CITY OF DOVER PLANNING COMMISSION
QUARTERLY WORKSHOP
November 18, 2014

The Regular Quarterly Workshop Meeting of the City of Dover Planning Commission was held on Tuesday, November 18, 2014 at 12:00 noon with Vice Chairman Mr. Tolbert presiding. Members present were Mr. Cregar, Mr. Tolbert, Mr. Holt and Mr. Baldwin. Mr. Holden, Dr. Jones, Ms. Still, Mr. Ambruso and Colonel Welsh were absent.

Staff members present were Mrs. Townshend, Mrs. Melson-Williams, Mrs. Harvey, Mr. Cook, Mrs. Purnell and Mr. Scott Koenig. Members present from NCALL were Mr. Joe Myer and Ms. Karen Speakman.

PLANNING COMMISSIONER COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND INSPECTIONS UPDATE

Summary of 2013 Applications and 2014 Applications

Mrs. Townshend stated that the application summary totals do not include applications that will be coming before the Planning Commission in December. In looking at where they are in terms of applications for the year, the totals are lower than last year. Some of that could be because of changes to the *Zoning Ordinance*; some of the things that previously required a Site Plan are now going through Zoning Review. The numbers for Subdivisions are short; there have only been five (5) Subdivision applications. They have had Minor Subdivisions; there has not been real subdivision activity. Twenty-two (22) Site Plans, where there were twenty-one (21) last year and twenty (20) the year before. The Board of Adjustment volume is a little less. When you look at the Site Plan activity, you notice that it's very consistent going back to 2011. We had a lot of volume before then but a lot of that stuff never got built.

Research Activities

- **Update on Research for Ordinance Amendments**

Mrs. Townshend stated that they are working on a number of things and they will talk later as it relates to Restoring Central Dover. There are some residential code amendments like, the General Residence Zones they are going to be looking at to help to improve the redevelopment ability of the Downtown residential area. They are still working with the business community. She is hoping in early 2015 to bring forward amendments to the Industrial Zones. That would include the idea of eliminating the Manufacturing Zone and rezoning properties that are currently M (Manufacturing Zone) to C-3 (Service Commercial Zone) or IPM (Industrial Park Manufacturing Zone) depending on the use and what's around them.

One of the big pushes that they have been getting for an ordinance amendment and they know it's an issue but they simply haven't had the staff time to research it is parking for restaurants. They are finding with the maximum parking that they have put in the Code, it is creating a situation where restaurants are under parked even when they are at the max based on the market research that they have. In talking to one developer who happened to develop Cheddar's, if you took that restaurant and put it in Dover it would be way overparked according to our Code but the parking lot is always full. Clearly there's an issue with the Code. What she has said to the developers and restaurant organizations that have talked to her about it is that they need to get her the research to support a reasonable requirement that they could use. Staff has not had the

time to do the research, that's the challenge. Unfortunately, we are stuck in a situation where if restaurants want to have the parking that their market research says they need, they need to go to the Board of Adjustment. They need to get beyond that but Staff is constrained.

- **Review of *2008 Comprehensive Plan***

Mrs. Townshend stated that with the *2008 Comprehensive Plan*, they did what is required under the Code which is a review about nine (9) months ago. That included amendments that called for the Transportation Improvement District and Restoring Central Dover and the other Planning studies that need to be done before they can start to truly update the *Comprehensive Plan.* It didn't make sense to do an update of the *Comprehensive Plan* while they had pretty significant plan studies going on. She would anticipate that going into 2015, they are going to need to start looking at a schedule for a more comprehensive update to the *Comprehensive Plan*.

Current Studies and Projects

- **Transportation Improvement Districts**

Mrs. Townshend stated that the idea of this is that they will be looking at Route 13 and Bay Road Corridors on a comprehensive basis and looking at how it functions now, what is expected for projected growth between now and 2035, what that means for necessary improvements to the transporation network, putting a price tag on that and then coming up with a fee system so that developers, instead of doing a Traffic Impact Study with each project, would simply pay a fee to help fund the improvements that have already been identified. It's a better approach than the piecemeal way that they have done it in the past and ultimately it's fairer. It's a lot of work getting there. She and Bill Cook had a meeting today and what they are in process of doing now is looking fifteen (15) years back for DelDOT. They are looking at Conditional Uses and Site Plans going back fifteen (15) years to see how much square footage and different categories have been added based on the Site Plans. They would then need to then go through and make sure that if Site Plans expired and were never built that we correct for that, get a sense of what's been added in fifteen (15) years so that they can start to project the next twenty (20) years. They are meeting about every three (3) weeks with DelDOT to keep this on track. It is a lot of work. They were hoping to have something wrapped up by the end of the year but she thinks they are now looking at probably late spring or early summer. That is moving on and the end result will be that they have a better mechanism for dealing with projects without telling them that they have to do a Traffic Impact Study that can take six months to a year and has a scope that is far beyond anything that is reasonable as well as a laundry list of improvements that each developer would have to make. The idea is that once this is done it creates a better environment for redevelopment along Route 13 and Bay Road Corridors.

