

LONG RANGE PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING

**Tuesday, October 5, 2021
1:00 p.m. – Rye Town Hall**

***Members Present: Steve Carter, Katy Sherman, Kathryn Garcia and Rob Wright
Ad-Hoc Members: Dominique Winebaum and Patricia Losik (serving as alternate)***

Others Present: Planning Administrator Kim Reed and Julie LaBranche

I. Call to Order

Chair Carter called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. Visioning Session on November 10th

Ms. LaBranche noted that the municipal and community surveys have been completed. She is working to compile the community survey data. There were 207 responses for the community survey, which is approximately a 3% return. During this meeting, she would like to focus on structuring the visioning workshop.

Planning Administrator Reed commented that she polled the committee members about whether to have a virtual or in-person visioning session. The majority favored a session in-person.

Ms. LaBranche submitted a working agenda for the visioning workshop to the committee for discussion.

Member Wright asked if there was any thought given to presenting the results to the surveys for the first item in the visioning workshop.

Ms. LaBranche stated that the community survey was one tool for this group and the Planning Board to use. The visioning workshop shouldn't be skewed by the results of the surveys. There could be different people at the workshop with different views. She pointed out that the survey was very specific about topics. She thought the idea for the visioning workshop was to have more of an open conversation versus having a prescribed set of questions for people to answer.

Member Wright asked if there was any thought given to doing scatter plot of the responses to the multiple choices questions and making a display to show what people think is important. People

can then be asked if things should be added. It might be a way of getting the conversation started on priorities for the town.

Ms. LaBranche replied the committee can make a decision on whether they want to present the results from the survey. She commented that it can kind of set the tone and skew people's opinions or ideas. A survey and a workshop are two different things. A workshop is where people have a conversation about things in a more organic kind of way, as opposed to checking off boxes.

Member Wright commented that a heap map of topics is a conversation starter. If attention isn't paid to the survey, it may make people feel like it was a waste of time to do. It might help to have a heap map of the most mentioned topics or the most positive responses to a specific question, to get a sense of what was on the minds of the people responding.

Member Garcia asked about the real goal of the workshop. She suggested they role it back to that and go from there.

Member Sherman stated that she thought that the main points that were going to be discussed in the workshop were going to be from the result of the surveys.

Member Wright agreed.

Member Sherman pointed out that the workshop is only ninety minutes. She thought they would be drawing out from the survey the things that people felt were most important.

Ms. LaBranche stated there are fifteen or sixteen topical questions. The results of those questions are very specific to the questions. She is not sure that people can translate that data in twenty minutes and have a conversation. She suggested it might just be a bulleted list of one or two PowerPoint slides or putting them into groups by topics or themes. Otherwise, the survey structure, questions and answers can't be presented in twenty minutes. People won't be able to internalize that information in a short period of time. It will be a challenge to put that data into a format that makes sense to someone walking into the workshop who may not have done the survey.

Ad Hoc Member Losik stated that the introduction is where the town stands on the master plan journey. People will want to hear this, as these are small steps that will all hook together to a new master plan. She thinks it's important to say what was heard from the two surveys, but not an analysis. It sets the nuggets to provide parameters for what's going to happen that evening. It could be summed up with the major themes, which could lead into how the groups are organized and their discussion points. She reiterated that it should be a summary, not a deep analysis. She continued there are baskets that the Planning Board is going to be using; municipal survey, community survey and the visioning workshop. There's interrelationship between the surveys and the workshop. People should understand the broad sense, but the Planning Board will get

the details. She thinks it's important to remind people of where this is going and where they are in the process. It's important to keep people engaged in the conversations throughout the process.

Ad Hoc Member Winebaum stated that she received a number of complaints about the survey; such as, it was too long or they didn't like the questions. She thinks they lost a number of responses due to the survey.

Member Sherman commented she heard a lot of appreciation for what was being done.

Speaking to Ms. LaBranche, Chair Carter noted that what they are talking about is what floated to the top. What did people agree with and needs more attention? He thinks they should pick out common themes of what people are interested in to give a sense of what the survey produced.

Ms. LaBranche stated that her suggestion is to not delve into a huge amount of detail. Once it gets to the major master planning effort, that's when the detail will be delved into. Right now, it should be broad based, high-level types of things.

Chair Carter agreed.

