

New Castle City Planning Commission Meeting

Minutes

October 23, 2017 -- 6:30 p.m.

City of New Castle Town Hall

Members Present: David Baldini, Chair  
Brenda Antonio  
Gail Seitz  
William Walters

Members Absent: Marco Boyce  
Joseph DiAngelo  
Jonathan Justice, Vice Chair  
Vera Worthy

Mr. Baldini called the meeting to order at 6:38 p.m. Roll call followed. Mr. Baldini declared no quorum to be present. A review of the 2019 Comprehensive Plan workshop (10/16/17) followed.

2019 Comprehensive Plan (Plan) – Presentations and some work from the planners (Debbie Pfeil, Lauren Cook—KCI Technologies) were reviewed. Mr. Baldini provided digital files for Commissioners. Commissioners have copies of worksheets showing organizations within the entire City and SWOT (strengths/weaknesses/opportunities/threats) analysis tasks. Commissioners are asked to compile a list of all events in the City. Mr. Baldini said we will be gathering information between now and November. Commissioners should finish reviewing the current Plan and provide what they suggest be changed, improved, and added, including comments. That data will be provided to the planners to consolidate. Mr. Baldini informed there is no WILMAPCO funding for this year. Planners (D. Pfeil and L. Good) are preparing paperwork to submit to WILMAPCO for their next budget cycle. We will be looking at other resources like student assistance from the University of Delaware (UD). At the last Planning Commission meeting Mr. Justice informed there are two classes at UD that could possibly provide some student assistance as part of the course curriculum.

It is Ms. Seitz's understanding the City was getting in-kind planning assistance; she asked for clarification. Mr. Baldini acknowledged we do have two in-kind planners from WILMAPCO. However, we are now looking at funding from WILMAPCO for 2018 for additional planner assistance that will be provided on a priority basis. KCI will work with City Administrator Bill Barthel to complete the application. The Planning Commission has not been asked for input at this point.

Ms. Seitz is not clear on how to get started. Mr. Baldini advised that Commissioners are to submit a list of organizations and events in the City individually by November and the planners will consolidate. Once the consolidation has been made assignments will be made in January. Mr. Baldini said the objective is to gather as much diverse information as possible using the templates provided. We need to gather more data than we currently have in the Plan.

Recently meetings conducted to discuss City 'branding' were conducted. Mr. Baldini and Ms. Antonio attended some of the sessions. Results are on a YouTube video. Branding will be included in the 2019 Plan update.

Ms. Seitz asked about the status of surveys associated with the neighborhood community meetings and when will those meetings begin. Mr. Baldini indicated the neighborhood community component will start in January. Some of the questions for the neighborhood survey will come from the SWOT analysis.

#### Commissioner's Comments

Ms. Seitz – The Resiliency Community Partnership met last week to review comments, results from the community meeting, review maps and start looking at critical structures and roads, dikes from a standpoint of identifying and preparing criteria for assessing their vulnerability, flooding, and sea level rise. She said the group began trying to assess any adaptation litigation strategies for critical infrastructure in the City. We are looking at priorities and possible strategies. Ms. Seitz said there will be another community meeting. The final report should be complete the beginning of 2018. DNREC's involvement with the group ends once the report is prepared. It is Ms. Seitz' hope the committee continues thereafter.

Ms. Antonio – Attending the branding sessions was helpful, specifically hearing insights of people in the City. She thinks the information will be useful when integrating branding with the Plan.

#### Public Comments

Karen Whalen, 17 West Third Street – Ms. Whalen asked if there is a defined public comment period planned for the Plan. Mr. Baldini explained the Planning Commission has 18 months to complete the update of the Plan. There will be opportunities for the public to give comments; those dates will be published later. Further, he said this body will be gathering information and preparing a draft Plan, but the final document is approved by City Council.

The Plan is not a legal document; it is designed to help guide the direction of the City. Ms. Whalen commented that by living in a historic City and it would be appropriate to define the historic district and what 'historic' means. Mr. Baldini informed it is defined in the current Plan, but interpretations may be different because it is not defined as well as we would like. We hope to define it better in the update.

Ms. Whalen asked if the historic district would merit more concern when planning a project and if the project were to the detriment of the historic district what would happen. Mr. Baldini stated it depends on who owns the project. She thinks the owners are the people who live in the City, adding that people who pay taxes and maintain properties in the historic district are as much owners of the historic area as anyone. Their thoughts and views should be taken into account. Infringements on that area are important. Ms. Seitz informed Ms. Whalen that the Historic Area Commission (HAC) is charged with overseeing the historic district using rules and regulations geared towards maintaining the historic character of the area. Ms. Whalen thinks the Planning Commission needs to consider impacts on the City and the individuals who live in the historic district when the group is planning projects in the historic district. Mr. Baldini said the current Plan does discuss the historic and cultural aspects of the City. We are looking to make it deeper. He said that

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using the maps as they are defined in the current Plan would allow Ms. Whalen to outline the historic district. He acknowledged it could be made better than it is currently written.

Ms. Whalen asked if the Plan comprises tracts of land, specifically Battery Park. Is Battery Park part of the historic district? Mr. Baldini said that Commissioners will be looking at bolstering the definition during the update process; however, because of the current language he cannot answer her question. Mr. Baldini said Ms. Whalen's input will be used to help refine and improve the current Plan.

Mr. Baldini encouraged input from the public for the Plan. Comments are welcome at monthly meetings. All meetings are public and will be published in the *New Castle Weekly*.

Ms. Whalen said the historic district should be better defined and anyone should be able to open the Plan and understand where the district is. Battery Park is as historic as any piece of land and should be included definitively if it is not already.

Sally Monigle, former Historic Area Commission chairperson, cannot say that Battery Park was ever defined as being part of the historic district.

The Planning Commission's next meeting is 11/20/17. There being no further business, a motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting at 7:10 p.m.

Debbie Turner  
Stenographer