

# **LONG RANGE PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Wednesday, January 5, 2022**

**12:00 p.m. – Rye Town Hall**

***Members Present:*** Chair Steve Carter, Katy Sherman, Kathryn Garcia and Rob Wright  
(joined via Zoom about 1:00 p.m.)

***Ad Hoc Members Present:*** Dominique Winebaum and Patricia Losik (joined via Zoom around  
1:00 p.m.)

***Also Present:*** Julie LaBranche and Planning Administrator Kim Reed (via Zoom)

## **I. Call to Order**

Chair Carter called the meeting to order at 12:08 p.m.

## **II. Go over the results of the Vision Session, Surveys and talk about the outline**

Chair Carter noted that the committee has received the ‘Town of Rye, N.H. Master Plan Vision Framework’ submitted by Julie LaBranche.

Julie LaBranche passed out a copy of the current Master Plan Vision Chapter. She suggested that they discuss the Vision Chapter framework based on all the information collected; community survey, municipal survey, public input from the workshop and the notes from the handouts. She noted that the Vision Chapter shouldn’t be a summary of all that input. The Vision Chapter should function as an overview. It should point the reader and the users as to where the Master Plan is leading. She does not think the Vision Chapter is the place to summarize all the input data. She recommended creating a separate chapter (section) in the Master Plan to summarize the public input.

Ad Hoc Member Winebaum stated that years ago, when she was trying to figure out what a master plan was, she read that every chapter should have its own vision statement which would describe the chapter. She asked if this is going to be done.

Ms. LaBranche stated that they are not at that point yet. This would be part of the master planning update process, not what is being done now. She continued that the summary is complicated and has lots of information. It would be difficult to try to summarize all those items into a vision chapter. The Vision Chapter needs to be forward thinking and should set the stage for what the Master Plan is all about. It would bring in some of the ideas that came out in the public input sessions, while taking into consideration the ideas of the LRP Committee and the Planning Board as those are the bodies responsible for creating the master plan. Referring to the

current Vision Chapter, she noted that it's two and a quarter pages long. One of the issues is that it has no structure. It's a bunch of paragraphs. It has a lot of the history and talks about the way it used to be in Rye. A master plan is to be a forward-thinking document, not so much looking back.

Ms. LaBranche stated that she would like to propose structuring the framework into an introduction or purpose. The purpose would cite the RSA that requires towns to have a master plan with the planning board being the entity responsible for its creation. She also proposed having a vision statement, as there is not one in the current vision chapter. She commented that all vision chapters, in the master plans that she has read, have a vision statement.

Ad Hoc Member Winebaum asked if there is just one vision statement.

Ms. LaBranche replied just for the Vision Chapter. The committee is not going into the other chapters because they haven't figured out how that will play out. She continued that she agrees that if they go with a theme based or chapter topic-based plan update, each chapter would have its own vision statement.

Chair Carter stated that he came up with some topics that a lot of things would fall under to help create a vision of how things should look based on what was heard.

Member Sherman stated that she thought that one of the reasons they were doing the visioning and the survey is to use that input for the framework of the Visioning Chapter, which was to be an introduction to the rest of the Master Plan. She asked if this is accurate.

Ms. LaBranche explained that's kind of where this group landed back in the summer; however, she feels they have moved away from that a bit. The question is how to pull out the topics that are most relevant. She feels like they can bring some themes forward and some action ideas, but it's still going to have to be distilled down.

Member Sherman asked if they would be doing an introductory paragraph for each chapter of the Master Plan.

Ms. LaBranche noted they are not that far down the road yet. She has created master plan chapters for other towns. The ones she has done had an introduction statement created for each chapter. She thinks this is a great addition to a master plan. She reiterated that the Vision Chapter should be forward thinking and the current one is not at all. There are definite things that came forward in the public input. She pointed out that she hasn't summarized the community survey yet. She continued that having a vision chapter with just a list of topics, doesn't get anywhere. The committee and planning board haven't decided what direction and approach to take with the update. The Vision Chapter can't be defined, until the approach is decided.

