

**RYE TOWN CENTER COMMITTEE  
MEETING  
Wednesday, August 2, 2023 – 5:30 p.m.  
Rye Town Hall**

**Present:** *Chair John Loftus, Kaitlyn Coffey, Victor Azzi, Lindsay Gray, John Mitchell and Selectman Bill Epperson*

**1. Call to Order**

Chair Loftus called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**2. Review meeting minutes from June 7, 2023**

The following corrections were noted:

- Page 2, under item d, 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph, 3<sup>rd</sup> sentence should read: **If not, the Committee should have an idea of what they want to do so a future warrant article can be proposed.**
- Page 3, under item e, the last paragraph should be deleted: **~~There was some discussion about shaving off some of the pavement at the Lang Road intersection now, instead of waiting for the TAP Grant.~~**

**Motion by John Loftus to approve the minutes of June 7, 2023 as amended. Seconded by Katilyn Coffey. All in favor.**

**3. Review the May 5<sup>th</sup> agenda which was some of the basis of subcommittees, and other discussions.**

The Committee did not have any comments.

**4. Quick discussion from subcommittee members for a “general understanding” and time management for the meeting**

There was a brief update from the members in regards to the work of the subcommittees.

**Subcommittees**

**Crosswalks:** Victor, John M, Jen

Subcommittee has not yet been called together; however, the TCC has already discussed some of the issues at previous meetings.

**Benches/Pocket Parks:** Kaitlyn, Lindsay, Jen  
Subcommittee working on size, style, and material of benches.

**Landscaping, sod, irrigation:** Kaitlyn, John L  
PowerPoint has been put together for Committee's review.

**Lighting, additional lighting, lighting styles:** John M, John L, Jen  
Subcommittee still needs to have discussions about lighting.

**Signage:** Kaitlyn, John L  
Information has been put together for signage.

**Intersection of Lang/Washington:** Lindsay, John L, Bill  
A handout was sent out to the community and feedback was received. Possible next steps would be discussions with the Police Chief and traffic engineers. PowerPoint is being created.

**Trails, paths behind annex and conservation land:** Lindsay, Kaitlyn, John M  
Easements on private property is going to be a hurdle. John Mitchell and Kaitlyn Coffey went to a Rye Conservation Commission meeting to discuss ideas.

**Library relationship with the Town:** Victor, John M, John L  
The Library has recently decided to retain a landscape architect to develop the improvements for the Library Commons. There will likely be some interaction between the Library Common and the improvements on Washington Road. John Loftus had discussions with Bill Epperson and Jeff Ross about moving the museum building and building a barn (in between the museum and library) that could be used for performances, meetings, and a coffee shop.

**School traffic:** Lindsay, Kaitlyn  
Subcommittee has information to share with Town Center Committee.

## **5. Crossover information from the TAP Committee**

Chair Loftus reported that the TAP Committee received responses from three engineering firms who are interested in working on the TAP Grant project. The TAP Committee will be holding a pre-interview session to give the firms more information about the project. The firms will then come back for a formal interview with the TAP Committee. The engineering firms will be rated according to the guidance provided by the NH Department of Transportation. The firm that comes out on top will be able to bid the job and negotiations will begin at that time. Chair Loftus pointed out that the TAP Grant Committee is going to be moving pretty quickly over the next couple of months. Some of the items being address by subcommittees might take preference over the others, as answers will be needed for the work of the TAP Committee.

## **6. Chief Walsh update on traffic data**

Chair Loftus noted that Police Chief Walsh is working on updating the traffic data and will be getting it to the Committee soon. He will follow up with Chief Walsh.

## **7. More in-depth discussions from subcommittee members, bring handouts of your ideas, photos, text, link, etc. Depending on how long discussions take, we may not get to every subcommittee on August 2<sup>nd</sup>. Perhaps an extra meeting will be warranted.**

### **School traffic:**

Member Gray reported that she and Member Coffey spoke to the middle school's principal Anne Gilbert. Ms. Gilbert is definitely concerned about the traffic situation. There has also been an increase in drop-offs and pickups since Covid, so there are less students riding the bus with more parents driving their children to school.

Referring to the pdf file that Planning Administrator Reed did with Smart People, Chair Loftus noted that in reading through, it always came back that parents are worried about traffic, speed of vehicles, and lack of bike lanes.

Member Coffey pointed out that was done in 2009 and there have really been no changes to the Town Center. She continued that Ms. Gilbert is definitely interested in collaboration and further discussions about the planning. She understands it's not something that is going to be solved right away. Ms. Gilbert is concerned about the junior high students leaving at the end of the day. The students on their bikes are thinking about where they are going and their friends. They're not thinking about cars going by or whether they are following the traffic rules. Ms. Gilbert had a lot of concerns about that because of how busy the center of town is now with the Town Hall Annex, which has created more traffic right across from the school. Ms. Gilbert also said that they made a change last year. The bike racks used to be on the right side of the building (looking at the building). The bike racks have been moved to the left side because the right side of the driveway is where all the parents come in for pickup. The intent is for the students riding bikes to be closer to the crosswalk where the police officer is stationed to help them get across the street. However, not all students exit the parking lot that way, even though that's what they are told to do.

Member Gray commented that there was some discussion with Ms. Gilbert about moving the students who ride their bikes back into the conservation land. She really like the idea of getting them off the main road. Member Gray continued there was a concern about the students darting in between cars that are waiting at pickup. The students riding down Washington and Wallis will ride their bikes along the field and then dart out between two cars in front of the building.

Chair Loftus noted that letters of support from the principal, PTA, or parents' association, will give more valid reasons that can be presented to the engineers for different types of traffic control, bike lanes, etc.

