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Town of Rye
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December 20, 2021

Hello Select Board,

Topic 1: Master Plan

At the December 16th Budget Committee Meeting, during the discussion of an additional \$20K to support the ongoing Visioning Chapter update, Select Board representative King indicated that the Select Board would be driving an update to the whole Master Plan on the heels of the Visioning Chapter update.

If that is the plan, where is the money in the 2022 budget or Capital Improvement Plan? It certainly should have been in the CIP before this year and it is not in the CIP you just accepted.

What are the chances of the Visioning Chapter getting drafted, reviewed and two public hearings completed before the March Election? This is not to say people have not been working very hard, they are doing the best they can.

My suggestion is that you put \$200K in the 2022 budget to develop a Best-in-Class Master Plan. Rye has been guilty of under investing in strategic planning. Make it a warrant article if you will not put it directly in the budget. Don't argue about what the exact amount should be, we have been penny wise and pound foolish for too many years on this topic. If Bedford spent \$163K, something north of that should be sufficient for a town with all of Rye's challenges. Only what is needed would be spent.

Topic 2: Work Force Housing

Rye residents are giving something up when higher density developments are allowed because they contain units priced to enable work force housing.

While the "Management" or monitoring that the units will continue to be work force housing units is being outsourced to the Housing Partnership, units can return to market pricing and there could be disbursements of funds back to the Town. Note, I can't find this approved document posted or attached to any older meeting minutes.

I would suggest that before any more developments are approved, Rye institutes a system for tracking, monitoring and reporting the work force housing granted in Rye. This information should be included in the annual town report.

Topic 3: Parson's Creek Fecal Contamination

From the 2016 Parson's Creek Select Board committee report how many of the actions have been completed over the last five years? Besides the Septic Pump Out ordinances, what else has been done?

What actions (zoning) have been taken to not exacerbate the problem, protect the buffer better and manage storm water in the area over the last five years?

Waiting to learn if there is a non-human contribution to the problem is a delaying tactic. I will tell you now that there will be contributions from non-humans, but we know that a large factor is the oversaturation of leach fields and not enough land to filter all of that effluent. Add in a rising water table from storms and run off and the problem is escalated. You can also factor in the failure rate and higher costs of maintaining the new septic systems approved for this area.

There are no funds in the current budget, nor the CIP to address this health and safety issue.

Who is responsible for addressing the contamination from the Parson' Creek Watershed? What are the plans and when can results be expected?

Topic 4: Land Use Board Assistant

I concede the point that boards and the Building Inspector's office need help, there is no argument there.

My concern is that we are using a permanent position as a band-aide. I am fine with this being an annual or temporary position, so we are not locked into a permanent position when a major re-engineering is required.

The dynamics of the best development lots long gone and migration of deep pocketed people to communities such as Rye has been with us for many years.

The question is, what should have been done to get in front of this curve? Given where we are today, what must happen to make up for lost time and not kick the can down the road any further?

For example, what must happen to figure out how to handle all of what is happening on Route 1 for the development we know about now, and for every acre of non-developed land in that watershed?

- Where is the breaking point for leach fields? While it is a function of soil type, we know from the State in 2017 that more than 0.26 Septic Systems per acre can be a problem.
- Until there is a Sewer system – that number needs to be known, communicated and managed to (i.e. not approving additional development).
- If there are no droughts, fires and people don't irrigate too much in Rye, Rye Water District says there should be enough water. However, do we have a sensitivity analysis to fully understand how far the town is from different levels of water restrictions and what residents would consider hardships for the rest of us.
- Additional water moving to and from new homes requires infrastructure that must be paid for and maintained. This should also be well known and communicated to RWD residents.

- Also, the aquifer does not restrict itself to the manmade boundaries of RWD and Aquarion, so this must be coordinated at the aquifer level

Next, look at the 420 South Rd. development. At most Planning Board meetings for the past few years, there is a comment or discussion about what has been going on there. Do we have any idea of what the total cost (include efforts of employees and board members) has been to the town from this development? Don't forget the \$400K settlement, legal fees, the properties that were taxed for years as non-buildable and the many other cost components.

How did this happen? Do we fully understand what enabled this? Has there been a lesson learned analysis and what are the actions to address the enabling causes?

What is happening on Rt 1, Parsons Creek pollution, and the million plus dollars spent since what to do with Town Hall hit the Select Board meetings all ties back to a lack of strategic planning leadership.

What will this Select Board do, so Rye finally has strategic planning leadership?

Sincerely,

Steven Borne