

**Notes OF JULY 25, 2012 RYE TOWN HALL SPACE NEEDS  
AD HOC STUDY COMMITTEE**

Final Revision C – Provided by the Rye Civic League

NEXT MEETING, AUGUST 8, 2012

*NOTE: These are not the official minutes of this meeting. They are prepared by the Rye Civic League from notes taken during the meeting by members and are not prepared after listening to recordings of the meeting. Every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of these minutes, including the review by those RCL core committee members in attendance at the meeting.*

Introduction by Selectman Jenness

Selectman Jenness opened the meeting by introducing the members of the Rye Town Hall Space Needs ad hoc Study Committee (the “Committee”):

1. Selectman Priscilla Jenness. Town resident.
2. Michael Magnant, Town Administrator.
3. Cynthia Gillespie, Assistant Town Administrator/Finance Director.
4. Beth Yeaton, Town Clerk and a Town Resident. Kim Reed, the former employee representative, will not be a member as Beth Yeaton has replaced her. *Editor’s note: Ms. Reed was included in the July 9 announcement, as was Ms. Yeaton. See minutes of the July 9, 2012 Board of Selectmen meeting.*
5. Dennis McCarthy, Director of Public Works.
6. Mel Low, Planning Board Member. Town resident.
7. Gregg Mikolaities, Appledore Engineering. Town resident.
8. Paula Merritt, Historic District Commission Member. Town resident.
9. Curtis Boivin, Planning Board Member. Town resident.
10. Ned Paul, Budget Committee Member. Town resident.
11. Phil Winslow, Historic District Commission Chairman. Town resident.
12. Peter White, Heritage Commission Member. Town resident.
13. Tom McCormick, Planning Board Member. Town resident.
14. Paul Goldman, Budget Committee Chairman. Town resident.
15. Peter Kasnet, Sewer Department Commissioner and local builder. Town resident.

*Editor’s note: The prior (2011) committee, which selected AG Architects to prepare the initial space needs analysis, consisted of Ms. Jenness, Mr. Magnant, Ms. Gillespie, Ms. Reed, Mr. McCarthy, Mr. Low, Mr. Mikolaities, Ms. Merritt, and Joe Tucker, a local builder. Neither Ms. Reed nor Mr. Tucker is on the 2012 Committee. Thus, the 2012 Committee has 7 members from the prior committee of 9 persons, and 9 new members after Lucy Neiman accepted her invitation to join.*

Three additional persons were mentioned:

1. Lucy Neiman, Energy Committee (invited to join, still considering). Town resident.
2. Martin Klenke (interested, but unable to commit to the time required to serve). Town resident.
3. Keriann Roman, Recreation Commission (interested, but unable to commit to the time required to serve). Town resident.

The Committee will disband after the voting in the March 2013 election. Only members who are Rye residents will be able to vote. Non voting members are: Michael Magnant, Cynthia Gillespie and Dennis McCarthy. These employees are on the committee to expedite matters and answer questions.

*Editor's note: Each member of the Committee was provided with a binder containing the Selectmen's charge to the Committee and certain other documents, including excerpts from the report of AG Architects, selected by the prior Committee, and other documents that the prior Committee considered.*

Selectman Jenness then read the Charge, which was signed by the Selectmen on July 9, 2012, to the Committee. The Committee's report is due November 1, 2012. Selectman Jenness also read the text of 2012 Petitioned Warrant Article 27 into the record, omitting the reference in parentheses to "7,000 square feet build-out on second floor" after the "Public Safety Building." Selectman Jenness indicated that the Committee was initiated with Article 27 in mind.

Committee member Peter White commented that the Charge really related to space needs in the Town, not just to Town Hall. Selectman Jenness indicated that, since the Charge referred to the business of the Town, that it implicitly referred to Town Hall.

She then listed the properties owned by the Town which have buildings on them, noting that the first nine of the properties (1-7 below) can be dismissed:

1. Three sewer pumping stations
2. Cemetery vault
3. Outer Marker *Editor's note: this is a structure that at one time housed a radio beacon used by planes approaching what was then Pease Air Force Base.*
4. Parsonage Apartments
5. Recreation Buildings
6. Public Works Department
7. Library

Selectman Jenness indicated that, unless the collections of the Library are all digitized, the Library would not be a candidate for space for the Town Hall. This leaves three facilities to be looked at:

1. Public Safety Building
2. Old Police Station
3. Town Hall

*Editor's note: This list of facilities appears to exclude properties owned by any of the subdivisions of the Town, including the School District, the Water District and the Rye Beach District.*

Selectman Jenness noted that one of the first decisions to be made would be whether the Great Hall (*Editor's note: This is a reference to the large area on the second floor of the Town Hall which is divided by partitions which do not reach the ceiling*) is to be renovated, and what is to be done with the two front stairways that have three offices in them. Also, the former committee (*Editor's note: This is an apparent reference to last year's smaller committee which selected AG Architects as the architect. See the RCL minutes of the June 11, 2012 Board of Selectmen meeting*) had discussed the construction of a new facility on newly purchased land.