Chair Carter stated that the committee decided that it should be theme based. He thinks they also came to the conclusion that a full update of the Master Plan needs to be done. The current topics can't be taken and reformed into a new master plan. It has to start from scratch. In his opinion,

what they are heading for is to create a rationale for the Select Board and Budget Committee that they need a certain amount of money in order to initiate the process of master planning.

Planning Administrator Kim Reed pointed out that the committee never voted or formalized a decision. It was discussed and every time it was brought up, somebody would throw something in and the committee would get off subject. Theme based was discussed a lot, but it was never actually voted upon; therefore, it was never formalized. She continued that it's not up to the Select Board. It's up to the Planning Board. The master plan by the RSA is a planning board issue. There are not going to be funds until 2023. It first has to be decided where this is going to go. After this is decided, the committee can formulate a plan on how to move forward. She reiterated it is not up to the Select Board. It is not up to the Budget Committee. It's up to the Planning Board. This committee has to decide what they want to propose to the Planning Board.

Chair Carter explained they need a proposal that the committee thinks it should be a themed based master plan that should be redone completely. They would propose this to the Planning Board, who would have to agree.

Planning Administrator Reed commented this committee has to make some decisions and bring those to the full planning board.

Ms. LaBranche stated that the charge for this meeting and the next meeting in January is to decide on the content for the vision framework. She reiterated that the Vision Chapter should not be a list of topics. She suggested creating a chapter in the master plan about public input, which will all be summarized. It's hard to use the SWOT in a framework without any context. The Vision Chapter should just be forward thinking with some of the themes in a narrative form.

Chair Carter stated that he came up with three themes. One thing that he really picked up on was "maintaining the semi-rural seacoast flavor of Rye". If he was preparing an outline, that would be number 1. Under that, there are things like zoning enforcement, septic education, what happens to Route 1, affordable housing, open spaces and conservation. The second theme that he pulled out was "developing community connections within Rye". Under that would be; open spaces, town center, bike paths, sidewalks, cell reception, senior and youth needs. The last theme was addressing climate change as it affects Rye. Under that would be; water quality and supply, wetland protection, zoning and enforcement, renewable energy and septic system regulation. He commented that those are the three big topics that he saw.

Ms. LaBranche suggested creating a narrative around those topics areas and bring in all the context.

Chair Carter stated that he doesn't think they need to put low tax rates in a visioning chapter. He doesn't think they need to put the beaches, as the town doesn't really have control because they are State beaches.

Ad Hoc Member Winebaum pointed out this is a connectivity. There's a lot of connectivity at the beach.

Member Sherman stated that beach might not be in the visioning chapter, but it would be in the Master Plan.

Ms. LaBranche pointed out it would be under environment and natural resources. She agrees with Chair Carter. There were a lot of comments that came out of the input forms and at the workshops that were issues for the town's people, but are not in the town's control at all; such as, traffic on Route 1A. It's something to talk about for other sections of the Master Plan, as this moves forward. The vision statement should really focus on the things the town has control and influence over.

Member Sherman commented that she sees the Vision Chapter as an introduction to the rest of the Master Plan.

Ad Hoc Member Winebaum stated they have not documented existing conditions and trends to inform the visioning process. It needs to be known what the existing conditions are.

Chair Carter noted this is part of rewriting the whole master plan.

Ad Hoc Member Winebaum commented this really informs the process. She feels this is missing from the process.

Ms. LaBranche noted there is another phase with an RFP to do the Master Plan. The consultant could do that work at that time.

Chair Carter stated that if they create a visioning framework that's a narrative, he would assume this would become part of the RFP. Part of what the consultant will do is to look at demographics and trends. He doesn't feel the committee has the capacity to do that with the resources they have at the moment. He thinks they are trying to do something to inform an RFP. He commented that they could do the visioning and come to the conclusion that they like what they have. This was an exercise to see where people are and to see where the Planning Board is about spending a lot more money to develop a new format.

Ms. LaBranche pointed out that what is in the Vision Chapter now doesn't reflect what Rye is and what it wants to be. It doesn't have vision forward ideas and issues that need to be worked on.

Member Garcia asked if they are in agreement that the framework will be based on these three themes and be a narrative.