- **Citywide Recreational Needs Assessment**

Mrs. Townshend stated that they completed the online survey. They did three (3) workshops in October. In September the survey was completed and they had five hundred six (506) survey responses. They are in the process of thumbing through the data and hope to have at least preliminary information to put out sometime in December.

- **Draft Bicycle Plan and Draft Pedestrian Plan for Dover**

Mrs. Townshend stated that the MPO has been taking the lead on this and working with the City's Bicycle and Pedestrian Sub-committee, who has provided a lot of input. The hope is that with where we are now that they will be wrapping up the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plans by early spring. There needs to be a series of workshops that can probably be done in January and then

they would go through the process to have Council approve them as the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan for the City. If the Commissioners have looked at that plan and have anything that jumps out at them, they can bring it up now or talk to Staff but the MPO is the lead but the City is involved as well. The MPO really in a lot of ways on a number of things has stepped up to help out with things that the City doesn't have the Staff to do.

- **Certified Local Government Program Application**

Mrs. Townshend stated that this is a designation that they are looking to get through the National Park Service. It would allow the City to be eligible for certain grants and it relates to the City's Historic District.

Mrs. Melson-Williams stated that there is a formal application process that includes a lot of data gathering of how the City's Commission is established, what regulations the City has in place for their Historic District and how that works. The formal application also includes a requirement for resumes from the Historic District Commission and Staff now has those in hand. It's a matter of packaging the rest of the application. It's nowhere near as complicated as the Downtown Development District application that the Planning Office has just been through this fall. It's something that Staff will be focusing on within the next month to actually submit. The submission goes to the State Historic Preservation Office. There's a review step with them and then ultimately on to the National Park Service for a final determination for CLG (Certified Local Government) status. CLG brings with it the ability to receive additional technical assistance as well as it can make a grant application for a portion of the Historic Preservation Fund monies that come to Delaware. That process for those funds would be somewhat competitive because there are other Certified Local Governments throughout the state. There's a portion of those funds that have to go to CLG's and then beyond that it's somewhat competitive as to what type of project is put forward. Grants in the past have been utilized for things like brochures, public outreach and trainings. It's not really a bricks and mortar type grant program; it's more of getting helpful information out there that's been the target of most of the grants through that program.

RESTORING CENTRAL DOVER COMMUNITY PLAN

Mrs. Townshend stated that she asked Mr. Myer and his staff if they could be here today. She thinks that a lot of the Commissioners are familiar with the history. Probably about a year and a half ago to two years ago, the Cen-Del Foundation convened what they called a Downtown Safety Task Force. They have really just tried to bring together stakeholders about the issue of what they can do about the Downtown, about the crime, about the perceptions of safety and the things that have really been keeping them from getting to the next step. Out of that, they found that there was a grant opportunity through the Wells Fargo Regional Foundation. They together collectively did a grant application for planning money with NCALL as the lead and NCALL has been the lead on this project since. For the last year and a half or so the City has been working with Interface Studio, who is a planning consultant out of Philadelphia on what they are calling Restoring Central Dover. What excites her about this is in her view, they have done a lot of things over the years studying for Downtown, planning for Downtown but they have never really gotten to the heart of the socioeconomic challenges that have made it difficult to get to where they want to go. Not only really acknowledge with any degree of clarity with socioeconomic challenge, but to really come up with community based solutions that draw from all of the stakeholders in the community on how we can meet some of the challenges. For the last year and a half, NCALL has led the Steering Committee that has provided the direction to the planning

consultant. Then they had the open house in the Bayard Plaza for ten (10) days. People could come in and they were able to obtain information. There was a survey that was done. They had surveyors trained and it was door to door. It was random and it was people filling out the survey. It wasn't put online or mailed; it really was a very meaningful survey that was very scientifically administered to get the best information possible. There were workshops and they are not at the end of that process.