### Facility tours

Selectman Jenness announced that the group would now take tours of the Town Hall and the Public Safety Building, and would reconvene at the Public Safety Building. Ms. Jenness asked the group to park behind that building, and noted that, if the space over the equipment bay were to be

utilized, that the entrance would be there, as would the required elevator. Also, she asked the group to visualize the impact of rows of dormers (to provide light) on the appearance of the building. The addition of dormers would mean that the facility would no longer look like a colonial house with an adjoining barn, Ms. Jenness noted.

The group was then divided in half, with Michael Magnant conducting the upstairs tour, and Elizabeth Yeaton conducting the downstairs tour.

Mr. Magnant pointed out the newly installed geothermal system, which occupies a number of closets. *Editor's note: the geothermal system was approved at the March 26, 2012 Board of Selectmen meeting by a 2-1 vote, Selectman Mills voting no. Most of the funding was provided by a federal grant which was about to expire.* The current boiler, forced hot water system, and upstairs radiators were left in place to accommodate particularly cold days. The downstairs is, and was, heated by forced hot air.

Mr. Magnant also pointed out the original stage of the Great Hall, which could be partially seen in the second floor hallway and continued behind a wall. His office is at the level of the stage. He stated that the intention at the time that the Great Hall was partitioned was that the stage and other historic aspects might be restored to their original form.

A question arose as to whether offices without windows were permissible. One of the Committee members responded that current code does not permit this, although older structures may retain windowless offices.

Questions arose as the group viewed the Recreation Department offices. Mr. Magnant indicated that Recreation Director Lee Arthur spends 10-20 hours per week performing work for the Sewer Department, and Janice of the Recreation Department spends time assisting Nancy and finance. Keriann Roman of the Recreation Committee commented that the Recreation Department is open to moving out of the Town Hall, although the modular units currently in place at the Recreation Area would not be suitable to house the employees now at Town Hall.

The group viewed the records stored, largely in cardboard boxes, in the belfry. Boxes with labels from 2003 or earlier were found. The belfry area appears less than 50 percent filled to capacity. While some closets used for records were full, others had additional capacity.

Elizabeth Yeaton was asked how many people worked in the Town Hall. She responded that there are 6 downstairs and 7 upstairs, plus a part-time Treasurer, and a part-time Trust bookkeeper. *Editor's note: These figures are inconsistent with the figures of 10 full-time and 19 part-time employees that appear in the AG Architects Facility Needs Assessment Report, dated January 26, 2012, page C-1. That is true, even after the 10 part-time Recreation Department employees listed are deducted (it was acknowledged by AG in an early 2012 meeting that these do not work at the Town Hall). See the description below on accessing the survey for information on accessing this report, of which the survey is a part.*

The group then drove over to the Public Safety Building and ascended stairs to a platform that overlooks the equipment bay. Fire Chief Sullivan described the building and answered questions. He deferred a question on the size of the equipment bay to Town resident Victor Azzi (*Editor's note: Mr. Azzi had been a member of the committee responsible for planning the Public Safety Building*). Mr. Azzi indicated that the footprint was 7000 square feet, of which 6200 was usable, unless dormers were added to expand the usable floor space. After someone noted that heating would need to be added if the area over the equipment bay were to be converted to offices, Chief Sullivan noted that the floor of the equipment bay has radiant heat, and that the bay is heated to 50 degrees during the winter. Chief Sullivan, in response to a question about interference with the egress of emergency equipment from traffic destined for the rear parking lot, replied that this would not be a problem.

## Election of officers

After reconvening in the Public Safety building meeting room, Selectman Jenness commented that the committee has excerpts from the AG Architects Report in their binders. A lot of work has been done before. There is already data for the space needs.

Selectman Jenness noted that the Selectmen had unanimously decided not to select a chairman, vice chairman or clerk. She opened the floor for nominations.

Member Paul Goldman nominated Ned Paul for chairman, and proceeded to describe his qualifications. *Editor's note: the two serve together on the Budget Committee, of which Mr. Goldman is chairman.* Member Ned Paul indicated that he was willing to serve if he gets everyone's cooperation. Member Mel Low seconded the nomination. No other nominations were made and Mr. Paul was unanimously elected as Chairman.

