PARKS, RECREATION, AND COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

The Parks, Recreation, and Community Enhancement Committee Meeting was held on September 8, 2014, at 3:30 p.m. with Chairman Dixon presiding. Members present were Mr. Hutchison, Mr. Anderson, Mr. Caldwell, and Mrs. Horsey. Mayor Christiansen was also present.

AGENDA ADDITIONS/DELETIONS

Mr. Hutchison moved for approval of the agenda, seconded by Mrs. Horsey and unanimously carried.

Review of Active Recreation Area Plan - Tall Pines at 1655 and 1665 Kenton Road

Mr. Bill Cook, Planner I, advised members that the proposed project is a multi-family residential development to be known as Tall Pines. A previous Site Development Plan and Parcel Consolidation Plan (S-04-33) for the project were approved by the Planning Commission in December 2004 with Final Site Plan approval in October 2005. Some site improvements commenced, existing buildings were demolished, and foundation work began but subsequently ceased; therefore, the original plan expired.

The proposed project includes a total of 24 dwelling units in two (2) buildings on 2.34 acres, which is a density of approximately 10.2 dwelling units per acre.

Mr. Cook advised members that the plan consisted of three (3) areas south of the site: 1) a walking path surrounding the storm water facility, 2) a lawn game area between the two (2) structures, and 3) an area closer to the intersection of the roads.

Staff recommended approval of the Active Recreation Area Plan with the following recommended changes:

a. Area 1: Relocate horseshoe pits to Area 2 to comply with required setbacks of game/court facilities from adjacent properties (*Zoning Ordinance*, Article 5 §10.15).

b. Area 1: Add grills and a picnic table to Area 1. Provide accessible path to the picnic table. Revise ornamental tree plantings in the area to shade tree plantings.

c. Area 1: The woodchip/mulch walking path should include a defined edging that will prevent encroachment of grass and/or weeds into the path area.

d. Area 2: Relocate a bench from the storm water retention pond Area 1 site to near lawn game area with an accessible path.

e. Area 3: This lawn game area is shown to have a sloping grading near the building. Due to its location and configuration it is not a viable area for active recreation activities.

In addition, to meet the objectives of Article 10 §10 2.2 of the *Zoning Ordinance,* staff recommended additional outdoor bicycle parking to include a minimum of two (2) spaces per building entrance (total eight (8) spaces). Planned improvements on Kenton Road will include bicycle lanes, and potential improvements in neighborhoods south of the project site which are anticipated to improve bicycle connectivity to parks, schools, shopping areas, and nearby recreational amenities, such as the YMCA.

a. The use of "Inverted-U" racks capable of supporting of two (2) bicycles each are recommended, for a total of four (4) which exceeds the code requirement of three (3).

b. Any indoor storage areas capable of secure bicycle storage, within individual units or in common, should be noted.

In response to Mrs. Horsey concerning the buffering on the west side of the recreational use area, Mr. Cook advised members that a buffer of existing trees was provided in this area, noting that the requirements for buffering were related to adjacent properties rather than parking lots.

Responding to Mr. Anderson regarding the addition of grills to the common area, Mr. Cook stated that it was the request of the City's Fire Marshal to provide community grills in the active recreational area to minimize the chances that homeowners might try to use personal grills on their balconies or store propane, which are not permitted per the City's Code.

In response to Mr. Hutchison, Mr. Cook indicated that the hours of use for the active recreational area had not yet been established.

Responding to Mr. Dixon's concerns regarding the community's involvement in the planning process for the active recreation area, Mrs. Ann Marie Townshend, Director of Planning and Community Development, advised members that the area was meant to be used exclusively by homeowners within the proposed complex and not by the community; therefore, the public was not involved in the planning process. She noted that the project as a whole would be brought before the Planning Commission for a public hearing.

In response to Mr. Caldwell concerning the horseshoe pits in the active recreation area, Mrs. Townshend explained that they were part of the original application in 2004, which was approved. Construction was started and infrastructure was put in place, but the plan then expired. Mrs. Townshend stated that the applicant was simply bringing back the same plan, as originally approved in 2004.

Mr. Caldwell inquired who would be responsible for maintaining the active recreation area. Responding, Mr. Joe Petrosky, Woodbrook Ventures, LLC, stated that the residents and homeowners within the community would develop an association to maintain the area, as originally planned when the project began in 2004. Mr. Petrosky noted that the grills were added to accommodate a requirement and not something that he personally favored.

Mr. Anderson moved to recommend approval of the Active Recreation Plan for Tall Pines at 1655 and 1665 Kenton Road with staff's recommended changes, seconded by Mr. Hutchison and unanimously carried.

