PARKS, RECREATION, AND COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

The Parks, Recreation, and Community Enhancement Committee meeting was held on July 13, 2015, at 3:30 p.m. with Chairman Anderson presiding. Members present were Mr. Hosfelt, Mr. Lewis, Mr. Caldwell, and Mrs. Horsey (arrived 3:32). Councilman Hutchison was also present.

AGENDA ADDITIONS/DELETIONS

By unanimous consent, the agenda was approved as presented.

Review of Revised Active Recreation Area Plan - Eden Hill Farm Traditional Neighborhood Design - Residential District

Mrs. Dawn Melson-Williams, Principal Planner, stated that this application is associated with the Residential District Revised Implementation Plan for the Traditional Neighborhood Design project known as Eden Hill Farm and advised members that a representative of the ownership company was present and available to answer any questions.

Mrs. Melson-Williams explained that the project began in 2006 and is now under new ownership, stating that the new owners have brought forth a revised implementation plan for how the property will be developed. Mrs. Melson-Williams explained that the Planning Commission approved 742 units which are a mix of single-family, duplex, townhouse, and multi-family units. Mrs. Melson-Williams stated that the original plan for the open space and active recreation area included a series of individual park areas scattered throughout the residential area. The proposed revision is to develop a large central open space area, just over nine (9) acres, while retaining a series of the smaller parks throughout the residential area.

Mrs. Melson-Williams explained that there is currently a total of approximately 83 housing units constructed in the neighborhood, noting that the Zoning Ordinance for the City of Dover prescribes how much active recreation space is required based on the number of units. She stated that this project would require 4.68 acres of open space and active recreation area; however, the proposed revisions well exceed that minimum requirement.

Referring to the Overall Open Space Site Plan, Mrs. Melson-Williams pointed out the nine (9) acre central open space area. Mrs. Melson-Williams then referred to the Clubhouse Open Space Plan, which focuses on the central open space and the number of amenities being proposed. She advised members that this would include a clubhouse building, which has internal spaces such as a gym and meeting rooms; a swimming pool; parking area to serve the facility; tennis courts; a basketball court; a community garden; a playground; picnic area; and various amenities that go along with that, as well as benches and bicycle racks.

Mrs. Melson-Williams stated that Eden Hill Farm has a traditional neighborhood design for which there is an associated pattern book with the details of what would have to be included in the project. She indicated that, upon staff approval of the plan, staff provided the developer a series of recommendations to be included. Mrs. Melson-Williams explained that staff is in support of the concept for a large open space area, noting that staff had provided a series of comments to either

clarify items on the plan or improve the project. Mrs. Melson-Williams asked the Committee to review the active recreation plan and provide any comments or guidance on the parks and recreation component of the proposal, stating that those comments would be forwarded to the Planning Commission for consideration during their August meeting.

Staff recommended approval of the revised active recreation plan for the Eden Hill Farm Traditional Neighborhood Design - Presidential District with the comments and conditions provided.

Ms. Andrea Finerosky, Pettinaro Construction Company, stated that they were representing Eden Hill and were also the developer of Blue Hen Apartments. Ms. Finerosky advised members that the clubhouse proposed for Eden Hill is similar to the one at Blue Hen Apartments; however, the one at Blue Hen is only 2,200 sq. ft., whereas the clubhouse for Eden Hill will be 5,000 sq. ft. to accommodate the larger tenant base.

In response to Mr. Caldwell, Ms. Finerosky stated that the open space will either be maintained by the developer or the homeowners association (HOA).

Responding to Mr. Hosfelt, Ms. Finerosky stated that Pettinaro is overall in agreement with the recommendations made by staff, noting that Pettinaro needs further clarification on some points.

In response to Mr. Hutchison, Ms. Finerosky stated that Pettinaro will manage the project and the management team will be similar to the team at the Blue Hen Apartments. Mr. Hutchison stated he was very pleased with the management at Blue Hen Apartments and that they do a great job.

Responding to Mrs. Horsey, Ms. Finerosky stated many of staff's comments are just general suggestions and reminders of what needs to be done to be in compliance; however, there are one (1) or two (2) things that they had not yet determined if they are in agreement with, noting that this will be worked out and they are largely in support of the comments.