Mr. Myer stated that this information has not been released to the public and that a press conference will be held tomorrow. He thanked Mrs. Townshend and Mrs. Harvey who serve on the Steering Committee and have been valued members there. Mrs. Harvey also serves on NCALL's Board of Directors as Secretary. He provided an Annual Report to the Commissioners about NCALL. They are an affordable housing community development organization located on Saulsbury Road. They are the ones with the solar panels on the roof. They do homeownership counseling, foreclosure prevention, financial coaching, apartment development and community development lending. They do a variety of things. They were really pleased to be asked to come in and be a lead organization. It was really a capacity issue at that point in time to be able to apply for a significant grant from Wells Fargo. On the inside cover of the packet, the Commissioners can see that funding has been provided by Wells Fargo Regional Foundation, Spirit Trust and the City of Dover who made them a $10,000 grant, Neighbor Works America, Federal Home Loan Bank of Pittsburgh and they have provided some funds themselves.

Inside the front cover you can see the Steering Committee members and it's a great Steering Committee. The Committee has been very responsive, met monthly and been engaged in a lot of other activities that have taken time. It's been a very comprehensive group as you can see who's on it and the organizations that are represented as well as key stakeholders from Central Dover.

What's unique about this plan is that it's heavily resident engaged, resident driven and there's five (5) residents on the Steering Committee and people have been really involved in a lot of different ways. Certainly the goals are to strengthen the neighborhood, to raise the profile, to expand economic opportunity, obviously to improve housing conditions as well, to work on revitalizing Loockerman Street as a vibrant commercial corridor and to coordinate and convene people to come together and to resolve some of these issues. The plan area is seventy-five (75) blocks, three hundred ninety-three (393) acres. Why is that little off-shoot to the west there? It was strongly felt that Lincoln Park and Simon Circle areas needed to be involved as well.

The Planning context shares the kind of plans that it connects with that are underway for example, Bicycle Pedestrian Plans, CDBG Action Plan and the Economic Inclusion Study of Dover. There are also foundational documents that their plan builds on. It's not really stand-alone but the consultants really looked at the additional plans and made sure that there was continuity and consistency. They also looked at the *Dover Transit Center Neighborhood Plan and Design Book* that was done in the past and the Dover Community Partnership Revitalization that Mrs. Ami Sebastian-Hauer did with the Dover Housing Authority. That is one of the big reasons that Mrs. Sebastian-Hauer is on the Steering Committee because she has been through some of this before. The process would be to listen and then to collect and analyze data. As Mrs. Townshend said, there was a lot of community outreach and engagement, there was monthly Steering Committee meetings, one on one interviews, focus groups with the faith community, the business community and social service groups, the interactive open house, the collaborative maps, do it yourself budgets, photo suggestion booth and the community survey (Resident

Reception Survey). There was also a lot of work by the Steering Committee and then the planning consultants cull of this information down into some recommendations and strategies.

Next it was putting the plan together and there was a lot of mapping done. He doesn't know if this information is really new to the City but there is commercial use, vacancy, institutional and residential land. There is a lot of emphasis on how much vacant land there is. It turns out that it's rather significant. They looked at land-use, at the consistency and the planning, the policy map, the Census data, the data that they collected themselves. This is just the executive summary; there is a hundred twenty (120) page Plan that backs this up and the Commissioners will have access to a link to that. They've listened, researched and analyzed, developed preliminary recommendations, testing those with stakeholders, residents and with the Steering Committee and then coming out with a Final Plan.

Page 10 shows a map of Areas of Interest to Central Dover. Page 11 shows a snap shot of Central Dover. It's interesting when a consultant comes in, to see the things that a consultant finds interesting and unique about your City and it might be a little different than what you might consider yourself. There are a number of aspects here that relate to areas of interest and key aspects of Dover.

Mr. Tolbert questioned why the area that shoots off to the west like a thumb was unique and was made part of this plan? Responding to Mr. Tolbert, Mr. Myer stated that it's residential that's going through some change, maybe from homeownership more to rental and there was a thought among the Steering Committee that it was a neighborhood to be shored up, an area that just needed some attention. He knows that Councilman Dixon is from that area and he felt that it should be included as well.

Ms. Speakman stated that it's surrounded by commercial/industrial areas as well as the school. It's sort of an island in itself. They thought it should be connected to Downtown Dover and addressed as well.

Mrs. Harvey stated that its across from Eden Hill with all of the development going on over there, they wanted to emphasis on revitalizing that area too.

Mrs. Townshend stated that they also looked at this area in the Downtown Development District application. The west side of that area is still more owner occupied but as you move east closer to the tracks, there is a lot more rental, vacant and rundown properties so the idea is to really shore up this area. It's an area that was at one point a very strong community. The concern is that they don't want what's happened on the east side of that neighborhood to continue and they want to revitalize the east side of it.

Mr. Holt stated that when they did away with the old scrap yard and built a new store on West Street, he thinks it was a big asset to that whole area there. Part of that absentee ownership is that owners are not in the area to put pressure on the owners of those buildings to update their facilities. Responding to Mr. Holt, Mr. Myer stated that that's definitely in their recommendations. Perhaps Code Enforcement and some other kinds of activities particularly for absentee situations like that.