Statistics for Homeownership/Rentals in the City of Dover (*Request of Councilman Hutchison*)

Mrs. Ann Marie Townshend, Director of Planning and Community Development, advised members that, according to the United States Census Bureau, the homeownership rate in Dover from the period of 2008-2012 was 55.1%. This was an increase over the 2000 Census, when the homeownership rate was documented at 52.3%; however, the methodology for collecting and reporting this data changed between the 2000 and 2010 Census.

Mrs. Townshend stated that, at 55.1%, Dover has a higher homeownership rate than Wilmington, Georgetown, and Seaford, but lower than Newark, Smyrna, and Milford, which places Dover in a median rate of homeownership. She noted that there was definitely room for improvement, recognizing the importance of maintaining or increasing the rate of homeownership, especially in the downtown area. Mrs. Townshend advised members that, according to the Restoring Central Dover Study, the project area (bounded by William Street on the north, Hope Street on the south, State Street on the east, and West Street on the west, and including Lincoln Park) had a homeownership rate of 25% and a rental rate of 75%. Mrs. Townshend stated that a key strategy of revitalizing the central Dover neighborhoods would include increasing the rate of homeownership. In the coming months, the City will be looking for opportunities to build upon existing incentives such as tax incentives, potentially building permit fee reductions, etc., to help make it affordable and desirable for people to own homes in the downtown area.

Responding to Mr. Hutchison, Mrs. Townsend stated that, according to the 2008-2012 American Community Survey, the City of Wilmington's homeownership rate was 47.9%, which was significantly less than the City of Dover's rate. Mr. Hutchison indicated that it was important not only to prevent the rate of homeownership from falling but to work to increase that percentage, particularly in the downtown area, where the current rate of 25% was unacceptable. Mrs. Townshend stated that the two (2) closest municipalities geographically, Smyrna and Milford, had homeownership rates of 66.8% and 60.4% respectively, and this indicated there was room for significant improvement in Dover.

Mr. Hutchison stated that in his mind there are two (2) cities in Delaware: Wilmington and the Capital City of Dover, and shared his opinion that the staff and the community should be educated on homeownership statistics to work together for improvement.

Expressing his appreciation and support of the efforts being made to promote homeownership in the City of Dover, Mr. Anderson also pointed out that some of the difference between rates in Dover and in the cities of Smyrna and Milford may relate to fact that the population of those municipalities nearly doubled, mostly due to the addition of new developments of single-family homes, during the building boom. He felt that their growth may be the result of these increases rather than changes made by these cities. In addition, Mr. Anderson attributed some of Dover's rental rates to the volume of renters in Dover due to the Dover Air Force Base and military families.

Mr. Dixon reiterated the importance of affordable housing so that people can live in Dover.

Mrs. Tracey Harvey, Planner I, advised members that settlement assistance for homeownership had been increased to $20,000 city-wide to help provide affordable housing for those who qualify. In addition, she explained that part of the discussions held regarding the Restoring Downtown Central Dover Initiative had included adding a provision that some settlement assistance money could be used toward rehabilitating the properties purchased in the downtown area.

Ms. Yvonne Hall, 228 North State Street, stated that she is a business owner in the downtown Dover area and also a real estate agent. Ms. Hall noted that the town of Camden was not included in the census, stating their homeownership rate was 70%. Ms. Hall expressed her concern about the percentage of homeownership within the City of Dover and offered to provide assistance wherever needed, stating that, as a real estate agent, she may be able to assist with finding financing programs and other avenues that potential homebuyers could pursue. In response to Ms. Hall, Mrs. Townshend noted that Camden was not included in the figures provided because the U.S. Census Bureau did not provide information for towns whose size and population were much smaller than Dover, such as Camden, Wyoming, Magnolia, etc.

Ms. Paula Kinsey, 224 North State Street, owner of "Tea for Two, inquired if the City had a beautification plan, stating the importance of improving the appearance of properties by keeping trees trimmed and houses and buildings painted. She stated that proper care of properties should be enforced. Ms. Kinsey noted some unsightly things she had observed, such as long weeds at the old Dover Public Library and cigarette butts at the Dover Post Office and new Dover Public Library, and suggested utilizing volunteers to assist with clean up and maintenance, as well as adding flowers and just being neat and clean in general. She encouraged everyone to show and take pride in our City.

Mr. Hutchison assured Ms. Kinsey and everyone present that the City does have a beautification program and that the City's code enforcement officers and inspectors work diligently to maintain the appearance of the City; however, recently some of those resources have had to be reallocated toward new issues the City is facing, such as 350 vacant homes and commercial buildings, which had placed many demands on the Planning Department. However, Mr. Hutchison stated that this would improve as some of the issues are addressed and resolved. In response, Ms. Kinsey said she would be happy to offer her time to work toward the City's efforts.

Mr. Dixon expressed his appreciation of the efforts of all of the departments of the City that work toward resolving these issues, stating that the City would continue to work hard to keep its appearance of the City; however, it costs money to do so.

