

New Castle City Planning Commission Meeting
Minutes
April 27, 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
Vera Worthy

Members Absent: Josephine Moore
Florence Smith

Also present: Debbie Turner, Stenographer

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

Minutes – A motion was made and seconded to approve the 3/23/15 minutes as distributed. The motion was approved.

Mr. Quaranta announced the resignation of Daniel Bungy from the Planning Commission, effective immediately. The Mayor will fill the vacancy as soon as possible.

Dr. Jo Viola spoke briefly on the progress of the Parking Sub-committee. A report of activities to date was provided and will be reviewed in detail at the May meeting.

A motion was made and seconded to recess for two (2) minutes. Motion approved.

The meeting reconvened at 6:45 p.m. Mr. Quaranta introduced Professor Ed Ratledge, Center for Applied Demography & Survey Research, University of Delaware, who gave a presentation on area demographics.

Professor Ratledge talked about a number of topics, including: economics, population growth in the state and by county, single family building permits in the state and by county, home ownership, unemployment rate for Delaware versus the U.S., state unemployment claims, employment sectors (non-agricultural, manufacturing) state personal income and Medicaid enrollment, labor force rates in Delaware by year and age group, state hospitalization by age and gender, and children in poverty in Delaware.

- Growth in the city is associated with job growth.
- People returning to the labor force are likely working at jobs that pay less than previous employment.
- The health care field is doing well.
- Housing trends are showing an increase in apartment living.
- New residents to the city and state come primarily from New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Washington, D.C., and some international migration.

Alice Riehl of the *New Castle Weekly* noted the Gateway District is designed to attract new retail, housing, manufacturing near town to build up the economic life in the city. She wondered if those efforts will be productive considering tonight's presentation. Professor Ratledge said it is possible the Gateway District would be successful citing the small size of New Castle as a plus, but the city might need to address things like traffic and an increase of people walking around. Keeping costs down while providing an attractive quality of life is key to success.

Roger Clark, city resident, asked how New Castle County (NCC) compares to Cecil County, Maryland and Chester County, Pennsylvania. He does not believe NCC has much in common with Sussex County. Professor Ratledge said Chester County and Delaware County (Pennsylvania) provide a large workforce in Delaware, but they live in Pennsylvania for a variety of reasons (schools, tax situations). Data shows a number of in-state residents travel to Philadelphia and Cherry Hill, New Jersey on a daily basis. Property taxes and homes are lower in Delaware.

A couple of city residents raised the issue of health care facilities being an attraction to communities. Some of the data presented indicates the growing demand for assisted living facilities and nursing home beds in the near future.

Dorsey Fiske, city resident, said one possibility is to try to attract younger families to the city. Professor Ratledge noted many younger people are not interested in buying and maintaining older homes.

Esther Lovely, city resident, talked about the National Park being an attraction. Professor Ratledge suggested active marketing campaigns around city events could be effective in bringing new people into town.

Betsy McNamara, city resident, asked if there is any cooperation with adjacent states rather than competing with them. Professor Ratledge stated Delaware does not have the funds to compete with neighboring states. Quality education, good living conditions, proper levels of taxes and regulation are needed to attract companies to the state.

Mr. Quaranta commented the state's size can be an asset if we move quickly and use it correctly. He asked Professor Ratledge if anything stood out about this region. Professor Ratledge said he was surprised the city does as well as it does citing income levels being weighted, poverty levels are within bounds, and vacancy rates are low. Most jobs are outside of town. There are 390 houses in the city with a single person over 65 years residing in them. In about 10-15 years vacancy rates may begin to rise and a market will be present to find new residents.

Mr. Bird wondered if the city shouldn't market people who commute into Delaware to work to look at New Castle as their choice of residence.

Judy Hentkowski, city resident, said before moving to the city she heard that people living in New Castle live longer than the average population.

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Mr. Quaranta thanked Professor Ratledge for his presentation.

The Planning Commission's next meeting is 5/18/15. There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 8:08 p.m.