

APPROVED MINUTES of the Workshop
of the City Council of the City of Rye held in City
Hall on July 26, 2010 at 7:30 P.M.

PRESENT:

DOUGLAS FRENCH Mayor
PAULA J. GAMACHE
PETER JOVANOVIK
SUZANNA KEITH
CATHERINE F. PARKER
JOSEPH A. SACK (Arrived at 7:39 p.m.)
Councilmembers

ABSENT: RICHARD FILIPPI

1. Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor French called the meeting to order and invited the Council to join in the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Roll Call

Mayor French asked the City Clerk to call the roll; a quorum was present to conduct official city business.

3. Presentation by City Planner, Christian Miller, on the Locust/Purchase Traffic Signal Project and Test of Alternative Traffic Control for Purchase Street in August

Prior to the presentation, City Manager Scott Pickup provided an update on recent work in the Central Business District (CBD). The Department of Public Works has repainted many intersections and also extended some no parking areas an additional four or five feet to improve sight distances for pedestrians. Some merchants expressed concerns about the loss of on-street parking, but the overall response seems to be positive. He said City staff has been looking at the signalization of the downtown for an extended period and City Planner Christian Miller has been coordinating signal studies to get a better picture of how the City could improve the pedestrian experience in the downtown, make sure that traffic flows effectively, and make sure that pedestrians, businesses and cars mix well.

City Planner Miller said that some challenges to replacing traffic signals in the CBD were identified in the 2009 CBD Capital Planning and Streetscape Plan, and the CBD Task Force recommended that alternative traffic controls be considered. He outlined a proposal to temporarily put stop signs at intersections in the CBD that are currently controlled by traffic signals. He said the original proposal had only included the intersections of Smith and Elm and Purchase Street, but as the design of the signal replacement for the Locust Avenue/Purchase

Street intersection has begun, it has been determined that it should be included in the test. He said that before replacing traffic signals, communities should evaluate if replacement is the best solution, especially in older communities. Installation of new traffic signals presents a challenge because they require more space and equipment, which could encroach on sidewalk space. Bump-outs were suggested for the Locust intersection in order to increase sight distance and accommodate the additional equipment. Stop signs instead of traffic signals is easier to implement and is less costly and more sustainable because there is no operating expense. There could also be a traffic benefit due to reduced queuing of cars waiting to turn, which reduces traffic delays. Eliminating signals and using stop signs as traffic control devices is a growing idea throughout the Country. The proposed test would be implemented the week of August 8th and would last for two to three weeks in a slow traffic period prior to the beginning of the school year. The existing signals at the three intersections would be set to flash, if possible and turned off if not. The existing traffic restrictions, such as no left turn restrictions, would be preserved. The reason to test is to assess the impact in order to determine the positives and negatives; look at how vehicles yield to pedestrians and determine any changes in crossing patterns.

Council comments and questions included:

- Pedestrian safety and traffic flow are the most important aspects – the financial benefit is the least important.
- How would a stop sign work for making turns? (Yielding to whoever is first into the intersection. Both drivers and pedestrians will have to be engaged.)
- What are the concerns of the merchants? (Whenever something new is introduced there is a fear that it will make things worse.)
- Will a decision be made based on one test? (It would depend on the results, but a decision could be reached on whether to go with a full signal at Locust Avenue.)
- How many spaces would be lost if bump-outs were implemented? (Since there are no marked spots on Purchase Street it is hard to determine but maybe three spots, but losing spaces in certain areas would enhance pedestrian safety.)
- Would we be doing this test if there were no issues with installing the signals? (Possibly not, but it is an example of a challenge creating an opportunity.)
- Has the Fire Department had input in the discussions about the Locust Avenue intersection? (There have been discussions held with them and there will be more after the test.)
- If the use of stop signs rather than traffic signals was implemented when would it be done? (Ideally, in slower times of the year.)
- The use of bump-outs would be a great opportunity to enhance pedestrian safety. Since everyone uses the downtown, there must be a balance between pedestrians and drivers.
- Using pavers in the crosswalks makes sense and could enhance the downtown. The Council should be given numbers on what that would cost. (A better time to look at using pavers might be when the street is repaved, which should be done in the next five years.)
- Will the test period be long enough for people to get used to the stop signs? (If the change was from an uncontrolled intersection to stop signs it would need to be longer, but people are already used to having to stop at these intersections.)