Mr. Holt further stated that at one time they were in this area, they lived here, they grew up here

and then moved on to other places but they still own the properties. Responding to Mr. Holt, Mr. Myer stated that it's interesting that he brings up West Street too because there is a fair amount of activity happening on West Street. The Inner City Cultural League is building there and Solid Rock Baptist Church is adding a community center. NCALL has a community development loan fund and they loaned the funds for both of those projects to happen. They also loan for Dover Interfaith Missions and the shelter and their transitional housing that taking place on Walker Road. They have a fund that can actually put their money where their mouth is.

There's some existing condition take aways that the consultant came up with for population dynamics, in particular a decline in population. Not an actual decline but a less of an increase within this target area of population than the full City of Dover and Kent County. There is a challenge to retain existing residents as well as attract new neighbors to the community. He thinks vacancy really jumped out at them; 13% of the land area and buildings are vacant. This is equivalent to twenty-five (25) football fields. Of course, vacant properties can typically hinder reinvestment but for them, they are hopefully going to be an opportunity. They actually surveyed not only land use for every parcel but all of the building conditions. They were rated from A for excellent down to F for poor. Most ended up being a B or C for good or fair condition. He thought that there might be more than 3% in poor condition but this was all exterior windshield type evaluations. His guess is that the percentage of poor condition homes may be a little higher but the City has been working on that issue.

Mrs. Townshend stated that the fair condition may be boarder line.

Mr. Myer stated that at least it is mapped out so that you can see clusters of where conditions exist.

The consultant also looked at commercial services. They know that people have to travel away from Downtown Dover sometimes to meet their commercial needs; that's not a surprise but the goal is to bring some more things within walking distance.

The median income in this target area is 27% lower than the City of Dover's; its $34,730. More than half of the families are headed by single family households and there's a high number of cost burden households paying way too much of their income towards rent. There's a number of housing needs that are listed in here to preserve and increase access to affordable housing. The unemployment is at 10% as well. Crime and perception of safety are shown on page 15; these are information from the Police Department. It's shown differently than you might see it. In the full Plan there's a heat map that gets the reddest in the high crime areas. The target area has a lot of crime. Figure number 10 shows that within the last two (2) years that violent crimes have increased 400%. That was a shock to everyone on the Steering Committee. There's a perception of crime and there's real crime; it is alarming. Part of this Plan is safety as well.

The logo name came from the Steering Committee: "Our Vision For Vitality". The name "Restoring Central Dover" came from the Steering Committee also. The goal areas fall into three (3) categories: A Strong Community, Positive Development, and An Integrated Public Realm and Infrastructure. These are recommendations and strategies that the Steering Committee wants to move forward. These are timed as short term, intermediate term or long term goals. It's really a ten (10) year plan but they have set goals for the first five (5) years of those. The community that's in the target area is really not organized; there's no civic association. There might be some

on the fringes but even in Lincoln Park there's not an active one anymore. There's no neighborhood watch. There's not a lot of organizations where people work together to do things. Maybe there's more than they know but it didn't jump out. Establishing resident-led civic groups, developing community building partnership with anchor institutions such as Wesley College and Bayhealth and creating an annual "Creating Central Dover" block party are all short term goals. One was held in May of this year and they want to do something like that annually. A few years ago there was a "Community Clean-Up Day," they would like to resurrect that program and expand it as well. They would also like to develop and distribute a community calendar of activities and events to make sure that everyone's aware of things that they can walk to and visit. Evaluate the level of access to community facilities for services is another goal. Some of this is just taking a look at the facilities that exist. Are people connected with them? Do they need transporation? Are there facilities close by? Are they under-utilized? Are they over-utilized? They just want to get a sense of that information. When you do a study, there are more things to study and that would be the case here. They also want to develop those community facilities for services. They mentioned Inner City Cultural League, Solid Rock Baptist Church and Dover Interfaith; these are example of facilities but as needs are identified they would go further with that.

There are also suggestions that fall under Public Safety. One was to establish a collaborative community policing; an oversight Committee on community policing that involves neighborhood residents to work with the Police to make sure that everybody has the same goals and are working together. Deploying police foot and bike patrols has been done at different times in the past. They know that there is a new initiative out there right now. The Steering Committee is hearing from Police Chief Bernat about that tomorrow. The Police Department has been represented on the Steering Committee so they are in sync with all of this; some of it's trying to find the funding to do it. Expanding surveillance camera network is a good way to potentially reduce crime. Improving lighting in targeted areas was not only for street lights and it's mapped out in the full plan, showing where that would be. It will be sort of a porch lighting program as well, to light up the area.

