

"A Historic Past"



"A Bright Future"

CITY OF DELAWARE CITY
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MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION
CITY OF DELAWARE CITY
Monday, September 10, 2018 – 7:00 p.m.
City Council Chamber

CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Hendry called to order the regular meeting of the Planning Commission (PC) at 7:02 p.m. Commissioners Dilliplane, Smith, Starrett and Renoll were in attendance. Also present were City Manager Houck and City Secretary Hanna.

ACTION ON THE PREVIOUS MINUTES

Commissioner Smith made the motion to accept the minutes from the August 6, 2018 meeting as written. Commissioner Dilliplane seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all ayes, motion carried.

DISCUSSION & PRESENTATION OF COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

Opening Remarks & Answers to Questions:

- Plan of attack: go systematically chapter by chapter each month.
 - The first chapters are based on research of what has happened that we are aware of and things that have never been incorporated.
 - Every chapter will have the information from the old, the existing, and the updated information to discuss and move it into a final form.
 - When the Planning Commission is satisfied with a chapter it will go to Mayor & Council to approve.
 - The intern, Danielle Metcalfe updated every chapter of the plan during her tenure here.

- City Manager will obtain the results of the survey and find out if it can be opened again for a longer period of time.
 - The last census was 2010 therefore working with stale information
 - The next census in 2020 will include what impact Fort DuPont has had on the City.
 - Suggestion: to do what the Pre-Plus Committee “requires” and perhaps not all of what they recommend.
 - Engage the Community for their contributions
- The purpose of the Comp Plan:
- Requirement of the State
 - The State wants to know what each city/town is planning that will impact lifestyle: i.e. water, utilities, health & human services, etc.
 - The penalty for not doing one would have an impact on loans, grants, revolving loans and other areas that involve resources for growth. i.e. municipal street aid, police grants, etc.
 - It also impacts the State when they go for grants, etc.
- Format
- The format is as laid out in each chapter.
 - May change sentences, etc.
 - Go through it person by person on topic by topic. If someone covered your topic and you have nothing to add, move on to next.

Commissioner Snow was unable to attend the meeting but forwarded her thoughts. She believes not enough is being done to promote the valuable assets that are in town such as a walking tour guide, prepare a pamphlet to describe how the lock works and to promote more of what does exist here.

Commissioner Dilliplane asked City Manager what type of community she would describe this town as: retirement, tourist or long term growth community. City Manager answered the town is in a position to grow but really has not been decided. Discussion continued with Commissioners weighing in on their definition of the town and some of the incentives that had taken place but not carried through. It was agreed that there has to be a united front among the Commissions, Mayor & Council and the residents and it's necessary to steer the opinion to clearly define what Delaware City is to become.

Commissioner Hendry asked if there was a way to sync the information with the census. City Manager Houck said a Comp Plan is a living document because of different decisions, opportunities, and things that did not happen as hoped will occur. The last update never included the annexation. A mid-term report at 5-years is required which will have more accurate information due to knowing the impact of Fort DuPont's redevelopment at that point in time.

At the Pre-Plus meeting all the State's agencies were there to give their recommendations of what we should be working on. Commissioner Renoll added that we are not reinventing the wheel but we need to prove to the State that we took the pulse of the community and spent the time to make reasonable assessments of what we have. Commissioner Starrett and City Manager agree if it's something not meeting the needs or character of the community then we work on that.

Commissioner Hendry said it appears to be a paper full of numbers and asked what are we to look for? City Manager said the key things are suggested on pages 10 – 11.

Commissioner Dilliplane said as he went through he jotted down thoughts. City Manager said the key things are on page 10 showing the 2008 plan. Page 11 is her tweaks from 2008 along with draft goals and strategies for that chapter...

CHAPTER DISCUSSION

Commissioner Dilliplane said what jumped out at him looking at the graphs was:

- The disparity in income and in education compared to the rest of the state and county

He believes it's necessary to make ourselves attractive to the higher income potential residents based on the projections of doubling our size in the next 8 to 10 years.

