

LONG RANGE PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING

**Monday, September 13, 2021
1:00 p.m. – Rye Town Hall**

Members Present: Steve Carter, Katie Sherman and Rob Wright (arrived at 2:21 pm)
Ad-Hoc Members: Kathryn Garcia, Dominique Winebaum and Patricia Losik (acting as alternate)

Others Present: Planning Administrator Kim Reed, and Julie LaBranche

I. Call to Order

Chair Carter called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m.

II. Update on the Surveys (Municipal and Community)

Julie LaBranche reported that 10 responses have been received for the municipal survey. This is about what she expected from the boards and commissions. She commented that the committee could think about sending out a reminder and extending the period for a bit. Ms. LaBranche agreed to create a list of the boards, commissions and town departments that have responded so far.

Ms. LaBranche noted that they have received 105 responses for the community survey. That survey was released on September 3rd, so it's been only 10 days. She is hopeful that they will receive around 300 by the time it closes on October 1st. She suggested that the committee discuss some ways to get the survey out to the community.

Member Sherman noted that she will follow up with both schools about putting it in their newsletters.

Planning Administrator Reed commented that she will coordinate with the library and town hall about having paper copies of the survey available. She will print the copies and distribute them, once she knows where the surveys will be located at each place.

Ms. LaBranche suggested that a sealed box could be used for people to put their responses in. In regards to fliers, she stated that these could be printed or sent by email. She also suggested an email request from the committee to all departments and boards. For the municipal survey, the response was to be one cohesive collective response. With the community surveys, a town employee who lives in Rye would be encouraged to fill out the survey independently. An email verification of this could be sent with a flyer. It should also be noted in the email that a paper copy is available at the town hall and the library.

Planning Administrator Reed pointed out that the town newsletter has gone out with information about the survey.

Chair Carter stated that the Rye Civic League put a link to the online survey in their recent newsletter.

Ad Hoc Member Winebaum commented that she is going to do another send out. Also, Steven Borne can tell how many clicks there are from people opening the survey.

III. Visioning Session Discussion

Member Sherman asked if the committee is allowed to know if there are any themes coming through with the surveys already received. Should that be kept quiet until they are all completed?

Ms. LaBranche commented that she could create a preliminary report; however, it might be a little premature.

The committee agreed that they should wait to perhaps the week before the responses are due.

Ad Hoc Member Winebaum stated that she has some concerns about the visioning session being held in person because of the COVID situation. Referring to the Goss Farm Event, she commented that the plan was to hold it at the Rye Junior High if the weather was bad; however, they are not allowed to do that because of COVID.

Member Sherman asked if there is a regulation about how many people can meet in the State of N.H.

Ad Hoc Member Winebaum suggested contacting Police Chief Walsh to get the parameters.

Chair Carter stated that COVID is a legitimate concern, given that it's starting to rise.

Ms. LaBranche stated that the session is a month and half out. If the situation worsens and it's only two weeks away, the committee will be scrambling to figure out what to do.

Chair Carter commented that he is not sure they will have a Plan B. It may just have to be postponed.

Member Sherman asked if it would be possible to do a visioning session via Zoom.

Ad Hoc Member Winebaum pointed out that was the original plan.

Ms. LaBranche confirmed that the committee had talked about this early on because things were still up in the air at that time.

Ad Hoc Member Losik stated that she was looking at a few visioning sessions that were done in other communities. One was Exeter, which was done pre-COVID in January of 2017. At that session, the participants worked in small groups and were focused on three main questions. Also, their planner, Mr. Sharples, kept up with the revised plan and issued a master plan analysis (April 8, 2021). She suggested that Mr. Sharples might be someone to speak with, as he might have some thoughts about vision.

Ms. LaBranche noted that she participated in that vision session. She was one of the facilitators at the table.

Ad Hoc Member Losik continued that she looked at Hampton because they had a vision session during COVID last summer via Zoom. She pointed out that Ms. LaBranche was one of the attendees.

Member Sherman asked the committee members how they feel about planning for Zoom.

Ad Hoc Member Winebaum stated there were 160 people over two meetings for the Plan N.H. Charette. The committee should be planning for about 80 people. That is a lot of people in one room with shared tables.

Ms. LaBranche stated they need to find out from Chief Walsh what the parameters are first. The committee can then have a discussion about what they will do if things change moving forward and they can't hold the event in person. The committee would have to think about rescheduling to a Zoom platform. Ms. LaBranche explained there are different ways to structure a Zoom event. First, everyone gathers for an introduction and information on how the session is going to be structured. The participants are then broken out into separate chat rooms. They can be broken out by topic or the facilitator of each room could go through a number of different themes. She is not sure that the committee needs to decide this today. They should just get some options out on the table and start thinking about how things would work.