Mr. Paul then assumed leadership of the meeting and stated that he hopes to lead the Committee as a team with every member stating his ideas, and with general consensus as to the final report. Mr. Paul asked whether there were any volunteers for Vice Chairman. After there was no response, he asked each of the members to describe his or her background and how they could assist.

1. Cynthia Gillespie indicated that she is a non-voting member, but can offer financial expertise.
2. Tom McCormick indicates that he serves on the Planning Board and the Capital Improvements Program ("CIP") Committee. He is the Town accountant for North Hampton and has 27 years of experience in the construction business.
3. Elizabeth Yeaton indicates that her background is in business and she has a degree in business administration.
4. Peter White indicated that he is Chairman of the Heritage Commission Investment Advisory Committee. His experience is in financial services.
5. Ned Paul indicated that he hopes to lead the committee to compile the necessary information.
6. Paul Goldman indicated that he has an engineering background and is Chairman of the Budget Committee.
7. Gregg Mikolaities indicated that he is a civil engineer and was Chairman of the Recreation Commission for 7 years. He knows how to pull a package together.
8. Priscilla Jenness indicated that she can be the liaison to the Board of Selectmen on the Committee. Her education is in art, with a minor in history. For 12 years, she has prepared drafts of Town newsletters and yearbooks (*Editor's note: an apparent reference to Town Annual Reports*). She can assist in preparing written materials.
9. Paula Merritt indicated that she has a degree in chemistry. While she has been through the library and Public Safety building planning processes, and has an historic contribution to make.
10. Peter Kasnet is a builder and Sewer Commissioner.
11. Mel Low indicated that he is a former selectman. He has a background in banking and commercial lending.
12. Curtis Boivin has a degree in architecture and works as an architect for his own firm. He is on the Planning Board.

13. Phil Winslow has a background in international business and has participated in expanding buildings. He is the Chairman of the Historic District Committee. His strength is in data collection and analysis.
14. Michael Magnant is the Town Administrator.
15. Lucy Neiman is a mechanical engineer and serves on the Energy Committee. She worked on grants for the geothermal system at Town Hall, and on insulation for the Library. After describing her background, she was asked whether she was ready to join the Committee. She agreed.

Member Elizabeth Yeaton then nominated Gregg Mikolaities for Vice Chairman. He was reluctant, but agreed to serve if nobody else would. Paula Merritt nominated “the architect,” asking him for his name again. Curtis Boivin indicated that he could serve. Ned Paul then asked Elizabeth Yeaton if she were willing to serve as clerk and Ms. Yeaton indicated that she could. It appearing that Mr. Mikolaities had withdrawn his name from consideration, Mr. Low seconded the nominations and Mr. Boivin and Ms. Yeaton were unanimously elected to their respective positions.

### Committee discussions

Chairman Ned Paul assigned homework. He requested that each member identify the five most important issues to them. The committee members were also asked to come to the next meeting with their respective visions for the Town Hall.

Member Peter White then asked whether the reports have been critiqued. He asked whether they had been debated, denied or contradicted.

Member Gregg Mikolaities (*Editor’s note: Mr. Mikolaities served on the prior committee*) responded that the architects had been vetted. There were 13 submissions, and some consultants were hired. While he questioned how AG arrived at a doubling of the space, he believes that the needs are closer to 15,000 than 7000 square feet.

Peter White asked whether the reference to consultants referred to a structural analysis dated January 31, 2011. Mr. Magnant indicated that that study had been commissioned by the Selectmen, and that it discussed the attic and foundation. Member Curtis Boivin indicated that he did not see an issue with that report. The study found no differential settlement in the past 100 years, and recommended the addition of steel plates to the roof structure.

Chairman Ned Paul suggested that the group identify obstacles to the first plan.

Curtis Boivin indicated that the Committee could not ignore the Americans with Disabilities Act (“ADA”) requirements. These are retroactive and the Town Hall does not currently meet the requirements. He asked whether the building requirements are accurate. Is 15,000 square feet needed?

Selectman Jenness stated that the Selectmen want a way to move forward. If action is required at next year’s Town Meeting, what needs to be done must be completed early enough that a warrant article can be written so the Town does not miss a year. Member Phil Winslow indicated that the key issues are the square footage and the alternative of utilizing the upstairs at the Public Safety building. Options must be vetted from a cost standpoint. Maybe the requirement is 12,000 square feet or 10,000 square feet. The prior report duplicated hallways and meeting rooms. The Committee needs to look at the consequences of one location compared to two locations.

