**Minutes**

Comprehensive Development Plan Working Group

July 30, 2016 Meeting

Lighthouse Cove/Ruddertowne BayCenter

124 Dickinson Avenue, Dewey Beach DE 19971

**9:00 am Open.**

The meeting was called to order by Chair David King. Present were Working Group members Elaine Bole, David Davis (by teleconference), Jim Dedes, Dave Ferry, Julie Johnson, Steve Judge, Beth Caruso, Bill Lower (by teleconference), Jimmy O’Conor, Gary Persinger, TJ Redefer, Mark Richardson, Paul Roessel, and Larry Silver; Ad Hoc member Jim Tyler, Town Mayor Diane Hanson and Commissioners Dale Cooke and Mike Dunmyer; and members of the public, including Ed Beste, David Moskowitz, Len Read, and Eleanor Tyler.

Approval of the Agenda. There was consensus to adjust the timing of the various agenda items to meet Secretary Cohan’s schedule.

**9:04 am Status update on surveys, mailing and handouts – Elaine Bole**

Basically everything is ready to go once there is final approval from the Town Commissioners. Elaine will move forward with getting the cards and labels printed, so the mailings (property and business owners) and handouts (visitors) can go out ASAP after the August 13 Joint Meeting, at which we expect final approval from the Town Commissioners on survey language.

There was concern that, at least, the visitor survey was going out too late to capture June, July, and early August visitors (i.e., families with school-age children). Any interpretation of the results will have to be framed within that background. For comparison, there was no visitor survey for the prior Comp Plan. This might be a good reason to ask for a longer extension (end of 2017) from the Delaware Office of State Planning Coordination, so as to be able to capture input from May, June, July, and August visitors.

**Homework: If you have comments on the survey language, send to Gary ASAP.**

**9:20 am Discussion on “Town Hall” objectives and issues – David King**

King said, in creating this document that he took prior discussions in general and on objectives and goals in particular and to weave into a document that might be usable as a starting point for the 2017 comp plan. Some of this language was taken directly from the 2007 comp plan and specific details of the current situation need to be verified, and that he wants feedback in 2 areas: 1) whether or not this format makes sense, and 2) specifics regarding either the narrative or objectives and milestones.

There was concern about time-bounding the various objectives since there is no knowledge about what body of work might really be necessary for many of these tasks, and that taken as a whole this could be overwhelming to the Town. While there was support to omit specific time bounds in favor of prioritization of each item, there was a clear desire to try to get all important goals and objectives on paper now and to refine and prioritize later.

Commissioners Cooke and Dunmyer both expressed concern that the current staffing in Town Hall might not be suitable or sufficient to make timely progress against these milestones. And that ultimately it is the Commissioners who will set the timeline.

Specific comments and discussion included:

* **Population aging and growth:** questioned by some – before we commit to such language we need the data (possibly available from Rehoboth and Bethany. Anecdotal evidence behind extended season activity was provided by Paul Roessel, who noted that in Sea Gate and Ocean Reach, which collectively have 30 units, no one comes to Dewey after Labor Day, and David King who noted that in Bermuda Sea Mist with 8 units most owners spend a significant number of extended weekends in Dewey in the off seasons or have long-term rentors during that period. Also, the indicated proposed population growth does not provide any actionable threat or opportunity even if the Town grows to 1,000, including residents and 2nd home owners who come to Dewey off season for extended weekends (versus the 30,000 present in town on a summer weekend). Perhaps change language to say we should monitor population growth and suggest data points to watch and appropriate responses if it reaches a magnitude of concern. A final comment noted that while we might not see a big increase in year round “residents” it is likely we will see a big increase in off season activity; Dewey has always been a business/rental community and will likely continue to be such.

A bigger concern should be growth and development in the surrounding towns and unincorporated Delaware and how congestion, etc. might affect access to Dewey and to amenities in the surrounding area that we all need.

