SAFETY ADVISORY AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

The Safety Advisory and Transportation Committee Meeting was held on June 29, 2011, at 5:00 p.m. with Chairman Hutchison presiding. Members present were Mr. Lynn, Mrs. Russell (arrived at 5:06 p.m.), Mr. Davis, and Mr. Hutchison.

AGENDA ADDITIONS/DELETIONS

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

Presentation - Regional Bike Plan

Mrs. Juanita Wieczoreck, Executive Director, Dover/Kent County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), explained that, in 2009, the MPO updated their Regional Transportation Plan. During this process, a significant number of comments related to bicycles and bicycle facilities were received and, as a result, the MPO began development of a Regional Bicycle Plan.

Mrs. Wieczoreck reviewed a presentation of a Dover/Kent County Regional Bicycle Plan. She stated that the maps include recommendations for improvements. She advised members that the Regional Bike Plan primarily addresses roads leading into the local City system, noting that the City has its own bicycle plan. Mrs. Wieczoreck explained that the MPO's plan is a regional effort to bring cyclists to major employment and shopping areas. She indicated that one (1) improvement for cyclists scheduled for the Fall of 2011 includes re-striping Route 13 (in conjunction with a milling and repaving project) to include a 3-foot wide bicycle lane in each direction. Other bicycle projects that are being considered or planned include converting an existing railroad bed between Clayton, Delaware and Easton, Maryland into a bicycle path, developing a cycling connection between Brecknock and Schutte Parks in conjunction with construction of the West Dover Connector, and work on a path near the Gateway South Shopping Center on Route 10. Mrs. Wieczoreck explained that the Dover/Kent County Regional Bicycle Plan is incorporated in the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), and it is intended that all projects included in the RTP be completed within 20 years. She advised members that the next steps for the Regional Bike Plan include finalizing and releasing the draft Plan, allowing 30 days for public comment, providing additional presentations, and review by MPO committees and MPO Council. She stated that it is hoped that the document will be finalized by September 2011.

In response to Councilman Hutchison's question of how the MPO plan interfaces with the City's bicycle plan, Mrs. Ann Marie Townshend, Director of Planning and Community Development, explained that the City's Planning Department and Mr. Zachery Carter, Director of Parks and Recreation, have been involved in the MPO planning process. She indicated that staff's next step will be to review the City's 1997 Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan and reconcile it with the MPO Plan. Mrs. Townshend stated that many of the implementation measures from the City's plan that have not yet been accomplished will mesh with the MPO Plan. She indicated that after reviewing the two (2) plans, staff will develop a list of projects that the City should develop further, with the goal of using Transportation Enhancement Funds for this purpose.

In response to Councilman Hutchison, Mrs. Townshend indicated that when the West Dover Connector is complete, it will provide bicycle access to the existing bike path along North Street, which connects to Schutte Park.

Mr. Hutchison moved to recommend acceptance of the report, seconded by Mr. Davis and unanimously carried.

Councilman Hutchison congratulated Mrs. Wieczorak on her prospective retirement, expressed his appreciation on behalf of the City for her 17 years of service to the City of Dover, Kent County, and the State of Delaware, and wished her well in the future.

Staff Briefing on Discussions with Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) and Capital School District on New Dover High School

Mr. Scott Koenig, Interim City Manager, Public Services Manager/Director of Public Works, stated that staff has been meeting with the Capital School District for approximately 18 months regarding the development of plans and infrastructure related to the new Dover High School being constructed near the west entrance to the City on Route 8. Some of the major issues being discussed include the location of the building and construction of an access road. He noted that the access road is currently planned to extend to the end of the school property and connect to the Cannon Mills subdivision; however, the intent is that it be extended further along the Papen Farm and tied into West North Street or Hazlettville Road. Mr. Koenig indicated that Mrs. Ann Marie Townshend, Director of Planning and Community Development, was successful in obtaining approval from the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) to incorporate this road extension into the State Capital Transportation Program (CTP), which will allow for a prospective construction date of 2015.

Mr. Koenig stated that there are additional concerns regarding the character and function of Route 8 following the development of the high school. He noted that the school will be a major facility that will accommodate up to 1,800 students, with a significant number of athletic fields and sports complexes. In addition, he indicated that additional residential development is expected around the facility and in unincorporated areas west of the school. Mr. Koenig felt that these developments would change the face of the west Dover corridor. He noted that construction on the site has begun, with a targeted completion date of 2014, and he anticipated that the site would change rapidly as construction proceeds.

In view of the complexity of the issues involved with the project, Mr. Koenig stated that Mrs. Townshend is coordinating monthly meetings between City staff (Mrs. Townshend and Mrs. Dawn Melson-Williams, Principal Planner); EdiS, the construction manager; Becker Morgan Group, the design engineers; ABHA Architects, the architects; DelDOT; and the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC). Mr. Koenig stated that these meetings will ensure that all parties are fully informed as the facility is constructed so that temporary or permanent Certificates of Occupancy can be issued when the facility is ready to open. They will also allow the City to "weigh in" on budget adjustments and construction staging so that public safety can be protected. Mr. Koenig explained that these coordination meetings began in June.