Ad Hoc Member Losik asked Ms. LaBranche if she suggests having a facilitator if they go to the Zoom structure with breakout rooms.

Ms. LaBranche confirmed. She would suggest having a facilitator in each one of the breakout rooms. She noted that once people register for the vision session, they would be emailed materials for reference. Documents can also be shared on the screen. It is also helpful to have a Zoom administrator who would be just dedicated to keeping time and moving people around in the chat rooms.

Ad Hoc Member Losik commented they would need to have a dry run about a week to ten days before to practice, if this is the structure they go with.

Chair Carter asked about the number of groups they would break out into.

Ms. LaBranche replied it would be probably six to ten people per group. The number of groups would depend on how many people sign up. She noted that the committee could also cut off the number of people per session and offer two sessions.

Note: Police Chief Kevin Walsh joined the meeting to speak with the committee regarding the parameters for COVID.

Planning Administrator Reed explained the committee is planning a visioning session that is scheduled to be held on November 10th at the Rye Junior High. Dominique Winebaum said that the Goss Farm Event Committee was told that if it's raining, the event cannot be held at the junior high because of COVID.

Chief Walsh stated that the Fire Chief was working on an option for bad weather and it's either a go or not. That has to do with the COVID information that the departments are receiving, as far as hospitalization numbers, as well as the number of people who are contracting COVID. Fire Chief Cotreau and Lieutenant MacGlashing were watching the numbers and they felt it would be best to not have a backup plan for weather, based on the school's rules for masking and the number of people expected.

Planning Administrator Reed asked Chief Walsh if there is any advice he can give the committee for planning purposes.

Chief Walsh recommended that they speak with the Fire Chief about the hospitalization numbers and the infection of COVID. Either he or Chief Cotreau could help the committee look at the layout of the room. People need to be placed 6ft apart and there is also a sanitation process, as well as the cleanup after the meeting. He noted that the school's policy is that masks would have to be worn, even sitting down 6ft away. There may need to be a seating plan and a plan for how people enter/exit the building. There will also have to be a sanitation process for the use of the restrooms. He would suggest capping the number of people.

Ms. LaBranche asked if the committee would be responsible for implementing the sanitation components of the plan.

Chief Walsh replied that most of the town functions have relied on the Fire Department for hand sanitizers and masks. The committee should also follow up with the maintenance person at the junior high to find out about staff on at that time and the sanitization of the restroom facilities. It's important to follow best practices to keep everyone healthy.

Ms. LaBranche pointed out that the committee is worried that they may get a week out before the event and the situation could change. If the protocols change, it may not be possible to have the event.

Chief Walsh commented this is a possibility. In looking at the pattern from last year, the numbers are going to go up when getting into colder weather. The question is whether the hospitalization numbers will increase. Over time, science has shown that the hospitalization numbers are not going to increase to the numbers they were last year. He pointed out that

complacency has set in with everyone. So, when they are in doors, they may not be following best practices. He continued that this is just like Goss Farm Day and it's a gamble. As the day gets closer, the committee should review the inside plan, review the number of attendees and develop a seating chart with everyone sitting 6ft apart. The committee should have a meeting with Chief Cotreau at least 7 days out to look at the hospitalization numbers and infection rate. At that time, it can be determined if it's still healthy to have an indoor meeting or if the numbers have risen to a level that it would not be healthy to do.

Ms. LaBranche pointed out that the school could also change their policy.

Member Sherman stated that the tables will have six to eight people at each one. It would be one thing if the people were all family members. The more she thinks about this, the more she thinks they should plan for a Zoom.

Ad Hoc Member Winebaum commented there's a level of comfort also. If someone is not comfortable, they are not going to attend. The committee wants to maximize attendance.

Ms. LaBranche stated that the complication from the committee's end is the enforcement component. If someone comes in and refuses to wear a mask, will they make a scene and won't want to leave? Some people don't want to comply with the requirements.

After discussion, the committee agreed they were all in favor of holding the visioning session via Zoom, as there is just too much uncertainty of what the situation will be a month from now in terms of COVID. It was also felt that it would not be easy to pivot to a Zoom type visioning session without having planned it in advance. The committee does not want to discourage people from attending because they may be afraid of being exposed to something. It's important to be as inclusive as possible.

