

A Submission from a Resident after Filing a Right-To-Know Request

As a long-time contributor for the Rye Civic League, I provide summaries of Town meetings for the monthly Civic News, presently for two subcommittees of the Planning Board, Rules and Regulations (R&R) and Long Range Planning Committees (LRP). I often watch meetings in order to summarize what has taken place, and at times, this will prompt me to write emails to the Town requesting background information.

On May 10th, 2022, I wrote an email to the Planning Department/Town Administrator, requesting some background information pertaining to what had been presented at the May meetings (R&R and LRP). Instead of being provided the information, I was told by our Town Administrator, Becky Bergeron, that I had to file a Right-To-Know request in order to obtain the information. Some of the items in my RTK request were not provided with the following explanation: “no government records exist responsive to your request.” I was told that a “Town Attorney” had responded to my RTK request via a 3-page letter [page 1](#), [page 2](#) [page 3](#)-- there was nothing confidential and nothing called out in the letter as invoking any confidentiality about the information requested and provided (link to Town Response PDF). The information should have been made it public and easily available upon request.

I made an appointment with Executive Assistant, Janice Ireland, in order to “inspect” the information provided in response to my RTK request. While Ms. Ireland was making several copies for me in the public area outside her enclosed office, I found a sheet of paper lying next to the different piles of paper that I had selected to make photocopies of (in addition to taking pictures with my phone). Thinking that this was part of my “packet” as it pertained to one of my requests, I read it.

JULIE V. LABRANCHE
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INVOICE FOR PLANNING SERVICES

THE FOLLOWING FEES ARE FOR SERVICES PROVIDED TO THE TOWN OF RYE PLANNING BOARD, LONG RANGE PLANNING SUBCOMMITTEE (LRPC) IN SUPPORT OF MASTER PLANNING ACTIVITIES FROM THE PERIOD OF JANUARY 20, 2022 – FEBRUARY 28, 2022. SERVICES ARE AS DETAILED BELOW.

DESCRIPTION	PAYMENT DUE
PREPARATION OF MATERIALS AND PRESENTATION TO PLANNING BOARD OF LRPC MASTER PLANNING WORK AND RESULTS OF 2021 MASTER PLANNING PUBLIC OUTREACH	3.5 HOURS
PREPARATION OF RYE NEWSLETTER ARTICLE	2.0 HOURS
GENERAL COORDINATION WITH PLANNING & ZONING ADMINISTRATOR KIMBERLY REED	2.5 HOURS
PREPARATION OF RYE MAGAZINE ARTICLE ABOUT LRPC MASTER PLANNING WORK, PUBLIC OUTREACH AND RESULTS	1.0 HOURS
TOTAL HOURS	9 HOURS
TOTAL PAYMENT DUE	\$540.00

PAYMENT BASED ON BILLING RATE OF \$60.00/HOUR

THANK YOU!

JULIE LABRANCHE

JVL PLANNING CONSULTANT

The document above was not part of my packet (as Ms. Bergeron informed me), yet it provided the very exact information I had requested (the additional services rendered by Consultant Julie LaBranche for “master planning work” that was not discussed/approved in a meeting).

So why had “no government records exist responsive to your request” been the response to this and other requests?

The head of the Planning Department will at times use the term “above and beyond” to justify spending from her “Consulting Budget,” when for examples some of the spending is to provide revisions/corrections to the Land Development Regulations ([DonovanLDR PDF](#)), a document that was only recently updated (approx. \$22,000 in 2019). Is it “above and beyond” to pay a Consultant to write articles for Rye Magazine and the Town Newsletter as shown above? A

proposed Wetlands Zoning Ordinance that was drafted by a Wetlands subcommittee in 2016 with the assistance of Tracy Degnan (approx. \$3,000), was never revisited /reviewed and the wetlands subcommittee never reconvened, as it had been the plan. (2016PBWetlandsMinutes PDF). I did not receive the draft, as requested in my RTK request, but a copy of the meeting minutes and the proposed zoning amendment to the Wetlands Conservation District, which contained minor changes, and which was adopted in 2017. Now, the LRP Committee is considering spending up to \$3,000 for an RFP to update the Master Plan – another item not specifically budgeted for.

Respectfully Submitted,
Dominique Winebaum

Exhibits