

**RYE TOWN CENTER COMMITTEE  
MEETING  
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2019  
5:30 P.M. TOWN HALL**

**Members Present:** Chair Karen Stewart, Vice Chair Nina Parrott, John Loftus, Secretary Kaitlyn Coffey, Victor Azzi, Selectmen's Rep; Phil Winslow.

**I. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance**

Chair Stewart called the meeting to order and led the pledge of allegiance at 5:33 p.m.

**II. Public Input**

Chair Stewart recognized and welcomed Debbi Toohey President of Rye Historical Society.

**III. Karen Oliver, Library Trustees**

Ms. Oliver explained that the Library Trustees want to update the Committee about the Library's Strategic Plan. She explained that the Library's planning process started in 2015. The first strategic plan was three years long. The current Plan (2018-2023) is five years long. The plan looks at the role of the Library in Rye, its strengths and weaknesses, current and potential users and what needs to be done to fulfill the Library's role and to improve on its facilities and services. The planning process generated a recommendation that the Library obtain a space needs study, to put a fine point on the things discussed during the strategic plan process. The Trustees engaged a professional to come in to perform a space needs study. The space needs study found that the Library needed to expand in order to meet its mission as well as to improve on it. The funding for the potential of expansion was also explored. The Trustees have not made a decision to move forward; however, should they do, the warrant article would most likely structure a combination of public and private funding. In order to continue best practices, the Trustees have engaged a development professional to help structure the funding piece.

The development professional gave a presentation to the Committee.

She started by saying that she would be talking about two topics; one being the results of the study and the second being why the Trustees hope that this information will be important and relevant to the Committee's work.

The major take-aways from the study were:

- The study was implemented according to industry standards
  - There was good participation and diversity in the survey

- The report was designed to inform the Trustees not only to proceed on raising funds for the capital project, but also on:
  - how,
  - who,
  - timing,
  - what for,
  - does it make sense, and
  - Special circumstances that would influence the decision to move forward with the project.
  
- What the survey showed:
  - The Library is very important to the community.
    - 92% felt the Library plays a critical role.
    - 96% felt that the demand for the programming at this time, is important for the citizens.
      - People are mostly connected by their devices. They do not get out to see each other. The library is a place where some of the civic needs of the community can be met.
      - Programming includes a place for older people to meet for companionship and activities, children learning to read, technology and many other classes.
  
  - Recognition that the institution itself is reliable and important, well run and trustworthy.
    - 88% felt it was important to move forward with the expansion and understood the need for it.
  
  - The Library provides space for other organizations for non-library events.
    - There are 1,300 sessions held at the Library every year, of which 900 are Library programs and 400 are non-library.
    - One of the goals in the Library's Strategic Plan is to increase the Library programming by 10%.
      - Limited space will affect this goal unless there is an expansion or a reduction of the number of non-library events held at the Library.
  
  - Opportunities
    - When asked if the individual would personally give, the approval rating dropped down to 25%.
      - The reason was that if they were going to vote and/or contribute to the Library project they needed to understand how the Library fits into the big picture for the Town.
  
    - 61% stated they would contribute.
      - 66% of the donations would be under \$5,000.

- 67% of the prospects were willing to volunteer to help.
    - This is important because the Trustees will need to build a compelling case among philanthropists about why a gift of over \$5,000 is important. The total cost of this project will be in the neighborhood of \$3 million.
    - It is a long way to go to have the public project appear attractive enough so that someone will want to write a check and have enough confidence that the project is comprehensive and make sense for the town.
- Options
  - Don't do the complete project. Pick and choose a few items from the project and only implement those.
  - Have all the Town's organizations work together to get a warrant article passed that encompasses all the Town projects into one, with one funding campaign.
  - Each organization works independently.

It is extremely compelling, and more effective to approach a potential funder as one unit and ask for \$100 thousand a year for five years. These would cover all these projects in one transaction.

