

RYE TOWN CENTER COMMITTEE
Wednesday, August 04, 2021
5:30 p.m.
Rye Town Hall

Present: Karen Stewart Chair; John Loftus; Victor Azzi; Kaitlyn Coffey; Funi Burdick; John Mitchell; Lydia Tilsley and Selectmen's Rep: Tom King

I. Call to Order

Chair Stewart called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. TAP Status Update

Chair Stewart announced that the Department of Transportation is going to be making their recommendations to the Executive Council on September 1st. Janet Stevens, a Rye resident and member of the Executive Council, and a number of other local officials have been really interested in the project and are advocating for it, where they feel it is appropriate. The meeting on September 1st will be public and Ms. Stevens will be sending information to the Committee so that they will be able to listen in.

Selectman King reported that the Select Board is working to augment the application because the town election occurred after the cut-off of the application. The pertinent information that should be changed in the original application is that the town voted to approve the \$300,000.

Chair Stewart confirmed that there is federal money available to the state of 6.9 million, which will be awarded throughout the state.

III. Continuation of Visioning Process

Chair Stewart updated the members that former Selectwoman Bradshaw was going to write a formal letter to the Select Board regarding the Town Green. She discovered that the Town Green is under the jurisdiction of the Cemetery Trustees. She suggested that would not fall to either Selectman King or to herself to advise the committee's interest and to ask that they modify the charge to include that property.

Member Azzi explained that just because something will be included doesn't mean that it will be changed, but they need to take into consideration the existing elements of a defined area. So, they can't ignore the existence of the Town Green, regardless if it is public or private. He added that the final plan of the Town Center should show the Town Green.

Member Loftus agreed with member Azzi. He added that the Town Center should be extended to the end of the Town Green and include the homes across the street. He pointed out that this is not extending the Historic District it is just the Town Center.

Chair Stewart recommitted to setting up a mobile meeting for the September meeting, in order for the committee to tour the town properties in the Town Center.

IV. Other Business

- Chair Stewart asked Selectman King for an update on the Town Hall Annex work.

Selectman King reported that the demolition of the interior was started. The work on the interior schematics is still in process. There are three phases to the plan. Reconfiguring the interior is phase one. The Select Board is trying to accelerate the process as much as possible so that things are running concurrently. The issue that came up today, was that some of the interior work will include demolishing some exterior areas and changing exterior windows, which will require approval from the HDC. Selectman King suggested that if the Committee wants to tour the building, the sooner the better.

- Chair Stewart referred to a letter that former Selectwoman Bradshaw had written to the Committee regarding their work in progress (where they have been and where they are going). Chair Stewart stated that there are some things that needed to be added and some things that may be corrected.

Member Azzi stated that he had already started to write a response to Ms. Bradshaw's letter.

Chair Stewart suggested that she reach out to Ms. Bradshaw and ask if she is comfortable with the Committee revising the letter or adding a response/companion piece to the letter. She suggested that this letter is a catalyst for the Committee to create their own summary of their progress and goals.

Member Burdick suggested taking the letter as a basis and rewrite it as the most accurate summary that the Committee has.

Member Coffey responded that she agreed. She added that this would be a great start of a document that could be updated along the way and handed out to new members of the Committee.

Chair Stewart added that it would be a great help for the Select Board as well. She asked member Azzi to create a revision of the summary and not a response to Ms. Bradshaw's letter and to share it with the Committee when he is done. The Committee will give feedback and they can even formally vote on it.

Member Mitchell stated that it was really nice of Ms. Bradshaw to take the time to write and send the letter/summary.

Member Azzi felt he could have his revision done prior to the next meeting.

- Member Loftus referred back to the Town Hall Annex. He expressed concern regarding the demolish work being started prior to the final interior plan being finalized. Proceeding without a plan will not be good for the town, as with any renovation as you get into it and discover what is there, the costs start going up. He recommended that the Committee send a message to the Select Board to stop work on the building until there is a plan in place.

After further discussion, the Committee agreed that their interest is mostly about the exterior, which would fall under the jurisdiction of the HDC.

- Member Burdick pointed out that the group that was interested in what the Town Center Committee was doing was the library. Following the last RTCC meeting last month, she, Lydia Tilsley and Victor Azzi attended the Library Trustees meeting and it was a really good meeting, with a lot of interesting ideas. She stressed that this is a great opportunity to work with the library as that is the heart of the center. It is a great site for them to get involved with and to be more connected. The Committee should focus their energy toward that parcel that will have a strong impact on the center.

Note: Member Tilsley joined the meeting at this time.

- In light of the work already being done on the Town Hall Annex and the decisions that were made on the Parsonage and the old trolley barn; there was a lengthy discussion regarding the charge of the Committee and what their focus and purpose should be moving forward. There was a comment regarding disbanding. After discussion, it was agreed that there is value in the Committee and that there is still a lot of work to be done.

