

### TOWN OF RYE WARRANT ARTICLE 33

*Shall the Selectmen authorize the creation a Younger Family Housing Committee ("Committee") that will explore whether the declining school population – which is expected to decline by 54% at Rye Junior High from 2011 to 2026 – can be reversed to maintain the vitality of our school district? This Committee should look to support Rye's dedication to school excellence that complements our heritage as a quaint, coastal community. This Committee should consist of no fewer than 4 and no more than 12 members consisting of a mix of one realtor, one member of the Conservation Committee or other land preserving organization, one RES parent, one RJH parent, Selectman, and one member of each of the following committees: School Board, Planning Committee and Budget Committee, each appointed by its Committee chair; and 4 citizens at large members. The Committee should self-elect a chairperson. The Committee should commence its first meeting by April 14, 2017 and should submit a report identifying suggestions to increase school population and next steps for implementation to The Town Selectman and Long Range Planning Sub-committee by October 16, 2017. Upon submitting the report this Committee shall cease. Those interested should submit a brief resume to the Selectman no later than March 22, 2017 for Selectman's selection by March 31, 2017.*

*This article is not recommended by the Selectmen (2-0)*

#### **Background**

The combined Rye elementary and junior high school enrollment is expected to decline 156 students from 2011-2019, representing a 33% drop. The junior high itself is expected to decline 54% in a 15-year period from 2011-2026. The reasons behind our declining school enrollment involve complex demographic and real estate trends:

- Nationally, couples are getting married older and are having fewer children.
- New Hampshire is tied as the 2<sup>nd</sup> oldest state in our nation and is the most rapidly aging state.
- From 2000 to 2015 number of Rye children fell 38%, and number of adults 18-44 declined 32%. During that same period those ages 45-64 rose 27% while residents ages 65 or older rose 70%.
- Only one in four women in our town are of the typical child-bearing age of 20-45.
- Rye's average real estate sale of \$800,000 is \$300,000 more than neighboring Greenland and unaffordable to many first-time home buyers.
- Much of Rye's land has been placed in conservation during the last two decades to limit construction.

The idea of this warrant article is to present an option of reversing the declining trend to sustain Rye's schools and keep the cost per student from escalating. Because so many of the above contributing factors are out of local control, housing seems a logical place to start.