



RYE POLICE DEPARTMENT

555 Washington Road Rye, New Hampshire 03870



Kevin Walsh
Chief of Police
www.ryepolice.us

Non-Emergency: (603) 964-5522
Business: (603) 964-7450
Fax: (603) 964-7458

To: Rye Select Board
From: Chief Kevin Walsh *KW*
Date: May 19, 2021
Re: Select Board Meeting with Rye's Town Center Committee

Washington Road in Rye is a main road that the majority of Rye citizens travel daily. The center of Rye has lots of town owned property, such as Rye Town Hall, Rye Library, Public Safety Building housing police and fire, and Rye Junior High School. The Rye Junior High has athletic fields for after school sports and they host many weekend events. The Town of Rye has a large field located in the center of town. Parsons Field hosts class activities during school hours, after school sports, weekend events, July 4th fireworks, and the Rye Lions Car Show. Many Rye families use the field to enjoy a nice weather day. Rye Junior High and Rye Library run after school programs for students. Weekends attract those attending school sports games and those who come to the seacoast to walk, run, ride bikes, etc. Again, the majority of the 5,000 Town of Rye citizens travel Washington Road, through the center of town, daily.

Rye's Town Center Committee would like to make immediate changes to the center of town citing safety reasons. The Committee wants 1) the speed limit reduced from 30 MPH to 20 MPH, 2) the intersection of Lang Road and Washington Road to go from the current right and left turn lanes to only a single lane and to have the intersection be posted a 3 way stop, and 3) to reduce the lane width of Washington Road.

The past and current Select Boards' policy on changes have been based on facts, data, statistics, best practices compared to the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices, and what federal and State of NH standards are. For speed limits, the Select Board has used the 85th percentile standard. Both the Rye Highway Director and Police Chief, when requesting that the Rye Select Board make changes to roads and traffic signals have used resources like a traffic engineer or they use the same equipment and standards that a traffic engineer uses.

On 04/19/2021, I presented 19 years of traffic data information to the Rye Select Board and Karen Stewart, the Chair of the Rye's Town Center Committee. There have been 35 accidents reported in Rye center over those 19 years. Of those 35 accidents reported, there was one pedestrian struck who did not require transport by ambulance to a hospital. There was also one cyclist struck by a vehicle during those 19 years and they were transported to the hospital with non-life threatening injuries. While I agree that the goal should always be zero accidents/crashes, the center of town does not tend to be an area where major crashes occur. Please see my memo dated 04/19/2021 for additional accident statistics and charts.

The speed limit is 30 MPH in the center of town. Traffic counters were placed in two locations within the town center to study traffic patterns in July of 2019 and then again in April 2021. Please see the attached chart showing all of the traffic count data.

In July 2019, a 7-day traffic count documented 43,532 vehicles drove through the center of town. In April 2021, a 7-day traffic count documented 42,056 vehicles drove through the center of town.

In July of 2019 of the 43,532 vehicles, approximately 10,823 vehicles were traveling between 25-30 MPH, representing approximately 25% of all vehicles. There were approximately 22,266 vehicles traveling between 30-35 MPH, representing approximately 51% of all vehicles. There were approximately 6,894 vehicles traveling between 35-40 MPH representing approximately 16% of all vehicles.

In April of 2021 of the 42,056 vehicles, approximately 16,629 vehicles were traveling between 25-30 MPH, representing approximately 40% of all vehicles. There were approximately 18,172 vehicles traveling between 30-35 MPH, representing approximately 43% of all vehicles. There were approximately 3,296 vehicles traveling between 35-40 MPH representing approximately 8% of all vehicles.

The data collected in 2019 vs 2021 shows that more vehicles are traveling at or below the posted 30 MPH speed limit. See attached chart.

The Select Board and Town Center Committee should verify traffic statistics and standards supported by best practice standards and/or a traffic engineer to support the changes as other town citizens will question the Select Board about the changes.

There can be unintended consequences in the future, both financial and safety related, if the Town of Rye does not follow best practice standards and the current plan for the center of town. As stated in previous memos the Rye Highway Director and Police Chief use the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices as a guide for why traffic signs or changes are made.

As an example, if the Select Board instructed the Rye Highway Director to reduce the travel lane width along Washington Road this will cost employees salary time, rental equipment and materials or a private contractor would need to be hired to complete the task. After the road markings are painted over with black or grinded off, this will be visible for all to see. This does not match a scenic, center of town appearance. To adjust one area of the center of town without studying the entire area at one time is not addressing safety concerns and is not the best way to spend tax payer's money.

Thank you for considering this information.

Cc: Town Administrator Becky Bergeon
Rye Highway Director Dennis McCarthy
Town Center Committee Chair Karen Stewart

580 Washington Rd - April 2021

	<=15	>15-20	>20-25	>25-30	>30-35	>35-40	>40-45	>45-50	>50-55	>55-60	TOTAL
4/17/2021	25	31	320	2,066	2,588	519	36	2	0	0	5,587
4/18/2021	26	77	288	1,753	2,141	432	18	1	0	0	4,736
4/19/2021	34	80	457	2,484	2,463	430	18	3	0	0	5,969
4/20/2021	59	108	599	2,879	2,818	396	28	2	0	0	6,889
4/21/2021	84	68	473	2,504	2,420	446	29	4	0	0	6,028
4/22/2021	29	44	450	2,392	2,710	493	32	3	0	0	6,153
4/23/2021	19	51	426	2,551	3,032	580	34	1	0	0	6,694
Total	276	459	3013	16629	18172	3296	195	16	0	0	42056
	1%	1%	7%	40%	43%	8%	0%	0%	0%	0%	
				49%	51%						

500 Washington Rd - July 2019

	<=15	>15-20	>20-25	>25-30	>30-35	>35-40	>40-45	>45-50	>50-55	>55-60	TOTAL
7/2/2019	54	71	290	1,995	3,922	1,159	120	8	1	1	7,621
7/3/2019	41	67	255	1,869	4,253	1,271	119	9	1	0	7,885
7/4/2019	359	371	385	1,665	2,768	851	81	8	0	0	6,488
7/5/2019	45	77	177	1,931	3,991	1,188	102	6	3	0	7,520
7/6/2019	64	68	163	1,601	3,435	1,047	100	13	0	0	6,491
7/7/2019	51	65	157	1,430	3,092	1,138	125	12	0	0	6,070
7/8/2019	7	11	38	332	805	240	22	2	0	0	1,457
Total	621	730	1,465	10,823	22,266	6,894	669	58	5	1	43,532
	1%	2%	3%	25%	51%	16%	2%	0%	0%	0%	
				31%	69%						