

APPROVED MINUTES of the Joint
Meeting of the City Council of the City of Rye and
the Rye City School Board held in City Hall on April
21, 2012 at 9:00 A.M.

PRESENT:

DOUGLAS FRENCH Mayor
LAURA BRETT
PETER JOVANOVIK
CATHERINE F. PARKER
JOSEPH A. SACK
Councilmembers

LAURA SLACK President
KAREN BELANGER
EDWARD FOX
KATY KEOHANE GLASSBERG
JOSH NATHAN
RAY SCHMITT
Board Members

SCOTT PICKUP, City Manager
EDWARD SHINE, Superintendent of Schools
SALLY ROGOL, Recreation Superintendent
KATHLEEN RYAN, School District Assistant Superintendent for Business
BRIAN DEMPSEY, Chair of Transportation and Pedestrian Safety Committee

ABSENT: RICHARD FILIPPI
SUZANNA KEITH
Councilmembers
KENDALL EGAN
Board Member

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

The meeting commenced with a roll call of both boards. A quorum of both boards was present.

3. Update on Rye City School District approved bond and next steps

Board President Slack announced that the architects were busy meeting with the science teachers on how the rooms will be laid out and that all classrooms will be equipped so that all science subjects can be taught in every classroom. The architects will meet with school officials and a report will come back to the Board in the end of June. In October the architects should be able to go to SED for permit approvals. When approvals are received the project will go out to bid. The target completion date is September 2014. City Manager Pickup asked if there were any areas of the campus that would be closed off during construction. Superintendent Shine said there may be need for temporary closures of the parking lot and participation by the City Manager, Police Commissioner and Fire Department may be needed.

4. Update on the City of Rye proposed bond

Mayor French said that in the last ten years the City has invested in its buildings but now it is time to invest in its crumbling infrastructure and flood mitigation. The Council is considering \$5 to \$10 million in critical needs infrastructure projects. There is a list of 14 possible items which include: expansion of the upper pond; the crumbling wall opposite CVS on the Boston Post Road; the reconstruction of Smith Street; intersections in the Central Business District; and Police/Court projects related to prisoner transport. City Manager Pickup said that if the Council passes a Resolution in June, it will go on the ballot in November. Public safety is the key in determining projects. The great unknown is the cost of resizing the Bowman Avenue Upper Pond. The City is also working with the County on another detention facility north of Anderson Hill Road.

Mayor French also provided an update on the City-owned property at 1037 Boston Post Road. The property was purchased in 2006 with the idea of using it for a public purpose. The Council has determined that it will not go forward with a Police Station/Courthouse and since there is no longer a public purpose, the Council will consider an offer on the property from the current tenant at a special Council meeting on April 25th.

City Manager Pickup also provided an update on a proposal to readapt the building located at 120 Old Post Road for hotel use. The building has been vacant since the last tenant moved out five years ago. The current owner has proposed a zone change for use of the property for a 150 room hotel. There will be no banquet facilities, bar or restaurant on site. The amount of parking spaces on site will be reduced and a preliminary traffic analysis indicates that the amount of actual traffic in and out of the site will be reduced from when it was a fully utilized office building. Proposals have also been made to upgrade stormwater detention on site. The proposal has been referred to the Planning Commission and Westchester County Planning Commission for their opinion. If, based on the opinions provided, the Council decides to go forward, public hearings will be held on the proposed zoning change. If the change is approved the actual site plan will be submitted to the Planning Commission for approval. Mr. Pickup said that this request may be the beginning of requests for re-adaptive uses by owners of commercial property in Rye.

There was a discussion among the members of the two boards regarding what would become allowable if the proposed zoning change was enacted and possible affects on the community. It was noted that the Council had requested the applicant to consider the public safety issue of school children who would travel past the location on their way to and from school. Members of the School Board stressed safety issues for school children and it was suggested that the Council only consider approving a minimal change of the zoning laws to encourage a non-residential, upscale facility. The need for the proposal to be fully vetted by the public was noted. The City Manager was asked to keep the School Superintendent informed on the project so the School Board can be informed and active in the process. It was suggested that the School Board create a memo listing areas of special interest that can be forwarded to the incoming School Superintendent and the City Manager.

