

## **LONG RANGE PLANNING COMMITTEE**

**Wednesday, May 5, 2021**

**10:30 a.m. – via ZOOM**

***Members Present:* Chair Steve Carter, Katy Sherman, Rob Wright & Alternate Patricia Losik  
*Ad hoc Members for the VS Committee:* Dominique Winebaum & Kathryn Garcia**

***Also Present:* Planning/Zoning Administrator Kim Reed and Julie LaBranche from Rockingham Planning Commission**

### **I. Call to Order**

Chair Carter called the meeting to order at 10:30 p.m. He noted that the meeting is to get an update from Julie LaBranche in regards to the timetable and the questionnaires. He is hoping the Committee can give her some input as to where the questions ought to be headed. The goal is to get the survey out to the boards and committees by some time in June, so they can get the surveys back and move along to the public responses.

Patricia Losik stated that as the chair of the Planning Board, she would like to review the Planning Board Rules of Procedure. The sub-committee is advisory. Its purpose is to evaluate, discuss and reach consensus on the Master Plan Vision Chapter update efforts. The sub-committee's work can go through the LRP. The LRP consists of three voting members; Katy Sherman, Steve Carter and Rob Wright. The LRP is one of three standing committees, which organize and facilitate the work of the Planning Board. In the past, the committee have encouraged citizen participation in formulating policies, by gathering more information from different sources. The responsibilities for the TRC, LRP and Rules and Regulations are assigned by law to the full Planning Board. She envisions a collaborative, consensus building effort. This will be a great project, as they go through and get this into a framework which will result in an updated vision chapter for next spring.

### **II. Update**

Chair Carter asked Julie LaBranche, Rockingham Planning Commission, to give an update to the Committee. He noted that the Committee received the 2002 survey questions, results and the report. He pointed out that a lot of the same items are still a concern for residents. He also pointed out that Ms. LaBranche has been getting help from Scott Marion and Stacey Smith.

Referring to the 2002 survey, Ms. LaBranche stated that she has not had time to go through the results. A lot of the survey is probably not relevant; however, it can be used as a guide. She would suggest selecting only questions from that survey that are still relevant and adding new questions.

Planning Administrator Reed commented that the 2002 survey and results was sent for informational purposes.

Ms. LaBranche stated that she would like to go over organization and timeframe with the Committee. She would also like to talk about the outreach events. She is hoping to get a sense of what the priority issues are for both the town staff/board and community surveys. It is going to take some time to develop the community survey. She would like some direction from this Committee as to the big issues and objectives. Generally, the community surveys are kept to ten to fifteen questions.

### **III. Gantt Chart & Discussion on the questionnaire and progress**

Ms. LaBranche presented the Gantt chart on the screen for the Committee's review. She noted that she needs to add outreach to the town staff and boards to the chart. There has been some discussion about doing two different surveys based on different objectives; however, she is not sure that is a great idea. She thinks one survey is enough and two may be confusing.

Chair Carter explained that 'Public Survey #1' listed on the chart, is the survey that was being considered for the committees and commissions. The goal was to get the town one out the middle of June, so they could get responses back over the summer while they got the survey out to the public.

Member Sherman stated she assumes that the survey that is going out to the boards will help to define what will go out to the public.

Ms. LaBranche replied she thinks they are two very different things.

Member Wright stated his recollection is that the survey to the town committees and boards was to backstop what had already been proposed within their purview and from their perspective what was important as people invested in some form of the operation of this.

Chair Carter explained the idea was to get an idea from the boards and commissions about what their top issues are from the committees' perspective, not an individual perspective. The Committee would have that information when they looked at the input from the people in town about what they feel is important.

Ms. LaBranche commented the questions for the town survey would be more like "what are you concentrating on in your work plan for the next couple of years (long range)" and "what are your goals and objectives to long-term planning for the Town?" Those answers could be compiled together to see how they interact and that can be incorporated into the master plan vision.