Mrs. Horsey expressed her appreciation for Ms. Kinsey's comments, stating that part of this Committee's name is "Community Enhancement." She noted that everyone loves the flowers; however, among those flowers are trash, weeds, and cigarette butts. She stated that homeowners are not taking care of the exterior of their homes, this applied to some government-owned buildings as well, and that promoting a clean City means more than just pretty flowers.

Progress Report - Downtown Development District Application

Mrs. Ann Marie Townshend, Director of Planning and Community Development, advised members that Ms. Connie Holland, Executive Director, and Mr. David Edgell, Principal Planner, both from the Office of the State Planning Coordination, were present in the audience to field questions.

Mrs. Townshend referred to her memorandum dated August 29, 2014 regarding Update on Downtown Development District Application and Incentive Ideas, stating that this memo focused specifically on incentives. She said that the City had been working to gather the data required to complete the application, noting that the recommended Downtown Development District Boundary would go before Council later in the evening. Mrs. Townshend explained that 20% of the

application scoring was focused on incentives, and that Dover had several incentives, including a real estate transfer tax waiver for first time home buyers, real estate transfer tax waiver for the seller of homes in the downtown Dover area, building permit fee waiver, impact fee waiver, and ten-year abatement of taxes on the value of improvements.

Mrs. Townshend stated that, for the purpose of the Downtown Development District application, the recommended boundary that would be going before Council later this evening was smaller than the current boundary, matching the Downtown Development District target area. The reason for the change was to focus more on development of the downtown area, which would exclude large institutional uses, such as the Bayhealth property. Mrs. Townshend noted that, if approved, the new boundary would be codified and become part of the City's Code.

Mrs. Townshend noted that some of the additional incentives being considered were to waive business license fees for new businesses in the District for a period of three years; provide a 50% rebate for real estate transfer tax upon completion and issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy (CO) for projects that qualify for the incentive; and modify the impact fee waiver to allow it to apply to all eligible projects within the District (currently only applies to multi-story mixed use construction), among other variances involving the impact fees. Mrs. Townshend advised that an additional incentive would be discussed with the Downtown Dover Partnership (DDP) Board at their September 24, 2014 meeting. This would involve having the DDP retain an architect and budget funds to provide up to $5,000 in architectural services for businesses that require small renovations or a code data sheet in order to occupy an existing tenant space, which would ease the process of new tenants bringing in their business.

Mr. Anderson shared his feeling that the proposal was well thought out. He indicated that he was not in favor of shrinking the codified district to match the boundary because it would not be possible to determine how long the State incentives would be in place, and it appeared the incentives were more specific to the State, whereas the district boundary that City set is more advantageous to the City and the entire downtown area. Responding to Mr. Anderson, Mrs. Townshend stated there was no requirement for matching grants under the Downtown Development District Program, however, the State was expecting the City to provide incentives as well.

Mr. Anderson inquired about incentives for vacant buildings and expressed interest in getting those buildings occupied. He indicated that he would like to mirror the National League of Cities' (NLC) participation with banks, so that people can sell tax credits to produce more cash flow.

Mrs. Townshend stated that new market tax credits would be a very positive option for the City of Dover and concurred with Mr. Anderson's suggestion regarding incentives for vacant buildings, so that buildings could be saved rather than demolished.

In response to Mr. Hutchison regarding a screening process for those who apply for incentives, Mrs. Townshend advised members that the State would screen those applicants applying for State incentives and was currently working on guidelines. Regarding the City's incentives, Mrs. Townshend stated that they are included in the Code and that an application must be completed. She reminded members that Council recently approved an amendment to the Code that states that applicants who discontinue paying taxes or utilities can lose their incentives.

Mr. Hutchison expressed his opinion that a specific process should be in place to avoid people going into business and, 90 days or a year later, going out of business, which wastes incentive money. He requested Ms. Holland and Mr. Edgell to explain the processes the State has in place.

Ms. Holland stated that she, Mr. Edgell, and the State Planning Office were very happy to see the State and the Governor working together on the incentive program. Ms. Holland said that the State Planning Office works with 57 municipalities in three (3) counties and shared her feeling that the only way to get past the recession was to start helping towns to get back on their feet. She informed members that she had been working with Governor Markell's chief legal advisor to create a user-friendly application; however, noted that it must be thorough to avoid funding businesses that are not sustainable. Ms. Holland also expressed her appreciation for the upkeep the City performs to make the City look nice and for enforcing standards to ensure the appearance of the City.