5. Discussion of Pedestrian Safety initiatives: improvement at Boston Post Road and Parsons Street

City Manager Pickup said the City and Board of Education continue to monitor pedestrian and traffic movements in and around school campuses. The proposal in question came up as a recommendation of the Shared Roadways Committee and was circulated to the City Council in June. Some classes are now walking from the High School/Middle School campus to the Nature Center for programs during the day and a group will also be leaving from the Presbyterian Nursery School Program in the afternoon and there are resulting traffic concerns. Brian Dempsey said that the Traffic and Pedestrian Safety Committee (TPS) is now looking at a proposal from the Shared Roadways Committee to add crosswalks and a pedestrian refuge island to improve the connection across the Boston Post Road to the Nature Center. The recommendations have not been approved. He said there are site distance issues that must be looked at. He said students from the Middle School would probably continue to use the crosswalk at the Middle School Driveway. City Manager Pickup said that what is missing from the proposal is the issue of crossing the Boston Post Road to the Nature Center and the area further down the Post Road by the snow dump parking area. The creation of the pedestrian refuge island would impact traffic flow by increasing the number of cars cutting through the Presbyterian Church property and traveling through Parsons Street to Milton Road. It was suggested that a test be done by blocking the area that would be occupied by the island in order to study the traffic implications. City Manager Pickup said the proposal is being looked at now because there will be issues with the snow dump lot and temporary parking during construction at the school.

Mr. Dempsey reported on other traffic and pedestrian safety projects that TPS is working on including: coordinating with the County on the bridge on Old Post Road project and the Trailways Project along Playland Parkway. They have also been working with City staff on putting sharrows on Forest Avenue and a new crosswalk at Hewlett Avenue. A question was raised about how to better delineate the street on Hewlett Avenue from the sidewalk at the drop off area at Milton School, such as rumble strips, in order to prevent drivers from parking too close to the sidewalk and car doors from opening into children walking by. A request was also made to look into removing the striped diet markings on the Boston Post Road in the area near the driveway at Osborn School to facilitate cars making a right turn coming out of the driveway.

There was also a discussion about the issue of crossing guards and preventing people from driving through crosswalks. Suggestions were made to increase enforcement during the first few weeks of the school year in order to re-enforce traffic safety regulations; scheduling police officers at crosswalks to control traffic as part of their regular duties; sending out a Nixle alert prior to the beginning of the school year; utilizing volunteer parents at intersections; or, not using crossing guards at noon dismissal and using them at afternoon dismissal instead. City Manager Pickup said that putting police at crosswalks is a staffing and budget issue and suggested that staggering Middle School and High School hours should also be looked at.

6. Discussion of potential sharing of services: tax collection and viewing

Mayor French said that tax collection is an area of shared services that has been discussed between the City and School District and that in the past the City collected the school taxes. City Manager Pickup said that City Comptroller Jean Gribbins and School Board Business Manager Kathleen Ryan would sit down and discuss how the process would be implemented and then come back to the respective boards with a report on how it might work. Mr. Pickup said that he believed the City would receive any penalties incurred by late payments.

7. Discussion of a joint statement on mandate relief

Mayor French said that a joint statement was issued last year in connection with the tax cap, which was implemented without the requested mandate relief. Both Boards received a draft of a proposed Resolution at their last meetings. Changes suggested by the School Board at their meeting to make the language stronger were discussed and additional language added. It was noted that many people do not know what is meant by the term “mandate relief” and that it was important that the City and School District educate the public as to what type of relief is being sought and why it is important to them.