Member Mel Low asked whether there was any money left in the architectural budget. Cindy Gillespie responded that that had all been spent.

Curtis Boivin indicated that if they decide to build a facility elsewhere, the issue arises of what to do with the current Town Hall.

Chairman Ned Paul indicated that all options must be considered so that nobody can say they didn't look at something.

Mel Low indicated that the other options had been looked at, and they came back to the current Town Hall.

Member Gregg Mikolaities indicated that the prior committee should have said that the current Town Hall is 7,000 square feet, and that 15,000 square feet is needed.

Selectman and Member Jenness indicated that presentation of the design was the end. She doesn't know anybody who liked that design.

Elizabeth Yeaton asked whether the process had been open to the public. The response was that it was, but nobody came. Ms. Yeaton urged the public to come to the meetings.

Ned Paul indicated that the Committee needs to meet every two weeks. Two things are needed for buy in. A visualization of what the building will look like and the money involved. What will the building cost each person in Rye? Somehow, a design needs to be presented, even though they have no money.

Other committee members disagreed that a design should be presented.

Peter White indicated that the Heritage Committee and the Historic District Commission are part of the mix.

Curtis Boivin suggested that a diagrammatic design be presented, not a façade.

Elizabeth Yeaton indicated that she may retire in 3 ½ years. She doesn't expect the building to be done by then. A bond will need to be issued before construction is started. She indicated that the Public Safety building went through many designs over about 15 years and she asked Victor Azzi for his recollection. Audience member Victor Azzi spoke up to indicate it had been 12 years.

Priscilla Jenness indicated that a major decision is what do they keep at the Town Hall. Six offices are affected if the Great Hall and the stairways are opened up. Meeting ADA requirements will require space. She stated that there is no money to do anything.

Peter White asked how technology will affect the requirements.

Paula Merritt indicated that there has been a prior concentration on the Public Safety building as an option. There's not enough information. If the Public Safety building is not suitable, they are forced to look at expanding the Town Hall.

Ned Paul indicated that there's also the Old Police Station.

Mel Low stated that the former committee eliminated that.

Phil Winslow indicated that they should have the facts to support that.

Speaking from the audience, Town resident Jo Ann Price asked when public input would be sought and at what point the public would be allowed to comment and ask questions. Ned Paul indicated that public input is needed at every meeting and asked for public comment.

### Public comment

Peter Crawford, a Town resident, then spoke. He indicated that he was encouraged by the Charge and its inclusion of Article 27. He stated that he is dissatisfied that some options seem to be being rejected so early in the process when Article 27 mentions five facilities to be considered. He indicated that Article 27 carried by a vote of about 4 to 1, and represents the thinking of the Town residents. He made the motion at the Deliberative Session to amend that article to require the Selectmen to consider the square feet per employee of other U.S. towns. As he recalls, that motion carried about 2 to 1. It's not just the design of the building that concerns the voters. The Town residents also appear to be questioning the need to expand the facility by a factor of two and a half

times. Considering the space use of other towns would provide a reality check on the space requirements. While the space needs of Rye may be different, any differences need to be explained.

Mr. Crawford continued by stating that Keriann Roman of the Recreation Commission had stated during the tour that the Recreation Department was open to moving out of the Town Hall. While the modular units would not support such an expansion, a building at the Recreation area could reduce the space needs at the Town Hall site significantly.

Mr. Crawford stated that he had visited North Hampton and within a half an hour had obtained figures for the number of square feet and the number of employees. While some have suggested that an architect would be required to do this sort of analysis, he disagrees.

Ned Paul nodded in agreement with this last statement and asked whether anyone could visit other towns.

Elizabeth Yeaton indicated that she could make phone calls.

Curtis Boivin indicated that he can look at office standards for municipalities.

One of the members indicated that the Great Hall blew the space needs out.

Priscilla Jenness stated that the number of square feet doesn't take into account the other boards and committees.

Mae Bradshaw then spoke from the audience, stating that she is Chairman of the Heritage Commission. She reported that the Selectmen had very recently approved listing with the State Register of Historic Places. The Heritage Commission would be generating a report (*Editor's note: Ms. Bradshaw was apparently referring to the detailed application required by the State*). The Committee will then have access to that data. Also, approval for the State Register would provide access to funds for renovation and for studies.

