

Planning Commission Meeting for New Castle City took place on April 27, 2009 at 6:30 p.m. in the City of New Castle's Town Hall.

Members Present: David Bird, Chair
Florence Smith
Joe DiAngelo
Dorsey Fiske

Members Absent: Bill Simpson, Co-Chair
Dr. Jack Norsworthy
Christine Masiello

Staff Present: Marian Hull, URS, City Planner

City Personnel: Jeff Bergstrom, Building Inspector

Mr. Bird called the meeting to order at 6:40 p.m. Roll call was taken.

Approval of Minutes – The minutes of the 3/23/09 meeting are still being modified and will be revisited at our next meeting. **Mr. DiAngelo made a motion to approve the 4/6/09 minutes of the special Planning Commission Meeting. The motion was seconded and approved by unanimous vote.**

Discussion and Action to be Taken Concerning a Recommendation to the City Council on Adoption of the Update of the 2003 New Castle City Comprehensive Plan – It was anticipated that we would receive the State's comments under the PLUS program in time to review before tonight's meeting. They have only recently been received. The document is lengthy and many suggestions have been made. The only certifiable comment was that we have not submitted three years of progress reports which is administrative and will be handled by Ms. Hull. We need to review all of the suggestions to determine whether they are or are not something we want to explore further. Ms. Hull will review the document, make her comments and distribute to Planning Commission members for review before our next meeting. We will look at making a recommendation to City Council at our 5/18/09 meeting. (*Copies of the State's comments and all other comments were made available to the audience.*) Referring to the hand-outs of comments, Mr. Hunter Ficke indicated written comments he has submitted on behalf of Immanuel Episcopal Church were not included. Ms. Hull confirmed she had not received those comments. Mr. Ficke will provide a copy to her. Mr. Bird said that all comments, written and verbal, along with the Planning Commission's recommendation, will be sent to City Council before action is taken.

Possible Development Proposal for Properties Owned by the Gambacorta Family – Ms. Hull described the concept of re-development in the Seventh and South Street area. We have discussed a mixed-use, modern extension of our historic downtown, pedestrian friendliness, and physical connections to the downtown area and the surrounding neighborhoods. Currently in the proposed comprehensive plan the area is recommended to be mixed-use development.

Mr. Jimmy Gambacorta presented on behalf of himself and his brothers. They own 12 acres but the State has claimed all but 5.9 acres for wetlands. On those 5.9 acres we hope to be able to develop a plan that includes office space, retail space and

residential. He presented a conceptual plan that was used to further describe the project. The project has several parts: residential over retailer, residential over office space and parking, open space and recreation and residential over parking, and residential over medical office or some other idea. Frontage of the property would be on Route 9 with internal roads, which is subject to change. Commercial and retail and parking would be closer to Route 9 and residential would face the river. Ms. Hull commented that the project goes along with the mixed use concept envisioned for this area. *(A more detailed site analysis was provided to the Planning Commission.)* The project was met with favorable comments. Mr. Gambacorta was complimented for presenting this plan and was encouraged to proceed in more detailed fashion what they would like to present. *(The audience was provided an opportunity to comment; no comments were received.)*

Discussion on a Possible Development Proposal for Property Owned by H.J. Fisher at the Apex Site on Route 9 -- Mr. James Harker provided an overview of the property to be discussed. There are two parcels, a larger 15-acre parcel and a 1-acre parcel across Route 9. Currently there are concrete foundations of a former foundry building, existing office building and some warehouse buildings. Ms. Hull informed the area is beyond the redevelopment area but is consistent with what has been discussed for the area. Development plans call for different phases. One potential buyer is a church. Retail use and residential use were also presented for portions of the property. The property is currently zoned industrial. In the City zoning ordinance churches are not permitted in industrial zoning districts. They are permitted in mixed-use districts. A special exception is not an option so it would need to be rezoned to permit a church on the property. The existing buildings would be used. Access would be on Larkin Street with an internal flow of traffic. The site was cleaned up by Apex about 10 years ago. The site is largely concrete and they do not anticipate any soil issues.

Bill Ganc, commercial real estate broker, is working with the Seeds of Greatness Church. The church is looking for another location near their current location on Quigley Boulevard. Before going forward he would like to know if this is a project the City would consider to be a good fit for the area. He does not anticipate the church moving if permitted on this site.

Pastor Jerome Lewis was introduced. Pastor Lewis provided a history of the locations the church has operated from. The church originated 9 years ago. They have outgrown several facilities since beginning. They are a mixed congregation of over 650 and conduct multiple services. They would use the facility for primarily church services but do offer community-related services. The church would play a major part of the revitalization of the redevelopment area and also provide an element of stability. There would be no residential area as part of the plan. The number of parking spaces was discussed by using a diagram provided by Mark Parker of Landmark Engineering. Environmental concerns were discussed. Stormwater issues were also briefly discussed.

Ms. Hull confirmed that this area is recommended to be a mixed-use area in our proposed comprehensive plan. The zoning must follow the land use once City Council adopts the comprehensive plan. The Planning Commission would then need to implement that through zoning ordinance recommendations for zoning changes.

(Additional discussion followed.)

Mr. Bird commented that this could be a benefit to the community. Ms. Hull added that having a high level of activity in this area is also attractive.

The Planning Commission looks forward to receiving further information on this project.

General Discussion – Concerning 901 Delaware Street, Ms. Hull reported she had received notice of a meeting being conducted by Kaercher Engineering to address concerns we have expressed in a letter sent to them last fall. Issues contained in the letter included wetlands, environmental studies, transportation, etc. Kaercher has been meeting with state, county and city officials and want to discuss further what the Planning Commission is looking for. Dave Athey and Marian Hull will attend this meeting that is scheduled for 5/15/09 at 9 a.m. (*Discussion followed.*)

Next Meeting -- Our next meeting is scheduled for 5/18/09 at 6:30 p.m.

Adjournment – **It was moved and seconded that the meeting be adjourned.** The meeting was adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Turner
Stenographer