Board Member Nathan made a motion, seconded by Councilwoman Brett to adopt the following Resolution:

Joint Resolution of the Rye City School District and the City of Rye

Be it RESOLVED by the Rye City School District Board of Education and the Mayor and the Council of the City of Rye that meaningful mandate relief must be enacted by the cooperative efforts of the New York State Legislative and Executive branches in order to provide relief to jurisdictions that are in compliance with the limits of annual growth in the local property tax levy, and

WHEREAS, the joint Mandate Relief Council comprised of representatives of both the Legislative and Executive branch of New York State is currently tasked with reviewing and implementing mandate relief reforms as a part of comprehensive tax reforms for overburdened New York taxpayers, and

WHEREAS, both the provision of essential services and the quality of educational opportunities and city programs are being negatively impacted by the current 2% tax cap, and

WHEREAS, repealing State statutes such as the Triborough Amendment would immediately improve the ability of the school district and city to control costs, and

WHEREAS, the repeal of the Wicks Law would also provide immediate savings in the cost of capital improvements by reducing the requirements for multiple contractors on construction projects, and

WHEREAS, the costs of public employee pension contributions are increasing at a rate that is unsustainable with the current exclusion language in the tax cap levy, and should be limited so that the state-mandated employer contribution rates are capped at the same growth rate increase as is allowed under the current tax cap, now

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rye City School District Board of Education and the Mayor and Council of the City of Rye demand that the Governor and the Legislature, as well as the Mandate Relief Council in accordance with Article 24, Executive Law 666, act upon these specific items of concern, and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the NY State Mandate Relief Council, Governor, Senate Majority and Minority Leaders, Assembly Speaker and Minority Leader, and Members of the State Senate and Assembly representing Rye.

ROLL CALL:

AYES: Mayor French, Councilmembers Brett, Jovanovich, Parker and Sack
NAYS: None
ABSENT: Councilmembers Filippi and Keith

ROLL CALL:

AYES: School Board President Slack, Board Members Belanger, Fox, Glassberg, Nathan, and Schmitt
NAYS: None
ABSENT: Board Member Egan

The Resolution was adopted by an 11-0 vote

8. Review of fields and facilities management scheduling

City Manager Pickup said that the City and School District work closely together on sharing facilities throughout the year. Recreation Superintendent Sally Rogol said that the Recreation Department plays a role in providing, maintaining and distributing the assets in terms of field use outside the school. The Department works with the School District to maintain the facilities and coordinates all the youth sports leagues, which have growing demands for field space. As the seasons grow the infrastructure is taking a hit. Many improvements have been made over the last year to both City and School District fields in cooperation, and there is currently a joint project with the School District and a Sport Clerk Consultant. They are awaiting

a report on how to have better practices at the fields and use better techniques that will save money in the long run to maintain the fields. The Recreation Commission has been doing a field study for about a year to identify if there is another property within the footprint that could have better drainage or handle artificial turf. The Recreation Department holds an annual tour, which will be held on May 10th at 6:00 p.m. and will include discussions of field projects that have been done, others that are contemplated in the future, and site visits to some fields where improvements have been made to discuss why the improvements were made. Ms. Rogol and Ms. Ryan are again looking at programs and will participate in some webinars to determine if a software program is available for scheduling purposes that is compatible for both entities. There was a suggestion made that the field use fees collected should be used for field rehabilitation. Superintendent Rogol said that only \$5 of the \$15 user fees the City collects goes to field rehabilitation. There was a discussion of the School District tying into the City's field cancellation policy in order to better protect their fields. There was also a suggestion that since there is increased demand and limited field space, the City might look into adding the Thruway Field to its bond referendum projects. Mayor French said that the Thruway Field is off the table because the City would never own the field and the lease would be structured as ten, 11-month leases which would allow use of the property to revert back to the State for their purposes for one month each year. The City will not invest \$300,000 in a field under those conditions.

9. Adjournment

Before adjourning the meeting, congratulations and thanks were extended to Superintendent Shine, who will be retiring at the end of the school year.

There being no further business to discuss Councilwoman Brett made a motion, seconded by Board Member Fox and unanimously carried, to adjourn the meeting at 11:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dawn F. Nodarse
City Clerk