

**RYE TOWN CENTER COMMITTEE  
MEETING  
Wednesday, May 4, 2022  
5:30 p.m.  
Rye Town Hall**

**Present:** *Chair Karen Stewart, Victor Azzi, Kaitlyn Coffey and Lydia Tilsley*

**Note:** *Some agenda items were taken out of posted agenda order (As shown in minutes).*

***I. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance***

Chair Stewart called the meeting to order at 5:40 p.m. and led the pledge of allegiance.

**II. Approval of Minutes**

**1) 8/04/2021**

**Motion by Kaitlyn Coffey to approve the minutes of August 4, 2021 as written. Seconded by Victor Azzi. All in favor.**

Chair Stewart noted that there was mention in the August minutes that Mae Bradshaw was intending to go to the Select Board to talk about adjusting the charge to incorporate the Town Green in the definition of the Town Center. She is not sure that ever happened.

Member Coffey stated that it was determined that it can't be included because it belongs to the cemetery.

Member Tilsley commented that they need to revisit this because it's confusing. The Town Green is under the auspices of the Trustees of the cemetery, but it doesn't mean it's not part of the Town Center.

The Committee agreed. Chair Stewart will follow up with Selectman King.

**2) 9/01/2021**

The following corrections were noted:

- **Page 1, 1<sup>st</sup> bullet, 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph should read: Member Coffey explained that it is an HDC meeting.**
- **Page 3, 7c. should read: Staffing capacity**

**Motion by Victor Azzi to approve the minutes of September 1, 2021 as amended. Seconded by Kaitlyn Coffey. All in favor.**

3) 3/02/2021

*Tabled to the next meeting.*

**III. RTCC Timeline/Report to BOS**

Chair Stewart noted that she has sent an email to Tom Jameson, Project Manager for the N.H. Department of Transportation, in regard to the questions that came up at the March meeting about the best way to proceed if grant funding is received. She will update the Committee once she hears back from Mr. Jameson.

Referring to the report to the Select Board and timeline, Chair Stewart explained this goes back to a year ago. Mae Bradshaw provided a RTCC timeline from origination to current (at that time). The Committee felt that this is something that should be done more formally. It would be a collective document that is a report to the Select Board and a public accounting of what the Committee has done to date. Chair Stewart noted that she has agreed to take on this job and will share the report with the Committee when it is ready.

**Note:** *Karen Stewart turned the meeting over to Kaitlyn Coffey.*

Member Coffey stated that she was thinking that they could “piggyback” on the report and timeline. She was thinking that the Committee could talk about where they want to put their time and energy now, knowing there are a lot of construction delays and delays with the buildings that are outside of the Committee’s control. She was wondering what would be the best use of time and focus. The Committee could redirect to have some content to focus on at the meetings that would be something that would be worthwhile in the here and now, knowing there are some long-term things that are pending.

Chair Stewart commented that she was also thinking that the report to the Select Board may or may not accompany a suggestion for updating the Committee’s charge. Perhaps what the Committee agrees the focus should be could be brought into the formal charge.

Member Coffey stated that if the Committee had a little more direction and more collaboration at the meetings, people would know what they are working on and putting their time towards. She suggested that they brainstorm some ideas and share them with the rest of the group for the June meeting, so they can decide how they would like to move forward.

Member Coffey continued that she thinks their hands are a little “tied” right now when it comes to the buildings. There are delays at the annex, so that is going to delay what happens at the Town Hall. There are delays on information about the TAP Grant as well, as it was found out that it would be many more years than originally thought. She still thinks there are things that can be done for the Town Center. There’s still collaboration and planning that is needed for the Town Center. She would hate to see the Committee disband. Many people have “come up to bat” to try to make some changes, but it has kind of “fizzled” out. There was a big delay due to Covid, but she thinks they should now brainstorm on what they want to focus on and what they have the capability to do.

Member Tilsley agreed. She pointed out that making the Town Center a place where people gather is more than building sidewalks. She started on the Committee when they were finishing up the writing of the grant. She's not sure what happened before that time. She suggested they might consider going back to the root of the charette with Plan N.H.

Member Coffey stated there are many things she'd love to do, but there have been many roadblocks because of funding and the things that are happening. She'd like to have a talk about what the monthly efforts could be focused on.

Chair Stewart noted that it was a year ago that the TAP Grant was put on hold. They talked about what they could do in the interim, which was focusing on the roads and traffic safety.

Member Tilsley asked if there is something that they could do that is not permanent; such as plantings, so it seems less open. Police Chief Walsh said that people drive the speed they think they can drive based on visuals and how safe it seems. If its narrower, people tend to slow down a bit. She asked if there is a way to do this prior to any permanent structures being built.