In response to Mrs. Horsey, Mrs. Melson-Williams stated that the Committee would be advised if there are any concerns; however, she reminded members that the role of the members is to provide a recommendation that will go to the Planning Commission for a final plan to be presented to Council.

Responding to Mrs. Horsey, Ms. Finerosky stated that the larger acreage for the open space was designed to accommodate the additional units. She stated that they believe a larger area would serve the community better than several smaller pocket parks, noting that the plan includes those as well.

In response to Mrs. Horsey, Ms. Finerosky stated that the layout and design of the office area attached to the clubhouse matches the apartments. She noted that it is not residential and would be used as a leasing office. Ms. Finerosky noted that part of the space may also serve as a model.

Mr. Hosfelt moved to recommend approval of the revised Active Recreation Area Plan for Eden Hill Farm Traditional Neighborhood Design - Residential District, as recommended by staff. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Horsey and unanimously carried.

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program Quarterly Update

Mrs. Ann Marie Townshend, Director of Planning and Community Development, stated that the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) had approved the 2015 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Five (5) Year Consolidated Plan and staff would be moving forward with entering into agreements with sub-recipients. Mrs. Townshend stated that focus has been on the Restoring Central Dover Initiative and working to leverage CDBG funding sources to promote home ownership in the downtown area.

In regard to the Mayor's Challenge to End Veterans' Homelessness, Mrs. Townshend advised members that, although the report indicated that 24 veterans had been housed by June 12, 2015, three (3) additional veterans had found housing; therefore, this was a successful effort.

Responding to Mr. Anderson, Mrs. Townshend stated that unrecovered funds would not roll over but would stay with the National Council on Agricultural Life and Labor Research (NCALL).

In response to Mr. Anderson, Mrs. Townshend stated that all six (6) homebuyers have been approved.

Responding to Mr. Anderson, Mrs. Townshend stated that there have not been any home repair projects this year. She indicated that some funding had carried over from the previous year; however, it had been expended, noting that this was handled through the Milford Housing Development Corporation (MHDC).

Draft Recreation Needs Assessment/Strategic Planning and Goal Setting (Restoring Central Dover Strategic Plan)

Mrs. Ann Marie Townshend, Director of Planning and Community Development, reviewed the City of Dover 2015 Recreation Needs Assessment report. Mrs. Townshend pointed out that the maps that they were able to obtain from the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) were useful in helping to identify some of the under-served areas. Referring to the map on Page 7 of the report, Mrs. Townshend explained that the colored areas indicate neighborhoods that are not within 15 minutes walking distance to a public recreation facility. She noted; however, that the map does not take into account that a lot of communities have open space which may contain a playground or some other type of recreation. Mrs. Townshend identified the City's anchor parks (Schutte Park, Dover Park, and Silver Lake Park) and the walk zones around those parks. She stated that one (1) of the criticisms that initiated the assessment was that the bulk of the investment in recreational facilities has been in an area that has the least amount of population served in terms of walking distance.

Mrs. Townshend noted that one (1) of the providers that the City does not have a very strong working relationship with is Kent County Parks and Recreation, and this was identified as a priority to improve; however, the City has a very strong relationship with the Capital School District and the YMCA. Mrs. Townshend stated that the YMCA brings kids to Camp Small Wonder, which the City runs through a grant at Delaware State University, and the City does a lot of joint programming with the Capital School District to support their athletics and get people involved who are interested in the City's Parks and Recreation programs.

Mrs. Townshend stated that the report included information about how the services the City provides are paid for, noting that 21% of the Parks and Recreation Department's budget is supported by fees. When including the Public Works Grounds Division, who maintains the parks and flower beds, this percentage drops to 8%.

Mrs. Townshend advised that one (1) of the recommendations in the comments section of the survey was to seek sponsorships, noting success in this area in regard to the Concerts on the Green. She stated that this area could be expanded upon if other corporate sponsorships are available.