- Upgrade the attractiveness of the homes in town
- Feels the prices of the Ft. DuPont homes are too high
- Receive a negative connotation from Delaware City Refinery
- Positive shot in the arm if Ft DuPont would advertise themselves as part of Delaware City
- Enforce codes; make slum lords upgrade their properties
- Downtown is difficult because of the income it's difficult to support a business that is not a necessity
- Someway to get help from County or State to reduce taxes to help the building owners to lower their rents to entice new businesses.
- Historic Preservation: relax our rules enough to not discourage homeowners to make repairs and to allow energy efficient cost effective alternatives.

City Manager Houck's responses:

- Property maintenance and attractiveness has been difficult. The Code Enforcer is no longer with us. We are bringing in a consultant on part time basis.
- The rental property inspection ordinance was in place before she came to Delaware City; people complained; Mayor & Council said to not enforce it;
- City Manager made the recommendation to Mayor & Council for changes but it was left on the table.

- The September meeting has an ordinance to repeal it. The landlords who did pay the fees will be reimbursed.
- Believes we can do better, just how is to be determined.

Commissioner Starrett asked if there was enough work to warrant a full time Code Enforcer. City Manager explains how much is involved. It is possible for the town to put a lien on properties but very hard on the follow through. Discussion continued on methods and means to enforce code violations including posting names in City News or the like. Commissioner Dilliplane suggested when ascertaining the nature of each house to also annotate the condition.

City Manager and Commissioner Dilliplane discussed the problem with Fort DuPont identifying with Delaware City. The annexation made it part of Delaware City but it is privately owned within the City.

Regarding lower rents to seed new businesses is usually run by Main Street Association. Some communities/towns have paid staff for Main Street to assist with businesses. City Manager considers becoming more involved in the National Main Street and attending one of their conferences to learn more.

Commissioner Dilliplane also adds the infrastructure of the town needs updating particularly repaving the streets. City Manager shares there are plans to repave at the same time the Washington Street project repaving is done for savings of time and money. Core samples have been taken to know how much paving is warranted. Talks with our Legislatures have also taken place. Washington Street paving is planned for November so working with small period of time. Commissioner Hendry mentions that although the repaving is not a part of the current chapters it needs to be thought through.

Commissioner Smith said as an owner of an historic home and having dealt with HPC he doesn't quite understand the guidelines HPC follows. He asked if one of the Commissioners could attend a PC meeting to explain. A request will be made for someone to attend the next meeting. City Manager Houck suggests the HPC requirements should be more available to the public.

Commissioner Smith also believes college degrees and tradesmen are stereotypical when yearly income can be equal. Marketing is a problem and it's necessary to find ways to do better.

City Manager highlights the population on page 11 which was one item the Pre Planning said we needed to address. Commissioner Dilliplane asked what the occupancy projections for 2020 are for Fort DuPont. He believes knowing that will be beneficial for putting the comp plan together. Commissioner Renoll believes it is a good statement and should be part of the new plan.

Commissioner Dilliplane brought up the goal to encourage infill development in the Downtown to include residential options. He believes we should be encouraging business options. City Manager explains its business on the bottom, residence on the top. By agreement of the Commissioners, it was changed to say: "encourages infill development in the Downtown that includes upper floors owner occupied residential options." Commissioner Dilliplane says it works best for owner to live above business for tax purposes and the owner has a more vested interests in keeping it viable.

Discussion then turned to what types of businesses should be allowed or not allowed. Commissioner Renoll says when a business wants to open in his property he looks at what is best for the overall town. City Manager suggests we look into how other towns handle that issue.

It was suggested to look for beautification grants for the town. Time is critical in doing that. There are some grants in the process now. We have joined lists that provide awareness of what grants are available.

City Manager said binders with the entire plan will be provided with the entire plan and for keeping the notes as we go along. To have the information all in one place will prove beneficial when it's time to go before Council. Each month can include the agenda, the chapters and the minutes to keep for reference along the process.

Commissioner Hendry asked for a motion. Commissioner Dilliplane makes the motion to accept the information on pages 11 - 12 with the understanding that the final decisions will be after the addition of the notes and thoughts as discussed tonight. Commissioner Smith seconded the motion. The Commissioners all agreed. Motion accepted.

Commissioner Dilliplane made a motion to begin the meetings at 6:30 p.m. in the future. Commissioner Smith seconded the motion. It was accepted by everyone. Motion carried. Meetings will now begin at 6:30 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Dilliplane made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Smith seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all ayes. Meeting adjourned at 8:37 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Bonnie Lynn Hanna
City Secretary