

LONG RANGE PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING

**Tuesday, August 24, 2021
8:30 a.m. – Rye Town Hall**

***Members Present: Steve Carter, Katy Sherman, Kathryn Garcia and Rob Wright
Ad-Hoc Members: Dominique Winebaum***

Others Present: Planning Administrator Kim Reed and Julie LaBranche

I. Call to Order

Chair Carter called the meeting to order at 8:37 a.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. Approval of Minutes – August 16th

**Motion by Katy Sherman to move the approval of minutes to the end of the meeting.
Seconded by Rob Wright. All in favor.**

III. Draft Community Survey

The Committee reviewed the draft community survey:

Ms. LaBranche stated that they should not lump short-term rentals with inns, and bed and breakfast. Inns, and bed and breakfast could happen in a commercial zone. Short-term rentals are really getting at the idea of rentals in residential zones. She suggested separating these as they are two different things.

Member Wright stated that he is not clear on what the permitted uses of a residence as a short-term rental are. He asked if it is permitted or not permitted explicitly.

Planning Administrator Reed replied that it's silent. It doesn't speak to it at all.

Ms. LaBranche explained that if it is expressly prohibited it is. If it is expressly permitted it is. If it's silent and not spoke to at all then it's not allowed.

Member Wright stated that his assumption was that if the property is in a commercial zone and the owner is running a commercial business, they are permitted to do that.

Member Sherman pointed out that the issue of VRBO might be a good discussion to have at the visioning session. She suggested they start making talking points for the visioning session. This is a hot topic for the Town.

Member Wright asked what if he ran an inn, but didn't call it an inn, and ran an ad in VRBO to accept people into the home and charged for feeding and housing. Is this a business?

Planning Administrator Reed stated that if they are being fed and housed, it's a business. Even with an Airbnb renters can use the kitchen and bath. The example of the inn is different. The property owner is in the home and renting out multiple rooms.

Chair Carter commented that the Airbnb question is not answered yet. People are not quite sure where to put it.

Planning Administrator Reed stated that Member Sherman had a good point. This committee is not going to solve this issue. This might be a good topic to leave in the community survey to see how people respond to it and bring it up as a talking point at the visioning session. People's concerns and thoughts can be brought forward so zoning ordinances or land development regulations can be created to address the concerns.

Ms. LaBranche commented that this should go along with a legal opinion as to whether it can or can't be done if it is silent.

Member Sherman commented that short-term rental covers beach houses, Airbnb and VRBO.

The committee agreed to put this is as short-term rentals as a separate line item.

Ad Hoc Member Winebaum stated that she did some thinking after the last meeting. She thinks it is too personal to ask people which street they live on. She suggested showing a diagram separating the Town into four sections where people would mark the area they live in. She continued that she spoke with Alex Herlihy about the working farms. He said that in 1945 there were about sixty working farms and there are none left. Rye now only has horse farms. She commented that it's good to have horse farms because it keeps the land open. She would also like to make a point about public historic buildings. There are now two and they are protected because they're in the Historic District. The buildings on the Isles of Shoals are public owned. Rye Beach has its own jurisdiction so nothing can be said about the Rye Post Office. She has been following the Historic District Commission and the Town Center Committee. They would like to expand the district to protect historic buildings of significance throughout Rye. She was wondering if there could be something on the survey asking if they are in favor of preserving Rye historic character.

Referring to question 4 under 'Our Character and Heritage', Ms. LaBranche pointed out there is a line item that says "maintain working farms", so it is already in the survey. Further down, there are three responses: "protecting historic houses and barns", "maintaining historic public buildings" and "protect (*inaudible*)". These things are already in the survey. If people respond strongly to those points, it could be brought forward for further discussion at the visioning session. Once the vision framework is developed, if this comes out as a priority, it can be brought into a narrative form. The survey is to get an idea of what people think is important.

Member Wright asked if the categories are captured enough to give a directional feeling.

Ms. LaBranche replied that she thinks so, unless the committee thinks there is another historic preservation item that needs to go in. She suggested adding “protect historic structures, houses and barns”, as there are other things besides houses and barns that are historic.