Ms. LaBranche stated there are four themes; climate change and resilience is fourth. She noted that they can write a paragraph that expands the themes and brings in the ideas that came from the public input. A narrative will be written for each of the themes. An introduction or purpose statement will be created, along with a vision statement. She would like the committee members to submit some sample vision statements before the next meeting. She will put all the statements together into one narrative to be reviewed at the next meeting. She will also work on creating a new vision for the framework based on the themes.

Member Garcia asked the four themes.

Ms. LaBranche summarized: 1.) Our community; 2.) Our land development and growth; 3.) Our environment and natural resources; 4.) Climate change, resilience and sustainability.

Chair Carter stated that he would like something more active like “maintaining the semi-rural and seacoast flavor”, rather than “land development and growth”. He thinks there needs to be some catchy titles that are more active.

Member Garcia noted that “land development” is more of a technical term. People might speak more like “semi-rural”. The audience is who they want to speak to and what language should be used.

Member Garcia stated that they might want to do some brainstorming about the vision statement. She has spent a lot of time working on vision statements, which should be short, concise and to the point.

Chair Carter asked what topics would go under climate change and resilience that the town would actually have control over.

Member Sherman commented wetland buffers.

Ms. LaBranche stated that a lot of things that came out for environment and natural resources was protection of wetlands, too much development in the wetlands, lack of buffers, variances and enforcement.

Referring to Climate Change, Member Sherman pointed out that it would be about how the town can react to sea-level rise.

Ms. LaBranche commented how to react and adapt. How much money does the town want to spend on mitigation? Under adaption, its sea-level rise, coastal flooding, coastal storms, erosion, infrastructure damage and infrastructure being undersized and not able to handle the new conditions. Under sustainability, electric vehicle charging stations is one that came up. She noted that the transfer station and recycling came up as big-ticket items. People think the swap shop and recycling center are great but need some improvements.

Member Sherman clarified that those specific things would go in the Master Plan.

Ms. LaBranche stated those would also be talked about in the vision framework. There may be some subheadings; such as, sustainability and what it means to be a sustainable community. She noted that she will draft something for the committee to consider. She pointed out that it could be framed like a definition and then what was heard from the public about their concerns. So, under each one of the major themes there would be a definition statement and what was heard from the community.

Member Sherman asked if they could do some brainstorming about a visioning statement.

Ms. LaBranche noted the in re-writing the framework, she will use the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats as an umbrella for creating a section before the theme section. It will say what the community said they value and here are the concerns moving forward. It will summarize things, instead of making a list. It will then talk about the themes.

Chair Carter stated that he doesn't think the paragraphs should be descriptive of what the town has, but more aspirational for what is needed.

Ad Hoc Member Winebaum stated there has to be a plan on how to reach the vision. They have to be careful not to just say "we want to have".

Ms. LaBranche stated that instead of trying to put too much forward in the Vision Chapter, she would say the community would benefit from x, y and z. She thinks they need to play it a little soft for now. When it gets to the full master plan update, those topics would be explored in more detail.

Member Garcia read her thoughts for a vision statement:

***Maintain the rural character of Rye while developing community connections and sustaining the environment.***

She noted that a lot is in there. The rural character, the farm and everything they've talked about. The community connections are the bikeways, walkways, and general store. Sustaining the environment means keeping it green and maintaining open space.

Ms. LaBranche stated that would be defined more under the themes.

Chair Carter stated that one thing that comes up all the time is what is semi-rural and what is seacoast? Semi-rural is one of those catch phrases that people use all the time.

Member Sherman stated seacoast is important because of sea-level rise.

Ad Hoc Member Winebaum pointed out that Rye is a seacoast town to begin with.

Member Sherman commented that semi-rural is what the town's people have chosen for Rye.

Chair Carter stated that semi-rural allows people to think about open spaces. Rye is mostly a seacoast town.

Ms. LaBranche explained that when the Coastal Program and others around the State talk about the seacoast, it's not just coastal towns. It includes towns in the fringes of tidal area; such as, Dover and Newmarket. Seacoast has a bigger geography. Rye is a coastal town.

Member Garcia stated that "coastal" is a key word. A lot of the input was that people don't want the coastline to become commercial. To her, that's maintaining a rural character, instead of a commercial coastline.

