

New Castle City Planning Commission Meeting
Minutes
February 27, 2017 -- 6:30 p.m.
City of New Castle Town Hall

Members Present: Michael Quaranta, Chair
David Baldini, Vice Chair
Joseph DiAngelo
Jonathan Justice
Josephine Moore
Gail Seitz
Florence Smith
Vera Worthy*

Member Absent: David Bird

*joined meeting at 6:45pm

Mr. Quaranta called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Roll call followed. A quorum was declared.

Minutes – Approval of the 1/27/17 meeting minutes was deferred until the next meeting.

Comprehensive Plan Update Discussion – Mr. Quaranta acknowledged that Commissioners have discussed the need to begin working on the 2019 Comprehensive Plan. Some of the work will begin in 2017. Referencing an email from City Planner Chris Rogers, AECOM, the State hosts pre-update PLUS meetings that includes PLUS agencies. The meetings cover the kinds of changes the State will be looking for in the 2019 Comprehensive Plan Update. Mr. Rogers suggested it might be good for 1-2 Commissioners to attend a meeting. The cost for a commissioner to attend is \$250 versus \$1,200 if the City Planner attends. Mr. Quaranta said a form needs to be completed to register for a meeting. He added the meetings run about 30-60 minutes and are conducted in Dover on the fourth Wednesday each month. Several Commissioners expressed interest. Ms. Seitz will get more information about the meetings (dates, location, etc.) and get back to her fellow Commissioners.

Public Comments – None.

Commissioners Comments

Mr. Baldini sent an email to Mr. Rogers inquiring about items the Planning Commission should begin working on, but he has not received a response. Mr. Quaranta thinks the PLUS meetings will give the Planning Commission an idea what will need to be addressed. He said there are other things relative to the lead up to the Comprehensive Plan that will be reflected in the Planning Commission's next fiscal year budget that starts on 7/1/17.

Mrs. Smith informed she will leave the Planning Commission at the end of her term in March. She thanked everyone for their assistance during her time with the Planning Commission. Mr. Quaranta extended appreciation on behalf of all the Commissioners for Mrs. Smith's dedication.

Ms. Seitz asked for the status of the application to the Downtown Development Designation (DDD). Mr. Quaranta said we agreed that the City would resubmit an application, but he

does not know the current status. According to Mr. Quaranta, one of the benefits of submitting an application was the information obtained during the process is suitable for use in our next Comprehensive Plan. Some of the expenses associated with the first application were offset by a grant. Mr. Quaranta will reach out to the Governor's Office and try to learn whether there is still support for the program. He suggested Ms. Seitz could inquire about this program at one of the pre-PLUS meetings. Ms. Seitz wants to review the first application on the City website; she was referred to Ms. Burgmuller in the City Office for assistance.

At a WILMAPCO meeting Ms. Seitz requested an application to apply for funding that might be able to help us with our Comprehensive Plan Update. They suggested that a WILMAPCO staff person could be assigned to help us navigate the Update process. That person(s) would be particularly resourceful with transportation planning and with healthy communities that incorporates pedestrian/biking. Ms. Seitz was instructed to take transportation-related inquiries to the pre-PLUS meeting for the Delaware Department of Transportation to address. Mr. Quaranta suggested seeking advice from Mr. Rogers to see how that WILMAPCO staff assistance could best be used with the Comprehensive Plan Update. He would like to get an idea of the amount of time the Planning Commission might be granted for the WILMAPCO staff person.

Ms. Seitz talked about a presentation at a WILMAPCO meeting about the Route 9 Master Plan (Wilmington to City of New Castle). The final plan should be finished in the spring. Several workshops were conducted to review a number of subjects. The biggest community need identified was the elimination of chronic crime and the biggest youth priority identified was better bus walking paths/bicycle transportation options along Route 9. Some of the other topics discussed were additional retail development, economic job growth, and affordable housing. Transportation needs included truck management, bike lanes, bus shelters, lighting streetscapes, sidewalks, ADA compliance, and railroad crossings. Mr. Quaranta acknowledged some of the hazardous conditions along Route 9 citing pedestrians walking on the shoulders where there are no sidewalks and some areas are not well lit. This plan addresses many of those concerns.

Mr. Quaranta met the man responsible for state and local governmental affairs for Airbnb. While his office is in Washington, D.C., he is from Dover, Delaware. Mr. Quaranta learned there are 11 properties registered on the Airbnb platform in the City of New Castle. The gentleman is willing to talk to the Planning Commission about Airbnb properties, who they are,, what do they do, and how they fit into the community. Mr. Quaranta thinks the subject warrants more education. No opposition was expressed by the Commissioners.

The Planning Commission's next meeting is 3/27/17. There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

Debbie Turner
Stenographer