

Master Plan Steering Committee
Tuesday, October 3, 2023
1pm-3pm
Rye Town Hall

Members Present: Chair Rob Wright, Joe Persechino, Howie Lazerowich, Rob Patten and ad-hoc member Pat Losik, Planning Administrator, Kimberly Reed.

Also Present: Steven Whitman and Crystal Kidd from Resilience Planning & Design

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Chair Wright opened the meeting, pledge of allegiance and turned it over to Steve Whitman.

Steve stated that they are going to discuss the last two topics for the existing conditions of the master plan.

Crystal stated that she would like to talk about history and culture. Examples of research she has been doing are looked at previous Master Plans, Historic Commission, Town Website, Demo Review and heritage commission. She reached out to the historical society and there are many good resources online. Her question is:

1. What are all active farms in Rye. She has Goss Farm and Rye Meadow Farm.

The committee asked for definition of Farm.

Steve started farms on a larger scale.

Chair Wright asked if they had to be for profit.

Pat Losik pointed to the NRI 4.2 which lists active farmlands including: Sentential, Rye Meadow, Cobble Hill and Land Agricultural importance.

Crystal's other question is cultural non-profit groups that are still active in Rye. Also State and Historical places where historical marker.

David Choate of 108 Washington Road said that Alex Herlihy would be the one with that information. He also listed off a bunch of houses that have plaques.

Rob Patten asked if Barns would be considered essential character of Rye.

David Choate and Gail Hughes comment on Historic Commission, Demo Review Committee and David is also a member of Rye advocates. He went on to say Rye is losing a lot of its heritage. He talked about the Barn program and tax abatement under 79B to restore barns.

Gail Hughes of Acorn Acre agreed with David Choate and her personal interest is to preserve the past and our heritage.

Chair Wright commented on what he heard and based upon that he asked if it was correct to summarize that they want to maintain semi-rural culture of Rye, hayfields, meadows and barns.

David Choate said the problem is the zoning ordinance is not responsive and not caught up to reality. He said it is very frustrating.

Chair Wright clarified that it is not the ordinance but relief granted.

David Choate gave examples of setbacks and the angst it causes when relief granted. He also talked about the FEMA 50% rule and it should include the land not just the house.

Chair Wright appreciated his comments as it informs the master plan.

Gail Hughes said it is conflict that the ZBA is approving too many variances.

David Choate spoke about the ZBA and them granting too many variances and how frustrating it is.

Rob Patten asked David Choate to attend a ZBA meeting because he has not seen this level of historical importance since, he has been a ZBA member.

Joe Persechino said we are not going to solve this today. Review the zoning in regard to historical and encourage preservation.

Chair Wright asked if there was a mechanism in the Master Plan to do this.

Steve stated the foundation of legal amending zoning and what Joe said was accurate.

Chair Wright said the mechanism is to identify the gaps such as ordinances voted on by the population.

Steve comments on the mechanism and they can look into it further and enough evidence change put in text of master plan may lead to action item.

David said he was on a citizen master plan implementation committee look at last plan were the ball dropped.

Pat Losik stated as an example of achievement she talked about the process of updating the zoning ordinance last year and the strengthening of section 3.1. It was a process and needed the foundational documents such as the NRI to back up the changes. She went on to say that Jenn Rowden from RPC stated if we were to get Phase II housing grant it would help take little bites on changes to the ordinances.

Steve asks if anything else historical or cultural before they move on.

Chair Wright stated it is a prevalent subject given this is a notable year, the 400th anniversary it is front and center.

Crystal stated she was all good on that topic and asked Joe P., where the recreation committee stood on their master plan.

Joe stated that the master plan is being finalized by Ironwood. Within the next month, pretty soon and it will be available to share with the Master Plan Committee and Resilience.

Crystal noted that previous Recreation master plan had a public outreach in 2007. She asked if there was something like that again this time or any recent surveys.

Joe stated surveys went out by Ironwood. Basis can be provided.

Chair Wright stated that there is a Lot going on and no central depository for the information.

Joe points out that the recreation department has control over very limited land which is under their authority. Yet, a lot of activities constitute recreation. Look at other spheres: beaches, state parks, schools, Conservation lands. All very NOT connected.

Chair Wright commented on little league and other formal and passive or informal ways to recreate.

Pat says to Crystal to look at maps and opportunities for paths and connectivity.

Crystal said she is working with FB in existing conditions report, she has a shape file from NHGranit.

Steve states for existing conditions which Crystal is working on now, she is flagging conditions and then we can engage the public to see if there are any primary goals, start talking about the future. Identify the deep dives.

Pat stated she understands we are working on the existing condition which could lead to the possibilities to know where the holes are.

The committee talks about bike paths, horseback riding, walking dogs and other ways to recreate and ways to connect them.

Joe stated that each board and commission is working in a silo and not coming together.

Chair Wright would like the committees, boards and the nonmunicipal groups to come together under one tent, capture and express in one formal place.

Pat commented on formal to passive recreation, there needs community connection and begin to remove the barriers.

Howie stated he agrees with what Joe was saying and there needs to be a common denominator, no cross pollination. Those groups should come to the Master Plan when there is a public forum.

Discussion on different ways to recreate and ways to bring them together.

Crystal mentions STRAVA is an app that they use to see where people are recreating, and she had two questions: 1. Abbenaquí Golf Course has winter activity and 2. Lafayette Road next to Greenland.

1. Abbenaquí has cross country skiing in the winter, walkers, dog walkers and ice skating.
2. The Cibborowski land off Lafayette Road is a big mountain bike area, dog walkers and walkers as well as some repelling and rock climbing.

The group said there are two beach clubs, pickle ball club as well as the golf courses and conservation lands.

Chair Wright wants to circle back to the timeline. Only 20 people showed up to the housing forum last week and do not want to miss an opportunity.

Steve stated the topics Crystal is formatting plus what FB Environmental are doing will be ready in November/December to run by the Committee in a Draft form. That gives us 2 months all the information in one place. Public Outreach January or February, early 2024, pull from the draft.

Steve the forum he asks if the committee wants one event or smaller focus groups.

After discussing it the committee votes on one big open forum.

Joe asks if it is like a Charrette.

Steve said that he will have tables set up ahead of time and people come in and can participate with their feet and walk to what ever table they want to and there will be multiple ways to communicate. This is better than someone speaking at them or having committee members facilitate tables.

How asks how to get the Memo Out.

Steve said to get Boards, Committees and members to show up, spread the word.

Pat said she likes idea of community forum. We had the vision focus then last week the housing forum, in October the Connect to Protect and then February 3rd is the Deliberative Session. Lots of way to engage people to get them on board, funnel the information.

Steve says to model good participation.

Chair Wrights asks Steve if he has seen a way to get the off shoots on board with the municipal body and elected voters to come together under one tent. A way to organize the fractions. Is there a best use case study.

Steve will look at the APA to see if anything written about this.

Possible date for the public forum is February 15th since school vacation will be the week of February 26th.

Next Meeting is November 7,2023 at 1pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kimberly Reed