- Member Burdick pointed out that where they are not about to do the charge, they need to reevaluate it and come up with a mission that they can achieve. Maybe the way to go about that is to say, “This is the charge, that has been given to us”. “We need to have an opinion of the historic value and the use, and make that statement of the value. If this opinion is not needed, heeded, or accepted, then we have to ask the Select Board to evaluate our charge.” If not, the Committee will not succeed and the Town will be asked what happened to the Town Center Committee?

Motion by John Loftus to make a recommendation to the Select Board to stop the further work on the TD Bank building until such time as there is a complete architectural plan and then to proceed in the normal fashion of construction. Seconded by Victor Azzi.

Vote: 6-0-2 Selectman King and Lydia Tilsley – abstained.

Motion passed.

Member Tilsley stated that she has concerns. She felt that if they bring this forward and the Select Board ignores it, then they will have no input. If there is no Rye Town Center Committee, they will lose the oversight. She disagrees with the “black and white vision” of the Committee that if the Select Board ignores their statement, then the Committee has no purpose.

The Committee agreed that if the Select Board does not listen to their recommendations, they should still make them anyways and they will not disband over it. It is their job to just make the recommendations. They don’t have anything to do with the results.

Friendly Amendment: The Rye Town Center Committee recommends to the Select Board to stop demolition and further work on the TD Bank building until such time as there is a complete set of architectural plans to work from and then to proceed in the normal construction procedure.

Friendly Amendment: The Rye Town Center Committee recommends to the Select Board to stop all demolition on the TD Bank building until such time as there is a complete set of architectural plans to work from and then to follow town procedures for permitting, with guidance from the Historic District Commission and permitting by the building department and normal construction procedures.

Chair Stewart stated that she will submit this to the Select Board.

- Member Tilsley announced that there is a lot of talk regarding the drive thru for the purposed coffee shop. She added that the new owner has approached the abutter that is connected at the rear of the property to purchase part of their land in order to accomplish this. She stated that there are no abutters that are in favor of it. She felt that this was important for this committee to know prior to announcing any support of the plan.
- Selectman King stated that he has been meeting with all the chairs of the boards, committees and commissions and the department heads. He is concerned that there is not a lot of communication and coordination between the groups. He pointed out that he attended the last Recreation Commission meeting and that the “New Wave” facility in the church is going to be large; not just in size, but in people. There is going to be a whole floor for the “Over 55” group and another whole floor for the teens, with room to expand. He recommended that the Rye Town Center Committee appoint a representative to the church committee. He pointed out that if the church committee pulls off even some of what they have planned, it will be a major impact on the traffic and the town center. He additionally recommended looking at the other boards and committee to establish if there is a need to appoint a representative.

V. Approval of Minutes

1. 05/05/2021

Karen Stewart moved to amend the minutes as follows:

- Page 5 third paragraph from the bottom reads: She recommended having a meeting with all the owners/managers of the non-private properties in the area to talk about what their overall plans are and how that might work into the Town Center vision (i.e., the church representatives, etc.). There was a request for clarification on this statement.

Chair Stewart clarified that this statement was specifically talking about meeting with Mr. Valley to talk about his plans for the trolley barn. Ms. Bradshaw was suggesting meeting with all non-private property owners, as in the church, the library, etc.

It was decided to omit the word non-private properties and use the word relative properties, for clarification.

All in favor.

Motion passed.

2. 06/17/2021

Karen Stewart moved to amend the minutes as follows:

- Page one; Library/RTCC Partnership Update reads: 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.
- It should read: Member Azzi explained that the gist of the meeting is to invite participation from anyone from the public that is interested in the project, to join in.
- Page two; Town Center Planning, Next Steps reads: ***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.***
- It should read: ***We envision a Town Center that retains its distinctive historical charm and provides a welcoming and walkable environment, with connections between destinations and multigenerational gathering places. All forms of development and redevelopment will preserve the Town Center's unique and historical small-town identity.***
- Page two: The committee came up with four core goals. Only three were listed. The fourth core goal was: Reimagine existing town owned buildings as efficient and functional spaces
- Page three; third paragraph last line reads: 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.
- It should read: 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 proposed coffee shop.

All in favor. Motion passed.

There was discussion regarding the use of the term Town Hall Annex for the TD Bank building. Annex depicts: a building joined to or associated with a main building, providing additional space or accommodations. It was suggested calling the TD Bank building the new “town office building”.

3. 07/07/2021

Karen Stewart moved to amend the minutes as follows:

- Whenever the term Town Hall Annex is referred to the term new town office building should be inserted
- **Warrant Article 6 Promotion – ~~Not Addressed~~ Was addressed**

The Committee discussed that no formal advertising or signs were sent out. However, there were emails sent out and in-person word of mouth was done.

- **Modified Charge (Expansion of District) – ~~Not Addressed~~ Was addressed**

Selectwoman Bradshaw informed the Committee that the Town Green is under the control of the cemetery trustees. Therefore, she did not pursue the subject of expanding the Town Center with the Select Board. The Town Center Committee will pursue modifying the charge to reflect that expansion.

All in favor. Motion passed.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Funi Burdick to adjourn the meeting at 7:21 p.m. Seconded by Kaitlyn Coffey. All in favor. Motion passed.

Respectfully Submitted, Dyana F. Ledger