Chair Carter stated the total sum of the surveys would go into inputting what is going to be done in the actual visioning session in late September or October. The surveys were to provide overall input for the process and input for structuring the actual visioning session.

Ms. LaBranche stated the town survey could be developed in May and it can go out by the end of May with feedback coming in the middle of June. Results of that survey can be compiled in July. The timing for getting the public survey out is July and August with results coming back and being compiled in September. In regards to the public visioning session, it is still up in the air as to whether it will be by video or not in September.

There was some discussion about the timing of the visioning session, which was originally intended to be in late September or October. Ms. LaBranche recommended targeting September for the visioning session, so the results can come out in October for the Committee to review and incorporate them into the framework. This would give the Committee two months in order to do that, as the work needs to be completed for December.

The Committee agreed with the timeframe laid out in the Gannt chart.

Member Winebaum noted that the current vision chapter is about two pages long. She would like an idea about how extensive the framework is going to be, in terms of work that will be needed.

Member Sherman stated that she envisions the vision chapter to be a gateway into the rest of the Master Plan.

Member Winebaum commented that it is going to be more extensive than it has been in the past and is going to cover more issues. She would just like an idea of how extensive it is going to be.

Ms. LaBranche replied it is hard to predict in advance. The previous vision chapter was pretty bare bones and was basically a list of bulleted items. There was some brief discussion in previous meetings about transforming the vision chapter from a topical sort of document into more of a theme-based document. One of the jobs would be to take the town survey, public survey and visioning session to distill that information down into themes. In initial conversations with the Long Range Planning Committee, this is where they wanted to head. She continued that she would like to talk about whether this is still a goal of the Committee.

Member Wright asked for clarification between a topical list and a theme-based list.

Ms. LaBranche explained that topical list is the way the current Rye Master Plan is organized. Its by the traditional land use topics; such as, vision, land use, transportation, environment and energy. Those things are all individual chapters of a master plan. Theme based approaches are more like maintaining community character and how that is done, sustainability and resiliency planning, growth management and community services. It is a big umbrella of topics, under which a lot of things lie and there is also a lot of crossover. It would be putting things more

under how they are actually implemented and function in the community. She noted that she will send the Committee some examples from Exeter and Portsmouth, who have morphed from a topical based master plan to a thematic based master plan. She further explained that one of the impetus for communities to go to a more streamlined version of a master plan is that the old version of the topical chapters can be well over 100 pages, which is so inaccessible for people, boards and town staff. It is not an efficient way of defining the community's goals, objectives or priorities. It would have a little less detail but it has more cohesiveness and coordination. She commented this would really go to the kinds of questions that should be asked in the community survey. They may be broad based questions that cover a lot of ground and have people thinking about things holistically.

Member Winebaum stated that implementation is a huge part of the process. She would just like some context as to where they are going. In terms of trying to get it done after all the results are gathered, if it is more of a theme, it might require a lot more knowledge and work.

Planning Administrator Reed explained that right now, in 2021, the goal is to find out from the departments, residents and all of Rye, what they want Rye to become. Once all the data is received and a visioning chapter is created by December, they can then plan for 2022 the next step for the Master Plan. This is just one aspect of the process. She noted that they did not receive the PREPA Grant, so they need to stay focused on the visioning with RPC and Ms. LaBranche's assistant. Once they have this chapter, they can decide what needs to be done to move forward to create an awesome master plan that the Town of Rye can get their arms around. This will be done by taking into account all the answers received from the town departments and residents of Rye who participate in the visioning session. She reiterated they need to stay focused on the visioning. By looking at the other towns and what they are doing is helpful in trying to generate the questions. However, they have to be careful they are not trying creating the master plan right now. Right now, they are creating a vision for how to create a master plan.