- Should the test also include the intersection at West Purdy? (People would be less inclined to stop at that location. It might be a better location for bump-outs.)
- Would mountable curbs at Locust Avenue help the Fire Department? (It would not be safe for pedestrians.)
- How much would be saved by not replacing traffic signals? (Signals are usually about \$125,000 to \$135,000.)
- How quickly could this system be implemented? (After the test, staff will come back to the Council for a decision. The job would then go out to bid. It could possibly be done by the end of the year or after the holiday season.)

Public Comment:

Jim Amico and Bob Zahm offered comments on the presentation that included:

- The test calls for putting seven stop signs at crosswalks in the downtown but the Council has previously said that stop signs at intersections provide a false sense of security to pedestrians.
- Will proper provisions be taken for pedestrians during any construction periods? (Traffic control is part of bid specs.)
- Will the test period be long enough to see the effect on traffic during peak volume times? (The reality of congested traffic is that it is safer for pedestrians because cars are moving slower.)
- Additional stop signs should be added to the test area. (Stop sign placement is being done to maintain existing conditions, not to introduce new traffic control where it does not already exist.)
- How will it be determined if the stop signs are successful? (By visual observations based on travel behavior of vehicles and pedestrians in compliance with the traffic control measures.)
- The bump-outs on Midland are grass -- will they be concrete on Purchase Street? (There is no benefit to concrete over grass.)

Prior to Agenda Item #4, Laura Brett and Pam McGuire of the Rye Historical Society made a presentation on a proposal to create a Historic Walking Tour through Rye of the City's historic sites. They believe it would be a good way for people who live in Rye to learn about its history and to promote visitorship to Rye. The plan is to put up approximately 15-20 outdoor signs that would include photos and text and would focus on the social history of Rye and how it relates to the rest of the world. They are looking for the support of the City Council and believe they will have to go before the Board of Architectural Review and Landmarks Committee for approvals. The hope is to have the project in place by October 2011 to coincide with the Historical Society's walking tour of the downtown. Council Members were supportive of the idea.

4. Presentation by Lisa Easton of Easton Architects on the Rye Meeting House and Rye Town Park Capital projects

Lisa Easton said the roof project at the Administration Building in Rye Town Park was substantially completed on June 8th. Reimbursements have been applied for from the State and Federal Grants. The original budget was \$1.31 million, with a labor and material bond of \$22,000. There was a contingency of 7.5% in the original budget, which was not entirely spent. The project stayed on budget. Additionally, lightning protection was also installed in the entire building, which has been hit by lightning numerous times. The State and Federal Government looks favorably on projects that are completed on time when considering future grant applications. Additional capital improvements that are contemplated for the Park include: the sea wall; the tunnels to the bathrooms from the beach; the 1925 bath house; a small shelter building; and the walkways and staircases around the park. Additionally, the Rye Town Park Commission is looking at issues that affect the beach such as handicapped accessibility issues and infrastructure issues. A strategic five to ten year capital plan for improving the park will need to be drawn up. City Manager Pickup said that to date the City has spent \$320,000 on the roof project, with approximately \$86,000 still due, for a total of \$414,000.

