

New Castle City Planning Commission Meeting

Minutes

January 26, 2015 -- 6:30 p.m.

City of New Castle's Town Hall

Members Present: Mike Quaranta, Chair
David Baldini
David Bird
Daniel Bungy
Joe DiAngelo
Jonathan Justice
Josephine Moore
Vera Worthy

Member Absent: Florence Smith

Also present: Donald Reese, Mayor
Debbie Pfeil, City Planner, URS
Debbie Turner, Stenographer

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m.

Minutes – A motion was made and seconded to approve the 12/15/14 minutes as distributed. The motion was approved.

Questions for Consultant – Ms. Pfeil will be in attendance every other month at future Planning Commission meetings, at the request of this group. She will attend meetings when applications are being presented.

Ms. Pfeil addressed several outstanding items of concern.

- Comprehensive Plan Update – Comprehensive Plan was updated and certified on 7/1/09. By State law, a new plan is required to be submitted by July 2019. Recommendation in the interim is the City work with the Planning Commission on a project scope and move forward each year with projects (census data, certain demographic information) to remain funded. Ms. Pfeil recommended bringing a representative of DelDOT to a meeting to discuss transportation improvements (district/regional plan). WILMAPCO, and the State Office of State Planning would also be invited. No funding is needed for this part. Traffic lights, railroad crossings, bike paths, and pedestrian trails will link into the project. The City is to submit a progress report to the State each year. Ms. Pfeil will check on the status of the progress report for 2014 and provide copies to Commissioners. Mr. Quaranta has met with Dr. Jo Viola to review several items that the Parking Sub-committee has been working on that tie in with the Plan. Status of the items was provided. Ms. Pfeil will invite DelDOT to come before the Planning Commission's February or March meeting. She will follow up with City Council and extend an invitation to attend.
- Comprehensive Plan Implementation Matrix Status – Information on items that have been done can be entered now. Not all implementation items need to be finished by 2019.
- Neighborhood Districts Update – Ms. Pfeil submitted a final report in July 2013. She will resend to the group. Information is to be included in the next Plan update.

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- Census Data – Ms. Pfeil advised to hold off updating the census data, unless it is needed for a grant. Census data will need to be updated for the 2019 update.
- Authority of Planning Commission – Ms. Pfeil will provide a copy of the State Code and the City Code as it pertains to the Planning Commission to each Commissioner.
- Parking Update – Two areas to watch: commercial component and parking. Mr. Quaranta thinks it would be helpful to formulate a list of options for parking for special events versus daily usage for review by City Council and the Planning Commission. Ms. Pfeil said the Parking Sub-committee has looked at ways to add parking. A proposal for several lots came before this group and then was passed on to City Council for consideration. Churches, the senior center, and the like have parking areas, but ‘shared parking’ involves agreements and liability. Liability is a primary concern of those groups.

Comments from the Public

Downtown Gateway (DG) zoning district -- Mayor Reese said a recent fire in the Gambacorta garage may result in the building being torn down. The Board of Adjustment has approved a 120-unit apartment complex in the same area with the understanding the applicant would rent some nearby ground for additional parking. Brief discussion about mixed use in the DG District followed.

Commissioner’s Comments/New Business

Ms. Moore – Expressed concern with the number of apartment buildings being constructed versus personal dwellings and would like to limit apartments. Ms. Pfeil said stronger wording could be considered under demographics in the Comprehensive Plan. It will be difficult to cap affordable workforce housing. The matter can be discussed further when an application is presented. Mr. Justice cautioned against exclusionary zoning.

Mr. Bird – A repository is needed for all planning documents that are readily accessible to the public. He suggested the City library. Information is posted on the City website. Ms. Pfeil said all physical documents are required by law to be kept in the City office and available to the public.

Ms. Pfeil will provide language to the City for use on future agendas informing the public that all documents (agendas, minutes, and meeting packs) relative to that meeting are available to the public. Documents are in PDF format so they cannot be altered.

Mr. DiAngelo – Inquired about the process involved with putting a topic on the agenda. Ms. Pfeil said FOIA requirements require agendas to be posted seven (7) days in advance of a meeting with enough information in the meeting pack to allow the public to adequately research and learn about a subject. Topic requests go to the Planning Commission chairperson. A topic cannot be discussed if it does not appear on the agenda for a particular reason.

Comments about a subject that is not on the agenda are acceptable so long as no interaction on that subject takes place. The subject must be placed on the agenda for the public to be

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part of the discussion. General information about a subject/project can be done by phone to the City Administrator or Building Inspector.

The Planning Commission's next meeting is 2/23/15. The meeting was adjourned at 7:35 p.m.