Member Wright stated that he felt that the committee had moved away from the topic based visioning session to a themed based. He thinks that was a great idea. His suggestion would be to simply strike option 1 and run the workshop as a themed based discussion. He would also recommend distilling the major themes from the data set the committee now has with the municipal and community surveys. He likes the idea of a heap map of words because it's easy to see and easy to take in. Those words could be assigned to one of the five categories of themes. This is a way to break it down into small operational steps that people can break up into groups to discuss.

Ms. LaBranche commented that one of the functions of the online survey program is a word map. However, she doesn't think a word map really makes sense. It doesn't resonate with anything that people could understand in a few minutes and react to. She suggested taking the results of each multiple-choice question, under each category, and pull out what came out at the top. There could be one slide for each of the four or five categories.

The committee agreed this would work.

Referring to the agenda for the workshop, Ms. LaBranche explained the overview should include the master plan process. This includes how the committee was formed, the charge from the Planning Board and the direction. The components are surveys, visioning workshop and a draft framework for a vision chapter.

Member Sherman commented that it's important to talk about the cost and how much can be accomplished with that cost.

Member Wright stated that he would say it doesn't matter because it's mandated by state statute that it be done.

Member Sherman stated that they need to let people know in the overview that this is the tip of the iceberg in forming a vision chapter.

Ms. LaBranche clarified it's not the complete vision chapter. It's the framework for the chapter. The contract was to do all the steps to create the framework for a vision chapter. She explained that to write the vision chapter, it would require delving into the survey information and data in huge detail.

Ad Hoc Member Losik commented that she thinks they are saying to have the message out there as to what the journey looks like, not the details. There has been dialogue about a bigger project for the master plan, a more comprehensive master plan and perhaps a consultant driven master plan. It's possible the master plan could cost in excess of \$100,000. The discussion is already out there. She thinks this is all linked to the overview of the journey.

The committee agreed it's important to focus on where they are in the process and where it's going during the overview (in general terms without so much emphasis on the costs). The committee also agreed that Julie LaBranche and Kim Reed would handle the introductions. The overview will be given by Pat Losik and Steve Carter.

There was some discussion regarding whether the surveys should be used for discussion points at the workshop.

Ms. LaBranche reiterated that the survey will inform the Planning Board and LRP Committee's work moving forward, when it's time to dig into the details of the survey. She feels that leading a group of people coming into a workshop in a direction that another group has said "this is how I feel", is not really the spirit and intent of a workshop. The spirit and intent of a workshop is to gather people together, post some questions and have a discussion about things that are important, not rehash the survey. It's not the workshop participants job to vet the survey.

Member Wright suggested pulling out the themes and asking people at the workshop what they think is important under those themes. Once that's done, the results of the survey could be presented.

Ms. LaBranche noted that there may be two very different groups of people and different opinions between the survey and the workshop. She continued that she feels like that's contaminating the participants for the workshop with preconceived notions and opinions.

Member Garcia agreed. The goal is to gather information from people. She continued that they should layout the themes and get a robust conversation going. She agrees that they should not be led down a path.

Ms. LaBranche pointed out that an organic discussion and dialogue at a workshop is different than what would be given in a survey. Referring to Ad Hoc Member Winebaum's comments, Ms. LaBranche stated that she did see a couple of comments in the survey responses that said the survey was too long and overwhelming. She pointed out that the average survey response time was 24 minutes. She does not feel this is overly burdensome when helping the community to move forward with a master plan vision chapter.

Ad Hoc Member Winebaum commented that her concern is the maximum capacity for the workshop. In terms of topics, she asked if there is a platform for people to throw out big ideas. During the visioning, people might have some big ideas that transpire from the topics. She read about visioning and often times that's when big ideas come out. She suggested stronger words; such as, "Rye going green".

Member Garcia stated that she went to a visioning session once and there was a dream board when people walked in. People could write comments on the board. It doesn't necessarily have to be part of a formal session.

Referring to the workshop agenda, Chair Carter asked the members if they feel that the topics listed are the one's that capture everyone's interest.

Ms. LaBranche noted that these topics were taken from the survey. Each one would need one or two questions behind it. There are five categories with an hour for group discussion, so that will be ten minutes for each category.

Chair Carter asked if each group will be doing all five.

Ms. LaBranche confirmed.

