

New Castle City Planning Commission Meeting  
Minutes  
July 24, 2017 -- 6:30 p.m.  
City of New Castle Town Hall

Members Present: David Baldini, Chair  
Brenda Antonio  
Marco Boyce  
Joseph DiAngelo  
Jonathan Justice, Vice Chair  
Gail Seitz  
William Walters  
Vera Worthy\*

Member Absent: Josephine Moore

Also Present: Jeff Bergstrom, City Building Inspector

\*joined meeting at 6:35 p.m.

Mr. Baldini called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Roll call followed. A quorum was declared. Brenda Antonio and Marco Boyce were introduced as new Commissioners.

**Minutes – A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of the 6/26/17 meeting as distributed. Motion was approved.**

2019 Comprehensive Plan (Plan) – Mr. Baldini has requested a template from City Planner Chris Rogers (AECOM) showing PLUS activities and comments. He added that City Administrator Bill Barthel is currently getting bids. Mr. Walters is researching pricing. City Council President Linda Ratchford contacted Mr. Baldini saying she is receiving questions about parking lots, the definition of ‘fringe’ that appears in the Plan, and boundaries of the historic district as it relates to other areas in the City. President Ratchford asked if these are things that City Council should be addressing now or if they will be addressed in the Plan. Mr. Baldini said these items will be addressed in the Plan process going forward.

Mr. Walters is unsure what the responsibilities of the Planning Commission are versus Mr. Rogers’ scope of work. Mr. Bergstrom said that AECOM and Mr. Rogers are employed by the City. He believes that Mr. Rogers serves at the Planning Commission’s direction. Mr. Walters said that we are not giving Mr. Rogers any direction right now and should that change. He reported that Mr. Boyce has volunteered to join Ms. Seitz and Mr. Walters on the sub-committee. They will report monthly to the full Planning Commission. Mr. Walters would like the subcommittee to meet with Mr. Rogers to review our roles and responsibilities versus what he will be doing, and what kind of support should this body be offering to Mr. Rogers.

Mr. Baldini informed that the Planning Commission will need to provide certain information to Mr. Rogers. We will use the current Plan as a guide and expand/incorporate issues such as zoning (Downtown Gateway). Using community outreach we need to determine a vision for the City going forward.

Ms. Seitz referred to the high-level outline that Mr. Rogers provided to Commissioners previously. Citing Mr. Rogers' planning experience, it was her thinking that Mr. Rogers would prepare a work plan. Commissioners would then be better situated to determine a path forward.

According to Mr. Baldini the Planning Commission has a budget of \$25,000 for the coming year that will be used partly to pay for Mr. Rogers' services and the work effort of others. He said there is more work in the first year of the two year process.

Mr. Baldini will reach out to City Administrator Bill Barthel to schedule a meeting with Mr. Rogers.

Mr. Boyce asked what other things the City wants to see prioritized. He thinks that a budget of \$25,000 means a lot of work will be done by this body. He added that modern Comprehensive Plans Updates contain fewer words and have more pictures/graphics.

Mr. Justice noticed during the Pre-PLUS review meeting he attended that categories the State Planning Office used did not align well with the organization of the chapters in our Plan. He is unsure if there is an up-to-date standard we should use. Mr. Boyce said the State PLUS Committee uses their own review format; how the City's Plan is set up is whatever the City desires.

Mr. Baldini asked if the City has a strategic plan. Mr. Bergstrom thinks such a plan is prepared by the Planning Commission. Noting this body will be doing the bulk of the work relating to the Plan, Mr. Baldini said we need to provide enough information concerning our vision of where the City will be in the next five years to City Council for their review.

Mr. Boyce stressed the importance of public meetings during the update process. Many times consultants facilitate those meetings to get as much knowledge as possible from the public. Mr. Justice said the Planning Commission started an update about five years back, and then the State changed to a ten-year cycle so no further work was done. We have some information from a few of the public meetings we had before stopping our work.

#### Commissioner's Comments

Mr. Justice – For future meetings it would be helpful to have an updated zoning map and a map showing parcels and streets. He suggested having a supply of printed copies that can be shared with the public. Mr. Bergstrom will address the request.

Ms. Seitz – The City has received a grant from the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control for a resiliency study in regards to sea level rise and its impact on the community. She has been asked to serve on the task force and will share information from the study with the Planning Commission.

Public Comments

Alice Riehl of the *New Castle Weekly* asked if topics like the definition of “fringe” and whether there should be a parking lot, etc. will wait until the next Comprehensive Plan is addressed in 2019. Mr. Baldini said these topics will be addressed in the Plan, but while discussions are taking place during the Plan process, the same discussions will continue with City Council. Ms. Riehl said City Council has just had the first reading of an ordinance concerning a parking lot on West Third Street. Mr. Baldini clarified that whether the ordinance is in place by 2019 or is still being discussed, it will part of the Comprehensive Plan Update.

Mr. Baldini said that “fringe” is a phrase used in the 2009 Comprehensive Plan. For at least three years a definition for “fringe” has been discussed because the root of parking discussions is based on that definition. Ms. Riehl reported that City Solicitor Dan Losco said at a recent City Council meeting that the parcel on West Third Street is included in the fringe. Mr. Baldini said that is Mr. Losco’s interpretation; there are other interpretations. In the Comprehensive Plan there is no interpretation.

Mr. Bergstrom said the subject parcel touches Battery Park. He assumes the interpretation is that any parcel in the historic district that touches a parcel in the non-historic district is considered fringe. Mr. Justice added the Historic Area Commission has jurisdiction over the park and as far south as the boat house, extending farther than the historic residential district and historic commercial district. Mr. Bergstrom said that parking lots are not permitted by zoning in historic or residential districts as a primary use.

Mr. Baldini said while we are in the Plan process this is an area that needs to have more definition and substance. We need to address the definition of ‘fringe’. Ms. Riehl believes there is a lot of interest among residents with the definition of ‘fringe’ and if it relates to parking in the City.

Ms. Seitz said one of the State PLUS Committee’s comments was that we need to try to identify funding sources and costs connected to the Update.

The Planning Commission’s next meeting is 8/28/17. There being no further business, a motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting at 7:15 p.m.

Debbie Turner  
Stenographer