Ad Hoc Member Winebaum pointed out that there are buildings of historic significance that are not protected and they provide historic value to Rye.

Member Garcia stated that if this type of concern comes out in the survey, the town has a Historic District Commission that may ramp up their activities because it will rise to the top.

Member Sherman commented that this can be a talking point at the visioning session.

Member Wright noted that the intent is to get the narrowest scope of everything they want to talk about in a survey, not decide whether something should or should not be included.

Planning Administrator Reed agreed that they are not trying to say what is fact. They are trying to reach out to the citizens to find out what’s important to them.

Ms. LaBranche noted that once the visioning session is done, if the planning board and this committee decides there’s an item that should be elevated, which the public did not see as being significant, it can be done. The planning board and committee have the right to do this. Getting input from the community is not the end all of what the content of the visioning chapter may end up being. There are a lot of people who do not understand planning and zoning to the level of detail that the planning board does.

Planning Administrator Reed pointed out that Section 3.3 of the Rye Zoning Ordinance has a definition of the Historic District, purposes and how to get a certificate of approval. It was the consensus of the committee to add “structures” to “preserving historic houses and barns”.

Our Environment:

Ms. LaBranche noted that they added “preserve mature trees”, “open space and natural features” and “beach access and maintenance”.

Member Sherman asked if they should do “public beach access” and “residential beach access”, as they are two very different things. Some people want more residential beach access and some don’t. It’s another hot topic in town. She asked if they should define public versus residential under beach access.

Planning Administrator Reed replied that she doesn’t think it should be defined; however, it might be a talking point at the visioning session.

Member Wright noted that his issue, for him, has always been about parking, not access. On foot, anyone can walk on to public access, as opposed to not walking on private property. There has already been at least one law suit that was ruled in favor of the public.

Member Sherman asked if there should be beach access in the survey at all.

The committee agreed to just use “beach access”.

Referring to ‘Resiliency, Sustainability and Climate Change Preparedness’, Ms. LaBranche asked if they wanted to expand and add to this.

Ad Hoc Member Winebaum commented there are the shale piles.

Ms. LaBranche noted this would be covered under erosion, as it would be too specific to call the shale piles out. She suggested adding “erosion”; “coastal flood and erosion protection”.

Chair Carter suggested “flood protection and erosion control”.

The committee agreed.

Ad Hoc Member Winebaum stated that there are a lot of collapsing roads, which impacts water and sewer.

Member Wright commented those are specific examples of why they would want to topically discussion “investing in stormwater management infrastructure”.

Ms. LaBranche suggested adding “roads”.

Member Wright stated that he would be in support of having some language around “infrastructure”. To him, stormwater management infrastructure are things like catch basins, retention ponds and culverts. He is talking specifically about anything that would be infrastructural that would be in service to the fact that things need to be done differently to the roadways because of the changing environment.

Ms. LaBranche suggested “investing in stormwater management infrastructure” and “investment in roads and bridges”.

The committee agreed.

How satisfied are you with each of the following aspects of Rye:

Member Sherman asked if they should add crosswalks/sidewalks.

Chair Carter pointed out that street lighting is listed so they may want to add “crosswalks and sidewalks”, as well.

The committee agreed to add crosswalks and sidewalks.

Member Wright suggested adding “recycling center”.

The committee agreed.

Ad Hoc Member Winebaum stated that many people are invested in the town center. They want to have the feeling of having a town center, so it is more than just the appearance.

Ms. LaBranche suggested “appearance and (*inaudible*) of the town center”.

The committee agreed.

Chair Carter stated that he thinks the town center has become decentralized. It used to be a town center. The post office used to be there. There should be a general store. There used to be a drug store. The drug store has gone out of business and the fire station has gotten bigger. The post office has moved down Central Road. The functions that now go on in the town center are basically the library and town hall. The town center as an entity where people can go for coffee doesn’t exist.

Ms. LaBranche pointed out that the charette brought some of those points out. It was recommended that Rye should try to encourage the town center.

Ad Hoc Member Winebaum noted that people are not satisfied with the town center.

The committee agreed that the town center could be a talking point at the visioning session.

