

RYE TOWN CENTER COMMITTEE
Thursday June 17, 2021
5:30 p.m.
Town Hall

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

I. Call to Order

Chair Stewart called the meeting to order at 5:32 pm.

II. TAP Application Update

Chair Stewart reported that there has been no news yet on the TAP Grant application. The decision is still pending.

III. Warrant Article get-out-the-vote

Chair Stewart asked how the members felt about doing PR for the warrant article.

Selectwoman Bradshaw stated that she felt that the residents at the Deliberative Session understood that this was a remake of last year's request, with more participation from the feds and no additional participation from the Town. No one questioned it and they went along with the amendment to clarify the article.

It was decided that the following would be effective in getting the word out:

- 1.Letter to the Editor
- 2.E-mail Campaign
- 3.Rye Civic League

IV. Library/RTCC Partnership Update

Chair Stewart announced that the library is having a public meeting on Monday, June 21st at 6:30, at the library.

Member Azzi explained that the jest of the meeting is to invite participation from anyone from the public that is interested in the project to join in. They can join by attending in person or by attending by Zoom.

V. Other Business

Chair Stewart reported that she had met with the Select Board a couple of weeks ago to have continued conversation with them and Chief Walsh regarding traffic safety. She asked Selectwoman Bradshaw to talk about the outcome of that meeting.

Selectwoman Bradshaw explained that PWD McCarthy will be doing the striping along the road to narrow it to 10 feet. There was a lot of contention about the dangerous situation a three-way stop at the Lang Road intersection would create. The committee also asked to have the right turn lane eliminated on Lang. Chief Walsh is still pushing back on it. So, she recommended that the committee continue to push on it.

VI. Town Center Planning, Next Steps

Chair Stewart pointed out that the committee has an opportunity to chart out next couple of months of work related to holistic planning. She added that buildings and property ownership are now starting to fall into place. She asked for the group to express their thoughts on how to structure the work process.

The committee referred to their vision (as written in the last meeting minutes) as read by Chair Stewart:

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 environment, with connects between destinations and multigenerational gathering places. All forms of development and redevelopment will present the Town Center's unique and historical small-town identity.

From this vision the Committee came up with core goals as:

1. Increasing safe and accessible multi-modal travel
2. Retaining the quintessential historic nature
3. Maintaining multi-generational focus on all planning
 - a. Social Engagements
 - b. Employment
 - c. Sports/Physical Activity
 - d. Gathering Spaces

She asked the committee if this is still hitting the mark.

Member Mitchell stated “absolutely”. He also pointed out that there are a couple of unknown factors involved now; the library and the open space/park, the TD Bank building and if they get the TAP Grant or not. He believes they can still go through the initial ideas of the concept of bringing the town center together. He believes that it is still a good model to follow, keeping in mind these other variables/project that will be tied in.

There was discussion in regards to creating more definition to the town center. Member Coffey recommended small decorative tops to the street signs that define the town center. She has seen these used in other communities to define the boundaries of historic and other districts. Member Tilsley pointed out that most people don't know that the lawn in front of the cemetery is the Town Green. She recommended that the town center start from the other side of the cemetery, as the Town Green should be included because of its historical importance. She pointed out that other communities have a sign on their town green with a brief history of the town. There was discussion on possibly extending the historic street lighting fixtures down Central Road past the cemetery.

It was noted that when the town hall annex building is opened, it will leave the current town hall as a meeting house. Possibly allowing for events to be held there as well. Selectwoman Bradshaw pointed out that this may necessitate connecting the parking lot at the church, and pulling the accessibility for parking toward the cemetery and the purposed coffee shop.

There was discussion on the possibility of putting a pocket park where the gazebo is and possibly moving the monument from the intersection of Central and Washington Road into that location. There is a vision of changing the intersection at the head of Central Road into a T-intersection. Selectwoman Bradshaw suggested that this may be something that could be explored while they are waiting on the TAP Grant.

After a discussion of what a coffee shop would do to add to the vision and shape the culture of the Town Center, the members agreed that they would like to invite Mr. Valley and the Library Trustees to a meeting to talk about their ideas and to also offer the committee's support.

The committee agreed that they would like to modify their charge to expand the Town Center from the south end of the Town Green to 150 feet beyond Grange Park on Wallis and Washington Roads. Selectwoman Bradshaw will draft the proposal to present to the Select Board.

VII. Town Forest Tour

Chair Stewart reported that she has talked to Tracey Degnan. The reason why the tour has not come together yet is because Ms. Degnan has been extremely busy. Ms. Degnan has sent the Town Forest Management Plan that has been signed off by the Town and the Conservation Commission. Rockingham County Conservation Commission holds the easement on the Town Forest. The Town Forest is 156 acres with an addition 2 1/2 acres coming from the TD Bank transaction and an additional 50+/- acres coming from another source. The trails are mapped. They do not recommend any additional trails. Chair Stewart stated that Ms. Degnan said she would be happy to do a site walk with the committee. Chair Stewart said that she is very familiar with the trails and could take the lead in a site walk.

Chair Stewart promised to send the Forest Management Plan to the members after the meeting.

VIII. Other Business

Member Loftus brought up the concern that the committee has not discussed the abutters of the coffee shop. He felt that they should be heard prior to the committee weighing in with support. The members feel that was a good point.

Member Azzi raised the questions: "What does it mean to be in the Rye Town Center?" "Are there any conditions that have to be met?" "Would you like to be a part of something called the Rye Town Center?" "Does it change what you can do with your house/property?" He pointed out that by expanding south on Central Road, if the committee intends to use the length of the road to define the boundaries, there are private homes directly across from the Town Green that would be involved.

Member Coffey stated that within the Historic District, the homeowners are tied into the district's zoning regulations. With the town center boundaries, she feels it is more just a visual boundary. It doesn't change zoning regulations or any rules.

Member Mitchell agreed that it is just a way to tie in all the town assets.

Selectwoman Bradshaw pointed out that someday it may benefit those 5 to 6 property owners to be part of the Historic District Commission because the Town may be able to get tax incentives for people living in the district to do work on their homes. The Select Board has the authority to create tax incentives in that way.

The members agreed that it is important to continue the vision that was developed by Plan New Hampshire. Bringing people to the town center as a destination.

Chair Stewart stated that they have had a good conversation. It is good to start talking about their vision for the town center. She will try to come up with a continuation of this conversation. She asked member Azzi to give his input, as he has been pushing for the committee to have an articulated plan. She stressed that it is important to have a framework to work around to keep this conversation going.

IX. Approval of Minutes – Tabled until next meeting

- **Next Meeting: Wednesday, July 7, 2021 at 5:30**

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by John Loftus to adjourn the meeting at 6:51 p.m. Seconded by Lydia Tilsley. All in favor. Motion passed.

Respectfully Submitted,
Dyana F. Ledger