

New Castle City Planning Commission Meeting took place on November 28, 2011 at 6:30 p.m. in the City of New Castle's Town Hall.

Members Present: William Simpson, Co-Chair
Joe DiAngelo
Dorsey Fiske
Jonathan Justice
Susan Marinelli
Dr. Jack Norsworthy
Vera Worthy

Members Absent: David Bird, Chair
Florence Smith

Also Present: Marian Hull, URS, City Planner
Don Reese, Mayor
Jeff Bergstrom, City Building Official

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Simpson at 6:40 p.m. Roll call was taken.

Approval of Minutes – The misspelling of two names was noted. A motion was made, seconded and approved to accept the minutes of the November meeting as corrected.

Update on Planning Studies – Ms. Hull reported on DELDOT's plans for transportation routes that have been discussed to avoid cut-through traffic in the city. At a recent meeting between Mayor Reese, City Administrator Thomas, City Engineer Athey, City Planner Hull, and City Council President Barthel with DelDOT and their consultants and Heather Dunigan of WILMAPCO, a lot of information was presented and discussed. No agreement was reached. City representatives will meet again to formulate a proposal to DelDOT illustrating changes the City would like to make. A high priority for the City is an improvement at the intersection of Route 9 and Delaware Avenue to increase pedestrian and vehicular safety and access across Route 9. This is not currently in the proposal and the City needs to find something that fits DelDOT's purpose and need for a project that also meets with citizens' approval. There will be opportunities for public input before any decisions are made.

Review of New Castle County Comprehensive Plan – Ms. Hull sent a link to the website to all commissioners.

Approval to Build Pumping Station on Penn Farm at Corner of School Lane and Rte. 273 – Jay Guyer, Water Supervisor, Municipal Services Commission (MSC), presented. MSC is seeking approval to move forward with drilling a test well on the Penn Farm. They hope to get a production well that produces approx. 400-500 gpm. Mr. Guyer explained MSC's current vulnerability. Mr. Bergstrom informed this is a special exception, the same as the electric station. Utility facilities are permitted as special exceptions in all zoning districts. The application comes before the Planning Commission first for favorable/unfavorable review then forwarded to the Board of Adjustment who make the final decision. The letter MSC submitted describes the pump house to be used for the well and a map of the site. It is Ms. Hull's opinion the well will not interfere with the rest of the use of the farm. Ms. Fiske raised the issue of past petroleum storage on the farm making the farm existing non-conforming. Distance (radius) of past storage area(s) to the proposed well site was discussed.

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Dr. Norsworthy made a motion to recommend the special exception to the Board of Adjustment for the pump house. Mr. Justice seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Budget Status – Mr. Simpson reviewed a document he prepared showing a list of invoices paid out of the Planning Commission’s budget and an accounting of monies this body has been billed for. A large piece of this budget is \$6,000 for the Riverfront Study. We have spent approximately \$8,000 to date, and spending an average of \$600-\$700/month. Some of the monies were expended on items that won’t reoccur again this fiscal year (Ex.-redevelopment ordinance, Gateway District). Amounts for services provided are up to date.

Other Business -- Mayor Reese commended commissioners on the job they are doing and expressed his confidence in them. He offered his assistance to the Planning Commission if needed.

Commissioners’ Comments – Mr. Simpson was charged with forming a committee to study parking in the City and get WILMAPCO’s help to work with the City on ideas to improve the parking situation. Serving on this committee will be Mr. Simpson acting as chair along with fellow commissioners Susan Marinelli and Jonathan Justice, and citizen members Joe Viola and Janet Wertzel. They are first looking at preparing a questionnaire (such as the one done in Chesapeake City, MD) that will be distributed by way of City utility bills. Mr. Simpson further explained what this committee hopes to accomplish.

Mr. Justice raised the subject of zoning in the historic residential district. He noted a large residence being built in the historic zone that is bulky. He wondered if the Planning Commission should consider discussing height limits or bulk regulations (floor area ratio, lot coverage ratio, and volume limitation), i.e., consider making zoning more precise. *(Lengthy discussion followed.)*

Comments from the Public – Earl Carpenter, City resident and New Castle Weekly, voiced his concerns with cut-through traffic at the ferry cut-off in the city. Specifically, making Harmony Street cut-through between Route 9 and 6th Street would be a mistake. That plan would force trucks downtown. Ms. Hull noted that the City has made DeIDOT aware it is not interested in an extension of Harmony Street creating a new downtown intersection that would force truck traffic downtown.

Ray Peden, 4th Street, appeared at the request of Mayor Reese to talk about the dangers of the Delaware River. At the October meeting a number of residents expressed concerns about the dangers of the river, but he does not believe it is as dangerous as purported. *(Lengthy discussion followed.)*

Mayor Reese informed of a “Survey of Households in New Castle” (Timothy Barnes, 1993) that would be a helpful tool for all commissioners. A copy will be provided to all commissioners.

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Next Meeting – Mr. DiAngelo made a motion to cancel the December meeting. The motion was seconded and approved. The next scheduled meeting is 1/23/12 at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Turner
Stenographer