Member Winebaum commented that she personally disagrees. She does not think they have to have a visioning in order to determine what kind of master plan it is going to be and what the needs are. She pointed out there are certain factors that inform the visioning; such as, growth and demographics. In looking at the population growth, how would that fit into the visioning?

Planning Administrator Reed commented that hopefully they will have the data from the 2020 Census to figure out the demographics. She asked the other members of the Committee if they agree or disagree on the focus.

Chair Carter commented this has been his sense of what they are trying to do. The Committee is really trying to find out what the town thinks at this point to give some direction for 2022. If the Master Plan is going to be redone, they are really going to need a consultant. It is going to take a lot of work and a lot more data. Speaking to Ms. LaBranche, he asked if the public could be moved back a month to mid-June, so the results could be collected by the end of July. That would give more time.

Ms. LaBranche commented it may be tight to do that in June; however, it could probably be done. She asked if everyone on the Committee will be involved in developing the survey. She asked if they are going to rely on LRP meetings to do that. She explained that surveys usually take about a month to do and then they have to be put into the web survey platform. There are always revisions done during that time frame. If the whole LRP would like to be involved in developing the survey, they would need to schedule several meetings to do that.

Ms. LaBranche suggested that the group brainstorm about what the objectives are for the survey. She noted that the town survey and community survey are really two different things. The town survey should ask the departments what their needs, challenges and plans are. The community survey would look at objectives for an overarching vision chapter for a master plan, which lays the groundwork across many different goals and topics. Ms. LaBranche gave examples of the types of questions that would be used on a public survey.

Chair Carter stated that one thing they could do is poll people as to what topics they should ask questions about in regards to the town.

Member Wright commented that in the last meeting, he thought they had sublet that work to Julie and Steve to come up with those questions. He asked if they are going to workshop the questions right now.

Ms. LaBranche replied that she is asking for objectives. From a high-level point of view, what are the sorts of things the Committee hopes to come away with.

Member Wright stated his perspective is that he has seen change in Rye over 30 years. There are components to the change which were outcomes of regulatory and legal decisions. There were other components that were outcomes of market forces; such as, real estate development and migration from and to the town of small business. There are market forces that drive the status of the town and there are governmental/regulatory forces that drive it. The things that they can impact, as members of government, is the governmental/regulatory piece. The market will be impacted by those decisions, as well as, economic forces. All of that ends up being what the town is and it drives people's feelings about it. Generally, the hope is to have people who live here, who have lived here and who might live here, like it and feel that they have been represented and heard, and feel that the town is moving in the direction they generally agree with.

Member Winebaum stated she is very concerned about sustainability; having enough water, having enough sewage and the capacity of the transfer station. Could Rye have a more sustainable approach in its development, transportation, water usage, etc.?

Member Sherman stated she agrees on sustainability. She thinks water is something they really need to detail more and perhaps have that an item in the visioning chapter.

Member Wright asked if those are more topics. He was thinking more of; “Why do you live in Rye? What do you like? What don’t you like? What makes you happy to be here?” He thinks those sorts of things are more the thematic outcome. From those inputs, they will derive things like “Does Rye have a sustainable plan for environmental concerns?”, which will drive micro actions. The macro questions are; “What is the reason you are here? What are the reasons that make it good? What are the reasons that make it less good?” From that, they will get what actions need to be taken to make it better for all, from a consensus perspective. Everyone is going to have a different view on development which drives resource conservation. He agrees the subject of water is very important, but that is one topic. It is not an overarching sense of a question.

Member Winebaum stated that she thinks sustainability can cover a lot of elements. She sees sustainability as a big umbrella.

Ms. LaBranche agreed.

