

**Cabinet Committee on State Planning Issues
Haslett Armory, Room 219
May 9, 2017**

Meeting Summary

Committee Members Present:

Jennifer Cohan, Chair, Delaware Department of Transportation
Connie Holland, Director, Office of State Planning
Anas Ben Addi, Director, Delaware State Housing Authority
Kara Coates for Secretary Shawn Garvin, Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control
Michael Scuse, Secretary, Delaware Department of Agriculture
Terry Pepper for Secretary Robert Coupe, Department of Safety and Homeland Security
Diane Laird for Acting Secretary Cerron Cade, Delaware Economic Development Office

Also Present:

David Edgell, OSPC
Dorothy Morris, OSPC
Miriam Pomilio, OSPC
Drew Boyce, DelDOT
Allison Kowalchick, OMB
Angelo Adbate, Town of Houston
Gary Persinger, Town of Dewey Beach
Dale A. Cooke, Town of Dewey Beach
Patricia M. Correll, Town of Bridgeville
Winn Abbott, Town of Smyrna
Rick Ferrell, Town of Smyrna

Chairperson Cohan opened the meeting at approximately 2:05 pm with welcome and introduced herself as the new Chair. Chairperson Cohan introduced Connie Holland to review a background of the roles and responsibilities of the Cabinet Committee on State Planning Issues, as there are several new members to the committee.

Smyrna Downtown Development Districts, Boundary Extension Request

Winn Abbott, the Planning and Zoning Manager for the Town of Smyrna introduced himself and also introduced Rick Ferrell of Retail Market Answers, LLC, Marketing Consultant for the Town of Smyrna.

Mr. Abbott provided an overview of the development of the downtown development district, changes to ordinances, including waivers of taxes and fees, grants and loans, grants for façade improvements, and small business loans. Mr. Abbott noted that the Town of Smyrna first submitted an application for a downtown development designation in 2014 and was not approved at that time, but applied again in 2016 and received that designation in August, 2016. Since then, one residential and one commercial project have moved forward.

Mr. Abbott stated that the town has several other opportunities in the pipeline for business that have shown a lot of growth and would like to continue to grow within the town limits and taking advantage of the Downtown Development District. Some of these are located

outside of the current district boundaries, necessitating the boundary extension request. Mr. Abbott stated that one of these business is The Painted Stave, a distillery that has become hallmark of the Delaware tourism industry, which has repurposed a downtown building. The Painted Stave has acquired related properties and made plans to create an outdoor gathering space and a storage facility and would benefit from the financing that would be made available by the designation as a downtown development district. Another business, Ducts Unlimited, a heating duct manufacturing business, is currently in the process of re-zoning their parcel from manufacturing to light manufacturing so that they can meet the setback requirements and double the size of their facility, adding eight to ten jobs. Mr. Winn states that the expansion area would be 71% in the historic area of the Town of Smyrna.

Mr. Winn then asked Mr. Ferrell to talk about some of the other opportunities that are forthcoming. Mr. Ferrell stated that investor interest had grown since the first round of development. Mr. Ferrell stated that there is a lot of focus on the currently unfinished third floor of the Wellness Center. And the DDD designation has been critical to that project, as there is significant capital improvement in order for it to be ready to be used as a medical office space. Mr. Ferrell also stated that there is one other site outside of the boundary which would need to be included in the expansion, which would be for the Harris Manufacturing site. Mr. Ferrell also made mention of three small projects which are underway.

Mr. Abbott then spoke about the ongoing efforts of the Town of Smyrna to reach out to the business and residential investor community. The Town has held many outreach events, bringing in lenders to provide education and financing assistance to prospective investors and to engage the business community.

Chairperson Cohan asked if the committee members had any questions.

Ms. Holland added that the Staff Report by David Edgell, the Circuit-Rider Planner for Kent County, and Miriam Pomilio, who reviewed the mapping, indicates that everything does meet the criteria for an amendment to the Downtown Development District boundary.

Anas Ben Addi asked what the maximum [acreage] is for a small town. Mr. Abbott and Ms. Holland responded 170. Mr. Ben Addi asked if they are under that. Ms. Holland responded that they are under that. Mr. Ben Addi asked if they are at 80-something already and Mr. Abbott responded that they are at 70.69 acres with the current boundary and the proposal would bring them to 140.51 acres. Mr. Abbott then distinguished on the map the area referred to as the Harris Manufacturing facility, which has been vacant for close to 20 years and is in Kent County. He stated that the prospective buyers are going through due diligence at this time. It is approximately 15 acres and a future request for expansion is, hopefully, going to be inclusive of this parcel.

Chairperson Cohan asked with that [parcel], all in, what they will be [in acreage]. Mr. Abbott states that they will be at 155 and change.

Mr. Ben Addi asked if this was part of the plan. Mr. Abbott responded that it is not.