Ms. Speakman stated that it would be a low cost version; a cost of being inexpensive to the homeowner. It would be solar powered so that it would come on at night.

Mr. Myer stated that Sustainable Energy Utilities is interested in working with them on that program.

Mr. Holt stated that solar powered lights are run by solar power and he has found them at Harbor Freight in Rodney Village. They were much better, they had solar panels and you could move them anywhere. They work great and save a lot of electricity and you can put them anywhere you want. Responding to Mr. Holt, Mr. Myer stated that it was kind of a win-win situation. You don't have to have an electrician to install the lights.

Mr. Holt stated it only takes 15-20 minutes, you can put them anywhere. They put out pretty good light and they run on motion. If someone comes by at night, the light would come on.

There was a strong feeling on the Steering Committee about the youth in the community. The plan is to sustain and expand youth programming. The Steering Committee feels that there's not sufficient youth programming at this time. The Police Department is very interested in re-

establishing a Police Athletic League. In the past it has been a great experience. They are hoping that this plan will move forward. Creating a youth outreach and educational support center is another goal. The Community Center at the Solid Rock Baptist Church will help with this goal. Certainly, the Inner City Cultural League will fill some of that but if there are other support needs, educational needs or outreach needs they would want to work at those. Down the road, there would be some sort of vocational opportunities for youth that are within the target area; maybe some community development kinds of vocational opportunities. They are not quite sure what that looks like, there are some model programs that they could look at and learn more from.

Ms. Speakman stated that affecting the youth came up really strong at the Open House from the residents. They gave them all paper money when they walked in the door and they could spend their money on where they would like Dover to spend their money, ranging from youth activities to affordable housing, to improve sidewalks, etc. A majority of the money went into the youth program.

Mr. Myer stated that regarding expanding adult and family services, they are not looking at re-creating the wheel but they are looking at transitional housing and some different types of housing services particularly for families and children. They know that they have a really good system with Dover Interfaith but maybe more housing for families and children. The Code Purple work is going on now which is important. Bringing the services together to talk; a family services collaborative, how services can be delivered better, faster, deeper and more together. Bringing the service providers together to talk is one thing that they are interested in. At NCALL they plan to offer their financial and housing counseling services right in the area as well.

Strengthen existing housing would be done by expanding access to housing repair programs, to initiate a volunteer-based neighborhood housing repair organization, to strengthen Code Enforcement, and to explore ways to boost homeownership. To bring together all the parties to brainstorm and find something that really might work for Central Dover. If you look at the occupancy in the area, it's 25% homeownership and 75% rental. That's difficult because it makes the organizing and some of the other things a little tougher too.

Supporting new development would be done by encouraging greater zoning flexibility to enable infill housing developments. They have the map of the vacant properties; is there some greater zoning flexibility to help to do infill housing? To facilitate parcel assembly would be where there are a number of parcels together that are vacant; can they assemble them and allow some different types of quality housing to be there? In evaluating ways of providing financial incentives for development, the Planning Office has just been through this with the Downtown Development work that they have been doing. There is a map showing where infill opportunities exist. It sort of gives them a starting point by mapping it out. Developing affordable housing options would be taking a look at whether there is a need for higher quality rental and how to attract new housing and homeownership into the area. An interesting one is providing assistance in activating upper floor apartments along Loockerman Street. They don't know if this is something that would have merit but it would seem to. Finally, to explore opportunities to create centralized student housing options off campus. They appreciate the fact that Wesley College has been a key partner in this process and there seems to be a need for that as well.

For commercial corridors they are looking at how to gain re-investment there. Everybody still talks about marketing and branding and re-branding. Build and expand on marketing and

branding efforts for the Loockerman Street Corridor and Central Dover. DDP has been involved in their work but there is probably still more to be done there. Activate vacant storefronts is another goal because a vacant storefront that looks vacant is just not a good thing. Address concentrated loitering because that's something that is going to keep people from coming Downtown. This may be a tough one but looking at a "nuisance business" owner and how to deal with that is another goal. Expanding small business development programs for new and existing business owners. Examples are SBA, First State Community Loan Fund and DDP to continue to provide resources and provide technical assistance for business owners and to attract new. Another thought is to recruit major local employers to establish satellite offices Downtown. If you need space for employees or certain sections of your business, they want to bring you Downtown to do that.

Lastly, to ensure equitable economic development; they aren't exactly sure what all of this means but develop a comprehensive workforce development strategy; some entrepreneurship programs, some small business development programs, some pilot work to improve access to our workforce and then the Economic Inclusion Study, which the City has been helpful on and he thinks it's moving along.

