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270 Washington Rd
BOS Meeting 03.28.22

Thank you for allowing me to speak tonight.

There are four Conservation Commission members on tonight's agenda for reappointment. However, there no public notice that any of these seats were up for consideration. That does not seem legal, ethical, fair and transparent.

No other Rye residents, including protected classes, are being afforded the opportunity to apply and be considered by the selectmen regardless of their experience, expertise, diversity and insight they may bring to the commission. This is a missed opportunity for the Town. It also allows discrimination.

The Committee Policy for the Town of Rye clearly states, "it is the intent of the selectmen to ensure that the widest variety of citizens participate in government by appointing members who represent the diversity of the community. How can the selectmen do that without allowing all residents an opportunity to be considered?"

I have seen letters in the Portsmouth Herald from longtime residents, Mel Low, Jane Holloway and other Rye citizens calling for fair process and transparency in Rye's government. Selectman, King also ran his election campaign on the need for transparency. Shouldn't that also apply to being appointed to the Conservation Commission?

Unlike the other commissions and committees, the selectmen have no authority over the Conservation Commission other than appointing its members. The Conservation Commission is entrusted with millions of dollars of taxpayer money. The selectboard has a fiduciary responsibility to ensure there is fair and transparent process with appointment and choosing diverse members vs allowing a tight group of homogenous close friends to keep reappointing themselves.

The Committee Policy for the Town of Rye also clearly states that all openings or vacancies shall be posted 30 days in advance of the Board of Selectmen's meeting where the appointment is scheduled to be made. Fact is the current members are seeking reappointment to seats that will "open" in April. Nowhere in the Town's policy or website does it state that members are reappointed to as many terms as they like without other residents having an opportunity to be considered. If that were the case, it would be part of the written policy and there would not be a distinction between an "opening" and a "vacancy" in the Town's policy.

Whether people want to debate what constitutes an open seat or not, it would be wise and ethical for the selectmen consult with the town attorney, put a stay on these reappointments, put out adequate public notice, allow all residents to apply, be interviewed and considered for appointment by the selectmen, so all residents are treated fairly and afforded the opportunity to serve.

The selectmen, the town's leaders, must lead by example, ensure there are ethics and fairness. There are no opportunities that allow any form of discrimination. Protected and non-protected classes must have an opportunity to be considered by the selectmen with an open, transparent process for any position, every three years or it should be an elected position.

In summary, I would like to submit a petition that was signed by 64 Rye residents in two days, asking that the selectmen ensure there is a fair process and transparency with being appointed to the RCC. I ask that all six pages be included with the minutes of tonight's meeting.