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Sent: Saturday, February 1, 2020 9:04 AM
To: 'Selectmen@town.rye.nh.us' <Selectmen@town.rye.nh.us>
Cc: 'Katelyn Drago' <KDrago@town.rye.nh.us>
Subject: Use of Conservation Funds - Fair Process and Transparency within Rye's Government

Board of Selectmen
Town of Rye
10 Central Road
Rye NH 03870

Dear Board of Selectmen:

I read the 1/13/20 BOS meeting minutes regarding the **Rye Conservation Commission request for a Warrant article seeking an additional \$3,000,000 from Rye taxpayers to add to the \$1,400,000 the RCC still has in the bank.** I thought of the late **Peter Crawford (well respected Rye resident) and his concerns regarding the use of conservation funds as well as fair process and transparency within Rye's government and the RCC.** He attended most BOS and RCC meetings for years and did thorough research. These are a few examples that outline his concerns.

<https://ryecivicleague.org/?p=1555>

<https://www.seacoastonline.com/news/20181008/dont-be-misled-by-new-rye-cell-tower-process>

In the first letter, he provides detailed examples on page two. In the second letter, last paragraph, he speaks of public meeting laws which must not be subverted by hiding deliberations and decisions from public scrutiny. He gives an example of how the town negotiated a settlement overturning the Planning Board's unanimous denial of a 17-lot subdivision off South Road. The deal channeled \$400,000 to the developer without any town vote, and the developer still got the subdivision. It also enabled a selectman and her sister (through their trust) to sell their land to the developer for \$1.8 million. **To date, none of the following issues have been resolved:**

- **There continues to be a history of conservation funds being used to settle town lawsuits. Many Rye citizens do not know this.** It needs to be made clear to the public in the warrant article or there needs to be a mechanism to ensure that does not continue to occur.
- **Although required, the RCC does not always get appraisals, land surveys and/or conducts public hearings for acquisitions.** This has resulted in use of funds that may not be supported by taxpayers, overpayment for land that has little or no development potential, easements that have no value, lack of adequate access to conservation land and, in some cases, deals that benefited individuals.
- **The RCC files are disorganized, in some cases files cannot be found, are missing important information such as appraisals, land surveys, easements, final signed documents related to purchase and sale, etc.** If Rye residents ask to review the RCC files, they are often rebuffed, told that files are at a members home, they cannot find them, etc.
- **There is no fair process for Rye residents to be considered to serve as an RCC member.** A number of RCC members have dominated the commission for years and no one will disclose how many terms they have served. When members' three-year terms are up, the BOS just reappoints them without any chance for any other Rye residents to be interviewed by the BOS and considered for appointment. This is a missed opportunity to appoint diverse members who may have stronger experience and skill sets that would benefit the town and all its citizens.
- **The RCC has no bylaws,** written policies and procedures, even though they have been asked for years by voters to ensure there is a transparent and fair process for all Rye residents.

I, like the majority of Rye residents, support land conservation and its funding. However, until the above issues are resolved, I will not be voting in favor of an additional \$3,000,000. Taxpayers work hard for their money and expect that it be used wisely for its intended purpose with transparent and well-documented processes. **Hopefully, the BOS and RCC will meaningfully address these longstanding issues in the best interest of all citizens of Rye so they can support funding.**

Respectfully - Shawn

Shawn Joyce
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