

**TOWN OF RYE - SELECT BOARD
MEETING
Wednesday, August 23, 2023 – 1:00 p.m.
Rye Town Hall**

Selectmen Present: *Chair Tom King, Vice-Chair Bill Epperson, and Selectman Bob McGrath*

Others Present on behalf of the Town: *Town Administrator Matt Scruton, and Asst. Town Administrator/Finance Director Becky Bergeron*

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair King called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. 2024 Staffing Requests

Police Department:

Police Chief Kevin Walsh spoke to the Select Board about his proposal to move the part-time animal control officer to a fulltime position. He presented a memo listing the types of services for animal control that residents rely on from the Police Department. He also presented an outline of some of the tasks of the animal control officer for the Select Board's review. He spoke about some jobs that will be picked up by the ACO in a fulltime position; such as, an evidence technician.

Selectman McGrath noted that when he was the animal control officer, the position was mainly an enforcement position at that time. In the past, a couple of people who held the position were ones who wanted to become police officers, so their attitudes were very specific about how to approach the job. Because of all the dog disputing in town about the dog ordinances, his thought was that if it was approached a bit differently, instead of enforcement it be an animal welfare type position, the town would appreciate that. The position evolved into a position where gift bags were given when there were policy changes during the year, which were donated by veterinarians and dog supply companies. People started reacting to the changes; knowing that when they saw the animal control officer it's not always bad news. Selectman McGrath pointed out that the amount of care in this town for wild animals is amazing. He also pointed out that Rye is a very unique community. There may be thought that an animal control officer is not needed fulltime; however, the work is double because of where Rye is geographically with the coastline.

Selectman McGrath spoke about the current animal control officer and noted the things that she has been able to accomplish during her time in the position. He doesn't think that the town would want to lose a person like this because they are not easy to find.

Selectman Epperson asked if there would be an advantage to making this position a salaried position, as calls for service could be at any time.

Chief Walsh described the ACO's rotating schedule. He noted that when preparing the schedule, they try to match the expectations for service based on season, weather, and other events. He also spoke about how the ACO adjusts her schedule to accommodate for the off-hour calls that she services.

Referring to the evidence technician, which is intended to be picked up by the ACO in the future, Chair King asked if it was considered to fill that as a part-time position, which may be less expensive than having it covered under a fulltime position while still maintaining animal control officers on the job.

Chief Walsh commented there are challenges with finding someone who would fit into the evidence technician position. He looked at weaning the ACO into that position because other departments are doing something similar with fulltime employees within their departments. The evidence technician tasks would be merged into the tasks that the current ACO already handles for the department.

Building Department:

Building Inspector Chuck Marsden spoke to the Select Board about the need for an additional building inspector on a part-time basis due to the increase and complexity of building permits for construction and projects in town, which requires significant research and compliance control. He also spoke about the increase in FEMA requirements, which requires extensive information and details about each property. Inspector Marsden reviewed the increase in the Building Department's work over the years that he has been with Rye.

School Resource Officer:

Police Chief Walsh reviewed his proposal for a part-time school resource officer, which would be for two hours a week at each school to start. Chief Walsh noted that he has met with the principals of the schools and the SAU 50 Superintendent to go over the memorandum of understanding, which gives a job description and goals of the resource officer. The resource officer will act as security support for the school staff, as well as continuing the school programs, and building relationships between parents and the Police Department. Chief Walsh reviewed what tasks would be covered under the school resource officer position. He also spoke about the active shooter training for school staff, which is conducted by officers from the Police Department at the start of school every year.

Chair King asked if the position would require another vehicle.

Chief Walsh noted that the Department will be managing the vehicle use with the cars that are already in place.

Selectman Epperson asked if the four hours are going to be staggered.

Chief Walsh explained the hours will be based off the school schedule and what the resource officer feels they need for time at the schools. He further explained there are some missions that the principals want to see from the resource officer. There are also built in missions that the resource officer will be following. The resource officer will be focusing on the security weaknesses in each school and the changes that need to be made.

