

APPROVED INFORMAL MINUTES of the Joint Meeting of the City Council of the City of Rye and the School Board of the City of Rye held in City Hall on April 10, 2010 at 9:15 A.M.

PRESENT:

DOUGLAS FRENCH Mayor
RICHARD FILIPPI (left at 10:00 a.m.)
PAULA J. GAMACHE
SUZANNA KEITH
CATHERINE F. PARKER
Councilmembers

JOSHUA NATHAN, President
KENDALL EGAN
EDWARD FOX
YOUNG KIM
RAY SCHMITT
LAURA SLACK
ROBERT ZAHM
Board Members

FRANK J. CULROSS, City Manager
EDWARD SHINE, Superintendent of Schools
SCOTT PICKUP, Assistant City Manager
KRISTEN K. WILSON, Interim Corporation Counsel
BRIAN DEMPSEY, Chair of Traffic & Pedestrian Safety Committee (TPS)

ABSENT: PETER JOVANOVICH
JOSEPH SACK
Councilmembers

1. Pledge of Allegiance

_____ Mayor French called the meeting to order and invited everyone present to join in the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Roll Call

_____ The meeting began with a roll call of both boards.

Prior to beginning the agenda items, Mayor French recognized Kaye Beyha, the President of the Rye Seniors. Ms. Beyha said that parents use the Rye Recreation parking lot to make U-turns when picking up their children from Midland School at 3:00 p.m. She said they drive too fast and talk on their cell phones and she is concerned for the safety of the seniors when they leave their weekly meetings, which also end at 3:00 p.m. Ms. Beyha asked if the parents could be instructed not to use the Recreation lot or told to use the tennis court lot if they must turn

around. Mayor French said he would like to come to one of their meetings and discuss the problem with the seniors. Board President Nathan asked if the seniors could change the time their meeting ends to 3:15.

3. Traffic and Pedestrian Safety Update

_____ Councilwoman Keith said that a report had been issued from the Joint Task Force of the Board of Education and City Council related to Pedestrian Safety. Each Board would have to review the report and follow through with its suggestions through their own channels. Several topics in the report were discussed.

Gregg Howells of the Rye YMCA and member of the Safe Routes to School Committee discussed the topics of “Education” and “Encouragement.”

The Rye Record is sponsoring an ad campaign and ran the first in a series of ads on “distracted driving.”

The second annual video contest for school children will begin next week. It is a good initiative to encourage good behavior.

People must be made aware of what they are doing while they are driving and walking.

The Safe Routes program is about the overall community health, but it costs money. The YMCA has a small budget. Would the City and School District consider contributing a total amount of \$2,500 to the program?

The age group most in need of targeted pedestrian safety education is the “tweens.”

Comments by the Council and School Board included:

There is money in the proposed School Board budget for safe routes programs.

The Rye Cable TV Committee could work on the education campaign.

The two cable channels have dead time when ads could be run.

The High School Production classes could produce ads.

A next step could be looking at the pedestrian safety curriculum in the schools.

An education campaign should be conducted in the summer regarding safe driving habits.

Enforcement should not wait until after an education campaign -- drivers should know that laws are being enforced.

People should know that speeding fines are doubled in a school zone.

Cell phone laws should be enforced.

You can't enforce your way out of a problem because the police can't be everywhere. Getting the message out is important.

Crossing Guards

It was suggested that a study be conducted to determine if crossing guards were being used in the most important locations. The review should also consider funding options if additional guards were requested. A suggestion was made that parent volunteers could be used to conduct the study and possibly serve as crossing guards. It was noted that volunteers would have to receive training and make a commitment because once a crossing guard location is established the liability will be on the City to make sure the location is covered. A question was also raised as to why there are no crossing guards in the afternoon and it was suggested that this be included in the study.

The topic of “Engineering” was covered as it related to the different school locations.

Milton School – The primary concerns for the area of Milton School related to signage. It was suggested that the area marked with School Zone signs be enlarged and that “School Zone Ahead” should be painted in the road near the school (and all other schools) in order to encourage speed reduction.

