

**RYE TOWN CENTER COMMITTEE
MEETING
Wednesday, April 3, 2024, 5:30 p.m.
Rye Town Hall**

Present: Chair John Loftus, Vice-Chair Kaitlyn Coffey, Victor Azzi, Lindsay Gray, and Selectmen's Rep Bob McGrath

I. Call to Order

Chair Loftus called the meeting to order at 5:34 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. Approval of Minutes

- March 6th

The following corrections were noted:

- The Committee met for a work session, as there was no quorum for a formal meeting.
- Kaitlyn Coffey is vice-chair and Victor Azzi is a member.
- The sidewalk in front of the Public Safety Building is concrete, not asphalt.

Motion by John Loftus to approve the minutes of March 6, 2024 as corrected and clarified. Seconded by Kaitlyn Coffey. Vote: 4-0-1 Abstained: Bob McGrath

- February 7th

Motion by John Loftus to approve the minutes of February 7, 2024 as presented. Seconded by Kaitlyn Coffey. Vote: 3-1-1 Opposed: Victor Azzi Abstained: Bob McGrath

III. Update on TAP Progress

Chair Loftus gave an update on the TAP Grant project. A draft statement on the scope of the project went back and forth between Town Administrator Matt Scruton and Leah Savage from DOT. The statement is finally ready. Work has started on the estimate, which is the next step in the project. The Town does an estimate and the engineering firm does an estimate on the project costs. DOT will compare the estimates and if they are close, they will further negotiate the price for the engineering design. Town Administrator Scruton is hopeful that this step can be done by May with design costs in to DOT for approval. Once the costs are approved, the design stage can begin.

The Committee gave a brief update to Selectmen's Rep McGrath on the proposed ideas for the Town Center and the work the group has been doing.

Referring back to the TAP Grant, Member Gray noted that the funds they are getting from the TAP Grant will probably cover the sidewalks, lighting, and crosswalks. It's not going to cover anything extra like landscaping.

Chair Loftus pointed out that they will be getting the information on the costs.

Member Gray commented that in talking about next steps, if it's known that three items are going to be covered by the TAP Grant, everything else will have to be raised outside the grant.

Chair Loftus confirmed. He noted that any additional items will need to be covered; for example, the two ends of the Town Center and the end of Lang Road, depending upon how much is included in the project. He doesn't know how the design can be done without including the intersection of Lang Road, as it all needs to come together.

Member Azzi asked if the design firm has been asked to give a price on the conceptual design of each end of the road. There was discussion about getting a conceptual on what would be appropriate. He pointed out that they can't end the 1950 ft. without knowing where each end will be going in the future.

Chair Loftus replied this is the unknown. He pointed out that it's part of the TAP Grant Committee's request that they do that work.

Member Azzi noted that they shouldn't build the end of one road without knowing how it's going to transition beyond that area.

Chair Loftus confirmed that the Committee is in agreement on that point. The price for doing that design work is part of the ongoing negotiations, at this time.

Vice-Chair Coffey pointed out that the Committee would then know how much money is needed, if they wanted to take it up in a warrant article.

Chair Loftus agreed. He noted that the first step is to get the number from the engineering firm.

IV. Discussion: Next Steps for RTCC

- Library Common:

It was noted by Chair Loftus that the warrant article for the project at the Common was defeated at town vote. He imagines that the Common will come back into discussions, as it relates to the Town Center.

Member Azzi commented that the Library will most likely not be moving forward on a project for the Library Common this year.

Member Gray pointed out that what was conceptually planned for pocket parks, if the Library Common had passed, it would have saved a lot of money. She asked if they should go back to identifying town owned land, now that the article has been defeated. The only town owned land that a park could be developed on, that would make sense for being in Town Center, would require a lot of land movement and that would require a lot of money. She doesn't want to take the time to plan something that the Town is not going to approve.

Vice-Chair Coffey explained that the front area of the Church is town owned land. The area where the Farmer's Market used to be is town owned land. The designers of the plan were trying to help find more pocket park areas and green space, and they identified that area. However, it would be very costly to rip up the asphalt and develop the terrain, as it's steep and would need to be regraded.

There was further discussion about the warrant article for the Library Common and possible reasons for why it was voted down.

Member Gray commented that her concern is that the article was, at most, \$500,000 that was asked for. The Town Center Committee is going to potentially spend the next year planning stuff that's going to take a lot more money. If there's not going to be an appetite for it, is it worth doing? She pointed out that they are probably talking about millions of dollars to do the things that have been discussed. If there's not an appetite for it, should the Committee proceed?

Selectman McGrath stated that it can happen if there's a solid plan that people can see. It can't be done at the last minute. It should be done carefully with education for the people with some presentations.

Chair Loftus commented that another good indicator may be through the TAP process because there will be an engineering firm making three presentations to the Town to meet the DOT's guidelines. There should be a good indication of what people want.

Vice-Chair Coffey stated that the Town has the million dollars from the grant. Right now, with constructions costs, she doesn't think that's going to cover much more than the sidewalk itself. There may be consideration of other things; such as, additional lighting. She pointed out that the Town doesn't have a town fundraiser. She continued that Rye is kind of "stuck" because there is money in the community and people would give to projects. However, she doesn't think the landscaping or lighting is going to happen because of the inflation on materials.

There was some discussion about the listening sessions for the TAP Grant project. It was noted by Chair Loftus that the first session is to introduce the firm and to discuss what is going to be accomplished with feedback from the residents. The second listening session will be more in depth and the third will go over the drawings.

After discussion, it was agreed that there are elements of the TAP Grant project that have already been approved that the Committee could focus on over the next year; such as, the lighting. There was also some discussion on whether it would be worth soliciting town feedback again, as the charette was in 2018. It was agreed that this might be a good idea.

V. Other Business

None

Adjournment

Motion by John Loftus to adjourn at 6:50 p.m. Seconded by Lindsay Gray. All in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,
Dyana F Ledger