Chair Stewart stated that the one of the final things that Dennis McCarthy did before he retired was to repaint the roads at the appropriate width to reflect what the car travel lanes will look like when the sidewalk and bike lanes are put in. Those are actually wearing down now. This reminds her that the Committee hasn't actually met with the new Public Works Director. She thinks this may be good to do at the next meeting.

The Committee agreed.

**Note:** *Karen Stewart left the meeting at 6:05 p.m.*

Member Coffey commented that what they can do is very limited. She just feels that maybe the morale is slipping a bit. Also, if people don't feel that the Committee's efforts are not beneficial moving forward, this could be discussed at the next meeting. She reiterated that she'd like to brainstorm some ideas for members to think about for the next meeting. Member Coffey continued that she wonders if they should focus on the green spaces and travel spaces in the Town Center and the connectivity of the buildings. She explained that the Town Hall and annex are the two buildings for town hall business. The library is in the Town Center as well. There's also the youth space in the church. She further explained that when she is talking about connectivity she means the school, to the annex, church, library and town hall. She pointed out that the public safety building is in the heart of the center too. She wonders if they should focus on the outdoor spaces.

Member Tilsley commented that she understands it's not just about the buildings, but also how people travel from place to place. She likes the idea of thinking about that. As the library thinks about their plans with the museum, is there a central place where people could gather?

Member Coffey stated that what comes to mind for her is that they are looking to the Committee to give guidance as to what would be good and what would make sense. The Select Board would then move to help make that happen or say to the Committee to not focus on that.

Member Tilsley stated that maybe they should be clear as to what the vision is beyond the construction. The vision at the end, even without funding. How it should look in ten years. She thinks this would be a very useful exercise.

Member Coffey commented that she feels better about doing that now that some of the dust has settled and there are not so many unknowns, as there were two years ago. At least a lot of dust has settled in terms of the ownership of buildings. There were too many unknowns that the Committee couldn't plan about before. Speaking to Member Azzi, she asked what else they could plan for town center.

Member Azzi commented that they were dealing with the remnants of what was left over after all the important parts had been removed from the Committee's consideration. He asked how a master plan could be created with proper relationships between all the entities if they're told not to include some of the buildings.

Member Tilsley stated that she thinks they should start with an overall cohesive vision of what Rye Town Center should be.

Member Coffey commented that there are things that the Committee could recommend.

Member Tilsley stated that once they have a vision, they could start looking at grants for the next piece. If they wait for construction to start before planning for the next stage, it could be another ten years.

Member Azzi stated this is a good example of something that someone needs to spend more time on. Construction should not be started, let alone finished, for the segment on Washington Road, until it's known what is going to happen at the intersection of Washington and Central.

Speaking to Member Azzi, Member Coffey asked if he would recommend addressing the intersections first when looking at the road scape and sidewalk.

Member Azzi confirmed. He noted that they should know how far the sidewalk should go because it should have a functional relationship with other things that should happen. How far beyond the library the sidewalk goes will depend on the nature of the intersection (Washington and Central). Will it be a 'T' intersection or a round-a-bout?

Member Coffey asked what kinds of tools and software may be available to help with this process and to see some ideas, without engaging an engineering firm.

Member Azzi stated they need good people who are open to ideas that may be new to them, who are willing to work together to make things happen. He doesn't think they are going to find a software package that is going to say what to do in the Town Center. It's going to take interested, creative, thoughtful, experienced people.

Member Coffey asked where they should start with the planning talk that would give a visual, without getting everyone too overwhelmed where things are not getting accomplished.

Member Tilsley commented that they could do an idea board or a mind map. There are all sorts of tools to get people thinking. Once they have the vision at a higher level, they can engage in software packages to help with planning. The more detailed planning will require traffic engineers. The Committee will just say what they envision and what resources are needed to make it happen.

Member Azzi noted that none of them have the time, even if they have the capability, to do all the work that will need to be done prior to implementing the design to go into construction. He would suggest that they retain an engineering firm to do a preliminary design for the section of Washington Road that has been the focus. He continued they would want to hire an engineering firm with the right kind of experience to work with them on the next steps. He explained that in order to design something for an intersection, they would need to know something about the traffic. With that, the engineering firm would have a sense of what kind of intersection is likely to be required for that kind of traffic level. Whatever is designed and finally built, should be functional and appropriate for that amount of traffic. It should be reasonable for a small town like Rye in a primarily residential neighborhood.

Member Tilsley stated that she thinks the vision has to be done backwards and then they can get to that type of planning. One thing they could start with is the charette. What does the vision mean and how do they get there? People in town will then see there is a long-term plan that is being worked on.

