

**RYE TOWN CENTER COMMITTEE**  
**Wednesday April 07, 2021**  
**5:30 p.m. – Via Zoom**

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

**I. Call to Order**

Chair Stewart called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

**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, with meeting ID 850 3356 2998 and Password: 649731 or by clicking on the following website address: [www.zoom.com](https://www.zoom.com) ID 850 3356 2998 and Password: 649731.

- a) 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 Town of Rye website [town.rye.nh.us](http://town.rye.nh.us)
- b.) Providing a mechanism for the public to alert the public body during the meeting if there are problems with access.  
If anyone has a problem, call 603-964-5523 or e-mail at [Bbergeron@town.rye.nh.us](mailto:Bbergeron@town.rye.nh.us).
- c.) Adjourning the meeting if the public is unable to access the meeting. 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:

- John Loftus
- Mae Bradshaw
- Victor Azzi
- Kaitlyn Coffey
- John Mitchell
- Funi Burdick
- 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. Traffic on Washington Road (Next Step)**

Chair Stewart reminded the members that back in February they talked about what things could be done while they were waiting for the TAP Grant approval and what could be done if they weren't awarded the grant. She added that the discussion included transitioning the community to a lower traffic speed. This could include downgrading the speed limit to 20 mph, eliminating the right turn lane at the end of Lang Road at the Washington Road/Lang Road intersection, and marking the pavement coming off Central Road for bicycle and pedestrian traffic lanes. She reported that she has not connected with Chief Walsh for the accident report for Lang Road yet, but she still intends to do that.

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

Chair Stewart recognized Katharine Brown, member of the Historic District Commission and Rye resident.

Ms. Brown stated that she feels this is a huge issue. She does not see how there can ever be a town center as long as there are vehicles roaring through. She had sent the committee a copy of a letter that she had sent to Chief Walsh, along with his response. He had stated that there are studies going on regarding this issue. She felt that there was no reason not to spend money on three signs that would at least slow things down to the current speed limit. She reported that she has some statics (prior to the pandemic). The results show:

- 8:00 am            48 vehicles    38 cars and 10 trucks
- 1:37 am           64 vehicles    45 cars and 19 trucks
- 4:00 pm           97 vehicles    74 cars and 23 trucks

She summed up that she will be meeting with Chief Walsh to suggest that the signs are something that could be done right away.

Member Loftus mentioned that one of the concerns was turning off Lang Road onto Washington. He suggested that stop signs be installed at Lang Road and both ways on Washington at the three way stop. It would slow the traffic and take away the need for the third turning lane on Lang Road.

Member Coffey agreed with Ms. Brown. She has noticed that the traffic has increased. She speculated that some of the increase is because of Covid. More people are working from home and not commuting. Also, there is a lot of new building happening in town that causes an increase in

construction vehicles. She pointed out that the committee's goal is to have the Town Center a safe welcoming walkable area.

Selectwoman Bradshaw recommended that they get consensus as to what the speed limit should be before they spend money on speed limit signs. She suggested that they make the recommendation to the Chief after a vote at this meeting.

Member Tilsley commented that the Committee should keep in mind Central Road when they are talking about speed limits. She also recommended that all roads in the town's residential areas have a speed limit of no more than 30 mph.

Member Coffey stated that she felt that 30 mph throughout town would be a great idea and 20 mph in the Town Center would be reasonable.

Member Loftus raised the concern that the Committee is charged with only the Town Center.

Chair Stewart acknowledge that; however, they are making a recommendation regarding speed limit, they wouldn't be prohibited from making the recommendation if they wanted too.

Member Burdick pointed out that their task is to make sure the speed limit is consistent and safe. She is not sure the committee has the expertise to determine what that number is. She feels they should just make the recommendation about it and allow the experts to determine what the number should be.

Selectwoman Bradshaw reported that the Police Department is currently involved in a grant and study on the traffic in town. She feels it is timely to support reducing the speed limit. She agrees with Member Burdick. It's up to the expert to determine what the right speed is.

Member Mitchell stated that he feels that they all have enough experience on the roads to get a feel for what that should be. He feels that 25 mph would be a good speed limit in the Town Center. Delivering a message that is specific would be more helpful than just leaving it open-ended. He feels they should come to a consensus as to what the speed should be. He also suggested that they recommend the three-way stop at the intersection of Lang and Washington and take out the third turning lane.