Finance Department:

Finance Director Becky Bergeron spoke to the Select Board about the proposal to hire a part-time finance administrator for twenty hours a week. She noted that the Finance Department does not have backup secondary support for routine tasks and administrative functions. The proposal is to hire a temp to do basic clerical work, filing, payables, and administrative paperwork.

Chair King asked where the person would work.

Director Bergeron noted it would be in the Town Hall, sharing an office with the Treasurer.

Selectman McGrath asked if this “temp” position would be covered through an agency.

Director Bergeron confirmed it would be a contracted position with a focus on finance.

Chair King asked if there was consideration on sharing a fulltime position with another town.

Director Bergeron replied this could work, depending upon what other communities are looking for in support. She pointed out that most finance offices in this geographic area are one deep without a large bench of support. Director Bergeron explained to the Board that a “temp” gives the town an opportunity to access what the needs really are and how to fill those needs without a long-term commitment.

Town Administrator Matt Scruton noted that sharing a fulltime employee with another community would require splitting the insurance and benefits for that person, so it would add to the cost.

Chair King pointed out that it would be more expensive; however, the town would be getting someone who knows the job versus a temp who will just show up for the day. It might not even be the same person each time. He further pointed out that continuity would need to be part of the contract with the agency.

B. Parsons Creek

Chair King explained that Rye did not receive a grant for 2024 from DES to continue the Parsons Creek studies. The town will apply for 2025; however, they cannot take a year off from the studies. The Select Board has asked FB Environmental to talk about what they would do for

\$100,000 and give a couple of options of things that could be done with funds put into the budget process for 2024.

Luke Frankel, FB Environmental, explained that the grant was specifically for groundwater modeling because that effort is a big budget item. If the town was looking to do something on a smaller scale, he would recommend doing additional DNA analysis using a lab that does mitochondrial DNA source tracking. Another option would be to do an update to the watershed-based plan for Parsons Creek. The main piece would be going through the recommendations of the previous plan, having stakeholders' meetings, doing an in-depth analysis, and identifying action items for management of the creek for the next ten years. An update to the creek's management plan would cost between \$30,000 to \$50,000. This work can also be done in a phased approach with the funded amount being split up over multiple years. Both phases must be completed to get a document that is complete and meaningful for the management of the creek. There are nine elements for an EPA approved watershed plan. Including all nine elements opens the door for federal funding in the future for implementation of the plan.

Chair King asked about baseline data collecting.

Mr. Frankel noted that the routine bacteria collection is \$7,500., which FB Environmental has been doing for the last ten years. This baseline monitoring should continue next year so there are no gaps in the data set. He pointed out that the mitochondrial analysis could be incorporated into the routine sampling, so the labor costs would be negligible. He suggested adding different sites to the ones that are being sampled now, which would increase the costs a bit. He will follow up with the lab on costs for the town. He estimates the costs to be approximately \$10,000 for the year. The DNA analysis are billed per sample and by the number of different animal groups being analyzed. He suggests looking for humans, birds, and dogs.

Chair King noted that in looking at the options for next year, it should be something that is a stepping stone for the future. Given what FB Environmental thinks they are going to apply for in 2025, groundwater modeling, does any of the suggestions help or hinder that project?

Mr. Frankel explained the additional DNA analysis could help by giving more of an idea of where the sources are. There could be some hotspots identified through that analysis; however, generally, the items are separate and there's no detriment if these things aren't done. He pointed out that there's already some groundwater monitoring built into the grant to facilitate what is needed to validate the model.

Chair King asked if funds would still be needed for the baseline testing, even if the town was given the grant of \$100,000 for the groundwater modeling.

Mr. Frankel confirmed. The decision would be whether the town wants to maintain the baseline monitoring for \$7,500 and do an additional project. In 2025, the groundwater modeling and monitoring for \$100,000 is dependent upon whether the grant is awarded or not.

Chair King asked where FB Environmental would go for 2025, in terms of state grants, if the town decided to pay for the groundwater monitoring for 2024.

