

New Castle City Planning Commission Meeting
Minutes
March 23, 2015 -- 6:30 p.m.
City of New Castle's Town Hall

Members Present: Michael Quaranta, Chair
David Baldini
David Bird
Joseph DiAngelo
Jonathan Justice
Josephine Moore
Florence Smith

Members Absent: Daniel Bungy
Vera Worthy

Also present: Debbie Pfeil, URS, City Planner
Debbie Turner, Stenographer

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

Minutes – A motion was made and seconded to approve the 2/23/15 minutes as distributed. The motion was approved.

Ms. Pfeil introduced T. William Brokenbrough, Jr., DelDOT County Coordinator, Division of Planning, Herb M. Inden, Principal Planner, Office of State Planning Coordination, and Heather Dunigan from WILMAPCO. Mr. Brokenbrough talked about Transportation Improvement Districts (TID), how they are created, staffing, cost to the municipality, boundaries, and the Traffic Impact Study (TIS) process.

TID -- DelDOT identifies transportation improvements needed in an area and all developments are assessed a fee based on the traffic they generate to help offset the improvements. DelDOT schedules the improvement to be done and draw on fees needed to cover the cost. Municipal staff time is necessary to determine what the City wants to achieve and discuss with DelDOT. WILMAPCO may be able to assist with staff time and DelDOT will provide as much technical assistance as possible.

Benefits of creating a TID --

- A chance to plan comprehensively for development in a district, allowing for a more detailed look over a long timeframe.
- It is a way to attract development.
- It is a way to encourage State transportation spending. It is one factor used when ranking projects in DelDOT's Capital Transportation Program.

Benefits to developers –

- Faster approvals. It typically takes about six to twelve months doing a TIS and negotiation of offsite improvements. With a TID they only pay a fee and most projects eliminate the need for a TIS.

- Known costs. Going into a TIS developers will see what they need to construct. Examples: length of right-turn lane, can they use existing shoulder, will utilities need to be moved, what is buried underground. With a TID developers are limited to entrance construction. A one-time fee covers the offsite improvement costs beyond the entrance.

Mr. Quaranta supports a TID process. It is a component to the City's Comprehensive Plan and makes sense to go through with the process. He likes taking a longer, more comprehensive view of all transportation-associated issues with developments rather than rushing.

Mr. Brokenbrough said a TID is a good option when a district contains several parcels close together that may be developed or redeveloped.

Ms. Pfeil said the Downtown Gateway District is an example. The district is targeted for redevelopment with vacant properties and redevelopment in the same area. Ferry Cut-Off is also targeted for redevelopment. *(Both areas are identified in the City's Comprehensive Plan.)*

Mr. Brokenbrough described the process involved. It includes drafting a TID agreement, determine district boundaries, target horizon year for land use transportation plan, roles and responsibilities, service standards for the plan, and a process for implementing improvements in the plan. Later an update of the agreement will include adoption of a land use and transportation program, capital transportation program, infrastructure fee program, and monitoring program.

In order to for DelDOT to proceed they would need one or more detailed land use forecasts and a model of future conditions. DelDOT will do the technical work, but the City needs to provide information about where the jobs will be, how much population and where, and how many jobs the City wants and where. The Planning Commission would welcome DelDOT's assistance with the review and input process.

There is a public meeting component involved with the TIS process.

Monies from Capital Improvement already identified for the City are tied to the City of New Castle's TID, preferably the City Administrator. Multiple ordinance changes are anticipated with the creation of a TID.

Ms. Pfeil asked how difficult it is to amend the agreement since City Council members change from time to time. Mr. Brockenbrough did not see this to be a problem since the agreement will be amended during the process.

For developers who are ready to move their project forward, they can go through the normal process with the City. The developer needs to be given an idea of costs associated with the TID that they would be responsible for later.

Ms. Dunigan would like to see the TID be part of the City's Comprehensive Plan Update before WILMAPCO commits staff time. Some of their earlier work could be refreshed. She suggested submitting to WILMAPCO for funding in January 2016. The request for funding will not impact creating a TID agreement. (*WILMAPCO was involved with the current transportation plan in the Comprehensive Plan.*) Mr. Bird asked if there is a skeletal transportation plan to update, if that is enough to get started and update some of the projects that DelDOT identified as part of their TIP. Some of those projects were built while others were not. He wondered if the unfinished projects could be part of the process. Mr. Brockenbrough said DelDOT looks forward twenty years at what is needed and if those projects already identified satisfy what DelDOT's study indicates is needed. Those that do not can be incorporated in the process.

Existing property owners in both areas will benefit from better infrastructure improvements. Infrastructure fees will increase over time when owners apply to change use or do something to their building. They would then be subject to the current zoning.

Capital projects already in the TIP can continue during the TID process. Mr. Brockenbrough confirmed that DelDOT's capital projects continue regardless of whether a TID district is created.

Ms. Dunigan was asked to detail the process and timeline for submittal for funding to WILMAPCO in January 2016. She estimated 9-12 months to complete.

Alice Riehl of the *New Castle Weekly* asked what reason the Planning Commission would have for not continuing with the TID process. Two reasons given were staffing and if a TID would not be helpful to the City.

Budget Status – Budget information was distributed to commissioners before the meeting. No questions about current expenses. The Planning Commission's budget submission for the next fiscal year is due by mid-April. Commissioners were asked to inform the chairperson of any projects requiring funds prior to that time. Mr. Quaranta thinks it would be helpful to have a physical map of the downtown area that gives an inventory of available parking. Inventory work and data already done by the Parking Sub-committee could be incorporated. (*Discussion about parking spaces and requirements followed.*)

Neighborhood Study – The information goes into the Comprehensive Plan for further implementation. Commissioners previously discussed how to follow up on identified concerns and whether to touch base with those neighborhoods to provide an update. Strategies and implementation go into the Comprehensive Plan.

American Planning Association (national and local chapters) – Eight (8) commissioners need membership renewals. Ms. Pfeil said the University of Delaware is offering a Planners 202 class as part of their IPA classes. She suggested including monies for this training.

Comprehensive Plan Implementation – Ms. Pfeil said that in 2013 the updated Comprehensive Plan Matrix was submitted to the State. She will meet with City staff to

Planning Commission Meeting Minutes
March 23, 2015

review what has been done and update accordingly. The update will be distributed to Commissioners at the next meeting. She will determine if anything has been submitted for 2015. She will also determine who is submitting the Annual Report for the City. Annual reports are now being done on a calendar year instead of fiscal year.

Demographics Update – Mr. Quaranta reminded that Ed Ratledge of the University of Delaware will be attending the April meeting to discuss City of New Castle demographics. Any information commissioners want to focus on should be forwarded to Mr. Ratledge soon.

Commissioner's Comments/New Business

Mr. Bird – He has informed the Historic Area Commission (HAC) chairperson of his intention to step down as the Planning Commission appointee.

Comments from the Public

Ms. Riehl suggested a change of venue for the April meeting in anticipation of a large audience. Recording equipment used in this location is not portable. Options will be explored.

The Planning Commission's next meeting is 4/27/15. There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.