Member Loftus responded that his goal would be for 20 mph in the Town Center. He was referring to the area from the cemetery on Central Road down Washington to Wallis Road.

Chair Stewart commented that it makes sense to identify their three primary concerns for the Chief.

1) The rate of speed that cars are traveling. 2) The problematic right turn from Lang Road on to Washington Road. 3) The rate of speed at the top of Central Road onto Washington. She also suggested they include Public Works Director McCarthy in the recommendations as they want to include the lane striping on Central Road and the adjustments to the Lang intersection. She added that she feels it was a long-shot getting a three-way stop at Lang Road. She pointed out that in the morning when parents are dropping off their children at school, there will be a backup of traffic on Washington Road; however, it is worth a try.

Member Tilsley pointed out that in the morning is when all the kids are riding their bikes to school. A three-way stop would be a lot safer for them as well.

Member Loftus pointed out that it was the parents of the students at the charette who wanted the lower speed limit. The Committee will just be making the recommendation.

There was mention of the police staff peeling out of the police parking lot during shift change. It was decided that this should also be brought up to the Chief's attention.

Chair Stewart offered to write a draft of the recommendation with the three primary concerns and send it to the members for their input.

Member Loftus suggested adding a rumble strip on Central Road before the Town Hall to remind the drivers to slow down before they get to the intersection. He added that rumble strips could be beneficial in other spots as well.

Selectwoman Bradshaw suggested that the recommendation go to the Select Board with a copy to Chief Walsh.

Member Mitchell talked about including approach signs. He pointed out that the Town Center is set up conducive to making approach signs effective.

Selectwoman Bradshaw reminded the members that anything that is done in the Historic District regarding signs will need to go before the HDC for their approval as well.

The discussion revealed that the signs that are being discussed would be just outside the District. Chair Stewart agreed to write up the recommendations and share it with the Committee prior to the Select Board meeting on April 19th.

#### **IV. Review Charter, Vision**

Chair Stewart stated that the big push ahead for the committee is to identify what the proposal for the comprehensive plan will be that will be submitted to the Select Board. She read the Committee Charge as follows:

##### **Rye Town Center Committee Charge**

*The Committee is charged with proposing a comprehensive plan for the Town Center (as defined from the Old Trolley Barn to Grange Park), to be submitted to the Select Board for consideration. The committee shall evaluate the finds and options presented during the 2019 Plan NH Charette, town owned assets, infrastructure in the Town, prior committee work and studies, and work with various other Town Committees to achieve this plan. Included in this plan may be the goal to provide ADA compliant work spaces for town employees, and adequate meeting and community activity spaces.*

*The committee shall consider the economic impact upon the Rye Tax Payer as it develops its recommendations to the Select Board. The committee should work collaboratively with the Select Board in the development of this plan for the Rye Town Center. Further the Select Board requests that the Rye Town Center Committee focus on completing the application for the Transportation Alternative Program grant and any warrant articles thereto.*

***The committee will consist of not more than 8 members, including a Selectman's representative, and shall be appointed by the Board of Selectmen for a second term ending March 31, 2023. Over the term the committee will participate in discussion with and make a final presentation to the Select Board. Staff members may be appointed as non-voting members of the committee. It is the Selectmen's intent to sunset this committee after completion of its charge, unless the Selectmen vote to continue the committee.***

Chair Stewart reviewed what the committee has already accomplished:

1. Evaluated the recommendations from the Charette.
2. Identified all the areas of interest ("hot buttons issues") that were important to the public.
3. From that process, the Committee established the priorities related to how to proceed
4. The Committee developed a vision for the Town Center as follows:  
***The Rye Town Center shall be a safe neighborhood with a strong sense of community and connectivity.***  
***We envision a Town Center that retains its distinctive historical charm and provides a welcoming and walkable connection between destinations and multigenerational gathering spaces. All forms of development and redevelopment will preserve the Town's Center unique and historical small-town identity.***
5. The Committee developed guiding principles.
6. Developed the warrant article seeking funding for the local match for the TAP Grant.
7. The Committee began to articulate some of the primary goals:
  - a. Safety; and
  - b. Retaining Rye Town's Center historic character and design.

Chair Stewart asked the Committee how they felt about the charge and what their next steps should be.

Member Burdick stated that what appeals to her is to think about the historic character of the Town Center, working with the Library, the Trolley Barn and the other assets. She also stated that she is not sure where they are as far as the Town Hall, in terms of its vision and adaptation. She recommended that they reframe what the assets are, so that they can understand how to work with the assets, in order to make a recommendation. She added that they also need to better understand the process of working collaboratively with the library and any other committees during this phase.