Mr. Frankel replied that they would probably have to come up with a different project. It couldn't be the DNA testing because DES strongly recommends that review is not done on any aspect of a previous phase of the grant. He recommends the watershed management plan approach for other grant opportunities because they can be less competitive. He pointed out that DES tends to fund water bodies that don't have any management plans versus ones that need to be updated; however, there are potential grant funding opportunities for the watershed management plan update. He pointed out that the watershed modeling project is a good fit for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund grant opportunity.

Mr. Frankel reiterated that he strongly recommends that the town focus on the watershed management plan for 2024. The plan is designed to set up implementation over the next ten years. The DNA testing could be incorporated into that effort as well. With management plans, there needs to be a monitoring component that is new and novel. Mr. Frankel explained that the intent of the management plan is to establish a water quality goal for the waterbody. Every recommendation in the plan is designed to meet that goal. The goal is based on modeling. For Parsons Creek, it would be to meet State criteria for secondary contact recreation. Doing that would involve modeling, identifying where the sources are, and identify different things that can be done in terms of best management practices. Another component is holding public forums throughout the planning process where the water quality goal is discussed. There's also a water advisory group that consists of representatives from DES, folks from the town, and other people from stakeholder groups to help design the goal and develop an action plan, which are the steps to meet the goal.

After discussion with the Select Board, Mr. Frankel agreed to provide more information within the next few weeks for the budgeting cycle.

C. Paving

DPW Director Jason Rucker spoke to the Select Board in regards to what could be done with more funding in terms of road maintenance and paving. He noted that the town is currently at 72% paving condition index (CPI). He has requested in the Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) for the next budgetary cycle a full road scan to evaluate the last 1.5 years of paving that has been done to reevaluate the town's paving condition index.

Chair King asked what could be done in an effort to really upgrade the town roads over a couple of year period, so a pothole would be a rarity.

Director Rucker commented the town has some trouble areas and DPW knows where those areas are. Overall, he would say that the condition of the roads in Rye are in good shape. The trouble areas are being targeted in the projected plans for repaving in the future. He noted that the roads in Rye are not in bad shape whatsoever, nor are they unsafe. Director Rucker continued that over the past couple of years, he has mapped out the years that the roads in town were paved last, which is used as part of the pavement management plan. The future paving plan has areas that are being targeted because the roads are seriously degraded and need to be focused on. He pointed out that a lot of the pavement management plan for future paving has to work around

current construction projects; the RWD water main replacement on Wallis Road being one, which will be up for repaving as soon as that project is complete. He noted that South Road would also be targeted. He has some estimates on the costs for repaving the entirety of South Road versus doing it in segments over a few years. He pointed out there are some complications with South Road with some extra costs having to do with the current sidewalk.

Director Rucker continued there are a few main roads that haven't been paved and those are the ones that receive a lot of complaints from residents. Those roads are also slated for paving in the pavement management plan: Wallis Road; Washington Road (between Central and the beach); Long John Road; Washington Road (between Hunter's Run and Central); and all of South Road. He pointed out these roads are DPW's main focus for the next few years. If the Select Board was so inclined to increase the paving budget, this is where he would place the onus and the majority of the funding. He pointed out there are a few neighborhoods where he has received numerous complaints: Wallis Road (near the RWD project); Odiorne; Appledore; Ocean View; and Parkridge. These are areas for future paving effort; as well as, McLaughlin off Perkins Road.

Director Rucker reviewed cost estimates for road paving on roads where it is needed throughout the town. There was discussion about an appropriate budget for next year that the Public Works Department would be able to handle in terms of work and what roads could be focused on during 2024. It was noted by Director Rucker that if the Select Board increased the budget by \$200,000 for next year, this would be something that DPW could manage. He also spoke about investing funds into a piece of equipment that would allow DPW to repair the roads indefinitely. Director Rucker agreed to supply the Select Board with more information on the piece of equipment recommended for road repair. He will also provide further estimates and options for road paving during the budgeting process.

III. OTHER BUSINESS

None

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Tom King to adjourn at 2:57 p.m. Seconded by Bill Epperson. All in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,
Dyana F. Ledger