* **Vision statement**: from prior comp plan as a place holder until we develop a new one; general support for this language, however.
* **Negative impacts of conflicting code and unequal enforcement:** should re-cast in a kinder tone. Is this so much about the code, or about complaints from people who get caught in violation and are looking for excuses. There are surprises and inconsistencies in the code, and it makes sense to recommend a review of the code since the State requires amendment of municipal code to ensure consistency with a newly certified comp plan within 18 months of plan certification. Many felt that it is implicit in the responsibility of the town to uniformly enforce its and that this should not be incorporated into the comp plan.
* **Timelines:** There was little support for strict time bounds (don’t know how much work might be required to achieve each milestone); some support from framing in terms of a short-, mid- or long-term goal; and general support for prioritization of objectives and milestones.
* **External review of staffing and operations:** There was consensus that this is an important issue, but that a more appropriate interval would be 5 years (2 years being too burdensome and 5 years being too infrequent as technology and expectations change).
* **Town representatives … friendly:** The general consensus was that this should be implicit in Town operations and not needed in the comp plan; perhaps language as to “a culture of helpfulness and openness” should be included in the overarching objective.

The “utilities & infrastructure” language in this document is to-be-determined, and will likely come out of discussions on the built environment meta issue.

**Homework: To conclude this item David King asked everyone who has specific comments or disagreements with specific objectives or milestones to provide them to him in writing by the end of the coming week.**

**10:05 am Discussion on “Natural Environment” objectives and issues – Elaine Bole**

The group began by discussing those items that we want to keep/improve:

* Preservation and maintenance of ocean beach and dunes, bay shores and bay waters (including storm-water runoff minimization and remediation)
* Elimination of balloons, straws, Styrofoam (or is that too far into the weeds?); what is the overarching issue? Want to ensure the continuation of clean beaches and waters
* Encourage the Town to explore funding for dredging the bay to reduce flooding while providing sand/silt for building protective berms and bay beaches
* A bay walk if it could be designed in a way that would also protect the bay shore and natural environment
* As a town, Dewey Beach needs to value the natural environment and its beauty as an asset and incorporate them into Town activities in an environmentally sensitive manner
* Town has no long range capital plan: makes any discussion of preserving/protecting difficult because there is no dedicated funding. Need an assessment of needs and a plan for funding. Beach replenishment fund is only for use related to the ocean beach and not for the bay; much of our discussion here is related to the bay, need to figure out funding mechanisms
* Should use zoning and building codes to encourage more rapid adoption of alternative energy sources (solar & wind) and environmentally-friendly building materials; should encourage building techniques and designs that are adaptive to future sea-level rise
* At this point the Atlantic side seems to be on autopilot. Bay side is an area of great opportunity – need to establish a group to work on a vision and options
* Highway right of ways and small open areas are opportunities for improving the natural environment in Town. Sunset Park is an example that could provide large benefits if better cared for by the Town
* Ensure commercial enterprise does not detract from the broad enjoyment of the ocean beach; do not want the analogy of the Rehoboth boardwalk set down onto the Dewey beach
* Ensure continued preservation of the ocean dunes system for the protection of the Town and broad beaches for continuation of the Dewey beach experience
* Develop a plan for the best use of the various elements of the natural environment, including ocean and bay beaches prioritizing protection of existing beauty
* Looking out on the bay, how do we preserve that: water, boats and sail boats, jet skis, kayaks, paddle boards, dogs …

Separate the narrative, which can include a detailed presentation of the situation, opportunities and threats, from our objectives and recommendations which need to be actionable

**Comments and Homework: Elaine will send out an update of her thoughts on the natural environment component. When you get that, respond back to her with your thoughts and comments.**

**10:43 am Break**

**11:02 am Presentation by Secretary Jennifer Cohan,** Delaware Department of Transportation regarding DelDOT’s long-term plans and vision regarding roadways and related infrastructure, traffic and transportation, and sea-level rise and flood mitigation in the Coastal Delaware area, how Dewey Beach fits into that vision, and how DelDOT and Dewey can leverage shared resources to make a better future happen.

