SAFETY ADVISORY AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

The Safety Advisory and Transportation Committee Meeting was held on January 25, 2012 at 5:01 p.m. with Chairman Hutchison presiding. Members present were Mr. Lynn, Mrs. Russell (arrived at 5:02 p.m.), and Mr. Davis. Mayor Carey was also present (departed at 5:29 p.m.). Mr. Hutchison was absent.

AGENDA ADDITIONS/DELETIONS

Mr. Lynn moved for approval of the agenda, seconded by Mr. Davis and unanimously carried.

Discussion - Establishing City Emergency Operations Center

Members reviewed correspondence from Mr. Dave Truax, 35 Upland Avenue, who serves as the City's Fire Marshal, relaying his concerns regarding the City's lack of emergency preparedness awareness (outside of emergency services and emergency management personnel) and the need for an operational Emergency Operations Center (EOC) in the City.

Mr. Scott Koenig, City Manager, stated that the City's emergency management function has progressed through various departments throughout the years, beginning as a part of the Grounds Department, then the Police Department, and ultimately an Emergency Management Coordinator position was created in the Public Services Department. As a part of the Emergency Management Plan developed for the City, the City Hall Conference Room was designated to serve as an Emergency Operations/Information Center. He reminded members that this Center was utilized as such during a recent hurricane and during snowstorms and met the needs for these types of emergencies.

Mr. Koenig explained that the City has a basic Emergency Management Plan which has been certified as meeting minimum requirements by the Delaware Emergency Management Agency (DEMA). He advised members that emergency operations functions are currently distributed among a number of staff members, including the City Manager, the Public Information Officer, the Fire Marshal, a representative of the Police Department, etc. He indicated that he would like to maintain an open position for an emergency management planner. It was his understanding that during the recent Police Department accreditation process, a previous Emergency Operations Center (EOC) located at the Police Department was reestablished. Members were provided a photo of the Center and a diagram depicting the seating arrangements.

Mr. Koenig questioned if the intent of the discussion was to determine if members wished to designate the Police Department versus City Hall as the EOC for the City of Dover.

Responding to Mr. Hutchison, Mr. Koenig confirmed that there are no backup generators currently serving City Hall and that if power was lost during an emergency situation, it would be necessary to utilize the facility at the Police Department to conduct emergency operations. He noted that backup power is available at the Administration Building for the Electric Department.

Mr. Truax explained the necessity for the City to have an Emergency Operations "mindset," beginning with members of Council, and for each department to have a better understanding of their responsibilities. In addition, he relayed the importance of an EOC.

Mr. Koenig suggested a review of the parameters of the two (2) rooms proposed for use as an EOC. He recalled there being a $2,400 activation fee for the phone lines at the Police Department EOC and noted that this was one of the reasons City Hall was selected to serve as the EOC during the recent snowstorms and hurricane.

Responding, Police Captain Stump stated that he was not aware of such fees and indicated that the phone lines were recently activated.

Mr. Hutchison suggested that this issue be referred back to staff for the development of policies and procedures. Concurring, Mr. Lynn requested that staff develop recommendations for the Committee's review to forward to City Council for approval.

Mr. Truax requested that consideration be given to the installation of a generator at City Hall, regardless of its use as an EOC, due to the need for electric service at City Hall during an emergency.

Mr. Hutchison requested that staff determine the costs involved for each of the rooms to become fully used as an EOC.

Captain Mark Hall, attending on behalf of Fire Chief Fortney, noted that ambulance services for the City are provided by PrimeCare; therefore, he suggested that staff request the participation of a representative of PrimeCare in the development of their recommendations.

Responding to Mr. Davis, Mayor Carey indicated that Dover High School currently serves as the City's emergency shelter and has been used as such in the past.

Mr. Laing, Community Relations Officer and Public Relations Liaison, Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT), suggested that space be allocated in the City's EOC for the City's Public Information Officer.

Mr. Lynn moved to recommend referral back to staff for a report to the Committee at the next meeting, seconded by Mrs. Russell and unanimously carried.

