



Opinion

Rye is lacking in planning leadership

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Oct. 17 -- To the Editor:

Rye's Pirate's Cove Beach corner (Wallis Road and Ocean Blvd.) could soon be getting a four foot raised football field supporting four tall buildings. Yes, the current Atlantic Four Winds beach house leach fields in the wetlands is a very bad environmental situation and less bad is better, but it is still far from good. There could be a better outcome, but only if Rye residents act.

At the short Sept. 10 Select Board meeting I suggested a public/private partnership where the town purchases land on the corner and along the wetlands for beach parking (revenue) and the owner puts in two buildings on gradually slopping land. At the end of the Select Board meeting, the Board could have chosen to discuss this and the root cause, but they just let the meeting end with no discussion or action.

If you have been following recent Rye Land Use (Planning, Zoning and Conservation) outcomes, you may be as dismayed as I am. If not, drive by Sea Glass Lane and ask if it meets our Master Plan's goal of preserving our semi-rural character or if you would have awarded two additional units for "excellence in design". Go by the South Road development and pat yourself on the back, because residents paid \$400,000 to the developer in the settlement and non-public approval. Speak to Brackett Road residents about how they fought long and hard to keep a cell tower out of their residential neighborhood, only to see the Board's Attorney decide Rye would be better off giving Verizon a last minute very long extension without our elected officials first meeting and deciding in a non-canceled public forum.

With over \$2.2 billion in property value and massive volumes of wetlands to protect Rye is lacking planning leadership. Residents are extremely fortunate to have a host of extremely hard working volunteers who donate countless hours

serving on boards, committees and commissions. These talented and overworked people are not the problem; it's the lack of Town planning leadership. Other NH Towns invest in a full time planner or have long term contracts with an experienced Professional Planner or Engineer. Rye currently pays a contracted attorney (who represents the boards and not the residents) lawyer's rates for a minimum of two meetings a month and ad-hoc requests that accounted for \$86K of the \$127K 2017 Rye Legal Expenditures. Rye also employs a full time administrator for operational tasks.

Rye does not have anyone to take planning leadership and could say, this may not be the best thing for Rye, here are some other options and it's my role to work with everyone to make this happen. I have been trying to raise awareness and action about the lack of town planning at Town meetings for many years, only to be ignored and ridiculed. I would also caution against promoting a planning administrator to becoming our Town Planner.

Rye's Zoning Board of Adjustment already granted the list of variances (an indication that something may not be good), so we are one step closer to our raised football field, tall buildings and shrubbery that we are told makes everything OK. You can do nothing, or you can step up, speak out, take leadership and possibly help Rye make a win/win solution happen.

Steven Borne

Rye