Osborn School – City Planner Christian Miller presented proposals for a “Diet” in the area of the school at the February 24th City Council meeting. “Option A” would cost approximately \$65,000 and addresses concerns of parents regarding the width of the sidewalk by moving the travel way of the road further away from the sidewalk. The City has \$45,000 in the current budget. Brian Dempsey, TPS Chair, said the Committee is in favor of testing the Diet at this location and the work can be done over the summer. If it does not work, the stripping can be removed. He said there is some concern with the left turn into the school creating some traffic backup. Sonn Drive would be narrowed to make a shorter distance for children crossing the street and it should also slow down people turning into the street. There would still be parking further back on Sonn Drive and, additionally, there is parking on Theall Road. The main concern is for the safety of the children, not the convenience of the parents to park. The sidewalk at the Oakland Beach Avenue corner would be made wider for children waiting to cross. The proposal will come back to the Council in May for a decision. The question of the School Board putting in a ramp to facilitate entrance into the playground at the Osborn Road and Boston Post Road corner was also raised. School Superintendent Shine said the Board may be able to come up with about \$20,000 for this purpose.

Midland School – The Task Force has looked at access to the school from Forest Avenue through Eve Lane and the Synagogue property. The School Board has talked about both options but needs to see actual usage numbers before they can discuss funding a project and may not be able to spend money for improvements made outside of school property. They support a Pilot program for escorting children across the Synagogue property in May and June in order to get the counts. Assistant City Manager Pickup said the City is pursuing the restoration of an easement on Eve Lane and will make the improvements necessary, but noted the following concerns: (1) children getting down the hill safely and then having to walk through a parking lot and (2) maintaining the walkway, which would usually be the responsibility of the abutting property owner. The question of moving the center cross-walk in front of the school and possibly having one on both the north and south ends of the school was also raised and a discussion with the PTO’s was suggested.

Middle School -- The discussion on the Middle School centered on parking and issues related to drop off in the morning. The back up of cars on the Boston Post Road at morning drop off was noted and the suggestion was made that the School Board revisit the policy of not letting cars on the school campus at that time. The Board has revisited the issue and does not want to change the policy because the lot is closed for pedestrian safety. The City could put an island in the road in order to prevent cars from bypassing the Diet and going around cars that are queued to drop off at the school. Long term planning must be done regarding parking. The number of spaces must be increased and possibly using the snow field for parking could be explored. The issue of students parking on Apawamis Avenue and Midland Avenue after May 1st when beach parking restrictions go into effect was also discussed. It was suggested that ticketing in this area could

possibly be waived on school days. City Manager Culross questioned asking police not to enforce parking regulations in this area when they are being asked to increase their enforcement overall and suggested that the law be amended to modify the summer parking enforcement season.

A brief discussion on sidewalks was also held. Mayor French pointed out that the City sidewalk policy is complaint driven, but the City is looking at making school areas priority zones for inspection. It was suggested that the PTO's could get involved in the process of inspecting sidewalks. It was noted that members of the PTO's might feel uncomfortable informing on a homeowner's sidewalk, but if the people who walk to schools knew how to do so they could report a problem sidewalk to the City.

Jim Amico, 350 Midland Avenue, said that he had been working with someone on a bicycle safety program, and they would be willing to come to Rye to make a presentation. He provided the members of the Boards with a flyer and suggested they look into it. It was noted that AAA did a presentation at Milton School and the feedback was that it was best suited to grades K-2. Maybe the Police Department should be approached or physical education classes could be used to discuss safety with students.

4. Discussion of shared use and cooperative opportunities

NIXLE.com

_____ Mayor French said the City has launched the use of the NIXLE service in order to provide more timely notification to residents of events such as flooding. He said the City would like to utilize the school's distribution network to inform residents of the program and how they can sign up. Councilwoman Keith also suggested that something be put into the district newsletter.

Youth Advisory Council

_____ Mayor French said that the Youth Advisory Council is a great way to get kids involved and receive their feedback, but it has been dormant since 2005. He said he has spoken to Bob Steel about getting students involved again through the social studies classes. Councilwoman Keith said that good projects were needed for the group. Councilwoman Parker suggested that pedestrian safety would be a good issue.

5. Miscellaneous communications and reports

_____ There was nothing discussed under this topic.

6. Adjournment

_____ Councilwoman Keith made a motion, seconded by Board President Nathan and unanimously carried to adjourn into Executive Session to discuss litigation at 10:50 a.m.

There being no further business to discuss, Councilwoman Keith made a motion, seconded by Board President Nathan and unanimously carried, to adjourn the meeting at 11:22 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dawn F. Nodarse
City Clerk