Member Coffey noted that they could also partner with other groups in town to help with grants and private funding. The Heritage Commission and Historic District Commission may be interested in helping. Once there is a plan, other groups and people could be pulled in.

Member Tilsley and Member Azzi agreed.

Member Coffey stated that she has so many ideas in her head of ways the Town Center could be better. She sometimes gets stuck on getting there because of the lack of a plan; and therefore, the lack of any progress at all. She thinks it would be nice to “rewind” a bit because they’ve lost a lot of time and there have been changes to the group over the last two years. She thinks they got a little to thrown into the details of the TAP Grant prematurely. She pointed out there’s so much right now that it’s very much hypothetical. She doesn’t think it’s purposeful to take everyone’s time each month to talk about the TAP Grant. The Town still hasn’t even been awarded the grant.

Member Tilsley commented they really don’t even have an idea or a plan. What’s the goal when the TAP Grant gets going? Maybe the Committee’s role is to just launch the TAP Grant and let the Town run with it, while the Committee starts on the next piece.

Member Azzi stated it’s hard for the members of the committee to maintain interest, let alone the residents of the Town, when they are told that money won’t be available until 2027.

Member Coffey noted that the library had nights where people met and threw out ideas, even if they were farfetched ideas, just to get them out on paper. She commented that she could speak with Chair Stewart about doing this at the next meeting.

Member Tilsley summarized they should create a vision for the Town Center, based on what they know at this time. She asked the thoughts on having someone facilitate who's not in the group.

Member Azzi noted that the library hired a consultant to work with them to develop a fundraising plan.

There was some discussion about who could possibly help facilitate a group discussion. Member Coffey will follow up with Chair Stewart about the idea of asking Stacey Smith to be a facilitator for the group, possibly at the June meeting. It was agreed that she would be a good choice as she works in communications, and lives in the Town Center. She would have a vested interest in the Town Center without being a member of the RTCC. The Committee also agreed that it would be nice to hold that meeting at the library, so there would be more space.

Member Coffey reiterated that everyone's time is valuable. The members of the committee are all volunteers. She doesn't want to see time being wasted. She has noticed that the Committee is getting a bit stale and it's been harder to get people to attend meetings. She commented that it's even been a struggle for Chair Stewart to come up with full agenda content.

#### **IV. 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration**

Member Coffey noted that a 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee was formed for the celebration taking place next year. She and Member Tilsley are working on projects for the celebration. They wanted to update the Committee about the projects because there may be people who are interested in being a part of them. There will be plenty of opportunities for volunteering.

##### **A. Signage Project: Lydia Tilsley**

Member Tilsley explained there is a small committee forming to put signage around town celebrating the history of Rye. The mission of the team is to ensure Rye's history is accessible. The vision is to create wheelchair, walking, biking, driving accessible pictorial signs that tell the story of fishing, farming, tourism, community, industry and natural history of Rye. (Member Tilsley submitted a drawing showing an example of what the signs will look like for the members to review.) She continued there are about eight locations that they have picked for the signs. The committee is trying to get a good idea of what they will be doing for signs before going to the Select Board and HDC. The sites being considered include; Odiorne, Brackett Burial Site, Brown Lane Farm, Pulpit Rock, Trefethen Corner, Rye Town Center, Rye Harbor and The Drake House. Members of the committee: Eileen Behan; Andy Stecher; Jaci Grote; Peter White; Alex Herlihy and Lydia Tilsley.

## **B. Candlelight Stroll: Kaitlyn Coffey**

Member Coffey stated that she had been thinking about bringing in a holiday type stroll to the Center of Town. She felt like the Town Center was calling for it with a large Evergreen Tree at Parson's Field. She was trying to figure out a way to have that activity brought in. She brought this idea up at a Historic District Meeting. The idea would be to highlight some of the historic properties in town center and to allow people to walk on foot to take in the properties. The HDC liked the idea and it grew into the idea of kicking off the 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration this December. After the Holiday Parade in December, the Candlelight Stroll is planned to start after the parade. Families can come to the parade and stay for the stroll. She is putting together a proposal for the event and will be speaking with Andy Stecher, who is the chair of the 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration Committee, to go over ideas for the stroll.

Member Coffey noted that a formal website is being made for the 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration Committee. People will be able to access the website to see the events that are planned for the celebration. The intent is to have a variety of events happening throughout 2023.

## **V. Other Business**

*None*

## **Adjournment**

**Motion by Kaitlyn Coffey to adjourn the meeting at 6:59 p.m. Seconded by Lydia Tilsley. All in favor.**

Respectfully Submitted,  
Dyana F. Ledger