Update - Dover High School Construction

Mrs. Ann Marie Townshend, Director of Planning and Community Development, provided an update on the construction of the new Dover High School. She advised members that, in December, the City issued a foundation only permit for the building. The City continues to work with the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT), Kent Conservation District, and Capital School District on completing the site development plans. She noted that building construction drawings were recently submitted and the building permit application has been completed. She anticipated that the building permit would be issued by the first week in March 2012 for the remainder of the main structure, noting that the stadium and other buildings will require separate permits.

Mrs. Townshend reminded members that City staff attends monthly coordination meetings with representatives of DelDOT and the consultants for the Capital School District to ensure that the project stays on track, since there are many site and location issues. She stated that, during the last coordination meeting, there was discussion regarding the east entrance (which lines up with Heatherfield East) which had been planned as a signalized intersection with a pedestrian crossing; however, the most recent submission did not show it as a signalized intersection. She explained that installation of signals typically requires a warrant analysis which documents traffic volume and is accomplished through DelDOT and she suggested that the Capital School District begin working with DelDOT on this issue. However, she noted that there are additional political and safety issues involved, explaining that there are multiple housing communities directly across the street from the school. She suggested that the City go on record in support of the signalization of the intersection at the east entrance and a pedestrian crossing, even if the traffic volume does not meet warrants since there is no other way to enable children to cross the street to access the school safely.

After much discussion, Mr. Gary Laing, Community Relations Officer and Public Relations Liaison, DelDOT, suggested that the City submit a letter to Secretary Bhatt and that Mr. Laing be copied so that he may have the opportunity to interject himself to work with the City in this regard. Responding, Mr. Hutchison suggested that such a letter be drafted and signed by the Mayor and City Manager.

Mrs. Townshend offered to draft a letter in support of the signalization of the intersection at the east entrance of the new Dover High School and the inclusion of a pedestrian crossing. Due to Mr. Laing's suggestion that this letter be submitted as expeditiously as possible, Mr. Koenig indicated that the letter would be sent by staff if there were no objections ***(Attachment #1)***.

Mr. Davis moved to recommend that staff be authorized to send a letter to Secretary Bhatt relaying support of the signalization of the east entrance intersection, with pedestrian crossing, for the new Dover High School. The motion was seconded by Mr. Lynn and unanimously carried.

Briefing on Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) Projects - *Gary Laing*

Mr. Gary Laing, Community Relations Officer and Public Relations Liaison, Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT), provided members a briefing on DelDOT Projects, as follows:

West Dover Connector

Mr. Laing stated that DelDOT is currently in the midst of a 30-day public comment and review period (which will end on February 2, 2012) related to the environmental assessment of the West Dover Connector. If there are public comments, a period of time will be provided for response. In late February to mid-March, DelDOT plans to issue the final version of the environmental assessment. Mr. Laing stressed the need for a finding of "no significant impact" in order to proceed with the project. He indicated that DelDOT will then need to address the issue of a preferred alternative for termination of the Connector at Route 13, south of Rodney Village, and acquisition of 15 properties along the route.

Mr. Laing advised members that several years ago, there were picketers with signs that read "don't take my home" in front of DelDOT's workshop and at working group meetings associated with this project; however, more recently DelDOT has received phone calls from these individuals who are now eager to sell. He explained that DelDOT's planning process has made it difficult for affected homeowners to market their homes. Mr. Laing assured members that DelDOT cannot offer a homeowner an amount less than the assessed value of their property, can assist a homeowner in finding a new home with a similar value, and can provide assistance with moving expenses in cases of hardship.

Mr. Laing stated that the specifics regarding the location and design of the preferred route will be finalized and presented to the public in April 2012. He advised members of the tentative schedule DelDOT has established moving forward, as follows: 1) July 2012 - semi-final right-of-way acquisitions to be completed by November 2012 (if there are no objections and eminent domain condemnation procedures are not necessary); and 2) Summer of 2014 - begin construction.

