

New Castle City Planning Commission Meeting
Minutes
November 16, 2020 -- 6:30 p.m.
Meeting via Zoom Technology

Members Present: David Baldini, Chair
William Walters, Vice Chair
Erin Sabatella
Jonathan Justice
John Lafferty
Vera Worthy
Joseph Day
Gail Seitz

Absent: Brenda Antonio

Mr. Baldini called the meeting to order at 6:3 p.m. Roll call followed and a quorum to conduct business was declared.

Minutes

A Motion to approve the Minutes of the October 26, 2020, meeting as presented was made, seconded and unanimously approved.

Commissioner's Comments

Comprehensive Plan

Mr. Baldini noted that to date there have been no comments from any agencies on the Comprehensive Plan.

Bike Delaware

Bike Delaware is having a free virtual all-day workshop on Designing Delaware Intersections for People on November 19. Three intersections in New Castle will be part of the workshop: 6th Street and Rt. 273, Rt. 141 and Rt. 273, and Hare's Corner. Mr. Baldini will look into the schedule of speakers and will send it to the Commissioners. More information can be found at <https://www.bikede.org>

Downtown District Development

The City has begun the early information-gathering stages of the DDD. Mr. Baldini will look into this further and update the Commission to see how goals in the Comprehensive Plan can be integrated into the City's plans to coordinate efforts.

Transportation Plan

The Transportation Plan is still in early stages. Ms. Seitz reported that City Council approved the members of the Advisory Committee and she and Mr. Lafferty will represent the Planning Commission on the Committee. The first meeting will be December 7, 2020.

Electric Car Charging Stations

Mr. Lafferty updated the Commissioners on the Subcommittee discussions relative to electric car charging stations. It was suggested that an electrical load analysis be done to determine if the existing infrastructure can support electric car chargers. The Subcommittee is looking into Level 2 car chargers, which require a 240 volt hookup.

It was also suggested that there be a preliminary pilot roll-out of car chargers in the lamp posts of the 3rd Street parking lot. The design of car chargers in the Historic District was discussed, during which having the chargers visually compatible with the Historic District while also having them easily recognizable as car chargers was debated. Other areas of discussion included the interface to activate and recharge vehicles and reaching out to other municipalities to learn how electric car chargers have been incorporated into their communities.

Mr. Walters opined that in addition to masking the car chargers the parking spaces should be identified as preferred for electric vehicles. A brief discussion was held of some options to ensure the use of parking spaces designated for electric vehicles could reasonably be enforced.

5-G Technology

Mr. Justice noted that 5-G technology requires 6-12 times as many antennas as current cellphone service and although they are not as large as the current antennas, they are unattractive. In general, municipalities are being advised to develop a standard set of regulations that applies to a wide variety of street furniture and utility pole attachments in anticipation of equipment installation. Mr. Justice suggested that because of the complexity of the matter the City Council, MSC, the Building Official and HAC all be included in conversations on how to proceed. Mr. Baldini added that MSC is in conversations with the telecom people relative to underground wiring, and Mr. Justice noted the FCC pre-emption makes it impossible for local governments to force the telecoms to install underground wiring.

Mr. Baldini will reach out to Mr. Bergstrom for initial guidance and report back to the Commissioners.

Site Plan Drawing Packages

Mr. Walters stated the City Code needs to be updated relative to site plan drawings and recommended that revisions be modeled after the New Castle County's Land Development Chapter. He will mark up the NCC Chapter and modify it for New Castle's specific requirements to ensure it is global enough to anticipate future needs and uses. He recommended that a draft be reviewed by the Building Official and the Planning Commission members before submitting it to City Council and the City Solicitor for review.

Mr. Baldini asked for an update on sewer system infrastructure and Mr. Walters noted that there is a Chapter devoted to stormwater systems, sewer system infrastructure, etc. He added that the proposed revisions to the Code would be a generic approach to land development in New Castle.

Mr. Day noted that the general requirements should include an updated list of other agency approvals that are necessary.

Comprehensive Plan

Ms. Seitz asked how the Commission will ensure forward progress on goals and strategies in the Comprehensive Plan is being made. Mr. Baldini noted that one of the recommendations was to meet with the City annually to discuss what the Commission hopes to accomplish in the upcoming year and opined those conversations would probably occur in February 2021. Ms. Seitz suggested creating a schedule of yearly goals that could be updated monthly to ensure there is forward progress.

1401 Johnson Way Parking Lot

At the request of Mr. Day, Mr. Baldini will ask that Mr. Bergstrom provide an update of landscaping for the parking lot at the December meeting.

Public Comment

Mr. Phil Gross

Mr. Gross suggested installing an electric car charging station by City Hall, by the tennis courts, or at parking closer to the Park, and opined the 3rd Street parking lot is not an optimum location. He noted that financing for electric car charging stations is on a decreasing scale and added that it appears the State wants to incentivize local municipalities to install stations sooner rather than later.

Relative to underground wiring, Mr. Gross opined that sidewalks and underground wiring sells a development.

There being no additional public comment and no further business to discuss, Mr. Baldini called for a Motion to adjourn.

A Motion to adjourn was made and seconded. On vote, the Motion was unanimously approved and the meeting adjourned at 7:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Weirich
Stenographer