

**RYE TOWN CENTER COMMITTEE  
MEETING**

**Wednesday, April 5, 2023 – 5:30 p.m.  
Rye Town Hall**

**Present:** *Kaitlyn Coffey, John Loftus, Victor Azzi, Selectmen's Rep Bill Epperson, and Lindsay Gray*

**I. Call to Order**

Member Coffey called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m. It was noted that the Committee has an open seat if someone is interested.

**II. Business:**

- Vote on recommendation of new members – Lindsay Gray & Jenn Thompson

**Motion by John Loftus to recommend the appointment of Lindsay Gray to the Town Center Committee. Seconded by Kaitlyn Coffey. All in favor.**

**Motion by John Loftus to recommend the appointment of Jenn Thompson to the Town Center Committee. Seconded by Kaitlyn Coffey. All in favor.**

- Election of officers
  - Chair

**Motion by Kaitlyn Coffey to nominate John Loftus as chair. Seconded by Bill Epperson. All in favor.**

- Vice-Chair

**Motion by John Loftus to nominate Kaitlyn Coffey as vice-chair. Seconded by Bill Epperson. All in favor.**

- Secretary  
*Tabled to next meeting*

- TAP Committee update

Chair Loftus gave an update on the work of the TAP Committee. The Committee recently met with the DOT to walk the Town Center. During the walk, the group was able to observe the

process for school dismissal at the Rye Junior High. It was felt that the dismissal was very neatly done; however, there is a concern about the intersection at Lang Road. There are safety concerns with the pedestrians and bicycles crossing this area.

Chair Loftus noted that one of the things that the Rye Town Center Committee was trying to do from its inception was to have a calming effect on the traffic. There are a number of ways that can be done; such as, narrowing the lanes, putting in speed bumps, and stop signs. He pointed out the statics state at 20 miles per hour (mph), the chance of a pedestrian being killed by being hit by a car is 5%. At 30-mph it's 45% and at 40-mph it's 80%. He also pointed out that he did a test drive from the Town Hall to the Washington/Wallis split. It took 4 seconds longer going 20-mph than it did 30-mph because the distance is so short.

Chair Loftus continued that Police Chief Walsh does not like the idea of a three-way stop at Lang Road, which is a T-intersection. However, there are some considerations to be made depending upon conditions; such as, the amount of traffic. He pointed out that Washington Road would be considered a main road. Lang Road would be considered a secondary road. This is determined by the volume of traffic. Chair Loftus will reach out to Chief Walsh to see if he has the information on the volume of traffic. He noted that the liaison between DOT and the Town used to be a traffic planner.

The Committee had some discussion about the split at the end of Lang Road to two lanes. This was done a few years back because it was felt that the traffic was building up on Lang Road. The concern is that the lanes are narrow. Also, it's difficult to see the oncoming traffic to make a turn with another car pulled up in the other lane. It was pointed out by Chair Loftus that if every vehicle had to stop at Lang Road, everyone would know who had the right of way and cars at the end of Lang Road would just turn. Vice-Chair Coffey commented that it would be good to understand the reasons for not wanting the three stop signs at this intersection.

Selectman Epperson noted that the recommendations for the TAP Grant need to be vetted carefully because what is done will be there forever. He also noted there's been a lot of pushback about the speed limit and speed bumps. He agrees that something needs to be done to create a traffic softening on Washington Road, specifically in that area.

Member Azzi commented that the Committee is responsible for designing a system that is safer, even if people have to stop. This will all come to the Committee in working with professional engineers within the TAP Grant implementation. The engineers will be able to give guidance based on what other towns have done and the data that's collected from traffic counts in various conditions.

Vice-Chair Coffey pointed out that a few of these ideas have already been presented to the Select Board, Fire and Police, and they were turned down. She wonders if there's a way to strengthen the argument and make the findings clearer, so some changes will be made.

Chair Loftus noted this will come when the engineers are hired to make recommendations and do the design work.

Member Azzi explained that everything that has been done so far has been preliminary. The preliminary work was done to satisfy the desire to submit an application for funds to be used towards real engineering to develop ideas in detail and proceed to construction.

Vice-Chair Coffey spoke about some of the things that could be done now; such as, posting more speed limit signs and lowering the speed limit.

Selectman Epperson noted that there's a new initiative to look at the speed limit transition between Portsmouth and Rye along Lang Road. Chief Walsh will be looking at the data and will be making a recommendation to the Select Board. The Select Board will then make a decision.

There was discussion about the number of students who walk to the library from the school and the need for a sidewalk in the Town Center. It was suggested by Vice-Chair Coffey to revisit the issue of not having equipment and labor to snowblow or plow the sidewalks. The Committee agreed that equipment is needed to maintain the sidewalks. Vice-Chair Coffey also spoke about approaching the Budget Committee for the next budget cycle to discuss purchasing equipment to at least maintain what the Town has now.

- Review of town maps

Referring to the town map, Vice-Chair Coffey explained that at the last meeting, the Committee looked at the map and reviewed some of the work that was discussed with CMA Engineering. The Committee identified that the next logical piece to look at would be the two intersections. In looking at some of the sidewalk planning, if the Range Park intersection were to change, it would really change the proposed sidewalk on CMA's proposed schematic.

Chair Loftus pointed out this came up with the TAP Committee and it will have to wait until there's an engineer. It's a question of how to plan where the project ends, so in the future it can be picked up again.

There was some discussion about finding additional funding for engineering to explore the intersections, which may be a separate warrant article or another TAP Grant. There was also some discussion about the upcoming TAP Grant project and the areas being considered for the sidewalks. Vice-Chair Coffey asked if they should evaluate other sources of funding for the engineering of the intersections, as it might be unlikely to get another TAP Grant when one is already ongoing. It was agreed that looking at other sources would be a good idea. It was the consensus that the Committee can speak with the chosen engineering firm for the TAP Grant project about looking at other aspects of the Town Center; such as, the two intersections.

The Committee discussed the possibility of speaking with other entities in town who may have an interest in the changes in the Town Center; such as, the Library and Congregational Church.

- Plan of action

The Committee discussed a plan of action:

- More information on three-way stop

- Other ideas for Lang Road intersection
- Possible warrant article for 2024 for a snowblower
- Selectman Epperson will speak with DPW Director Jason Rucker
- Selectman Epperson will speak with Chief Walsh about a 20-mph speed limit
- Further visioning for the crosswalks, stop signs, and lighting
- Talk with the Library, and other stakeholders, about Town Center plans
- Further information about the future of the Town Hall and Town Hall Annex

### **III. Other Business:**

*None*

- **Next meeting scheduled for Wednesday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5:30 p.m., Rye Town Hall**

### **Adjournment**

**Motion by John Loftus to adjourn at 6:39 p.m. Seconded by Kaitlyn Coffey. All in favor.**

Respectfully Submitted,  
Dyana F Ledger