

**New Castle City Planning Commission Meeting
Minutes
August 24, 2015 -- 6:30 p.m.
Trustees of the New Castle Common Board Room**

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

Member Absent: Gail Seitz

Also present: Jeff Bergstrom, City Inspector
Debbie Pfeil, City Planner

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

City Council has appointed Gail Seitz to the Planning Commission. Ms. Seitz is the City's representative to WILMAPCO. She is attending one of WILMAPCO's meetings tonight and will provide a report at the September meeting.

Minutes – A motion was made and seconded to approve the 6/22/15 minutes. Motion approved.

Minor Subdivision (one parcel into two parcels) 0 Buttonwood Avenue, Parcel 21-002.00-018 – Rocky DeAscanis, applicant, presented. This application was brought before the Planning Commission previously (2013) as a large parcel subdivided into three smaller parcels. The lot sizes are irregular and the applicant recalculated the lots making lots 2 and 3 larger and lot 1 smaller. (*Maps and pertinent information provided to commissioners prior to meeting.*) Maps show new lot lines and setbacks. Lot 1 is .18 acres; lot 2 is .22 acres, and lot 3 is .25 acres. They meet minimum setback requirements for the City. Lot 3 is larger because it has a 20 foot setback on Buttonwood Avenue and Meehan Avenue. Mr. DeAscanis plans single family, two-story homes under R2 zoning .

Ms. Pfeil informed if the Planning Commission approve the application tonight the applicant will need to meet setbacks as shown, parking (where driveways and off-street parking will be located), and approval for utilities. It is not known what the applicant plans of the existing blacktop/asphalt basketball court that is part of all three (3) parcels. She noted buyers may have problems knowing what portion they own. She recommended marking the court, move the court, or put in the deed. Ms. Pfeil confirmed the application meets requirements of the R2 zoning district, Comprehensive Plan, and the required 10 foot easement required in the code. Mr. Bergstrom has no issues with the application.

Ms. Pfeil said the application is complete and there are no issues.

Mr. Justice made a motion to recommend the approval of the minor subdivision as presented to City Council. Mr. Bird seconded the motion. Motion approved.

Rezone & Minor Subdivision (from RC to R2/one parcel into two parcels) 3 & 56 Buttonwood Avenue, Parcel 21-001.00-011 – Mr. DeAscanis is proposing a change in zoning from RC to R2. He feels the R2 zoning is the best use for the property. Property around the property is zoned R2.

Ms. Pfeil said the property is zoned RC Retail/Commercial in the Comprehensive Plan on map 2B. Rezoning changes are not recommended in the Comprehensive Plan at this time. The rezoning application is not consistent with the maps in the Comprehensive Plan. Per State law, we cannot rezone something that does not match future land use or suggested land use coverage. The applicant would need to seek an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan to move forward. *(Ms. Pfeil described the process involved with amendment requests.)*

The process would take 4-6 months and cost approximately \$8,000 to \$10,000. The other option is the applicant can wait until the Comprehensive Plan is finished.

Mr. Quaranta said the entire area could benefit from rezoning. The applicant would need to submit a letter detailing everything he intends to do on the property. The City Administrator, Mr. Bergstrom and Ms. Pfeil would then meet to discuss if there are others who are interested in an amendment and determine whether costs are borne by the City or developer. After that process, then the applicant is eligible to apply for the rezoning and subdivision.

Single-family homes are not permitted in the RC zoning district. Mr. Quaranta suggested the City look at the subject area and consider rezoning. Mr. Bergstrom agreed with the suggestion. There are a number of property owners in the area who could benefit from a rezoning.

(Discussion about the Comprehensive Plan and the process of making an amendment took place.)

In summary, the applicant has three options: wait for the next review of the Comprehensive Plan, which the city will undertake in 2018-2019; build something that complies with the current zoning, or do nothing at this time. Mr. Quaranta encourages fellow commissioners to think about reconsideration of a complete change in a future meeting.

Ms. Pfeil said the application will need to be addressed by City Council. Property owners would need to request re-zoning, the City will not do it.

Comments from Commission Members

Mr. Justice – Requested the most current zoning map be put on the City website. Mr. Bergstrom will handle. He said the New Castle County zoning map is a good tool. He will provide a link to the NCC GIS page showing current zoning. Mr. Bergstrom said the DG zoning is up to date. He asked for a hard copy of the zoning map prior to the September

meeting. Mr. Justice noted an article in the most recent APA (planning) magazine about connecting master plans and comprehensive plans to hazard mitigation plans. Mr. Bird asked if the sign (No Trucks) at the corner of Buttonwood and Route 9 belongs to the City or State. He supports the sign and said its strategic location has made it effective.

Ms. Moore is concerned about land use/development of apartments versus single-family homes and what direction the City wants to take. She hears concerns from residents about apartment development in the whole City. Residents are concerned about apartments outnumbering single-family homes and how they will impact property values.

At the September meeting Ms. Pfeil will be addressing the Downtown Gateway (DG) zoning district to discuss whether it meets the intent of the Comprehensive Plan. *(Lengthy discussion followed.)*

Mr. Baldini asked Ms. Pfeil what her DG discussion will include. She will talk about issues from the previous review and talk about future direction. The intent of the plan says mixed use and to date we have allowed only apartments. The neighborhood study was started, but there is no scheduling for it this year. The neighborhood study given to commissioners earlier is included in the Comprehensive Plan. Ms. Pfeil said the neighborhood study will be included in the next Comprehensive Plan review. She hopes the plan will be expanded upon during the next review. Ms. Pfeil said monies for the Comprehensive Plan review next year (2016-2017) will be discussed in early 2016. She was asked to follow up on the status of action items (at the City level) from the neighborhood study.

Comments from the Public

Councilman John DiMondi thinks the DG zoning has opened the western part of the City to a large amount of apartments. The area was zoned as commercial before the zoning change. As a result, over time, he projects that 50% of City citizens will be transients. Currently that percentage is 35%. He suggested putting in restrictions on the number of apartments and condominiums; ownership versus rentals.

Ms. Pfeil reviewed items for the September meeting.

- Updated zoning map to be put in meeting room and on the City's website;
- Parking committee update and presentation;
- Comprehensive Plan update;
- DG zoning interpretations -- look at regulations making sure they meet the intent of the Comprehensive Plan (intent of plan is mixed use, not apartment complexes). Apartments versus rentals can be part of that conversation.

The Planning Commission's next meeting is 9/28/15. There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

(Stenographer not present at meeting. Minutes prepared from recording.)