Ms. Speakman stated that she thinks the key behind that is that many people who live in the area work elsewhere and so many people who work in the area live elsewhere.

Mr. Myer stated that in the same point, transportation is not good as you will see in the next section so it would make sense. The last section is "An Integrated Public Realm and Infrastructure". This has some Planning Commission type of items as well. They are looking at expanding and enhancing transit services. Transit was a big deal; at their open house a lot of people felt disconnects and felt that they had to take away too long to travel to different places on the buses and the routes were just not conducive for them at all. The second goal was to improve the bus stops throughout the area and then the transit depot with something as seemingly small as having restrooms. The third goal is to advocate for a Regional Transit Connection Study which is a lot bigger than what they are.

Mr. Holt stated that he remembers growing up here; his mother would go to Philadelphia shopping during the day and be back for dinner that night by using the train and it didn't cost that much. It was a big part of transporation in those days. He wonders if there was a possibility to bring that back or not. Responding to Mr. Holt, Mr. Myer stated that is what this Regional Connection Study is about, to look at commuter rail services. He doesn't know how recent a Connection Study has been done but they would like to sort of be an advocate to try and get something done. They will not do to study themselves.

Mr. Holt stated that he knows the tracks are still there. Responding to Mr. Holt, Mrs. Townshend stated that there are a lot of upgrades that would be required to the tracks.

Mr. Myer stated that a lot of people have brought up this idea as well.

Mr. Holt stated that it would be a great way to get up to the cities and back at night. The roads are always clogged up with so much traffic. In fact, in those days his mother didn't even drive. A lot of women didn't drive. She eventually learned to drive but before that, she would take the train everywhere. In Europe, there are trains everywhere. Responding to Mr. Holt, Mr. Myer

stated that the idea was definitely in there. It's one that they don't have as much control over but they would like to advocate for it.

There was some thought to somehow subsidize transit access for youth, family, elderly and persons of lower income. There are some models for this; he doesn't think that it's been done in Delaware but that's something that they want to take a look at. Certainly also to build on existing bike infrastructure and to improve pedestrian connectivity. There's some examples in here and in the full plan to look at how to provide bike paths more. Although he thinks Dover has gotten some awards for bike paths. Responding to Mr. Myer, Mrs. Townshend stated that they have gotten Honorable Mention so they need to move up from there.

Mr. Myer stated that they were a mixed mind on conduction of a Comprehensive Parking Study for Central Dover. They heard a lot from the public that there's not enough parking. Then they heard from the public that that's just a perception; people just don't want to walk a block to parking lot. They are not quite sure what it is but if there is a need for a Comprehensive Parking Study or if one is in the works they would like to advocate for that.

Mrs. Townshend stated that this is one that she specifically talked to the consultant about because she came to her because the stuff was so spread across the spectrum. The decision that she had with her and this is the same decision that she and Mr. Koenig had with the Downtown Dover Partnership is that there's not really a parking problem right now. There is plenty of parking; is it where everybody wants it, maybe not. The challenge is, they are one or two good projects away from there being a parking problem. If we are successful in re-developing some of these properties with a zero (0) parking requirement then at some point people are going to say "Where am I supposed to park?" Some of the parking problem is kind of the perception and also the safety perception that Governors Avenue is a divide. People do not want to park on the west side of Governors Avenue. They do not want to park at the old Acme building in the parking lot there but they are okay parking across the street in the Bradford Street lot. The issue is that there needs to be a Comprehensive Parking Study that looks at now and when they are successful. Even if they have enough parking now, part of that is because they don't have as many people coming down here as they would like.

Mr. Holt stated that he agrees, part of that is perception. People will go to the mall and park quite a ways away but when it comes to Downtown Dover, they except to be able to park in front of the store that they want to go into. That's just not realistic as a rule, sometimes it can happen. They sort of mentally think that way. He doesn't know how they can change that perception.

Mr. Myer stated that the next piece of the plan would be enhancing open spaces and expanding green infrastructures and developing programmed recreation spaces. Maybe this fits somehow with your Recreation Study or surveys that they are going to be looking at too. There is a need for some programmed recreation spaces. He thinks there is also a need to find a way to connect people who want recreation to other venues throughout the City and how to do that as well. Such as strategically developing pocket parks on vacant lots; this is not a super expensive park type of development but to try to create in some key areas something that's attractive and usable. An interesting one was to create a West Loockerman Gateway Park. This is with the West Loockerman Gateway being right around where the Duncan Center. Play street designation is another interesting idea where at some point the City of Dover would create an ordinance allowing this and neighborhoods could apply to have their streets closed at certain times where

kids could actually play safely in the street.