Ad Hoc Member Winebaum stated that at the last visioning session, there were three chapters and only one table. The group had twenty minutes per chapter. She felt that twenty minutes was short.

Member Wright stated that since there is a data point, it would be useful to take the top hits, a word that was frequently mentioned, and assign the top three that fall into each bucket for discussion. If they are only talking about a concept, there will be high-level responses, which in a short period of time is all they will have time to do.

There was some discussion about whether the topics could be consolidated into one discussion point.

Ms. LaBranche stated this is just a working agenda for the Committee to discuss. Clearly, there are time constraints with an hour and what can be accomplished. The topics that are themed based need to be collapsed. She suggested three questions that encompass some of the themes. This is probably all that can be accomplished. She suggested creating a new structure and not even using the five proposed on the agenda; however, it will generally be about these subject matters.

Ad Hoc Member Losik pointed out that the charette really fostered some creative ideas. It was an environment that fostered a lot of discussion and creativity.

Chair Carter asked if the individual tables will be reporting back to the group about what they discussed.

Ms. LaBranche stated that she doesn't think there will be enough time at the event. However, after the event, everyone who signed up will receive a summary of the results. It should be summarized and published, so the whole community can contemplate what came from the workshop. She suggested big picture type questions, in order to bring people's creative juices to the front. Ms. LaBranche commented that she would like to regroup and come up with some questions. She likes the idea about the dream board and have it as people walk in. She would also like to have the sign-in sheet have a check box about whether or not they filled out the survey. She commented that when she revamps the working agenda, she will pull out some of the high-level things that came out of the survey.

Ad Hoc Member Winebaum stated that they need to address climate change. She noted that there is a climate change chapter. They've had a visioning session about climate change in 2016. There's already history, so this needs to be built on.

Ms. LaBranche stated that they have to be realistic as to what can be accomplished in a form like this in an hour. In thinking about how to structure the topics, maybe it's putting them into buckets and asking the same question under each one. Ask the people to quickly react to each one; such as, how prepared do you think the community is to deal with this issue? What resources are needed to address this issue?

Member Sherman liked the idea, as it will be blazing the trail for the remaining topics because they will know the questions.

Chair Carter agreed. He stated that one big umbrella about climate change is the wetland, water supply, aquifer and the expansion around the streams. He's not sure how it would all go into one big question, but it's all linked together under some type of environment question.

Ms. LaBranche stated it's hard to enter that content in such a short period of time.

Chair Carter commented that he was thinking there could possibly be a question that would raise those kinds of issues. He thinks one of the biggest issues is clean drinking water.

Ms. LaBranche commented this has to be corralled a bit. It can't be a teaching moment for people.

Chair Carter pointed out that they want to cover the whole landscape with three questions and that's difficult.

Member Wright suggested approaching this package of thinking as a SWOT analysis. Where are we strong? Where are we weak? What are our opportunities? What are the threats? Presented in the context of how to use the land and create regulations and statutes around land use.

Member Garcia commented that maybe these could be the four questions to the three buckets.

The Committee agreed with this framework.

The Committee discussed the organization of the workshop:

- Introduction – Kim and Julie
- Overview – Steve and Pat
- Theme based topics – three topics
 - Community, Citizens and Municipal Services
 - Land Development and Growth
 - Environment and Resilience (Climate Change)
- Five tables
 - Facilitator at each table – Pat Losik, Danna Truslow (RCC), member of Energy Committee
 - Scribe at each table
 - Directions of SWOT analysis
 - Info sheet for each bucket
 - Comment sheets
- Sign-in table
 - Assigned a table as they sign-in
 - Name tags
 - Hand sanitizer available
 - Sanitizer for the markers/tables

Next Steps:

- Julie will send out a revised working agenda.
- Julie will also send out an agenda for the administration of the event.
- Eventbrite is being set up for the registration.
- Flyer prepared by Julie is ready.

- Julie will work on drafting the explanation materials for the tables.
- PR package to be prepared and sent to Committee for promotion of workshop.
- Kim Reed to confirm capacity numbers for the Junior High.
- Facilitators to be confirmed.
- Next LRP Meeting scheduled for Tuesday, October 19th, 1:00 p.m.

Adjournment

**Motion by Steve Carter to adjourn the meeting at 2:46 p.m. Seconded by Katy Sherman.
All in favor.**

Respectfully Submitted,
Dyana F. Ledger