

Master Plan Updates – Timeline & Facts

Adoption of the Master Plan updates by the Planning Board possibly scheduled as early as October 10th, 2017, through a Public Hearing.

2014: The Rye Master Plan (2013), which was adopted in March 2014, has been the subject of recent updates with the creation of a new chapter. The Rye Civic League (RCL) played a role during the prior update by informing residents on the process that took place and the content being updated until the adoption of the amended Master in March 2014.

2015: As part of the “Tides to Storms” project, funded by New Hampshire Homeland Security and Emergency Management (NHHSEM) through a pre-disaster mitigation grant from FEMA, the Town of Rye has participated in a series of workshops to prepare for Climate Change. In line with the recommendations of the *Hazard Mitigation Plan Update 2016*, to include chapters on “Natural Hazards and Climate Change,” a new chapter “Coastal Hazards and Climate Adaptation” is being drafted and three chapters edited and updated: Natural Resources, Land Use, and Transportation.

2016: The process of planning for the updates of the 2013/2014 Master Plan began in January 2016 with the Long Range Planning (LRP) committee meeting on January 7 and 14 with Glenn Greenwood, assistant director to the Rockingham Planning Commission (RPC), to discuss incorporating a new chapter “Preparing for Climate Change” and “to hold a visioning session at the Rye Junior High Café to obtain comments from the public on suggested changes to the Visioning, Land Use and Natural Resources Chapters of the existing Master Plan” (*LRP, minutes 01-07-16*).

At the January 25, 2016 Board of Selectmen meeting with Planning and Zoning Administrator, Kim Reed, briefly appeared before the board to seek approval for an “agreement” for professional planning assistance with the Rockingham Planning Commission (RPC) to:

to rewrite and edit chapters in the Master Plan. The RPC will be preparing a new chapter called ‘Preparing for Climate Change.’

Along with that chapter, the Long Range Planning Committee would like to update three chapters, looking at preparing for climate change as the driving

force. The chapters that will be updated are Natural Resources, Transportation and Land Use” (Board of Selectmen minutes 01-25-2016, p. 2).

Kim Reed handed a copy of the contract to the Board of Selectmen during her brief presentation, but no dollar amount was cited in regards to the contract to hire the RPC to rewrite and edit three chapters.

A “Right To Know” request filed by a resident reveals that the Town paid \$ 11, 500 for the updates of the three chapters: Natural Resources, Transportation, and Land Use. A “Tides to Storms” grant provided additional funding of \$ 8,500 to create a new chapter “Coastal Hazards and Climate Adaptation” and to provide staff assistance for two Public Forums in May and June 2016. The initial deadline for the completion of the updates of the Master Plan was September 2016, which was extended to April 2017, and once again to June 2017. A total of \$ 20,000 was allocated and spent (from two different sources) for the updates of the Master Plan.

The LRP committee met in 2016 in January (3x), February (1), March (2x), April (2x), June (2x) and August (1x). The Chair of the LRP, who was an alternate on the Planning Board, whose term was up in March 2016, left the Planning Board, and was replaced by Planning and Zoning Administrator, Kim Reed. The LRP committee was made up of a total of 4 members and last met in August 2016. The initial deadline (September 2016) for completing all the updates, including the new chapter, was not met. From January through August, the Committee’s work encompassed reviewing the work of Julie Labranche, from the RPC, as she drafted the new chapter “Coastal Hazards and Climate Adaptation” and preparing for the two public forums in May and June 2016.

Two public forums in May and June 2016 were keys in providing a platform for public input for the updates of the Master Plan. Approximately 35 people attended the first public forum where people were organized in groups to provide input regarding the new chapter “Coastal Hazards and Climate Adaptation” in the Master Plan. However, only 6 people attended the second forum, in part due to conflicting scheduling (a “Septic Social” and a special ZBA hearing had been scheduled on the same day) and being poorly advertised. Staff ready to assist with the Visioning Process of gathering input from the public for the updates of the three chapters of the Master Plan: Land Use, Natural Resources and Transportation, went home early due to the lack of public attendance. Moreover, the Natural Resources chapter was left out as the meeting

started late and ended early. One member of the public thought she had come to the “Septic Social” event and not the Public Forum for the Master Plan.

2017: Only one meeting (June 13th, 2017) – a total of 100 minutes – took place for the members of the Planning Board to hear Julie Labranche, from the RPC, present the three chapters of the Master Plan that she had edited and updated for the past year, in addition to finalizing the new chapter, “Coastal Hazards and Climate Adaptation” and provide comments.

http://town.rye.nh.us/pages/RyeNH_PlanningMin/2017%20PB%20Minutes/PB_Minutes_6-13-17.pdf

Even though the drafts of the Master Plan updates, including the new chapter “Coastal Hazards and Climate Adaptation,” are significant improvements to the Rye Master Plan, it remains that there are many gaps in making this document a meaningful tool in planning for the future of our town and in protecting residents from present and future threats.

The Rye Civic League is providing a platform for comments regarding this Master Plan update. Please join in the discussion and participate!