Ms. Speakman stated that they saw it when they had the fair Downtown and they blocked off the streets. While there were people going to the different booths, the kids were out throwing the football, with the lacrosse sticks, on bikes and she thought it was great because they don't normally get to do that.

Mr. Myer stated the next goal would be integrating green stormwater management on Water Street and they don't know if that work is too far along or not far enough along but hopefully it can be done. With any plan you can see a projected implementation cost and there are a lot of question marks in these costs because they have not been bid out. The full plan has it sort of by item but you can see for the Strong Community section it was just over $8 million, for the Positive Development it was $21 million and that included more of your housing and commercial development and then Integrated Public Realm and Infrastructure was $4 million. It's not to say that that $33 million is all inclusive, there would still need to be other costs. It gives you an idea that this is not insignificant and there's going to have to be some sort of lead funders and then some access to other capital. They mentioned that the Wells Fargo Regional Foundation funded this Plan; they gave them a $90,000 grant. They do this throughout part of New Jersey and southeastern part of Pennsylvania and they have done it in Wilmington, DE before. This is the furthest south that they have come and everyone is glad that they have done that. They also have a five (5) year implementation grant and that is up to $750,000. That doesn't compare with the $33 million but in their days of funding it's pretty significant so they have made application to them. They are actually coming for a site visit on Thursday to take a look around. They have applied to some funders for smaller projects; the Presbyterian Spirit Trust for $20,000 to assist with a community organizer and Delaware Community Foundation for a collaboration grant with Dover Interfaith, Central Delaware Habitat and themselves to do some of the affordable housing work. They know the City of Dover just did a massive application for Downtown Development District designation and if Dover in fact is designated, that will give some of their partners an opportunity to apply to the Delaware State Housing Authority to have their projects receive 20-25% of their costs in grant funds which is significant and should spur some positive development. They are hearing that there is going to be a round of Strong Neighborhood assistance. Some of the banks that didn't do all the right things during the mortgage problems, there's settlements with a lot of the banks and there's one that's funding a Strong Neighborhoods Program through DSHA. That's going to actually come out next month. That's something that they should talk about because he sees that the City can apply as well as a number of their partners and they can apply. They have talked to them about how everyone should somehow work together on that. One of the big things that the Steering Committee is going to be doing is organizing themselves for implementation. They have been organized for the planning process, now how do they organize for the implementation? He can't say how that's going to happen because they have to talk about. They are going to start that with their meeting tomorrow but one of the least things that they could do is sort of organize by these three (3) areas into committees to really make sure that there's some kind of accountability that work goes forward. There are a number of policy items here that relate to the City that would be for the Planning Commissioners to look at, for City Council to look at and obviously Staff to research and see what could be done. There is a list in here and they would like to make sure that it happens. If they get the Wells Fargo Grant it will allow them to hire a full time implementation coordinator. They need somebody full time who can look at that and he mentioned a community organizer because the area is not well organized. A lot of their role is to convene and bring

together and to apply for resources and to partner with the City to try to glean everything that seems to make sense. Having this Plan will really help them rather than been disjointed in their applications for resources. If they can show that there's a Plan, that they have a willing City to work with and that they have a Steering Committee that is committing it's time and energy that can bring more resources than they have had access to in the past.

DELAWARE DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT PROGRAM

Mrs. Townshend stated that the Downtown Development District and the Restoring Central Dover are very much joined at the hip. The Downtown Development District Application, the way this works is the Governor will pick three (3) Downtown Development Districts in the first round. One picked for each county so they are completing with Smyrna, Milford and Clayton in Kent County. There are three (3) areas of the application. 50% of the scoring of the application is based on the need and impact. If you listened to what Mr. Myer said about Dover's high rental rate, people who are over-burdened in terms of spending more than 30% of their income on housing, the crime, the vacancy, all of these things lend themselves to unfortunately they do have a great need. They have described that in the application. 30% of the application is based on the District Plan. Their District Plan that they used is two (2) documents, one is *Restoring Central Dover* which was just heard and the *Transit Center Neighborhood Design Book and Plan* which was completed in 2011 as a joint venture with the Downtown Dover Partnership and the Dover Kent County MPO. 20% is based on the summary of the local incentives. Currently, the City offers impact fee waivers for multi-story mixed use construction within the Downtown area, Building Permit fee waivers, tax abatement on the value of the improvement and first time homebuyer transfer tax exemption that is City wide. Within the certain Downtown area there is also first time homebuyer transfer tax for the seller as well. There is also a homeowner property tax abate for home-occupied houses in a certain area (Mary Street to Loockerman Street and Governors Avenue to West Street). There is also the City's Historic Preservation Tax Credit. They had to show that they would modify some incentives so they talked about where they had the boundaries of Mary Street to Loockerman Street and Governors Avenue to West Street that they would modify those to match the Downtown Development District boundaries. Currently the City's impact fee waivers are only for multi-story mixed use construction so they are going to look at how they can amend that. The new incentives that they would like to add are the waiver of Business License fee for new businesses for a period of three (3) years within the Downtown Development District, a rebate of 50% of the real estate transfer tax for qualifying projects that would come to the owner upon Certificate of Occupancy. If you purchase land with the intention of developing it, they would get that after the Certificate of Occupancy because there are plenty of times when land sells and nothing ever happens. They don't want to just give the people the benefit for the idea that they bought land. The Downtown Dover Partnership of Directors has agreed to provide architectural services up to $5,000. They need to go through the process to obtain an architect but this would be for new business or business expansion. So if somebody is going into an existing space Downtown, they would be able to come in to meet with the architect at the front end of the process so that they are not at the eleventh hour when they figure out that there are building code requirements that they have and they have actually needed some type of architectural service.