Mr. Ben Addi asked if they could not expand that area at this time and Mr. Abbott responded that they could not, but that once the perspective buyers completed their due diligence phase, for which they have already had meetings with the Department of Transportation and the

Department of Natural Resources, then they could complete the purchase and then begin the process of annexation afterwards. At that time they could address this committee again.

Mr. Ben Addi asked if we have a rule about [applying for expansion] once a year. Ms. Holland answered yes.

Mr. Ben Addi then asked if it was not in the code, but in the policy. Ms. Holland replied that it is in the policy.

Mr. Abbott acknowledged that it may be a year from now and Mr. Ben Addi responded that he just wanted Mr. Abbott to be aware [of the policy] and suggested that they do it now so that they don't have to wait.

A motion was made by Secretary Scuse to approve the expansion. The motion was seconded by Terry Pepper. With no further discussion the motion was unanimously approved.

Municipal Comprehensive Plan Update Extension Requests

The Towns of Bridgeville, Dewey and Houston have applied for Municipal Comprehensive Plan Update extensions. Ms. Holland reviewed code with regard to extensions to the committee.

Town of Bridgeville

Ms. Holland stated that the Town of Bridgeville has a letter in their file stating that they are working on a comprehensive plan. A copy of this letter was distributed to the committee by Dorothy Morris. Ms. Holland stated that if given this extension, the Town of Bridgeville would like to work with Sussex County as they continue to work on their comprehensive plan. Ms. Holland stated that it is not the fault of the Town of Bridgeville that they were unable to complete their comprehensive plan within the allotted time because they are also having issues with their wastewater treatment plan that they would like to make decisions on first. Ms. Holland explained that these requests are usually approved if the town shows that it is doing its due diligence and that it is not their fault that there is a delay. Ms. Holland further explained that it usually takes at least 18-months to go through a comprehensive plan, and that is with a full staff and lots of planners, and it is the recommendation of the Office of State Planning that this request be approved and asked if Chairperson Cohan had any questions.

Chairperson Cohan and Secretary Scuse commended the Town of Bridgeville for working with Sussex County. A representative from the Town of Bridgeville was acknowledged by Ms. Holland.

Secretary Scuse moved to approve the extension request.

Chairperson Cohan stated that she didn't see any concerns and asked if there were any questions.

Mr. Pepper seconded the motion.

The motion was unanimously approved.

Ms. Holland asked to clarify if the committee would give the Town of Bridgeville 12 months. The committee was agreeable and Secretary Scuse made the motion to give the Town of Bridgeville one year from today's date. The motion to give the town 12 months from May 9, 2017 was unanimously approved.

Town of Dewey Beach

Ms. Holland introduced Dale Cooke, a representative from the Town of Dewey Beach and directed the committee to a letter from the Town of Dewey Beach that was in the packet. Ms. Holland explained that the town wanted more time to finalize their comprehensive plan and pointed out that they are also a smaller town with a smaller staff.

Chairperson Cohan asked Mr. Cooke if the Town of Dewey Beach is also working with Sussex County on their comprehensive plan. Mr. Cooke answered yes.

Secretary Scuse moved to approve the extension request. Kara Coates seconded the motion and with no questions or further comments the motion was unanimously approved. .

Town of Houston

Ms. Holland stated that there was a representative present from the Town of Houston. The Town of Houston requested a one-year extension for completion of their Municipal Comprehensive Plan Update, which expires on July 12, 2017. Ms. Holland stated that the Town of Houston has recently been working with The University of Delaware (UD) and that there has been some personnel changes with UD which have affected progress. Ms. Holland commended the Town of Houston for moving forward with their Comprehensive Plan and stated that she recommends this extension and asked the committee if they have any questions.

The representative from the Town of Houston stated that they are working with UD.

Secretary Scuse moved for an extension for the Town of Houston.

Mr. Pepper seconded the motion.

Ms. Coates asked for clarification of the dates. She stated that the letter that has been presented to the committee states that they are requesting a one-year extension from July 12. Ms. Holland recommended one year from today's date because the Town of Houston is close to completion.

Secretary Scuse asked if the Town of Houston can complete their Municipal Comprehensive Plan by one year from today. The representative from the Town of Houston stated that he is being told that it won't be completed until July, 2018.

Secretary Scuse amended his motion to give the Town of Houston until July 12, 2018.

Chairperson Cohan asked if anyone seconds the motion.

Mr. Pepper seconded the motion. With no questions or further discussion the amended motion was unanimously approved.

Public Comments

Chairperson Cohan asked if there are any public comments. There were no public comments.

Adjournment

With no additional business before the committee, a motion was made by Chairperson Cohan to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Secretary Scuse and with no further discussion, the motion was unanimously carried. The meeting was adjourned at 2:25 PM.

Draft Minutes posted to calendar:

Minutes approved:

Final minutes posted to public

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