Ms. LaBranche suggested adding “conservation land/open space” under conservation and recreational trails.

The committee agreed.

Municipal Services:

Member Sherman asked if this is would be the place to put in something about the town’s website and being able to do everything online.

The committee agreed to put in “online access to documents, forms, etc.” and “online access to applications and permits (paperless)”. The committee also agreed that “code and zoning enforcement” should be separate from “building inspection”. Also added, “public access to cable and wireless communications (cell/internet)”.

There was review of the list of boards, commissions and committees in the town.

Motion by Katy Sherman to have Julie LaBranche access the town’s website to list every board, commission and committee of the town. Seconded by Steve Carter. All in favor.

The committee discussed having an open question at the end of the survey that asks people what is important to them about Rye that might have been missed; such as, “What areas of Rye do you think might need improvement that was not covered in this survey?”

The committee had a discussion about how the data is going to be generated.

Member Wright stated that he doesn't dislike Dominique's notion of somehow parsing the town into some number of sectors small enough to see generally where someone lives.

Ms. LaBranche commented that she is not sure this is possible on Survey Monkey.

Member Wright suggested carving out the sections by number to have them select the area they live in.

Member Sherman asked what they are trying to get from this question.

Member Wright replied that he thinks what they are trying to do is weight responses. For example, someone living in a particular part of town might be interested in having street lights, sidewalks and sewer, which might be related to an area that has those things. It might be directly correlated that most of the people living in that section find this as a high priority. He thinks they should know where the people are coming from that would make this so important. He does not think there can be a conversation without making sure the loudest voices aren't the only voices that are heard.

Ad Hoc Member Winebaum pointed out there is also the issue of Rye Beach being different from the rest of the town.

Ms. LaBranche noted it will show who actually replied to the survey. Whether a part of town was more heavily weighted or whether a certain part of town wasn't represented at all.

Ms. LaBranche suggested showing a grid with the areas numbered. The numbers can be listed and people will check off the area they live in.

The committee discussed whether they could just ask if they live in the Rye Beach District, Jenness Beach District or general Rye.

Member Wright commented that he does not have a problem with asking people what street they live on. There could also be a box that says "prefer to answer".

Chair Carter agreed.

Ms. LaBranche suggested asking for the closest major street or road to their residence or business.

After a bit more discussion, it was the consensus of the committee for the question to read: "Please indicate the following about where you live or own a business." There would then be a list for people to check: 1) road or street; 2) Rye Beach Village District; 3) Jenness Beach District.

Ms. LaBranche will make the changes and additions as discussed at this meeting. A revised draft of the survey will be sent out to the members for review.

IV. Date for the Visioning Session

Projected timeline:

- ❖ August 25th – Revised draft of survey to be sent to members for review
- ❖ August 26th – Deadline for comments on the revised draft from members
- ❖ August 27th – Julie to incorporate any changes
- ❖ August 30th – Survey loaded in Survey Monkey
Link to be sent to members to try the survey online
- ❖ September 3rd – Target date for survey to be released to the community
- ❖ October 1st – Deadline for residents to respond to survey
- ❖ October 5th – LRP will meet to review and discuss the results
- ❖ **November 10th – Date for Visioning Session (6:30 to 8:30)**

V. Other

- The committee discussed ways to distribute the survey.
 - It was noted that there will be a link on the town's website. Paper copies of the survey will be available at the Town Hall and the Library.
 - Dominique Winebaum will speak to the Rye Civic League about getting the word out about the survey.
 - LRP members will send links to friends in the community. Commissions and boards will also be asked to send to their email lists.
 - Kim Reed will speak with to the Town Administrator about the possibility of sending the survey to the people on the Town Moderator's email list.
 - Police Chief Walsh will be asked to put a message on the department's message board.
 - A notice and link for the survey could be posted on Facebook pages specifically for Rye residents.
 - Julie LaBranche will draft a distribution plan and send it to Planning Administrator Reed.
- **Approval of Minutes 8/16**
To be approved at next meeting

Adjournment

Motion by Steve Carter to adjourn at 10:32 a.m. Seconded by Katy Sherman. All in favor.

Respectfully Submitted, Dyana Ledger