Ms. LaBranche pointed out it's already commercial. It's either a commercial development, private residential, state property or town owned property. The immediate coast is already pretty developed.

Member Sherman stated that what she heard was that people want a reduction in commercial on the beaches, but more commercial elsewhere.

Ad Hoc Member Winebaum noted that the houses are also becoming too big and too expensive. That is what's happening on the coast by the beach.

Ms. LaBranche commented they should bring it back to the words that should be in the vision statement. It should be short and sweet and have some context. She pointed out that two sentences could be used.

Ad Hoc Member Winebaum stated that the major concern with the coast is sea-level rise. Those houses are going to disappear and the access is going to disappear. A coastal town and sea-level rise with climate change is the most vulnerable.

Chair Carter suggested the words "coastal semi-rural character".

Ms. LaBranche stated they may want to use "coastal" in a slightly different context. She was looking at "coastal adaptation and resilience" as part of the vision statement. She wouldn't use the word twice. She would only use it once.

Member Garcia commented this might bring in a second sentence for "coastal line resiliency".

Ms. LaBranche stated that she was thinking of dividing the topics into two different sentences. Otherwise, it will just be a run-on sentence. She commented that she doesn't like the word "developing" community connections. The word "develop" has a connotation. She suggested "fostering community connections".

Ad Hoc Member Winebaum read from the current vision chapter.

Ms. LaBranche stated they can use some of the text from the current vision chapter and morph it into the themes.

Ad Hoc Member Winebaum pointed out that she likes: ***"This will be unified by human scale density and architectural style honoring the historic buildings and character of much that already exists."***

The committee agreed this was a good sentence.

Ms. LaBranche explained there will be an introductory paragraph. The introductory paragraph talks about the purpose of the master plan, who has control and states the RSA. The purpose is to guide the community in policy and decision making, and investments to move the town forward

to meet its goals and objectives, which will be outlined in the Master Plan. There will then be a vision statement and master plan themes. The Master Plan will be organized around the themes.

The committee reviewed what they had drafted so far for a vision statement for Member Wright and Ad Hoc Member Losik who joined the meeting.

***Maintain the semi-rural character of Rye while fostering community connections.  
Sustain the environment addressing coastal resilience.***

Ms. LaBranche reviewed the layout so far for the Vision Chapter:

- Purpose – State the RSA that outlines the responsibility of the master plan, the functions of the master plan and how it will be used.
- Master Plan Themes – 1.) Our Community; 2.) Our Land Development and Growth; 3.) Our Environment and Natural Resources; 4.) Climate Change, Resilience and Sustainability.
  - Statement under each theme that defines what the topic means.
  - Some feedback received from the community about big-ticket items that they are interested in addressing, which the master plan will likely adopt.

Ms. LaBranche noted that the Vision Chapter should function as an executive summary about what the Master Plan is going to address. It should be lean and concise. It should not be more than four pages. She also noted that she had suggested taking the public input and condensing it into its own chapter. She thinks it's important to capture the input and show the town's people their input is part of the plan.

Planning Administrator Reed noted that the committee has one more meeting with Ms. LaBranche. At the next meeting, the committee should take a vote on a direction that is going to be taken to the Planning Board at the February meeting.

Member Sherman commented that she is hearing that they all feel there should be a master plan rewrite. She asked Member Wright if he feels that way.

Member Wright agreed. Bits and pieces of the Master Plan are fairly outdated. Given the state of where it resides today and the issues that it does, and does not, address, it would make sense.

Ms. LaBranche pointed out that the vision framework may change in the future. What it provides is a format for sending out an RFP for a master plan update. It gives a consultant some direction and an idea of what the town would like the Master Plan to look and feel like. The value of doing this vision framework is to give that guidance. To spend a good amount of money on a master plan update, there should be direction and guidance for the final product. This framework will provide that guidance.

Member Garcia stated that because of the investment for a master plan, it's really important that it's crafted so it is used by the town and not just "gathering dust on the shelf". Many times, they aren't used.



Ms. LaBranche commented that Dominique made this point a number of times. Dominique had commented that she wanted it to be a useful, productive document. Ms. LaBranche pointed out that part of the update would be to create goals and objectives and an action plan.