Mr. Edgell advised members that there are two (2) processes involved in determining eligibility. The first part is the application prepared by the City, which includes maps, incentives, etc, and is due November 1, 2014. Once submitted, the State Planning Office will meet with the Cabinet Committee of State Planning Issues in December, who will evaluate the applications from the different cities and towns so that the Governor can designate one (1) to (3) districts for the first program year in early 2015. After the districts are designated, the next phase will be managed by the Delaware State Housing Authority (DSHA), since they administer grants as a daily course of business and are developing a process. Mr. Edgell indicated that there would be a reservation system for developers, business owners, or property owners who wish to undertake projects in a designated district. The DSHA will evaluate the proposal and the applicant and, if consistent with the guidelines, the DSHA will grant them a reservation and allocate funding to reimburse the project owner once they obtain their Certificate of Occupancy (CO), with the purpose being to try to ensure the business is solid and sustainable. Mr. Edgell noted there had been discussions with Kent County about potentially offering some matching grants to pair with the State incentives.

Ms. Holland emphasized the importance of money being allocated to planning, particularly in smaller towns that do not have funding, stating her hope that the designation would not be a one time thing. She and urged members to encourage their legislators to approve this project.

Mr. Anderson questioned, if planning money were awarded, if it would be structured to include staff time, overtime, etc. Responding, Ms. Holland advised that parameters had not been fully identified; however, it was their intent to use the funding efficiently and have it dedicated toward projects.

Update - Recreation Needs Assessment

Mrs. Ann Marie Townshend, Director of Planning and Community Development, provided members with a flyer, "Public Workshops for City of Dover Residents" ***(Attachment #1)*** advertising three (3) Public Workshops scheduled on September 29, 2014 at Towne Point Elementary School, September 30, 2014 at the Dover Public Library, and October 6, 2014 at Schutte Park. Mrs. Townshend stated that, to date, there had been approximately 100 responses. Receipt of responses was ongoing and additional paper copies were being distributed. Mrs. Townshend advised members that she would provide a copy of the survey to members of Council if asked, and that she planned to keep the survey open until October 15, 2014 to allow for maximum response.

Mrs. Townshend stated that the majority of the responses were coming from City residents, so the survey was reaching the target population.

Mr. Hutchison questioned whether staff was receiving updates from recreation programs in surrounding areas. Responding, Mrs. Townshend advised members that the City's Planning Department meets regularly with a group of recreation providers, including the YMCA, Delaware State University, Special Olympics, and Senior Olympics. She indicated that she had also spoken with Kent County's recreation director with regards to setting up a meeting to discuss some of their programs.

In response to Mr. Hutchison regarding whether schools and churches were included in the discussions regarding recreation programs, Mrs. Townshend stated that the Capital School District is invited to meetings held with recreation providers every other month; however, they typically do not attend. She noted that the City does have a reciprocal relationship with the School District whereby both entities allow each other to use facilities and fields without charge for some events. Mrs. Townshend also stated that the Capital School District, along with Holy Cross, the Charter Schools, and St. John's Lutheran School, assist by distributing material on behalf of the City. Mr. Dixon stated that he would like to see information distributed in the high schools as well.

Mr. Anderson asked if the meeting dates and times scheduled for the Public Workshops were "set in stone," and suggested adding a meeting at Westminster Village, which is centrally located. Mrs. Townshend stated that this could be considered.

Responding to Mr. Anderson regarding the status of the Youth Advisory Committee, Mrs. Townshend stated she did not believe that this was an active committee. Mr. Anderson expressed his desire to reactivate the Youth Advisory Committee.

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

Meeting adjourned at 4:41 p.m.

Wallace R. Dixon
Chairman

WRD/MK/js
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Attachment
Attachment #1- Flyer - Public Workshops for City of Dover Residents

ATTACHMENT #1
PR&CE Committee Meeting of 09/08/2014

Public Workshops

For

City of Dover Residents

Come & Help

Recreational Needs Workshops

We are seeking your input to develop a plan for investing in our parks in a holistic way. We invite you to participate in identifying & assessing the recreational needs within the City of Dover. Tell us where we need to address a lacking of amenities or provide recreational services that are not being met. It has been many years since the City has performed a comprehensive recreation needs assessment. Now is your chance to have a voice as we move forward in making your City of Dover Parks a place where people want to go!

3 Conveniently Scheduled Workshops

Monday, September 29
5 - 7 PM
Towne Point Elementary
629 Buckson Drive
Dover, DE

Tuesday, September 30
5 - 7 PM
Dover Public Library
35 E. Loockerman Street
Dover, DE

Monday, October 6
5 - 7 PM
John W. Pitts Recreation Center
10 Electric Avenue
Dover, DE

Have you taken our Needs Assessment Survey, yet? If not, please visit this link to have your opinion count:

HTTPS://www.surveymonkey.com/s/CODRNA

Workshops are being held by the City of Dover Planning & Recreation Departments.

For more details, visit the City of Dover website at: www.cityofdover.com or call us at (302) 736-7050.