

**RYE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
MEETING**

**Wednesday, January 10, 2024 – 5:00 p.m.
Rye Town Hall**

Present: Chair Kaitlyn Coffey, David Choate, Katherine Brown, Lydia Tilsley, Karen Stewart, Stacey Smith, and Selectmen’s Rep Bob McGrath

Members not Present: Mae Bradshaw and James Tegeder

I. Call to Order

Chair Coffey called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. Seating of Alternates

None

III. Approval of Minutes

- 12/13/2023

The following correction was noted: Jennifer Goodwin should be **Jennifer Goodman**.

Motion by David Choate to approve the minutes of December 13, 2023 as presented.

Seconded by Lydia Tilsley. All in favor.

IV. Update after Planning Board Meeting

Chair Coffey updated the members on the Planning Board Meeting of December 22nd. She explained that they had been meeting with the Rules and Regulations Committee throughout the fall. Rules and Regs is a subcommittee of the Planning Board that had to accept the plan of the district expansion, prior to the HDC being able to get on the Planning Board agenda. HDC went through a few revisions with Rule and Regs prior to meeting with the Planning Board.

Chair Coffey continued that when they met with the Planning Board there were a few members of the Planning Board that did not like the way the boundaries of the expansion were defined. They did not agree with it being by property lines, which is different than the way the district is currently defined. Their concerns were focused on some of the properties deeper on Central Road. They felt that there was no sense in including that land. They preferred that the HDC talk to the property owners and calculate a certain footage in from the center of the road, which would basically shorten all those properties.

After the meeting, the HDC approached the homeowners and found that they were not in favor of being included in the expansion. So, the HDC presented the Planning Board with a revised plan of four properties: 1 Central, 17 Central, 25 Central, and 37 Central. The Planning Board accepted this plan; however, this has not been approved with HDC yet. The Planning Board approval was just an approval for the plan to move forward to a public hearing. It could still be denied at the public hearing. This is not a green light to the warrant.

In preparation for this meeting tonight, Chair Coffey has heard from the neighbors of the four properties. At this time, they do not have any agreement from any of the four to be included in the expansion. Chair Coffey expressed that the homeowners' participation is important. She also asked the members to think about how much the plan has changed since the start of the project. She recommended that the HDC pull back and reevaluate. If they feel that they want to move forward on the project, they can look at it for next year.

After discussion, it was agreed that it is important to relook at the original vision of the project before moving forward. A key element would be to better communicate that vision to the public and to educate the public of the benefits of being in a historic district. The HDC should become a resource to the property owners regarding maintaining their homes in a historic condition.

Chair Coffey opened the meeting to Public Comments at 6:13 p.m.

Shannon Murphy, 17 Central Road, stated that he believes something like this, which is a regulatory change and has potential financial impact to the homeowners, should take time for a reason, as it's a process. He understood that with everything the HCD had to do, and coming to the end of the year, they felt that they had to make it happen or that they were looking at waiting another year. It feels like it got rushed. Homeowners are busy and may not have received the meeting notes. He commented there is no need to rush, especially with his house. He stressed that there is no danger of his house being torn down. Their remodel was very important to them. He stressed the importance of taking more time with the expansion of the district, providing more education, and getting more buy-in. He also spoke about the potential of possible tax breaks to the homeowners if there is value to the Town of expanding the Historic District.

Selectman McGrath stated that he appreciates the HDC's hard work, and feels this is very important. He is in support of it; however, he cannot step on people's private property to make it happen. He would love an opportunity to allow all people in town to protect their properties.

Member Choate agreed that the tax break idea was an interesting concept. He added that he did not think there is any enabling legislation, at this time, that allows tax breaks to be given like the 79-E program that helps with renovation of downtown dilapidated buildings and the 79-B for the restoration of historical barns. He reported that there is a bill in the Legislation right now that might be attempting to do that. He will have to go back and read it. If he can find it, he will send it to Chair Coffey for circulation. He pointed out that the bill will need support in Concord. If the homeowners think the bill is a good idea, they should contact their state representatives.

Wayne Maciejewski, 1 Central Road, noted that he and his wife attended the October meeting. That was the first time that they had heard about the proposed expansion of the District. At the meeting it was stated that someone would come out to visit the homeowners to discuss the project. It has been a year and a half that the HDC has been working on this project. He doesn't understand why they have not been contacted.

Chair Coffey clarified that Reagan Ruedig was the person that the HDC contacted to replace the surveys of the homes in the District. She wasn't necessarily going to go to the homes unless she needed more information. Ms. Ruedig also met with Alex Herlihy, and she reported back to the HDC that she had more than enough information.

Member Smith stated that the HDC should have gone to the homeowners; however, it was a timing error on their part. They were waiting on information from Ms. Ruedig that they could use to give the homeowner to give a clear understanding of the project and to have supporting documentation.