Selectman Epperson commented that DPW Director Jason Rucker is very cognizant of the speed and traffic flow in the center of town, which is why the traffic lanes were reduced in size a bit. At the Lang Road/Washington intersection, heading west, the area has been lined so cars have to slow down to make a ninety-degree turn, which slows down the traffic pretty significantly. If the engineers come up with something viable, they should listen to it.

Member Coffey presented a visual of the Town Center and junior high showing the area where the vehicles are backed up during pickup in the afternoon. It was noted that the cars always go back to the Carey & Giampa building and will sometimes go back to Alehson Street and the Acorn Acres area. It was also noted that parents who don't want to wait in that long line will park along Washington Road and back towards the Dufresne Plumbing driveway. Students are now darting out in between the parked cars to get over to their parents on Washington Road. People are also turning around in the driveways of Tails of Rye, the accountant and real estate offices, and the dental office. Member Coffey commented that it's just chaos. The principal is not sure that it's going to swing back to more people utilizing the buses and there may even be a downsize in the number of buses being used. Ms. Gilbert thinks this is a post-Covid, here to stay, situation. In planning, this is something that the Committee needs to be aware of and it should be considered that this is going to be the norm.

Member Azzi suggested finding out a number of people who choose to pick up their children from school to get an idea of how many cars are queuing up the road.

Member Coffey pointed out that when there are bikers or pedestrians utilizing Washington Road, the cars are on the walking side.

Member Mitchell noted that cars are lining up Olde Parish Road, as well. Students are walking from the junior high past the safety building and all their parents are waiting on Olde Parish Road.

There was some discussion about the land to the rear of the school, which is conservation land, and possibly using it to make a loop around the building to be used during drop-off and pickup.

Member Coffey commented that the Committee needs to think about this being the norm and provide a safer, more controlled way for parents to pick up their children. Maybe there could be a designated area where parents could sit and wait for their students to safely cross.

Member Gray pointed out that the principal was enthusiastic about solving this problem. She wonders how they can involve the school, this committee, and the Town in general. When talking about climate change initiatives, the whole idea is to have less cars going into the school. Perhaps there could be a community wide push for children using the bus, which would not only solve the traffic problem but also reduce the climate footprint.

There was further discussion about the possibility of creating a loop driveway around the junior high. Selectman Epperson will speak with Police Chief Walsh to get his thoughts.

**Trails:**

Member Mitchell reported that he went to the recent Rye Conservation Commission meeting. The idea is to have a way for students to cross the street, into the annex to cut through the parking lot, straight through the conservation land, and to Parsons, but also have a path that continues to the community center and town hall, so kids don't have to go down the busy street. (Member Mitchell pointed out the area of the conservation easement on the slide before the Committee showing the center of town.) He continued that RCC was suggesting that instead of going straight across the street through the annex property, the easement area could be the entry for all students getting into Parsons. Member Mitchell pointed out that if this was used, there would be a need for crosswalks. He suggested having a site walk with the Conservation Commission.

There was discussion about having a path from the annex to the Town Hall building, which could be used by all members of the public, not just students. It was agreed that the next step would be to set up a site walk.

**Intersection of Lang/Washington:**

Referring to the intersection at Lang and Washington, Chair Loftus noted that originally, the road was two lanes; one going in and one going out. Over time, people coming down Lang Road to the end would scoot over to the corner to turn right. This would push the other car turning left towards the center. A few years ago, striping was put in for two lanes at the end of Lang Road, so there was one to turn right, one to turn left, and another for outbound traffic. He commented that the latest rendition made it a little better because there's actually ten feet to each lane; however, he thinks there can be an improvement. (Chair Loftus presented a drawing showing his suggestion for the intersection to put in an all-way stop.) He pointed out that all discussions come back to slowing traffic and keeping people more aware of their surroundings. Putting in crosswalks, sidewalks, and bike lanes, with the vehicle traffic, makes it more compound than it is now. There are a lot of different factors that need to be controlled so people can get through that area safely. Chair Loftus noted that Chief Walsh is not in favor of this idea. However, making every car stop at the intersection is a slowing effect, which is even more important with the crosswalks. Lang Road is in the middle of this whole project, so it would be a good place to have the traffic stop.

Member Gray commented that she thinks that some of the residents' concerns would be solved by this idea. She asked if Chief Walsh's concern was mainly about back up on Washington with the school traffic.

Member Coffey replied this was one of his initial concerns.

Member Mitchell commented that Chief Walsh also said that he didn't have the resources to police the intersection.

Selectman Epperson pointed out there are very specific RSA's that control intersections by statute.

Member Azzi commented that all-way stops are very effective. He asked if there is sufficient right-of-way width to accomplish this on Washington Road.

Chair Loftus noted that the bike lanes are four feet. They could always be three feet, so two feet could be picked up. He thinks that in most places there will be forty feet, which is what is needed.

Referring to the drawing submitted by Chair Loftus, Member Coffey noted that she really likes the idea of the concrete island. Right now, there are pedestrian signs in this area. The lanes have been made smaller for slowing traffic; however, people still come flying around the corner. Daily the sign is being hit and thrown into her neighbor's yard.

Chair Loftus reviewed his proposal on the slide presented to the Committee showing the Town Center.

## **8. Other**

- Chair Loftus will send the Committee possible dates for the next meeting.

## **Adjournment**

**Motion by John Loftus to adjourn the meeting at 6:49 p.m. Seconded by Victor Azzi. All in favor.**

Respectfully Submitted,  
Dyana F Ledger