Mrs. Townshend indicated that one (1) of the major issues discussed at the previous coordination meeting was the potential requirement for a multi-use path along the school's frontage that would cross private property. She noted that the Capital School District has serious concerns about the potential need to acquire the right-of-way to construct such a path. She noted that signalized

pedestrian crossings are planned for both the east and west entrances to the campus; therefore, paving the gap between them is not a priority at this time, as the campus can be accessed from both sides without students having to walk on the shoulder. She noted that all agencies have been working on concerns collaboratively.

In response to Councilman Hutchison, Mrs. Townshend stated that a reduction of speed limits was discussed at the June coordination meeting and indicated that she and Mr. Koenig planned to discuss this further with DelDOT. She informed members that DelDOT's current recommendation was to reduce the speed limit to 35 mph in that area during school hours; at other times it would remain at 50 mph. Mrs. Townshend stated that staff's opinion is that the speed limit should be reduced to indicate that the area is no longer rural and to reflect the urban character of the City. She noted that the City would have to request a speed study in order for this to occur.

Mr. Gary Laing, Community Relations Officer for DelDOT and Public Relations Liaison, suggested that the City delay any request for a speed study until the school is in operation. He stated that a future study would more accurately reflect the existing traffic situation in the area.

In response to Mr. Hutchison's concerns regarding the lack of sidewalks in the area, Mrs. Townshend stated that some sidewalks will be constructed east of the school property. She explained that the City may need to consider seeking funding through DelDOT's Transportation Enhancement Project for this purpose, as this is a project that would not typically be required of a developer.

Mr. Koenig explained that potential sidewalk construction would be complicated by the fact that some of the properties involved are not within City limits.

Councilman Hutchison encouraged staff to play a major role in the decision-making regarding the construction of the new Dover High School and requested that a monthly status report on the project be provided to members.

Draft Letter to Capital School District - Pedestrian Crosswalk *(Referred to Staff During the Meeting of April 27, 2011)*

During their meeting of April 27, 2011, members requested staff to provide recommendations regarding submission of a letter to the Capital School District requesting consideration of construction of a pedestrian bridge at the new Dover High School, so that the Committee could determine if they wished to move forward with sending such a letter. Mr. Scott Koenig, Interim City Mrs. Ann Marie Townshend, Director of Planning and Community Development, revised the draft letter. He indicated that, because staff deemed the construction of a pedestrian bridge to be a transportation issue, it was determined that the proposed letter should be directed to the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) rather than the Capital School District. Mr. Koenig stated that staff felt that this project would present many challenges, and that it would not be prudent to request the school district to expend funds for a study or proposal that may not be feasible. He noted that there are many transportation issues associated with opening the new high school, that additional development on Route 8 will complicate this further, and that a pedestrian

bridge may not be the solution to the problem. He suggested that submission of the letter be delayed or, if members wished to proceed, that an inquiry be made to DelDOT to gain input on the feasibility of this concept.

Mr. Gary Laing, Community Relations Officer for DelDOT and Public Relations Liaison, suggested that discussion of this project be postponed until transportation concerns in the area are identified. He noted that construction of a pedestrian bridge could cost approximately $1.5M. Mr. Laing identified some of the concerns related to the project, such as land acquisition, installation of ramps, elevators and/or escalators, and escape proof barriers; the need to lock/unlock an elevator (if incorporated); vehicle clearance; possible graffiti; maintenance; snow removal; handicapped accessibility; safety of users and traffic below; the appearance of the structure as a gateway to the City; and potential cost. Mr. Laing indicated that a pedestrian bridge would be a costly solution that might not solve the problem of granting safe access to the school.

After further discussion, Councilman Hutchison suggested referring this matter back to staff for further discussion with DelDOT in the future.

Mr. Davis moved to refer this matter back to staff for consideration in the future if it is determined that there is a need for a large number of students to cross Route 8 to access the new Dover High School. The motion was seconded by Mr. Hutchison and unanimously carried.

Mrs. Juanita Wieczoreck, Executive Director, Dover/Kent County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), suggested that staff consult the University of Delaware Transportation Research Center to determine if research has been performed on pedestrian overpasses and/or pedestrian issues related to high schools.

Mr. Laing noted that on Tuesday, July 5, 2011, Mr. Shailen Bhatt will be sworn in as the new Secretary of Transportation. He indicated that Mr. Bhatt would like to meet with members of the Safety Advisory and Transportation Committee and City Council in the near future to discuss some of the City's transportation issues and concerns and stated that DelDOT would contact the City in this regard.

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

Meeting Adjourned at 5:51 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

James L. Hutchison, Sr.
Chairman

JLH/JS/ac/dd/tm
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