

**RYE PLANNING BOARD
LONG RANGE PLANNING COMMITTEE
Monday, August 16, 2021, 1:30 p.m.**

Members Present: *Chair Steve Carter, Katy Sherman, Rob Wright and Kathryn Garcia*

Ad Hoc Member: *Dominique Winebaum*

Others Present: *Julie LaBranche, Planning Administrator Kim Reed, Selectman Tom King*

Chair Carter called the meeting to order at 1:33 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

I. Approval of Minutes – August 11, 2021

Motion by Rob Wright to approve the minutes of August 11, 2021 as presented. Seconded by Katie Sherman. All in favor.

II. Update Municipal Survey
Addressed at the August 11, 2021 meeting.

III. Draft Community Survey

Chair Carter noted that he had downloaded both the Exeter Master Plan and the Stratham Master Plan. He then went to the towns' websites to see what they had done for their surveys. (He submitted a copy of the questions to the Committee.) He pointed out that Exeter had basically four questions and these were used at their public workshop. Stratham didn't seem to have a survey. They did public workshops on different topics and themes. He continued that Exeter put out general questions and the themes were sorted from what was received back.

Ms. LaBranche stated that she never advocated for identifying themes in advance of the survey. She just wanted people to think about what the themes are and what kind of themes come to mind when thinking of a Vision Chapter.

Member Wright commented that when a survey is populated, there has to be some kind of content. The things that are on the survey could be the themes, in so many words. His take was that they would be using the result of the survey but they wouldn't be just asking people what they want to talk about, as the choices are infinite.

Chair Carter pointed out that themes are infinite but there are also standard ones that always come up; such as, heritage, cultural resources, economic development, smart growth and climate change. Referring to the information from Exeter and Stratham, Chair Carter explained this is really to show what other towns have done, so they can discuss what they want to do.

Member Garcia stated that she was really excited when she saw three or four questions. Everything they can do to get the public to respond is really important. If she gets overwhelmed with a survey, she just doesn't take the time to fill it out. Short is better than long.

Chair Carter commented this is one of the things Ms. LaBranche had mentioned. At the moment, they have seventeen questions and that's too many.

Ms. LaBranche stated that in looking at the four questions from Exeter, really only questions 1 and 4 are going to give tangible feedback. One of them is "List five topics you feel are important for Exeter now and in the future?" She feels that limiting it to five is confining. That is why she reorganized the survey based on the Hampstead model, incorporating some feedback from Dominique and Rob, and put it into categories. It's really hard for people to come up with only five. Sending out a question like that is going to give all these different ideas and there won't be any sense of consensus around any issues, if it's not partitioned a bit more. She agrees the survey is a bit long and they can eliminate a few questions.

Member Wright asked if the survey can be kept limited to things that the town has jurisdiction over. The residents could be saying something that doesn't translate into actionable events or compilation of rules by the land use boards.

Ms. LaBranche pointed out that the revised survey hones in on those kinds of things. She continued that in comparing the Stratham and Exeter Master Plan effort, this was the first survey and they had multiple visioning sessions and a very large budget. The survey was like the first cut to a much bigger process. In trying to streamline public input, it has to be a little less broad and more confined in order to get tangible feedback that's useable for a vision session. The idea for the survey is to come out with some items that can be taken to the visioning session to be flushed out a bit more.

The Committee reviewed the questions on the revised survey in detail:

Ad Hoc Member stated that she thinks they should care about questions 1 and 15 because they should know the demographics of the people who answer the survey. She explained that demographics are part of the Master Plan. Perhaps the answers would be skewed if its mostly elderly people answering the survey.

Chair Carter agreed that if 70% of the survey is filled out by people who are 66 or older, it's going to look different than if it's filled out by people between 26 and 50.

Ms. LaBranche stated that the reason to ask a demographic question is to find out who is replying to the survey. If there is a demographic group who is unrepresented, it means that in going forward with a visioning session, they need to reach out to that demographic. One of the ways to use the data is to find out who was missed and who to reach out to more.

Member Wright suggested the question about whether the person works from home or commutes to work. This would open up discussion for traffic and home-based businesses.

The Committee agreed this would be a good question to add. They also agreed to remove the question regarding salary, as this information may not be used in any way. There is also demographic data available for the median income in the Town of Rye. The question asking if they work full or part-time will be removed.

After some discussion, it was agreed to have a question on the survey asking what street or road they live on (or have a business located) and whether they live in the Rye Beach District. The question asking full address will be taken off.