South Governors Avenue Improvements

Mr. Laing stated that the improvements to the South Governors Avenue roadway are substantially complete. He indicated that DelDOT has had a recent issue regarding a signal at the intersection of South Governors Avenue and South Street, noting that the original plan included such a signal. Since federal funds were utilized for the project, when DelDOT was ready to have the signals turned on, the Federal Highway Administration (FHA) indicated that the intersection did not meet the warrants for a signal and a new study was required. DelDOT completed the new study in late fall/early winter of 2011 and it was determined that the intersection meets warrants at only certain times of day. He advised members that there are safety concerns, noting that there is an employee parking area located across the street.

Most recently, Mr. Laing stated that DelDOT's Director of Traffic Operations sent a letter to the FHA indicating that DelDOT planned to post signs indicating that the signals would become operational on January 27, 2012 and was awaiting a response.

Water Street Railroad Crossover

Mr. Laing stated that the Water Street Railroad Crossover is not a project that will come to fruition anytime in the near future due to the involvement of the railroad.

Wyoming Mill Road Project

Mr. Laing advised members that only the paving of the roadway was required for the completion of the Wyoming Mill Road Project and it is hoped that this will begin in early spring when the asphalt plants reopen.

Mrs. Ann Marie Townshend, Director of Planning and Community Development, suggested that, in the future, a briefing on the Route 8/Hazlettville Road Connector (formerly identified as North/South Road between Route 8 and Hazlettville Road on the West Side of the Capital School District Property and the Village of Cannon Mills) be provided to the Committee.

Briefing on Dover/Kent County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Projects - *Rich Vetter*

Due to the absence of Mr. Richard Vetter, Executive Director of the Dover/Kent County Metropolitan Planning Organization, there was no briefing on Dover/Kent County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) projects.

Mrs. Russell moved for adjournment, seconded by Mr. Davis and unanimously carried.

Meeting Adjourned at 6:01 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

James L. Hutchison
Chairman

JLH/JS/jg/dd/tm
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Attachment
Attachment #1 - Letter of Support, to Transportation Secretary Bhatt, for the Signalization of the East Entrance Intersection, with Pedestrian Crossing, for the new Dover High School

City of Dover

February 1, 2012

Mr. Shailen P. Bhatt, Secretary
Department of Transportation
800 Bay Road
Dover, DE 19901

Dear Secretary Bhatt:

The City of Dover has been meeting with staff from DelDOT as well as consultants for the Capital School District on a monthly basis to coordinate the design, review and permitting associated with the new Dover High School which is currently under construction on Delaware Route 8 on the west side of Dover. We have all found these meetings to be helpful in keeping this large, complex project on schedule, and we appreciate the Department's collaboration in this regard.

At the most recent coordination meeting on January 19, 2012, there was a discussion about the proposed east entrance to the school site, and whether it is intended to be a signalized entrance. This entrance is intended to be the bus entrance and primary pedestrian access to the site, and early discussions and presentations by the Capital School District had shown this entrance to be signalized. The City of Dover understands that a warrant analysis must be completed prior to a signal being approved and installed; however, we believe it is necessary to share our administrative concerns related to the importance of this proposed traffic signal.

There are a number of residential developments on the north side of Route 8, from which students will be expected to walk to school. A signalized east entrance would provide a safe crossing for pedestrians from the north side of Route 8 to access the school and associated fields and amenities. The absence of a signal at this location would create an unacceptable safety risk for students, and other members of the community, accessing the school property. From the City's perspective, the presence of a traffic signal at this location is imperative.

The City of Dover Safety Advisory and Transportation Committee has had numerous discussions and has repeatedly expressed concerns about pedestrian access to the Dover High School from the north side of Route 8. Our staff has assured the Committee that a safe crossing for pedestrians is being addressed as part of the plan review.

I look forward to the City of Dover staff continuing to work with DelDOT staff to address this specific issues as well as a number of other transportation challenges. If you would like to discuss this matter with me personally, please call me at 736-7005.

Sincerely,

Scott D. Koenig, P.E.
City Manager

SDK/amt

CC: Ann Marie Townshend, AICP, Director of Planning & Community Development
Greg Moore, Becker Morgan
City Clerk's Office