Next Steps:

- Julie will send out a revised outline for the framework within the next few days.
- Committee members to send Julie their edits and ideas, which will all be put together and sent out in another document to be reviewed at the next meeting.
- Chair Carter will put his ideas and thoughts, which were discussed at this meeting, in a memo and send it to the committee.
- Next meeting scheduled for January 20<sup>th</sup>, 1:00 p.m.

### **III. Other**

Referring to the current master plan, Ad Hoc Member Winebaum stated that the Rye Public Library Trustees are very upset that the vision for the town center never materialized. This isn't from 2013. This came from visioning in 2002. They didn't have a visioning in 2013.

Chair Carter stated that one of the tricky issues of putting the library into whatever is done, is that everyone thinks the library is great. There are not a lot of suggestions about what should be done to the library. People are generally happy with the library. The things that people talk about are the things they are unhappy about.

Ad Hoc Member Winebaum commented they are taking a bigger role in fostering a town center. With money, they were able to buy back the Parsonage land. The Library Trustees are trying to work together with the Town Center Committee to make some things happen. She pointed out that she is the only one that is not a member of the Planning Board. She knows there are many thoughts about keeping the committee the way it is. However, in many towns, it's not a Long Range Planning Committee, it's a Steering Committee with members from different committees. The way the Planning Board's Rules of Procedures are written, there can only be ad hoc members. In the future, they should consider having a master plan steering committee with members from other boards and the public. She noted that she really had to exert herself to get on this committee and she's just an ad hoc member. It should be more welcoming. The Planning Board adopts the master plan, but they don't have to control over every aspect of the master plan. She pointed out that in 2006, there was a steering committee. She would welcome a different format for the future.

Chair Carter asked if she is saying to create a group that has ownership of the plan and a vested interest in driving the recommendations forward.

Ad Hoc Member Winebaum noted that the Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) used to be under the responsibility of the Planning Board. That was moved out of the Planning Board and it's better because people are coming from different venues. She thinks this could be a benefit.

Chair Carter agreed this should be considered.

Member Garcia stated this is a great point in terms of the diversity. That speaks to the makeup of the master plan planning. She doesn't think the planning committee would be implementing.

Member Wright commented that he'd like to hear from Planning Board Chair Losik what the current regulations are with respect to ownership and what can be delegated to an ad hoc committee.

Planning Board Chair Patricia Losik stated that she has many thoughts. She is really not prepared to comment; however, she would be prepared on January 20<sup>th</sup> to talk about this. She continued that Dominique brings up some very valid points and Kathryn followed on in terms of the involvement with the committee. She thinks that overall, there's been such a success in terms of community input. There is a lot to think about in terms of how they would look to the future and how they would structure the Master Plan. Where does a master plan for a town the size of Rye work best? She noted that this opens the door for a document as important as the master plan to have greater ownership then just resting with the Planning Board. However, from a statutory standpoint, there are pieces that are going to be owned by the Planning Board. There are pieces that are tied to the zoning and land development regulations that ultimately rest with the Planning Board. She pointed out that this could be a conversation with the town's land use attorney, who has a lot of experience with many communities the size of Rye.

Ms. LaBranche stated that when doing the master plan update, they could create an action plan chapter. A lead individual, board or commission would be assigned to head up that action. It could be structured such that all conservation items are in one section of the action plan, DPW and planning board, etc. are in another. She continued that there is frustration across the board with committees, in terms of things not happening and not being able to track progress. She suggested having a quarterly meeting with the representatives from each one of the groups, who will report on what they are working on. That way the Master Plan becomes a living document because the community is actively working and talking about it. That kind of structure might be a great way to track progress.

Patricia Losik stated this is a great way for the Planning Board to connect with other departments who are integral to the Board's work. There are a lot of very positive initiatives that could be taken to facilitate the Master Plan. She thinks they will come out of this, having gone through a very good planning process, and have a dynamic document.

### **Adjourn**

**Motion by Kathryn Garcia to adjourn at 1:57 p.m. Seconded by Katy Sherman. All in favor.**

Respectfully Submitted,  
Dyana F. Ledger