

**The New Castle City's Planning Commission Meeting took place on May 21, 2007 at 6:30 p.m. in the City of New Castle's Town Hall.**

Members Present: Dr. Jack Norsworthy, Chairman  
Jim Steele, Co-Chairman  
Elliott Tatum  
David Bird  
Joe DiAngelo  
Bill Simpson

Members Absent: George Freebery  
Thomas Wilson

Staff Present: Douglas Lloyd, City Planner

City Staff Present: Building Official Jeff Bergstrom

City Council Members Present: Janet Churchill, John Gaworski

Mr. Steele called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. Roll call was taken.

Approval of Minutes – Mr. Steele made a motion to approve the minutes of the 4/23/07 meeting as presented; Mr. Tatum seconded the motion. The motion was passed by unanimous vote.

Discussion on Comprehensive Plan Updates & Review -- At the last meeting the Mayor asked to bring additional input regarding the comprehensive plan to this meeting but he is not present. In addition, City Council passed a resolution to move forward with the University of Delaware (UD). (*Members received the resolution.*) Mr. Bird asked what the impetus of the resolution was.

Dr. Norsworthy informed that there was not a contract officially signed with the UD between this council and the last council. At our last meeting we tried to assess the scope of work they would be doing in order to update the plan. He added that we should consider having a meeting separate from this meeting to begin the process. It was felt that a representative from the UD be present at that meeting. Mr. Lloyd suggested that the action plan is a good starting point but the goals and objectives of the plan need to be reviewed. Mr. Simpson added that we need to determine what was achieved versus not achieved and why they were not done and prioritize goals. Mr. Steele believes one of the problems was the lack of input from the Planning Commission with past Councils. This year's budget process begins tomorrow and it was announced that the Planning Commission has been placed on the agenda for the 5/22/07 meeting. Mr. Bird expressed concern that since we are in the middle of updating capital improvements it may be premature to propose capital improvements to Council because the planning process hasn't been completed. (*Lengthy discussion followed concerning the Planning Commission budget and a scope of work that we want the UD to update.*)

Mr. Lloyd said that he has spoken to the State Planning Office. We need to talk about planning and budget. The cost will depend on the level of detail that you

expect in the report. *(Brief discussion followed about what to present to Council.)* Dr. Norsworthy informed that city staff is currently reviewing the action plan to determine what has been done and what has not been done. That input would then be used with the annual report which is required yearly by the state.

*(Discussion about the budget history of the Planning Commission and the amount to be requested at the budget hearing followed.)* Mr. Bird asked what the Planning Commission currently has in its budget. Although he doesn't have the exact amount Dr. Norsworthy feels we have approximately \$2,000 available through 7/1/07. The Council gave us \$10,000 last year and we should request an additional \$10,000 that would include the annual report update plus the annual report for next year. Community outreach would come out of the budget also. The rest of the operating budget would be for general consultants and other expenses. Mr. Steele will speak with Jackie Seneschal of KCI to see if a report was prepared for 2006 that we have not received due to the change in city planner. It was suggested that Cathie Thomas, City Administrator, make contact with the State Planning Office to determine what is expected from us, i.e., whether they want to receive the 2007 plan or do they want past reports. It was also suggested that contact be made with Mr. Inden to learn whether a 2006 comprehensive plan implementation activities report was on file. **Mr. Simpson made a motion to direct the City Administrator to inquire from the State of Delaware whether they have on file the annual report from the City of New Castle for the year 2005 and if not what does the state require with the information we are currently updating regarding our comprehensive plan and our activities. Mr. Bird seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken with affirmative votes cast by all members.**

**Mr. Bird made a motion that the Planning Commission appoint a sub-committee to develop a scope of services in conjunction with the UD at a workshop forum within the next two weeks. Mr. Simpson seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously.**

Messrs. Bird, Simpson and Norsworthy volunteered to serve on this sub-committee at a date to be determined. Mr. Tatum expressed concern whether the sub-committee would be prepared to meet with the UD. Mr. Bird said they would bring the Council resolution to the meeting as a starting point. He also hopes to obtain an update of the action plan and get some type of feedback on the status of the annual report and develop a scope and work within the parameters of our budget. They would then be able to address the Planning Commission with a draft scope of services at our next meeting. That draft would be provided to Commission members in advance of the meeting. He would like to obtain scopes of services that are used by other communities. Mr. Lloyd encourages Commission members to look at the UD website at the plans that are currently posted. You will see a pattern and it will give you a sense of their approach.

Planning Checklist Review – Dr. Norsworthy reported that he has not addressed this issue. **Mr. Steele made a motion to table the item until the next meeting. Mr. Simpson seconded the motion.** Mr. Lloyd informed that he has completed

a section of the checklist that addresses the planning process pertaining to steps for site plan review, subdivision review and Historic Area Commission review and will provide the information to Planning Commission members at the end of the meeting.

Budget Review -- Dr. Norsworthy asked if anyone had any suggestions regarding the action plan that we feel needs to be a priority to recommend to Council.

Mr. DiAngelo suggested estimating a figure of \$25,000 to include comprehensive plan, action plan, city planner, and community meetings. (*Brief discussion followed.*) Dr. Norsworthy added that any project that is over \$1,000 has to have Council approval. (*Discussion followed.*) Mr. Steele commented that Council should be addressing the action plan and the items that have not been acted on.

**Mr. DiAngelo made a motion to submit a budget request for \$25,000 to Council. Mr. Bird seconded the motion.** During discussion Dr. Norsworthy reminded that we have an additional \$2,000 in our current budget that should be included in our request.

**Mr. DiAngelo made a motion to amend his original motion and submit a request for \$27,000 for the next fiscal year to the Council at our budget hearing. Mr. Bird seconded the amended motion.**

Council's Request to Review Ordinance #451-Dangerous or Vacant Buildings to be known as Section 141-19-Annual Registration of Vacant Buildings and Registration Fees – Mr. DiAngelo expressed concern about the period of time to be considered a vacant building. (*Discussion followed about the*

*definition/parameters of a vacant building.*) Mr. Bergstrom reported there are substantial fees involved with getting permits when you have a vacant building and the idea is to eliminate vacant buildings. It encourages occupancy. There is no distinction between commercial and residential properties. The previous city solicitor has reviewed the document. He added that this type of ordinance is becoming very popular. Mr. Simpson feels that anyone who has a property they are maintaining that is vacant should fall under this. Any vacant property is an object for other people to do something with. That building is susceptible for use for something it shouldn't be used for. Mr. Bird looks at this ordinance as a tool to look at abandoned/vacant/run down buildings and charge the owner with a registration fee encouraging that owner to come forward and do something with that property. There is no fee associated at this time. Mr. Bergstrom believes this ordinance is firm. **Mr. Steele made a motion that we recommend Ordinance 451 to Council upon review from the city solicitor. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bird. A roll call vote was called. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.**

General Discussion – None.

**Adjournment** – Mr. Steele made a motion to adjourn the meeting; Mr. Bird seconded the motion which was approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Turner  
Stenographer