Mrs. Townshend stated that an important component of the assessment was the percentage of feedback that came from City residents versus non-City residents. She advised members that 28% of the people who responded did not live in the City, 20% declined to answer, and more than half of the responses were from individuals who live in the City. Mrs. Townshend shared that there was a lot of support for funding the City's programs largely by fees, and grants and General Fund dollars were also suggested. Mrs. Townshend advised that data from the State of Delaware's state-wide survey was also used, and 267 people who responded to that survey lived in the City of Dover. She noted that the State's survey was a phone survey, whereas the City had an online survey. Although it helped to gauge what the citizens wanted, it did not indicate a strong preference for any particular amenity, noting that the highest response for any particular amenity was 17%, and the amenity with the biggest response was restrooms at Silver Lake and Dover Parks. Mrs. Townshend stated that portable bathrooms are currently at those locations; however, if a patron does not utilize the facilities after a recent cleaning, they could likely have a bad experience.

Mrs. Townshend indicated that other items of interest were paved trails, fitness stations, and lawn trails, which was consistent with the State survey, and there was strong support for walking and biking trails. She indicated that this was good because the State has made some significant investments in those areas. Mrs. Townshend noted that the biggest reason people go to Dover Park is to walk or jog; however, Dover Park does not have a path and she advised members that is something that could be put into the capital plan using both City and State funds.

Referring to Page 12 of the report, Implementation Strategies, Mrs. Townshend stated that the first implementation strategy was to develop a master plan for each of the three (2) anchor parks, starting with Dover Park. She advised that the Request For Proposal (RFP) for Dover Park will address indoor restrooms, a paved loop trail system, potentially fitness stations along the trail, a skate park, a splash pad, and bicycle racks. Mrs. Townshend noted that everything will not happen at once; however, the master plan will identify where each item will go and how it will be implemented. She advised that this process has already begun at Schutte Park with a land survey. She indicated that

there are about 14 undeveloped acres there that need to be utilized and parking is something that needs to be considered as well. Mrs. Townshend explained that the City will be using in-house engineering staff to review the results of the land survey to begin laying out a plan for the undeveloped acres at Schutte Park. She noted that Silver Lake will likely be the last park to be addressed because the survey indicated that amenities desired at that location included an indoor restroom and a splash pad; however, infrastructure is not in place to provide those amenities at this time and the park is heavily utilized without them.

Mrs. Townshend advised members that another amenity that surfaced as a result of the survey was a request for a pickleball court and a dog park, and those requests will be considered. She reiterated the importance of continuing to improve and monitor the neighborhood parks and playgrounds as well.

Mrs. Townshend stated that one (1) of the biggest challenges is that there is not a stable funding stream for the Parkland Reserve Fund, which funds improvements to the parks. She stated that she is working on expanding and improving partnerships to help fund those improvements and find other ways to increase the Parkland Reserve. Mrs. Townshend explained that one (1) of the resources used to increase this fund is a cash-in-lieu contribution from residential developments that do not provide recreation. She indicated that when a developer puts in amenities, they often do not know the needs of the potential residents, which can lead to amenities that are not used and become dilapidated. Citing some examples, Mrs. Townshend mentioned the basketball court at Village of Westover, which has stood without backboards, hoops, and nets, etc., and the playground equipment at Maple Glen, which houses mostly retirees. The few families that do have young children in Maple Glen have play sets in their back yards. She indicated that these types of amenities often become a burden to the homeowners associations and code enforcement.

Mrs. Townshend advised that one (1) recommendation was to amend the zoning ordinance to eliminate the requirement to provide active recreation areas and instead impose a surcharge on building permits to generate revenue toward the Parkland Reserve, along with putting in other mechanisms, such as sponsorships.

Mrs. Townshend advised members that 67% of the responses to the survey included a request to have City residents pay a lower fee than non-City residents.

Responding to Mr. Hosfelt regarding the City of Dover's relationship with Kent County Parks and Recreation, Mrs. Townshend stated there is a spirit of friendly competition; however, she spoke to Mr. Jeremy Sheppard, Director of Parks and Recreation for Kent County, about shifting gears and working more toward collaboration, noting that Mr. Scott Koenig, City Manager, and Mr. Mike Petit DeMange, Kent County Administrator, had also had discussions in an effort to work collaboratively.

In response to Mr. Hosfelt, Mrs. Townshend confirmed that City recreation fees are currently the same for residents and non-residents.