- Next Steps

The Trustees are very eager to work with the Committee in terms of how the Library fit into the Town Center picture. They recognize that everyone would benefit from the planning work that the Committee is doing. They also need to determine the various specifics that will be going into the project, so they can put it forward to the market. There will be a campaign plan that has a campaign chair and an honorary chair and people working on committees in order to secure the funds necessary on the private side and then to have the right marketing on the public side for any warrant article that would be put forward.

It was very clear that for any warrant article for any effort, there needs to be a plan, which is a comprehensive approach for the whole Town. What is the big picture? When the Committee is ready, the Trustees are prepared to share their information with them, such as their needs for square feet, what they intend to do with the square footage (so that there is no duplication of service with any other project), what their anticipated costs are and what their timing will be.

Understanding the Committee's plan is important to the Trustees' efforts and is an important deliverable for the Library to understand how everything is put together, so that they can make good decisions. It is very clear that by working together, everyone will be better served by reassuring the voters and potential donors that the plan has been thought through and their dollars are being invested wisely, without duplication and with strategy.

\*End of presentation

Chair Stewart explained that the Committee is hoping to get to a place, to work with all the different committees and services in Town, to understand how they all work together and what is needed. The charge from the Board of Selectmen came with a delivery of a warrant article and there has been a very compressed timeline. So, the focus of the Committee was to go directly to the findings of the charrette. The Committee evaluated the findings and prioritized them. This turned into a focus on traffic safety; as in traffic calming, narrowing the road, and trying to find space to extend the sidewalk from the Junior High to the Library.

Selectman Winslow stated that the Committee has been working with Rockingham Planning Commission and CMA Engineering on the idea of applying for a Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) grant. This will be coming up in the spring and the Committee had to fast track the process to get a cost. The hope is to have the information by the 23<sup>rd</sup> for a warrant asking for the 20% matching funds.

Member Parrot explained that after the warrant has been produced the Committee will be moving forward to working on the plan. She stated that the Committee will be meeting again in January and then through September of 2020.

#### **IV. Warrant Article**

Chair Stewart asked Selectman Winslow the process to move forward on the Warrant Article.

Selectman Winslow stated that the Committee should put together sufficient detail of the project to give to the Town Attorney so he would be able to write the warrant article. The committee needs to have a good definition of what is wanted. He recommended including as much as possible in the plan in order to get the 80% cost savings from the State.

There was discussion regarding doing some public relations and getting the information out to the public, maybe using Rye Reflections, for the March issue.

The Warrant Article:

- Does not need dollar amounts at this time
- Must contain a statement on the Committee Charge
- Must contain a statement regarding safety in the Town Center
- Needs to detail the project – sidewalks, bike lanes, lighting
- Be specific with vision

Chair Stewart and Member Loftus will collaborate on the first draft of the warrant. Chair Stewart will send it out to the Committee for their review, prior the next meeting.

The plan is to have the warrant ready for the Board of Selectman's meeting on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

#### **V. Approval of Minutes - To be done at next meeting**

## **VI. Other Business**

Selectman Winslow gave an overview of the information that will be provided at the Board of Selectmen's meeting on Monday. He stated that the appraiser took a look at the Parsonage. The initial feeling is that all the plumbing in the building will need to be replaced. Most of the windows will need to be replaced. The back portion of the building is in advanced state of affairs. The appraiser's vision on the value of the property will be more of the function of the value of the land. He suggested that it is probably very difficult to do anything with the property without totally gutting the interior. Selectman Winslow stated that this will be discussed further on Monday night.

### Chair Stewart

- Send Jim Verra proposal to Committee Members
- Edit draft warrant article from Member Loftus
- Have Janice put the Rye Town Center Committee on the Board of Selectmen's agenda for December 23<sup>rd</sup>
- Attend the special Board of Selectmen's meeting on December 16<sup>th</sup>

### Member Loftus

- Write first draft of Warrant Article and send to Chair Stewart

### Member Parrott

- Will research the timing to get the information into the Rye Reflections Magazine and write the article for the Committee to review at the next meeting.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion by Kaitlyn Coffey to adjourn at 7:07 p.m. Seconded by John Loftus. All in Favor.**

Respectfully Submitted.  
Dyana F. Ledger