The members apologized for any mistakes they may have incurred during the process, as they had never done this before.

Member Choate stated that creating an additional area to be in the Historic District should be a vote of who wants to be in it. It should be for the greater good of the community. He agreed that people's opinions are important and they can vote against it.

Mr. Maciejewski asserted that he is totally opposed to putting his home in the Historic District, due to the problems he had when he renovated his barn. It took a year and a half, and he had to get the approval from two different town boards. However, he added that if someone from the HDC would like to come to his home to sit down with him and his wife to discuss the project, they would entertain that.

Hearing no further comments from the public, Chair Coffey closed the public comment session at 6:31 p.m.

Motion by Karen Stewart to retract the revised plan of the expansion of the Historic District that was presented to the Planning Board. Seconded by Lydia Tilsley.

Vote: Katherine Brown, Yes; Stacey Smith, Yes; Katilyn Coffee, Yes; David Choate, opposed; Lydia Tilsley, Yes.

Motion passed

Chair Coffey will notify the Planning Board.

V. Approval for payment of NH Preservation Company Invoices

Motion by David Choate to approve the payment of Invoice #1168 dated 10/31/23 in the amount of \$7,800. Seconded by Karen Stewart. All in favor.

Motion by David Choate to approve the payment of Invoice #1184 dated 11/30/23 in the amount of \$6,825. Seconded by Lydia Tilsley. All in favor.

Motion by David Choate to approve the payment of Invoice #1202 dated 12/29/23 in the amount of \$1,950. Seconded by Lydia Tilsley. All in favor.

Member Choate reported that he invited the owner of the trolley barn to attend the meeting tonight; however, he is not going to attend. Member Choate expressed concerns regarding the proposed renovations to the property which the Planning Board has approved. He noted that it's important that the HDC keep an eye on the property.

Chair Coffey reported that the owner of the trolley barn had e-mailed her expressing that he wanted his property withdrawn from the district expansion plan. She added that the property is not currently in the District, so it is not under the HDC's purview.

Member Choate pointed out some examples in that e-mail of misconception regarding the Historic District. He stressed that it will be important for the HDC to address these issues, if they truly want to move forward with the expansion.

VI. Response from Town Attorney on Ordinance updates

Member Choate reported that the ordinance is going to take a lot of time, as it is a major project. The goal is to have it done for the fall.

VII. Subcommittee presentation of findings from the bylaw review

Chair Coffey explained that she had attached a copy of the existing bylaws to the minutes of the September meeting. Members Choate, Tilsley, and Stewart have been working on updating them.

Member Choate recommended that the draft of these changes be distributed to the members. He asked Chair Coffey to send the documents to him. He will do some editing and get the changes out to the members.

VIII. 500 Washington punch list review

Chair Coffey reported that she has sent their word document to the Town Administrator, who is working on a response for the HDC. She also reviewed their prior approvals from the fall of 2021. She noted that the HDC had approved composite louvered shutters.

IX. Non-conforming vinyl fence

Chair Coffey noted that she has not received an answer on the non-conforming vinyl fence.

Member Choate read from the by-laws of the HDC regarding the powers of the Commission.
In the case of a violation of any ordinance or regulation made under the authority conferred upon the Historic District Commission, in addition to other remedies, the

Commission may institute any appropriate action or proceedings to prevent, restrain, correct, or abate this violation. NHRSA 674:50.

Chair Coffey reminded the members about their discussion at the last meeting regarding this matter. Due to the fact that a building permit wasn't pulled for the work, the next step would be for the HDC to submit a complaint to the Building Department. The members had agreed that they should not be the lead on this complaint and that the Building Department should investigate the issue. Chair Coffey promised to follow up on this matter and report back to the Commission.

X. 2024 Plans/direction

Chair Coffey asked the members to think about what they would like to take on as far as plans, projects, and directions for the new year.

XI. Other Business

Chair Coffey announced that the Commission has received an invitation to have a table at the Civic Feast, which will be at the Deliberative Session again this year.

Member Tilsley and Member Smith expressed interest in hosting the table.

Member Smith recommended that they focus their information on the Historic District and the value of being in the District. It was decided that this would be a great time to present the survey documents.

Member Tilsley reported that the Heritage Commission Sign Subcommittee is doing formal signs. One sign is for schools in Rye and the locations. The sign will be placed near the Junior High School. There are three other proposed signs; fishing, shipwrecks, and Central Cemetery.

- **Next meeting**

Member Choate recommended that the meeting of February 14th be rescheduled because the master plan meeting is the next night, (February 15th), which promises to be a late night.

It was decided to not have a meeting in February. Next meeting will be March 13th. If necessary, they can call a special meeting.

Adjournment

Motion by Katilyn Coffey to adjourn the meeting at 7:19 p.m. Seconded by Stacy Smith. All in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,
Dyana F Ledger