Mr. Hutchison expressed the importance of the City Manager, Finance Director, and City staff putting together a master plan forecasting three (3) to 25 years ahead to determine how the City will continue to support financing the recreational needs of the City. He pointed out that the needs of the City are going to continue to grow in all areas, including infrastructure, and stressed the importance of developing a plan to financially support those needs, noting the recent tax increase that was necessary to maintain the needs of the City and its residents.

Mrs. Townshend stated that various parks and amenities require different levels of maintenance, staff time, cost, and enforcement, noting that adding indoor restrooms and splash pads requires water and sewer usage, as well as more time and money to maintain, versus a path system which requires less maintenance.

Mr. Anderson stated that it was important to find out what the people want and need. Referring to the Implementation Strategies for Dover Park on Page 12 of the report, Mr. Anderson noted the park's playground, driving trails, softball field, tennis court, and basketball court, and stated that the request of the community was to have a walking trail and fitness station. Responding, Mrs. Townshend advised that those requests would not be difficult to achieve; however, some things that need to be considered include vegetation and lighting, which are areas of concern for the safety needs of park users. Mrs. Townshend pointed out that, although the parks are technically closed at dusk, the reality is that people still go into the parks and lighting and other safety measures need to be considered.

Responding to Mr. Anderson regarding the status of the plans for Dover Park, Mrs. Townshend advised that vendors have been contacted to obtain information on portable bathrooms, reminding members that Dover Park still has plumbing to support indoor bathrooms, but Silver Lake does not and it is the most popular park.

In response to Mr. Anderson, Mrs. Townshend stated that the survey indicated a splash pad was one (1) of the amenities desired but was not very high on the list for any of the parks.

Mrs. Townshend advised that the survey measures how many people request an amenity but not how strongly or how high of a priority it is, which is hard to measure. She stated that when people make specific comments, such as those related to the skate pad, dog park, and splash pad, that gives a stronger indication of what they want versus just answering yes or no on a survey.

Responding to Mr. Anderson, Mrs. Townshend stated that a lot of interest was expressed for indoor bathrooms; however, she noted they require maintenance and it would be important for them to be locked at night for security reasons.

In response to Mr. Anderson, Mrs. Townshend advised that she had not heard any feedback concerning a rugby field or football field at Schutte Park. She had heard feedback for a turf field at Schutte Park; however, that is very expensive and would be difficult to lay out with the parking. She stated that the challenge with a football field is the wear and tear it puts on specific areas of the field, and public input from the various park users helps to determine the layout of the park and what activities are of interest. Mrs. Townshend noted that currently the Delaware Union and the

Delaware Diamonds girls lacrosse groups use the fields at Schutte Park, stating that it would be useful to get some feedback from them. She indicated that she has heard that the boys lacrosse team that currently uses the field at Brecknock Park may be interested in using the fields if some improvements are made.

Responding to Mr. Anderson regarding feedback on current programs, Mrs. Townshend stated that one of the complaints she has heard is that people do not seem to know about the programs currently being offered. She said she was trying to find ways to make the public more aware of the programs through email, facebook, and other methods.

Referring to page 2 of the City of Dover Recreation Needs Assessment, Mr. Anderson felt this was a good summary of what the City is trying to offer. He stated that it reflects the City's Comprehensive Plan which calls for city-wide parks, open space plans, and individual parks.

Mr. Anderson suggested that the Committee review the Recreation Needs Assessment and provide positive suggestions to continue to improve the recreation plan and determine what is needed and what funding mechanisms will be necessary. He stated that the City of Dover was a prosperous and healthy city where families can enjoy the amenities of the city with a good quality of life and access to recreation and arts for people of all ages; however, it is important to continue to improve and look at other areas of community development and make sure housing is revitalized.

Responding to Mr. Anderson, Mrs. Townshend stated that the capital budget for the Parks and Recreation Department had $180,000 remaining for Dover Park and $66,000 for Mallard Pond.

In response to Mr. Anderson, Mrs. Townshend stated that she believed there was about $300,000 remaining in the Parkland Reserve Fund. Regarding splash pads, Mrs. Townshend confirmed that, while the splash pads themselves are not expensive, pipes and infrastructure can become very expensive very quickly.

