



# Select Board

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## Special Select Board Meeting Minutes

July 27, 2020

21 State Line Road, Town Hall

5:30 PM Site visit Rouge Restaurant

Quorum Present: Roger Kavanagh, Selectboard Chair, Kathleen Keresey, Selectboard Member, Eric Shimelonis, Selectboard Member,  
Also present: Marc Portieri, Police Chief, Steve Traver, Fire Chief, Curt Wilton, Director of Public Works, Jeremy Kenney, Rouge Restaurant Manager, Maggie Merrell, Rouge Restaurant Owner

Jeremy Kenney briefed the meeting participants on how Rouge is planning to conduct outside dining. He also reviewed the "soft opening" they did over the past weekend with dining on Friday and Saturday evening on the sidewalk in front of the restaurant.

The discussion covered a broad range of topics including:

- when and how to close the street off
- the physical layout of the street closure barriers,
- hours and days of operation,
- coordination with other Center Street businesses,
- the process and timing of blocking parking spaces in order to prepare for table set up after street closure

The site visit ended at approximately 5:50 PM and the participants, except for the Fire Chief, adjourned to the Town Hall for the Special Select Board Meeting

## Special Select Board Meeting Minutes

This meeting was conducted in person at Town Hall and shared with external participants via Zoom.

Roger opened the meeting at 6:03 PM. He notified the participants that he was going to record the meeting since Marie was not there to take notes and he would use the recording to prepare the meeting minutes.

Roger asked Jeremy if he would repeat his overview of the proposed plan for opening and operating outside dining at Rouge Restaurant so that people attending via Zoom would be on the same page as those who had been at the site visit.

Jeremy stated that the site visit was conducted outside Rouge Restaurant where we discussed the use of sidewalks and roadways as outdoor dining spaces in order to allow their business to open and viably operate. He pointed out that they do not want to use interior space for dining. He and Maggie don't want that, their staff doesn't want that and their customer don't want it either. Outdoor dining is their only option.

He then provided the following summary of the site visit:

- Rouge is requesting a temporary closure of Center Street on Friday and Saturday, closing the road straight across the Main Street / Center Street intersection and closing the Depot St / Center Street end on a diagonal, starting at the end of the Rouge property and ending near the corner of Baldwin's Hardware store. This would keep both the hardware store parking lot and the emergency access to the river open after the street is closed.
- This would just be Fridays and Saturdays, starting as early as possible. They will work with the neighboring business to coordinate timing. They will maximize their seating for the other days of operation on the sidewalk. He noted, as an aside, that blocking off the parking spaces next to the sidewalk as they became available after 3PM was much appreciated by their customers dining on the sidewalk as they didn't have to sit right next to a parked car. Jeremy also apologized to Chief Portieri for not notifying him beforehand that they were going to block off those parking spots prior to starting service at the sidewalk tables.

In response to a question about what other days they are asking to close the road, Jeremy stated that it would be just Friday and Saturday to start, with the potential to expand to Wed thru Sunday nights, if they had the demand for additional nights and if they are able to staff up to support an expanded schedule.

Kathleen suggested that whatever plan we approve should include the full schedule that Rouge would hope to have, and not just Friday and Saturday, so we don't have to revisit this again if they discover that conditions are favorable for additional days of operation. Everyone agreed with her suggestion.

A wide ranging discussion ensued covering numerous details including: days and times of operations, coordination with abutting businesses, set up and take down of street barriers (provided on loan by the WS DPW), storage of street barriers when not in use, notification of WSPD on days the street will be closed, blocking of parking spaces prior to street closure, and the exact configuration of the barriers at each of Center Street.

Kathleen reviewed the details of the agreement that she had documented during the discussion. The Board agreed to put those details into an agreement that would be sent to Rouge management and shared with all the abutting businesses so they will have an opportunity to provide feedback.

In addition to discussing Rouge outdoor dining operations, the Board discussed two other items related to the Center street closure.

The first item, introduced by Kathleen, was about asking other downtown businesses, particularly those that serve food, if they would be interested in looking into the Center Street closure as an opportunity to generate some additional business for their respective establishments. The Board thought this was an idea worth pursuing and Kathleen agreed to take the lead on how / when to begin outreach to downtown business owners.

The second item was about additional security on nights the street is closed. Eric pointed out that this Friday (July 31), the first day the street is scheduled to be closed, is the same day of two other downtown events, one at The Foundry and the other at Turn Park. Eric's suggestion was an additional police patrol to monitor the entire downtown area during the hours of the road closure. He positioned it as a "downtown patrol" not just for Center Street but for the whole downtown area as businesses and venues operate outdoors.

Chief Portieri expressed support for the idea but noted that the cost of the patrol would be an unbudgeted expense that would negatively impact what he already considers a pretty tight FY21 budget. The Board acknowledged that this would be a previously unbudgeted expense but they thought that the downtown patrol was an idea worth trying, at least for this weekend. They assured the Chief that they would work with him to find funds in the overall Town budget to offset the cost of this weekend's patrol.

Having agreed in principle to the weekend patrol, Roger asked for a motion to authorize the Chief to schedule the additional patrol. Eric made the following motion:

"I move to authorize the Chief of Police to provide an additional officer who would be on patrol in the downtown area during the hours of the Center Street closure on Friday, July 31 and Saturday, Aug 1. This authorization is only for these two days. After this weekend, the Board will solicit input from the Chief and from downtown business and venue owners in an effort to assess the value provided by the additional patrol and determine if this might become a regular patrol for the rest of the outdoor dining season."

Kathleen seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

Before a motion to adjourn, Roger spoke briefly about the effort the Board and other Town functions had been making over the past few weeks to work out an agreement with Rouge management that would enable them to open for outdoor dining. With that in mind, he told

Maggie that he didn't think she had been fair to the Board by taking her issues to the media through a press release versus just coming back to the Board immediately after the last meeting to share her concerns. He added that if she done that, this meeting could have happened at least two weeks ago.

Having no other business to conduct, Roger made a motion to adjourn. Eric seconded and all were in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 7:06 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Roger Kavanagh