Member Mitchell stated that he sees this committee as a sub-committee of the charette. They have a great report. The Plan New Hampshire report has a lot of information and great ideas that gives the Committee a way to focus back on what the citizens of the Town are thinking. The Committee has an important charge that is important to the process, so that all of the charette doesn't just fade away. He recommended that they use the basis of the Plan New Hampshire report to decide where to go from here. How do we relate to other committees and what are our capabilities? How do we get that nice town center feeling? He recommended that they each use the Plan New Hampshire report and come up with some ideas. They could get back together to brain storm and start formulating the plan.

Chair Stewart stated that she was thinking about the project map that was developed by CMA. She wondered if it would be a good idea to have a work session to review the vision statement and the initial planning goals to flush them out further. They could then look at the map of the area that they are tasked with considering.

Member Mitchell recommended that the members look at charette side numbers - 8,12,13,14,17,22 & 24 along with the map. It gives an overview or satellite view of the center of town. It highlights the areas that are owned by the Town, what is used for recreation and the properties that are privately owned. He recommended that they put the TAP aside and go back to the beginning. What did the Town develop at the charette? What if the TAP doesn't happen? What can they do with no or little money?

Chair Stewart suggested that they color code on the map the municipal and privately owned properties. For example, there is an easement on Parsons Field that prohibits a bandstand and benches.

There was a short discussion about developing a connecting path, possibly a wood path behind the properties on Washington Road between the Town Hall and the TD Bank building, where a pedestrian would not have to walk out on Washington Road.

Member Azzi stated that he likes what he is hearing. They are finally talking about things that are related to planning. He pointed out that they need to start with existing conditions. He felt that it would be good if they could mobilize to have a work or planning session, bringing the maps to the meeting. They can then start with what the Town's needs, wants, exceptions and other considerations should be. He recommended looking at the individual assets and the relationship between the assets to the overall roles of the Town and in the Rye Town Center in particular. He felt they were on the right track.

Chair Stewart stated that she will do some research on Parsons Field and its easement.

Selectwoman Bradshaw reported that James Verra is working on a plan to subdivide the back land from the TD Bank building for Conservation to present to the Planning Board. She reported that there is a small strip of frontage that runs along the exit from the bank. Conservation has most of that side yard that links up to the Town Forest. There will be an easement that nothing can be built there. Conservation has said that people will be able to walk there, but there will not be any paths or trails. The easement will be held by the Rockingham County Conservation Commission and the property will be maintained by them.

## **V. Approval of Minutes**

### **1. March 3, 2021**

The following corrections were noted:

- Page 3, Section 4 under TAP Application: Tom ~~Jamerson~~ should be New Hampshire Department of Transportation Tom Jameson.  
Also, Phil Corbett should be identified as being with CMA Engineering.

**Motion by Mae Bradshaw to approve the meeting minutes of March 31, 2021 as amended.  
Seconded by John Loftus.**

**Roll Call Vote: Lydia Tilsley – Aye; Mae Bradshaw – Aye; Victor Azzi – Aye; Kaitlyn Coffey – Aye; John Mitchell – Aye; Funi Burdick – Abstained; John Loftus – Aye; Karen Stewart – Aye.  
Motion Passed.**

## **VI. Other Business**

Chair Stewart reminded the members that the warrant article will have to be amended at the Deliberative Session.

Selectwoman Bradshaw explained that town counsel will draft something up for the amendment to be sure that it matches the grant. She stated that the Committee received a nice invitation from the chair of the Library Trustees to collaborate with them in the planning phase for the park. They are interested in the Committee's level of interest. She recommended that they reach out to the Trustees to have a joint meeting with them as to what their level of interest is.

Chair Stewart agreed and stated that she has been in touch with Jeff Ross. At that time, she had to get through the TAP application. Now that that has happened, she will get back in touch with him to get the groups together.

Selectwoman Bradshaw recommended also meeting with Conservation.

- **Next Meeting: Wednesday, April 28, 2021 at 5:30 by ZOOM**

### **ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion by Mae Bradshaw to approve the meeting minutes of March 31, 2021 as amended.**

**Seconded by John Loftus.**

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

**Motion Passed.**

Respectfully Submitted;  
Dyana F, Ledger