

Planning Commission Meeting for New Castle City took place on April 26, 2010 at 6:30 p.m. in the City of New Castle's Town Hall.

Members Present: David Bird, Chair
Joe DiAngelo
Dorsey Fiske
Vera Worthy
Dr. Jack Norsworthy*

Members Absent: Florence Smith
Bill Simpson, Co-Chair

City Personnel: Mayor John F. Klingmeyer

Mr. Bird called the meeting to order at 6:45 p.m. Roll call was taken.

*Dr. Norsworthy joined the meeting at 7 p.m.

Joint Planning Commission/City Council Work Session -- Our consultant will have a draft of the proposed changes to the City Zoning Ordinance available for that meeting. The meeting is scheduled for 6/3/10 at 6:30 p.m.

Transportation Planning -- Ms. Heather Dunigan of WILMAPCO presented to Commission members. She worked on the City's last transportation plan in 1999. A summary of project funding was distributed to all in attendance. Funding is still available. Ms. Dunigan followed with a review of each project on the summary. Four (4) projects in the New Castle area are funded for FY2011.

I-295 Improvements – Two (2) projects are shown on the summary which don't deal with the City's transportation plan.

Route 9/Delaware Street Intersection and the 6th Street and SR 9 Intersection – In the current Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) the money available is for engineering work. She anticipates construction monies to be available in FY2016 for SR 9, 3rd and 6th Street and FY2016-17 for SR9 at Delaware Street.

Washington Street – Primarily in the areas of Washington Street, 7th Street and South Street along with traffic calming and safety improvements. Construction is slated for FY2012-13. This is a high-priority project for WILMAPCO.

SR 9 Scenic Byway – The byway begins in the City of New Castle. Work will be taking place in 2010-11.

New Castle Airport – Work is currently taking place to expand runways and enhance security in hopes of getting another air carrier in the future.

NCC Greenway, Industrial Track – This project is from the NCC Transportation Plan as well as the East Coast Greenway Plan for the area and is funded with stimulus monies for the first section which runs from Route 273 to the Boulden Blvd. Little League fields. NCC is planning on constructing the next phase which is where Boulden Blvd. ends up to the Christina River. This project is slated for this summer.

Route 9, South of Dobbinsville, flood mitigation project was initially in the TIP but has temporarily been removed from funding. It will be a very expensive project but remains a priority with WILMAPCO and DeIDOT. They are hoping to receive more funding in the next fiscal year.

She added that the City of New Castle submitted a request for planning work asking WILMAPCO to look into a possible transit service between New Castle and Wilmington. She recognized this is a feasible project but it is very expensive. When DRBA did work on the I-295 bridges they filled in where the alignment area would be. (*Discussion followed.*)

Mr. Joe Hofstee, a project engineer with DeIDOT, provided an update on three (3) projects in the area that he is managing.
Washington Street – There was a public workshop on 11/3/09 that was not well-attended by residents. However, good feed back was received from those in attendance. They are working on having semi-final plans in September 2010. They were delayed a few months because of the addition of work at Routes 9, 141 and 273. This is an intersection improvement as part of the Washington Street sidewalk project. They plan on adding an additional left turn from westbound Route 273/Route 9 onto Washington Street to help encourage people to stay on Route 9. Coming up on Washington Street heading for Route 141 northbound an extra through lane will be added to head north on 141. On the southbound side they will add an additional receiving lane. Workers will be on Washington Street and 7th Street over the next several weeks looking at the condition of piping and sewer lines in the area to determine how much needs to be replaced. They are also looking at roadway conditions to determine what work needs to be done. Environmental and historical issues are also being addressed. (*Discussion followed.*)
The project is fully funded with federal monies. Construction is anticipated for Fall 2011 or Spring 2012.

Mr. Hofstee stated that at Washington and 7th Street they will put in some of the infrastructure for a signal in the event it is needed at a later time. Pedestrian improvements are planned for Route 9 (sidewalk extension) in the redevelopment area and Routes 141 and 9 (crosswalks, islands). Mr. Bird raised the 25 m.p.h. speed limit as a challenge. The Mayor asked about plans for traffic slowing along Route 9 in the Dobbinsville area. He is concerned with children in the area. Mr. Hofstee said the Mayor's concerns are beyond the scope of this particular project. DeIDOT is not doing anything with the roadway in the Dobbinsville area. Ms. Dunigan offered that the community may wish to apply to the DeIDOT Transportation Enhancement Program to create a nice gateway to the City. It is a matching program with the amount dependent on the scope of the project.