Ms. LaBranche stated that she took some of the overarching themes that came out of the Stratham and Exeter work and organized different topic headings. She commented that she doesn't think there is any value in pinning people's opinions against twenty different things and ask them to take the top five. People have lots of things that they care about. She continued that one approach would be to not constrain people to choose one thing or another. She pointed out there are thirteen choices in the draft survey right now. (Question: What do you like about living in Rye? #2).

Ad Hoc Member noted that beaches are not in the choices.

Ms. LaBranche suggested they add it to natural features.

The Committee agreed to "beach access/natural features". The tax rate will also be added to the list.

Ad Hoc Member Suggested taking out "affordability".

Member Wright pointed out that it's a lot to buy a home in Rye by comparison to some places; however, it can be less expensive in comparison to other places. He thinks the affordability question would give information on the perspective to which a respondent brought to the survey. Someone who thinks Rye is really affordable because they are moving from a place that costs three times as much, might answer affirmatively to things that might look more like where they came from.

Chair Carter commented that part of affordability is also the tax rate. He would leave affordability in.

Ms. LaBranche noted that affordability covers a lot of things. It's not just the cost of a property. It's also about the costs of maintaining or renovating a property.

It was agreed that the affordability question will remain, for the time being.

Referring to 'rural atmosphere', Ad Hoc Member Winebaum stated that she does not think there is rural atmosphere.

Member Wright commented this is the same thing as affordability. It depends on where the person is coming from and what their perspective is.

Member Sherman noted that all different walks of life are going to be answering this based on their perception.

Ad Hoc Member Winebaum stated that when she drives through Stratham and Greenland, she sees orchards and farm land. How many farms are left in Rye?

Member Wright asked if the question would fit if it said "semi-rural".

Speaking to Ad Hoc Member Winebaum, Ms. LaBranche asked how she would categorize Rye.

Ad Hoc Member Winebaum noted it's a coastal town. She does not think they have done a huge amount of work to preserve Rye's semi-rural character.

Member Wright pointed out that the town is described in printed matter as "semi-rural".

Member Garcia stated that she thinks this is important to have in the survey. If people say this is really important to them, that says to keep open spaces. It gives a direction.

Ad Hoc Member Winebaum commented it's a coastal town with a "semi-rural" feel.

Ms. LaBranche pointed out that if Route 1 was taken out of the equation, it might be said that it's a rural community.

It was the consensus of the Committee to leave "rural" in the survey. For question #2, it will ask for the top three choices. It was agreed to ask people what they would like to see in 5 to 10 years (take out 20). What concerns do you have about Rye in the next 5 to 10 years? (Both questions limited to 100 characters.)

Ad Hoc Member Winebaum suggested adding "sustainable development" to the survey. Can working farms be maintained?

It was agreed that this is important to Rye residents.

Member Sherman noted that “sustainable development” also means things developing in a way that’s not effecting the other things that are really important to residents; clean drinking water, open spaces and clean beaches.

Ms. LaBranche stated this has to be phrased in a way that people will understand and know what it means. She thinks that the lay person would think it means sustaining growth and continued development.

Ad Hoc Member Winebaum suggested “green development” or “renewable energy”.

Member Wright asked if this is under the purview of the Planning Board.

Planning Administrator Reed replied yes. She explained that she has seen cases before the zoning board that have LEED Certified architects and engineers. Right now, the new house at the end of Washington Road is going to be energy efficient. This is something that the Town is now seeing. LEED is a type of sustainable energy development. She noted that if this is in the Master Plan, it can be put into the zoning or Land Development Regulations. Sustainability has to be described. It’s not sustaining a rapid rate of growth. Sustainability is more of an environment.

Ms. LaBranche stated this is something that could be part of the visioning session and could be part of the vision framework; to describe what sustainable growth means to the town.

It was agreed to use the words “low impact” and “environmentally sustainable” development in question 8. Also, add “increase high density growth and development” (should the town encourage....). There was discussion on rewording #8 to make it easier to read. The Committee worked on rewording and making some additions to question #9.

The Committee will continue working on the community survey at their next meeting.

Chair Carter passed out a new timeline to the Committee, prepared by Member Wright.

- **Next meeting scheduled for Tuesday, August 24th, 8:30 to 10:00 a.m.**

Adjournment

Motion by Katy Sherman to adjourn at 3:31 p.m. Seconded by Rob Wright. All in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,
Dyana F. Ledger