In connection with the Friends Meeting House project, Ms. Easton reported that she had submitted drawings to City Manager Pickup that finish Phase I of the project, which dealt with stabilizing areas of the building that were structurally unsound and improving the building from a life/safety prospective. Phase II would involve the roof, which also affects the foundation, because the roof is under-structured for what it needs to bring the building up to Code. Phase II is tied to Phase I. The estimate for Phase I is approximately \$350,000, without prevailing wage. The overall project total should range from \$600,000 to \$650,000 including everything but mechanical, electrical and plumbing. There is an issue with the size of the rear door, which would only allow for occupancy of 50 people, but if the original door was replicated it could increase the occupancy to over 100 people. She asked if the Council would consider reallocating money that was allocated to bidding and construction administration in the original proposal, in order to allow the design to be finished. If the entire project was designed, there would be a cost estimate that could be bid at one time.

David Hood, who had been a member of the Quaker Meeting when it was located at the site, suggested that Home Depot's community outreach program "Team Depot" could be a source of funding for the renovations.

Jack Zahringer, Richard Hourahan and Laura Brett of the Landmarks Advisory Committee made a presentation on a possible use for the Meeting House as well as a possible way to fund the renovations. They said they had spoken with Jim Killoran of Habitat for Humanity, who has indicated that they would be interested in working on the project, along with students from the Rye School of Leadership, and might also be able to provide some supplies for the project. Mr. Killoran said that they have qualified preservation people who will be called in to work on the project and also understands that anyone selected to work on the project would have to be approved by the National Parks Service as part of the grant requirements. The Landmarks Committee has had discussions with the Rye School of Leadership about the idea of moving the school to the Meeting House, but it would require that the current plans for renovating the building be modified to meet standards for operating a school. They believe there could be many advantages to working with the School District.

City Manager Pickup said that there are certain constraints in connection with this project. A certain amount of cash was allocated toward the project and there was additional money that could have potentially been borrowed from the Rec Bond, which has now been spent on recreation projects and the Rye Town Park Roof project and staff is proposing that the balance be used for debt reduction in 2011 and 2012, leaving no money for this project. He added that there would be additional challenges created by working with the School District and their requirements.

5. Discussion on Deferred Capital Projects and cash flow options

City Comptroller Jean Gribbins provided an update on Capital Projects:

- In 2009, \$350,000 was budgeted for the purchase of a new Sewer and Vacuum truck. It was deferred in 2009 and 2010 but must be purchased in 2011 in order to meet Federal mandates and respond to emergencies. This is a piece of equipment that is used on a regular basis by the Department of Public Works.
- In 2009, \$130,000 was budgeted for the Police Lavatory and Locker Rooms. This project will be combined with a boiler repair and clean up project.
- In 2010 funds were budgeted for the purchase of two new police cars, which came in last week.
- The lawn mower for the Recreation Department included in the 2010 budget was purchased for approximately \$20,000.
- Several smaller projects are in progress at the Damiano Center.
- An oil tank was replaced at 51 Milton Road.
- The Fire Department will replace an alarm for \$30,000.
- The annual street resurfacing, sidewalk and sewer and drainage programs are well underway.
- The City was awarded a Federal reimbursement grant of \$600,000 for the Locust Avenue Bridge. An award letter is awaited. The current estimate for the project is \$1.8 million. The City's share would be \$1.2 million, but no actual funding source for that amount has been identified yet.
- \$210,000 has been borrowed for the Old Milton Road Drainage project. This amount may not cover the full cost of the project. Because the design is not yet complete, staff is deferring this project to 2011 in order to determine if the City is eligible for a Federal matching grant through the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Next, Ms. Gribbins provided an update on the list of projects that were deferred by the Council in March:

- The Boston Post Road Retaining Wall Design, which was budgeted at \$35,000, is still deferred.
- The design of the traffic light at the intersection of Purchase Street, Purdy Avenue and Theodore Fremd Avenue, which was budgeted at \$15,000, is still deferred.
- The replacement of the Milton Cemetery Bridge, which was budgeted at \$40,000, is still deferred.