Chair Carter stated that one of the questions to people should be; “What do you like about Rye?” Under that, another question should be about sustainability and questions about controlling growth, etc. The big topics are “Why do you like living here?” He would then ask; “What is the Town not doing that you think it should be doing?” He pointed out that some of this has to be multiple choice; otherwise, it will take the next ten years to compile the results. He also suggested the question; “What outside forces are pushing Rye in the wrong direction? How would those forces be commanded to keep Rye the way it is? How do you think Rye should change?” There could also be a question about sustainability, as it covers a lot of stuff. He thinks drinking water is a huge issue to think about. There are also questions around sustainability that involves sewers and septic, which drives how the town can be developed.

Member Wright stated this is looking for answers to strategic questions, not tactical issues. The tactical issues will sort themselves out if they understand the strategy. Someone receiving this survey is a citizen of the Town for Rye, N.H. As a citizen, “how do you feel about living here?” He thinks the Committee needs to come up with the subcategories.

Chair Carter stated the other big issue is the conservation issue. He thinks the need for more tax money, which happens when people develop land, pushes against the desire to have more open space and conservation land. If it goes too much in one direction, the town doesn’t have any money. If it goes too much in the other direction, it is not a great place to live. This is all related to sustainability; particularly, where Rye is located with all the water flowing in and out of the ocean.

Referring to broad-based questions, Ms. LaBranche stated that they have to be careful because the questions are front loaded as to what they can choose. It is sort of pushing the outcome a bit.

Member Wright suggested that a question to the citizens could be; “Where do your preferences lie? Development of land or conservation of open spaces.” That is a very fundamental, top view kind of question. He asked if this would be put on a survey.

Ms. LaBranche replied that she thinks in a lot of people's minds it is very hard to choose.

Member Sherman commented she likes that question. She asked if it could be done on a slider scale for ranking.

Chair Carter stated that another question he would be interested in is; "Would you be in favor of more business/commercial development, in an appropriate way, in and around Rye?" He thinks diversifying the tax base is a very important question. The question is what kind of commercial development would the citizens of Rye be in favor of.

Member Garcia stated that she takes more of a big picture look at visioning. One of the big objectives needs to be how to get people involved in answering the questions. To do that, it almost takes some kind of rallying point or looking at how to get the broad-based spectrum of residents involved. That is what they really need to hear about. There are many ways to craft questions for that. There are also community efforts that could be put out there; such as, a visioning board where people use one word to say what the community is. Many times, if school children are involved, parents will become involved. She would be happy to lend her skills to that effort, if the Committee thinks it is something that could work. She reiterated that a huge objective is how to get people involved in answering the questions.

Ms. LaBranche stated that they could actually incorporate something like that into the survey, where people are required to put in one word. She continued that they have to be aware that this is only an \$8,000 project. They are trying to do some targeted public outreach, targeted outreach to the town staff and boards, and coming up with a framework for what the broad-based objectives and goals are and topical issues are for the visioning chapter. That is the end point, so it can't be spread out too far because the cost would escalate well beyond the budget. She stated that it would be really interesting to ask the question about public involvement on the survey. She thinks that would be a really powerful question and would be interesting to hear what people have to say about it.

Chair Carter stated that he thinks one of the questions should have to do with the composition of the town and who lives in the town. In order to get the feeling of having open space and because of the septic requirements, the town has large lots. When there are large lots, they cost a lot of money and big house are put up to make it worthwhile. This excludes a lot of young families from being a part of Rye. Do people like that or would they rather have a better mix? How is that going to happen? He also noticed from the survey of 2002, people did not want condos or apartment buildings, which is what is being developed out on Route 1, which provides affordable housing for some people. He thinks the composition of Rye should be a question.

Member Winebaum commented there is also the issue of Airbnb. There are a lot of opportunities for people to capitalize on their housing. This diminishes the amount of affordable housing. There may need to be some kind of regulation to help with more affordable housing. In reading the 1985 Master Plan, it says that Route 1 should be commercial and industrial, not to have housing. Then later on, the affordable housing was specifically located off Route 1. She asked if this needs to be changed. This is in the Land Use Regulations.

