short-term that could be done or recommended to improve on safety conditions.

Member Loftus recommended lowering the speed limit to 20 mph from the cemetery to the intersection of Wallis and Washington. He pointed out that they have 20 mph speed limits in some areas in New Castle, which is enforced with tickets being issued. He added that it is such a short distance that it will not add even a minute to anyone's traffic time. The Select Board, Police Chief and Public Works Director would have to get involved with this to make it happen.

Chair Stewart recalled that the Police Chief had pushed back on this idea at a prior meeting. He felt that the core to the process was education. They had agreed that the narrowing of the travel lanes would have a slowing effect on the speed regardless of the posted speed. She suggested that they will have to be strategic in how they pursue this. Personally, she is in agreement.

Member Coffey recalled that one of the Chief's issues was having the manpower to take care of the enforcement piece. She also is in agreement. She added that people drive way faster than 30 mph in that area.

Member Tilsley stated that she would like to see the Committee pursue this.

Referring to the minutes of the meeting with Chief Walsh, Selectwoman Bradshaw that he had promised to get the Committee the land road accidents report.

Chair Stewart stated that she had not received that yet. She agreed to follow up with Chief Walsh. She pointed out that Chief Walsh did support the narrowing of the road, but he was not in agreement in lowering the speed limit.

Member Azzi pointed out that all these things go “hand and hand”. By narrowing the roadway by ten feet, that within itself will have the traffic calming effect of slowing down the traffic. The problem comes from adding a paved bike line, which effectively makes the pavement look 14 feet wide, giving the driver of a vehicle the feeling that there is plenty of width to drive a little bit faster. It’s going to take some getting accustomed to and some traffic enforcement and education.

Chair Stewart pointed out that this was a great point. They are operating under the assumption that they are going to be awarded the TAP Grant. If they were to downgrade the speed limit in anticipation of actually having a wider traffic line, with the impulse to go faster, that gives them an amount of time to education the public about the lower speed so that the transition is safer. They could do it as a test; such as, an interim speed downgrade. After the project is completed, they can re-evaluate the speed limit.

Selectwoman Bradshaw recommended that the Committee write a letter to the Select Board asking them to meet with the Police Chief about this.

Member Coffey suggested that the Committee walk the route together. She said that she walks her dogs that route almost every day. When walking, a car going by at 30 mph is really fast. Sometimes it is scary.

Selectwoman Bradshaw reported that the Police Department is currently working towards getting a grant for road safety and traffic control in town. She pointed out this is timely in getting them involved in this.

Member Tilsley talked about the wide right lane at the intersection of Central and Washington Road. She described how cars coming off Center Road onto Washington use the wide shoulder as an additional traffic lane to turn right. Anyone walking or running along there are forced to move off the shoulder. She asked if they could at least paint the pavement showing that it isn’t a driving lane.

Chair Stewart responded that the Public Works Department paint other roads for pedestrians and bike traffic. This should be another recommendation to the Select Board that they have public works add this area to their list of areas to paint. Chair Stewart also pointed out that the three lanes at the intersection of Lang and Washington happen at the town level and could be changed back to two lanes. She suggested this be another recommendation to the Select Board for an interim traffic calming measure.

Chair Stewart recommended that she follow-up with Chief Walsh on the Lang Road accident report and at the next meeting the Committee take a vote on three recommendations to the Select Board: 1.) Downgrading the speed limit to 20 mph. 2.) Eliminating the right turn lane on Lang Road at the Washington and Lang Road Intersection. 3.) Marking the pavement coming off Center Road for a pedestrian and bicycle traffic lane.

Member Coffey reminded the members that the intersection of Ocean and Lang Road is going to be redesigned, which may increase traffic use on Lang Road. She recommended that the Committee take this information into consideration, when they proceed with the recommendations to the Select Board.

No further business before the Committee.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Karen Stewart to Adjourn at 6:39 p.m. Seconded by John Loftus.

Roll Call Vote: John Loftus – Aye; Mae Bradshaw – Aye; Lydia Tilsley – Aye; Kaitlyn Coffey – Aye; John Mitchell – Aye; Victor Azzi – Aye; Karen Stewart – Aye.

Motion passed.

Respectfully Submitted;
Dyana Ledger