- The Stoneycrest Road drain, which was budgeted at \$35,000, is still deferred.
- The Police/Court Building renovation study, which was budgeted at \$50,000, is still deferred.
- The Gagliardo Park Restroom project, which was budgeted to use \$100,000 of Rec Bond money, is still deferred.
- The Friends Meeting House project, has been budgeted to use funds from the Building & Vehicle Fund (B&V) over the years. As of December 31, 2009 there was \$144,000 approved B&V funds remaining for the project. \$31,000 was used in 2010, bringing the remaining budgeted amount down to \$113,000. In the 2010 budget \$125,000 of Rec Bond money was budgeted for this project.

Ms. Gribbins also provided a summary of the 2010 borrowings from the Rec Center Bond. At the end of 2009 there was a cash balance of \$865,000. The City has used \$328,000 towards the Rye Town Park Roof project and there is an additional payment due on that project of about \$86,000 for a total of \$414,000. \$126,000 has or will be used for improvements made to the Damiano Center in 2010, which brings the cash balance down to \$324,000. It is proposed that the remaining funds be spent on debt service payments of \$150,000 in 2011 and \$174,000 in 2012 and suggested that they be removed as a funding source for the Gagliardo Park Restrooms and Friends Meeting House projects.

The City has made two \$1 million installments to Aero Hardware to pay for the 1037 Boston Post Road building. Additionally, the City has received \$1 million of the amount due from the Elm Place Wall project, which will be used to pay the third \$1 million installment in September.

Ms. Gribbins then discussed upcoming projects with reimbursement grants that will involve the City laying out the money before being reimbursed.

- The Bowman Avenue Sluice Gate is a \$2.2 million project, \$1.6 million of which will be reimbursed by grants and aid.
- The Central Avenue Bridge is a \$1.8 million project, \$1.4 million of which will be reimbursed through grants and aid.
- The Theodore Fremd Avenue/Blind Brook Retaining Wall reconstruction is a \$1.4 million project, \$1.1 million of which will be reimbursed by grants and aid.

Ms. Gribbins said that the Council will be asked at the August 11th meeting to approve a resolution allowing the City to issue \$4.5 million in Revenue Anticipation Notes (RANs) to borrow on a short-term basis the amounts the City will have to pay out before reimbursement for the upcoming projects, as well as for the grants that are awaited for the Bird Homestead. RANs fall outside of the Charter bonding limits because they are short-term borrowings. The money will not be borrowed until the projects are started because it must be repaid within 12 months, but she would like to immediately borrow \$550,000 of the \$1 million still owed to the City for the acquisition of the Bird Homestead.

Council comments and questions included:

- What level of anticipation must be shown to apply for RANs? (A cash flow time line must be filled out as well as evidence of grant awards.)
- How confident are we that the grant money for the projects will come in? (We have an IMA with the County for \$1.1 million and the State has obligated \$2.2 million for the other projects. The reason for one authorizing Resolution is that it makes it easier to go forward with the projects as necessary.)
- Could using Rec Bond funds for debt service held reduce the rate of tax increase? (It will help with cash flow but it is not known what impact it will have on the tax rate.)
- Is the cost of paying for 1037 Boston Post Road the primary reason for issuing RANs? (The City has spent down fund balance on capital projects and to buy down the tax rate for an extended period of time and has reached the point where it can no longer be done without changing the Charter.)
- How would the money that was transferred from the Forest Avenue study to the continuation of the Boston Post Road Diet near Osborn school be moved back to that project? (The Council would have to fund it in the 2011 budget.)
- Should the Council consider changing the Charter regarding debt limitations this November? (This idea has not received much support from the Finance Committee. It is more difficult to engage the public on the issue of Charter change than a bond issue for a specific project.)

City Manager Pickup summed up by saying that staff wanted to update the Council on the issue of deferred projects. Some of the projects have extended over multiple budget years. He said that cash must be preserved and, therefore, the recommendation is that the list of projects that were deferred in March should continue to be deferred and that the Gagliardo Park Restroom project and Rye Meeting House projects should not go forward.

6. Adjournment

There being no further business to discuss Councilman Sack made a motion, seconded by Councilman Jovanovich and unanimously carried, to adjourn the meeting at 10:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dawn F. Nodarse
City Clerk