There are a series of maps included. They were limited to no more than two hundred twenty-five (225) acres so they are looking at Mary Street at the north, over from the tracks to Governors Avenue until you get to Fulton Street and then it comes out to State Street. The District boundary comes down State Street taking in the west side of The Green coming down to Water Street, over

to Queen Street, bringing in the Transit Center and the property immediately south of the Transit Center, coming up West Street and coming out to pull in the east side of Lincoln Park where the need is the greatest.

She showed the map of registered vacant buildings within the District and dangerous buildings in the District as well. The yellow striped areas are lots where the City has demolished buildings. There are others that are in the process of either where they will be repaired or they will be demolished. Another map shows active Code Enforcement activity. In the Restoring Central Dover larger document, it breaks it down by crime so that you can see the crime concentration. You can see the high areas of crime concentration really are in this Downtown Development District. They tried to show the need and impact so there are pictures of the vacancy that is seen, the new Family Dollar that's next to a building that's in very poor condition. There are pictures of what is the former Acme site that's owned by the DDP, on the right of that is the rendering of what they would like to be there one day. Starting at the northeast corner of the district and you can see as you move further west and further south, the quality of the housing and the condition of the housing deteriorates.

With Division Street being their major East/ West gateway, if you are coming from Washington D.C., Baltimore or any of these areas, your first introduction to Dover is Division Street. She showed pictures of starting at the railroad tracks coming east of deteriorated buildings, vacant lots and litter. It's stated that there is twenty-five (25) football fields worth of vacant land. One of the things that Mr. Myer mentioned of 75% rental rate within the Restoring Central Dover area; they had to use a smaller geographical area for the Downtown Development District and of the occupied dwelling units in that area, 84.4% are rental. Of the dwelling units in the area, 15% are vacant. Of those that are occupied, almost 85% are renter occupied and only 15% are owner occupied. The idea is not that rental housing is bad and that renters are bad, it's the idea of balance and having that balance of ownership and rental. Once you get to the point where it is so heavily rented, homeowners leave and you can't get homeownership back in. The *Restoring Central Dover* and the *Transit Neighborhood Plan and Design Book* were the other pieces of their Downtown Development District Plan. The Transit Neighborhood Plan and Design Book really talked a lot about form and what development looks like so it's kind of more towards big picture. The *Restoring Central Dover* really got to some of those issues that the *Transit Neighborhood Plan and Design Book* did not get to. They don't conflict, they work very well together. Interface Studios was wonderful about taking the documents that they had and really looking at them; if they had questions they would call. She thinks what they have is something that fits in well with what precedes it. In terms of the Downtown Development District application and the path forward, they have submitted their application and they expect to hear back from the State in January. She would assume it would be late January. The $7 million dollars that was allocated in the Governor's budget would go directly to private property owner applicants within the designated districts. If we are designated, property owners can apply for the money but the money does not come through the City. If we do not get the designation, then people will not be eligible for money in the City.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITES

- **Report on DE/MD APA Regional Conference**

Mrs. Townshend stated that they did have the Regional Conference. They didn't have any Planning Commission members who had indicated that they wanted to attend but Staff did

attend. There is a lot of really good stuff at the conference about retrofitting suburbia. It will be interesting because they have a lot of sites that are prime for re-development particularly along Route 13, and they want to work to try to implement some of these ideas that they saw about making things not just so street oriented. It will take responsive and receptive property owners but they are hopefully.

Meeting adjourned at 1:27 PM

Sincerely,

Kristen Mullaney
Secretary