Responding to Mr. Anderson concerning cost examples and proposed plans for next year's budget, Mrs. Townshend explained that the idea, once the Recreation Needs Assessment was complete, was to reevaluate the capital plan and base it off the Needs Assessment and master plans to develop the park. Mrs. Townshend stated that the master plan for Schutte Park needed to be completed and that a master plan for Dover Park would likely use some funds from the capital fund.

In response to Mr. Anderson, Mrs. Townshend stated that she did not have information on the cost of portable restrooms at the moment but would be happy to provide the information after the meeting.

Ms. Theresa Morris, 1378 Old White Oak Road, stated that she helps with the Youth Advisory Committee and would like to see a lot more activities for teenagers. Ms. Morris referred to the recent shootings and drug activity, stating she felt it important to create activities geared toward the teenage group to keep them busy and out of trouble.

Ms. Morris stated that there seemed to be a lot of activities for younger kids; however, it appears there is a lack of activities and organizations available for the teenaged group. She stated that she has heard feedback expressing interest in a skate park, noting that Smyrna has one. As the capital of the First State, she would like to see as much offered for the youth in Dover. Ms. Morris noted that Mr. Anderson had discussed bringing back First Night for New Year's and that she would love to see that return. She suggested block parties allowing the kids to participate, show their talents, and keep them involved and off of the streets.

Ms. Morris expressed her appreciation to Mr. Anderson for reviving the Youth Advisory Committee, stating that she anticipates a lot of good things for the youth of the community.

In regard to Strategic Planning and Goal Setting, Mr. Anderson, referred members to the Executive Summary of the Restoring Central Dover report, "Our Vision for Vitality." He advised members that the reason for the strategic plan, as stated by Mr. Hutchison, was to focus on three (3) things when considering future budgets: 1) why something is being done, 2) how it can be accomplished, and 3) what is being offered. Mr. Anderson reiterated the importance of determining these things to ensure that what is being offered is what is needed and will be used by the people. He explained that the report was completed using focus groups, surveys, and town meetings to find out in a comprehensive way what people want. He stated that this was a great starting point for central Dover and essential to its revival. Mr. Anderson stated that the plan had been very useful as a blueprint to the City Planning and Community Development offices. He stated that the plan focuses on recreation, economic inclusion, safety, and restoring and revitalizing neighborhoods.

Mr. Anderson called for an "at ease" to give members an opportunity to review the Restoring Central Dover Strategic report.

Mr. Anderson suggested further future discussion on the Recreation Needs Assessment, State survey, and Restoring Central Dover report.

Mr. Hosfelt moved to recommend continued discussion of the Recreation Needs Assessment and Restoring Central Dover Strategic Plan at the next Parks, Recreation, and Community Enhancement Committee meeting, seconded by Mrs. Horsey and unanimously carried.

Discussion - Community Partnerships

Mrs. Townshend advised members that the Parks and Recreation Department plans to meet with Pastor Will Grimes to collaborate on recreation programming at the new community outreach center for the Solid Rock Baptist Church, hoping to make that a hub of activity in the downtown area for youth and people of all ages.

Responding to Mr. Anderson, Mrs. Townshend advised that she has only heard general discussion regarding revitalizing the Police Athletic League. She stated that there had not been many discussions regarding the Inner City Cultural League; however, she noted that once they are settled into their new location it was her hope to discuss opportunities to work on programming there as

well. Mrs. Townshend explained that the Parks and Recreation Department does not get very involved in the area of the arts; however, Ms. Margery Cyr, Director of the Dover Public Library, was working on some collaborations related to theater.

In response to Mr. Anderson, Mrs. Townshend explained that the Boys and Girls Club is currently focused on getting their new facility established and had been working very closely with the County on getting that up and running. She stated that, while there have not been a lot of discussions with the Boys and Girls Club in terms of working together, once they are established and their facility is open, it was her hope to resume discussions on working together on various programming.

Mrs. Townshend stated that staff had been working closely with the YMCA and Ms. Mary Ellen Gray, Kent County Planning Services. Mrs. Townshend advised members that she also sits on an informal working group to discuss plans for the former Kent Swim Club in Dover and how it could best serve the community as a whole. She anticipates a positive outcome from those discussions.

Mrs. Horsey moved for adjournment, seconded by Mr. Caldwell and unanimously carried.

Meeting adjourned at 4:56 p.m.

David L. Anderson
Chairman

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