Mr. Hofstee addressed questions/concerns from the audience that included traffic patterns and flooding on Route 9. (*Discussion followed.*)

He continued by stating that there are two upcoming projects planned that are from the City of New Castle study that also have funding.

SR9 Delaware and Harmony Street Intersection Improvement Project -- On Delaware Street they are proposing restricting the left turn off Delaware Street onto Route 9. From Route 9 going out of the city you can no longer make a left turn onto Delaware Street. The signal would be removed from this intersection and placed at Harmony Street which is where the left turn will be provided on Route 9 south into the city. Their goal would be to make this intersection the main entrance into the shopping center. Mr. Bird commented this will potentially impact the redevelopment of that area. At Harmony Street and Route 9 he inquired about the possibility of installing a roundabout rather than installing a light. Mr. Hofstee said the volume of traffic is too high to install a roundabout. *(Discussion followed that included Harmony Street and the direction of traffic on that street.)*

SR9/Wilmington Road, Third and Sixth Street Intersection Improvements – Sidewalk enhancements will be done throughout the corridor. Part of the work on Sixth Street will be separated from Route 9 which is designed to prevent cut-through traffic. *(Discussion followed.)*

Within the month surveyors will be along Route 9 from 3rd Street to Delaware Street. Part of this work will include drainage improvements along the whole length of the road. At the intersection of Route 9 and 6th Street maintenance forces will be doing temporary drainage improvement work. Mr. Hofstee's project includes a permanent address of drainage problems in this area. *(Additional discussion about traffic flow and potential impacts took place.)*

Reference was made about the good possibility of the National Park Service (NPS) locating in the city. Mr. Hofstee has not had any contact with any NPS personnel but believes these projects will help to enhance preservation of the downtown area.

Lengthy discussion concerning DeIDOT's proposed traffic flow plans followed. Mr. Hofstee noted that the plans being proposed are addressing the City's request for DeIDOT to help prevent cut-through traffic. They will not 'push' the projects on the City.

Mr. Bird asked if the median strips would be grassy or concrete. Mr. Hofstee responded that they can be grassy but that DeIDOT does not maintain them. The City would need to agree to enter into a maintenance agreement. Dr. Norsworthy asked what DeIDOT's position is concerning center turn lanes and if they had been considered since the area is potentially going to be a commercial area. Mr. Hofstee said it is dependent on the traffic and how many businesses would be impacted. He couldn't provide a position either way at this time.

Mr. Hofstee provided a timeline for the projects. The surveying will be a month-long process followed by preliminary designs. Preliminary plans should be completed by February 2011. After the plans are finished a public workshop will take place in early Spring 2011. They want to present Delaware, 3rd and 6th Streets along with Delaware and Harmony Streets together since they are tied together. He described where the funding for the design work is coming from.

The construction portion is a distance away. He estimated the first project (Delaware and Harmony Streets) would start about 2016. *(Ms. Dunigan and Mr. Hofstee left the meeting.)*

Commission members and members of the audience continued discussions about both presentations. Concern was expressed about how certain portions of the plans would be received from the general public. It is the Commission's hope that the public workshop will be well attended to allow for a lot of feedback from the community. Lengthy discussion took place about the former proposed bypass being the better solution to decrease traffic congestion from south of the city. Concern was also raised about better placement of signage to avoid traffic issues in the Dobbinsville area when the roadway is flooded. Motorists could alter their route if given more advance notice of road closures by placing signage in more strategic locations.

Approval of Minutes – Dr. Norsworthy made a motion to approve the minutes of the March meeting. The motion was seconded by Ms. Fiske. The minutes were adopted by unanimous vote.

Budget Review – Mr. Bird continued discussion on the budget until the next meeting.

Commission Member Comments – Mr. Bird recently attended the American Planning Association Conference in New Orleans and commented that a lot of good information was provided that he will share at a later meeting.

Next Meeting – The next meeting is scheduled for 5/24/10 at 6:30 p.m.

Adjournment – A motion was made to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded and approved by unanimous vote. The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Turner

Debbie Turner
Stenographer