Ms. LaBranche stated the idea of Airbnb rentals for short-term summer vacationers, is really a different question than affordable housing for Workforce Housing. She thinks this gets to the question of economic forces. People are attracted to the money they can make on very high rental units during the summer. That is a difficult thing in that it does not provide stability for affordable housing and that is not really the purpose. People who have property at the beach are trying to maximize their profit during the summer months. She thinks it would be interesting to ask people a housing question and it would be pertinent to the survey.

Member Sherman stated that she thinks everyone says they want more affordable housing, but then they say they do not want it next door to them. She asked if it would be possible to come up with a few topics for the public survey for Ms. LaBranche to work on. She feels like they are getting off topic a bit.

Member Wright asked if they are writing the questions and coming up with the subjects.

Ms. LaBranche explained they are trying to outline the objectives for the survey and what the big ticket items the Committee would like to know about. She highlighted some topics brought up from this discussion:

- **What do you like about Rye? Do you think it is moving in the right direction?**  
**This may be an open-ended question, multiple choice or ranking.**
- **Sustainability and what it means to the community.**  
**List out what sustainability means in different ways.**
- **Housing options, Workforce and affordable housing.**
- **Land conservation and resource conservation.**
- **Economic development. Is the Town in favor of more commercial development and zoning in certain places? Where would that happen?**
- **Is it important for the community to be more inclusive to foster a more broad-based participation for decision making?**
- **Coastal adaptation and resilience.**

Ms. LaBranche explained that she could develop some questions from these topics that are editable in a Word Document so everyone can review them and send changes or revisions. There may be some wiggle room to add some more topics.

Chair Carter suggested a question be; "What do you see as the most concerning threat to the Town of Rye?" He thinks they could list some things and have the people rank them.

Ms. LaBranche agreed this would be a really good question. It could be an open-ended question. There could be one field for external issues and one for internal issues. She thinks they would get some really great feedback.

There was some discussion on how the question would be formed on the survey.



Member Sherman asked if this would be the place to ask, as a follow up question, if people would be willing to spend more money to have certain services. "Would you be willing to pay more taxes to have more conservation land or safer drinking water?"

It was agreed this would be a good question. Ms. LaBranche suggested having this be the last question asked on the survey.

Speaking to Member Garcia, Ms. LaBranche asked what the question would be for a visioning board for them to respond with one word.

Member Garcia explained this was applied in the previous community she lived in. The board moved around town and people would write down what was most important to them. There are so many things that a community can provide. She continued that in terms of involving people, by having the visioning board and moving it around, it was a way to get people involved and thinking about it.

Member Wright stated that he would like to see an open-ended question; "What do you like about Rye? What are you hopeful about? What is not good?" He thinks this may be a way to get Member Garcia's desired result, without having to physically move something around.

Member Winebaum asked if the schools should be part of the questionnaire.

Ms. LaBranche replied they did not talk about municipal services; which would include, roads, schools, drinking water, sewer, emergency services, etc. It could even include things like broadband and cell phone coverage.

Planning Administrator Reed commented this would be a very good question.

Referring back to the visioning board, Ms. LaBranche stated there may be a way to incorporate the concept that was mentioned by Member Wright. What do you feel is Rye's most positive attribute? What do you feel needs to be improved? She will look into ways to create a visioning board.

#### **IV. Next Steps**

Julie LaBranche will take the thought taken from the discussion at this meeting and form 10 to 15 draft questions for the public survey. These questions will be emailed out to the Committee for their comments and changes. Ms. LaBranche will start working on the town staff survey with Scott Marion and Stacey Smith, which will be done via email. All correspondence regarding the draft questions will flow through the Planning Administrator.

#### **V. Other** *None*

- **Next Meeting – Tuesday, May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2:30 p.m.**

### **Adjournment**

**Chair Carter adjourned the meeting at 12:10 p.m.  
All were in favor.**

Respectfully Submitted,  
Dyana F. Ledger