The committee discussed how many sessions to hold via Zoom.

Chair Carter asked if 160 people could be handled on Zoom.

Ms. LaBranche replied that would be a lot. She suggested either offering two sessions, so people can choose which time they would like to attend, or having three sessions with each one divided into topics.

Planning Administrator Reed stated that her concern is there may be someone who is interested in all the topics, but is not able to attend more than one night. She pointed out that the town newsletter and Rye Magazine are already out. They have been shooting for November 10th.

Ad Hoc Member Losik commented that she can see conflicts for people with several nights. She asked Ms. LaBranche if she is thinking about doing two sessions on the same day.

Ms. LaBranche confirmed this could be done. She continued that starting the last week of September, the committee should really start promoting the visioning session. Emails specifically for the visioning session should be sent out with a link to register. She needs to

figure out how people will register. She noted that only people who register will get the Zoom link, so people will have to register.

Ms. LaBranche continued that there are also other options besides having one day with two sessions on Zoom. They could take the same format as the survey and turn it into something that's more like a Zoom conversation. There can be bulletin boards, comment fields and shared pictures. Different kinds of questions could be posed where it's open-ended and it would end up being a discussion. People would log on to the site, enter in their comments and submit. It's not a live chat room. This can be kept open for a long time, so people can go in when they want to. The questions just have to be crafted correctly, so the committee can get the feedback that they want.

Ad Hoc Member Winebaum commented that she likes this idea. She has found that with visioning sessions, people arrive and are not prepared to provide input, so they are really just listening. She thinks this would give people the chance to familiarize themselves with the idea and the content.

Ms. LaBranche stated that she will write up notes on the different ways the visioning session could be done; such as, two sessions on one day (afternoon and evening) or using Survey Monkey as a way to collect information from people.

The committee discussed the idea of having fliers at the Goss Farm Fall Fair, which is being held on September 18th. The committee agreed to have fliers at the fair. Ad Hoc Member Winebaum will ask the Rye Civic League to have the fliers available on their table. Ms. LaBranche agreed to modify the existing flyer to say Zoom format and to direct people to the town website for more information. The fliers will be ready for Friday morning the 17th. It was agreed to have fliers on the tables of the Historical Society and Conservation Commission, so people will know this is from a Town of Rye Committee.

Ms. LaBranche asked the committee the times they would like to schedule for the visioning session on November 10th. It was decided to schedule two sessions; one from 4:00 to 5:30 and a second session at 6:30 to 8:00.

Ad Hoc Member Winebaum commented that one or two members of each board or commission should attend the visioning session.

Planning Administrator Reed pointed out that they can ask, but it can't be a requirement, as board members are volunteers. She agreed to encourage attendance from boards and commissions.

Ms. LaBranche summarized the next steps; revise the times on the flier and note that it is now a Zoom event with two sessions and required registration, and the committee is to work on promoting the community survey.

Note: Rob Wright joined the meeting at 2:21 p.m.

IV. Other Business

- **Approval of Minutes – August 16th**

The following corrections were noted:

- It should be noted on pages 2 & 3 that Ad Hoc Member should be: **Ad Hoc Member Winebaum**
- Page 4, last sentence should read: **It was agreed that sustainable development is important to Rye residents.**
- Page 5, after the 7th paragraph it should be added:
Ad Hoc Member Winebaum raised a question regarding the terms “short term rentals” versus Airbnb. It was decided to add “short term rentals” to the choices in question #8 as Airbnb is the name of a company and was not deemed to be an appropriate term for the questionnaire as short term rentals include more than just Airbnb.

As a part of the rewording and reworking of questions #8 and #9 there was discussion regarding the use of the term “Elderly Housing” versus “Senior Housing” in question #8. The discussion also included adding “access to online documents/applications” to question #9 which was done. There was also a discussion regarding the availability of the Building Inspector and Zoning Administrator choice which resulted in modifying this choice in question #9.

Motion by Katy Sherman to accept the minutes of August 16, 2021 as amended. Seconded by Rob Wright. All in favor.

- **Approval of Minutes – August 24th**

The following corrections were noted:

- 6th paragraph, 4th paragraph from bottom, 2nd sentence should read:
There could also be a box that says “prefer not to answer”.

➤ **Next Meeting scheduled for October 15th, 1:00 p.m.**

Motion by Katy Sherman to adjourn at 2:39 p.m. Seconded by Rob Wright. All in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,
Dyana F. Ledger