Steve Borne also spoke from the audience. He stated that he had heard components, but they were not tied together. In 2011 the Town answered yes to the question of continued use of the Town Hall (*Editor's note: this is an apparent reference to 2011 Warrant Article 14, which passed 610-455, authorizing the expenditure of \$40,000 for hiring an architect and an engineering consultant for a space needs study and a structural analysis*). The second piece of the puzzle is the space needs. Assuming for the sake of argument that the need is 15,000 square feet, what is the role of a possible recreation building? How about the Old Police Station? The townspeople should not leave it to their children to address the issue of possible contamination of that site. The Town should be asked to select two of the options, and then these should be studied in more detail.

Ned Paul indicated agreement.

Burt Dibble then spoke from the audience. He feels that the Great Hall has a unique relationship to the other parts due to its historical nature. Restoration of that room depends on whether the Town is willing to make a commitment to do so. People could say that they are not interested. There must be a way of developing a sense of the support for this renovation.

Ned Paul said that a good place to start is the survey. *Editor's note: this is an apparent reference to the survey of town residents taken in early 2011. The results are tabulated as part of the AG Architects report at page B-46. The report is available on the Town web site by clicking on "Departments," then "Selectmen's Office," then "Town Hall Space Needs Study," and finally "Final Rye Report."*

After a question arose as to the results of the survey, Peter Crawford read the results of the survey question asking about the importance of restoring the Great Hall to public use. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most important, Town residents responded as follows:

1 – 50

2 – 25

3 – 47

4 – 21

5 – 39

Priscilla Jenness asked how much space the ADA requirements will impose.

Curtis Boivin indicated that there is a requirement to provide second floor access.

Member Lucy Neiman asked about electrical issues. The wiring is deficient. What if the Town Hall burns down during the long process of deciding what to do?

Ned Paul asked how many employees are based at the Town Hall. Various figures were discussed, but it appears that the correct figure is around 13-16.

Marty Klenke, a member of the CIP Committee, spoke from the audience. He indicated that people have questions about the Public Safety building. It's "the largest public non public building in Town" and most residents have not been inside. He doesn't know why it is so secure.

Dennis McCarthy, Public Works Director, responded that requirements have changed dramatically since 9/11. Since this is a mixed fire and police building, that explains why there is so much security.

Mae Bradshaw spoke from the audience asking whether a business plan could be prepared for use of the Great Hall. Weddings and proms could generate revenue.

Burt Dibble, a Town resident, spoke from the audience indicating that these meetings would be a terrific opportunity for use of the Town's TV system, if it had one. It's a very short process between now and November.

At one point Ned Paul asked the members of the audience whether they felt that the Committee was on the right track. Peter Crawford responded that he was encouraged by what he had seen, however the Committee should not be rejecting options out of hand. For example, the Old Police Station may be a suitable site as it is only about 100 yards away from the Town Hall. If it is torn down and any environmental issues remediated, a new building could be constructed to house some Town employees, reducing the space needs of the current Town Hall. This could alleviate concerns about the visual effect of a large addition off of the back of the current Town Hall.

Town resident Jo Ann Price spoke from the audience. She indicated that the Committee appears to be moving in the right direction. However, the time constraint is very tight. She emphasized the need to get information from and about the Committee out to Town residents as quickly as possible, and to encourage public attendance and input at the Committee's meetings. She emphasized the difficulty of communicating with Town residents and taxpayers and suggested that a complete binder be available at the Town Library, and that e-mails be sent to Town residents providing basic information about the Committee and where information can be obtained.

Steve Borne asked what the communication plan is. He indicated that he would work with the Committee to get items published in the Civic News.

Peter Crawford indicated that there is already a six page document addressing the Town Hall that has been distributed in the Civic News. That will be updated as the process develops.

There was a discussion about what items were in the members' binders and what would be made available to the public. After one of the Committee members indicated that some material might not be public, as is the case with the Planning Board, Mae Bradshaw spoke up stating that those other committees are not trying to sell a building. The suggestion that there might be private information then appears to have been dropped.

Ned Paul indicated that there would be an extra copy of the binder available at the Public Library.

There was a general discussion as to which items might be available in electronic form. Elizabeth Yeaton indicated that she would work to get items posted on the Town web site. *Editor's note: the documents are now available on the Town's web site by clicking on "Boards and Committees," then "Rye Town Hall Space Needs Committee," then "Town Hall Space Needs 2012."* Priscilla Jenness spoke up to indicate that everything in the binder has previously been publicly available at some time.

Michael Magnant indicated that there will also be a binder at the Town Hall that anyone can look at. These documents are available under the right to know law. The Town has an obligation to produce them.

The Committee will meet every two weeks at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesdays at Town Hall.