Secretary Cohan began with the following comments:

* Came into office in 2015 - $78 million deficit and with no projects going forward. Immediately tasked with securing a revenue package – 6 months successful with a revenue package signed into law that put an additional $390 Million into the Transportation Trust Fund. Last year was a good year for DelDOT; at end of 2015 Congress passed the FAST act for long term funding of transportation infrastructure at federal level, and which gave Delaware an additional $75 million for the Transportation Fund. The long backlog of projects are now moving forward, being prioritized within a transportation corridor viewpoint rather than as individual projects. One can take a look at this on line – to get a better idea of what they are doing.
* In past Sussex and Kent Counties have has not historically gotten their fair share of transportation funding. That is changing and more funding will be available to Sussex and Kent Counties, to the tune of half-a-billion dollars in next six years. The down side of this increased activity is that there will be local disruptions due to highway work. The relationship between the Secretary’s Office and Sussex County has improved dramatically with her tenure in office; good working relationships are important in Delaware because land use decisions are made locally while transportation infrastructure decisions are made at the State level – often resulting in land use decisions being made without the support of transportation infrastructure improvement planning.
* DelDOT is pushing a concept of Transportation Improvement Districts, and asked for our help in pushing this concept with the Sussex County Council; it won’t solve every problem, but should be a big help to insure development doesn’t get ahead of transportation infrastructure.

In response to questions:

* **Congestion and traffic along SR-1 in the center of Dewey which causes safety concerns for cyclists and pedestrians.** No simple answer, but does have a 5 mile paving project for our area along SR-1 for next year. Now is time for the Town to let DelDOT know if it would like to narrow travel lanes (bound by federal engineering standards), widen the bike lanes and/or bump out the sidewalks, so they can stripe the new pavement to prepare for such changes (however, this is not a reconstruction project). Needs to know what the town wants to do, before the end of the year.
* **Crossing SR-1.** Can arrange for barriers along the median: fencing was a good solution in Dover by DE State University crossing SR-13. Cannot put speed bumps on SR-1.
* **Curb issues that are not ADA compliant**, DelDOT has to remedy that during the paving process.
* **Synchronization of traffic signals.**  Command Center has real time input related to traffic signal synchronization and traffic flow. DelDOT has an app that provides the public real time information on lights and traffic congestion.
* **Congestion.** Working on traffic flow above Five Points. However, when that is fixed, will have to deal with the subsequent congestion south of Five Points. Mentioned a study that showed that 17% of traffic off the Ferry at Lewes comes south through Dewey and continues on to Fenwick and Ocean City – addressing this traffic is a major focus. Lewes Park & Ride should relieve some of the congestion by providing public interstate transportation so people don’t have to drive to get here.
* **Pedestrian safety.** DE is second deadliest state in terms of pedestrian safety. Can start to think about the use of hard barriers to separate different modes, e.g., pedestrian/bike and motor vehicle. DelDOT is aware of the problem and will be working on pilot projects. Speed bumps/humps sometimes work, but cannot put them on SR-1.
* **Reconfiguration of sidewalks**. While it is possible to think about reconfiguring the sidewalks in Dewey, this would be a big project and the Town would have to get involved in public hearings at the County level to promote it. Not out of the question, like the sidewalks from Lewes to Rehoboth which cost $6 million and was totally paid for by DelDOT.
* **Pass through traffic**.DelDOT is looking at re-routing traffic around SR-1 from Lewes to Dewey, but has no solution.This is part of their “corridor” approach. Need to solve East/West and North/South flow.
* **Traffic studies/projections**. Generally do traffic studies as part of a larger project. If Dewey decides to go forward with a Pedestrian Improvement Project as part of its comp plan, DelDOT would/would have to undertake such traffic studies. Such a project has to go through a process that starts at the County level and DelDOT public hearings. Now would be the time to begin the Town’s planning in light of the opportunity for initial work under the 2017 paving and re-striping effort, with reconstruction of curbs and relocation of utilities under a future project.
* **Sea-level rise.** Not a lot of options. Can’t put on more pavement (estimates say it would cost $160 million to raise SR-1 above the projected sea level for 2100); looking at pilot projects using nature-based solutions with the Federal Highway Administration at five sites along SR-1 between Rehoboth and Fenwick.
* **Roadway deterioration.**  All roadways are evaluated and ranked as to their health. Locally, the traffic, heat and air/water salinity play havoc with our current roadbed materials, and with any corrugated metal pipes buried beneath them, e.g., for drainage. DelDOT is looking at new materials and partnerships to improve their failing roadways. Local roadbed status should be on DelDOT’s web site; if it isn’t, the Secretary offered to provide that information to us.
* **Agreements with the Town.** DelDOT has over 1,000 municipal agreements; which are not uniform from township to township. Would love to have a single, uniform document. This might be an opportunity to renegotiate terms related to maintenance/repair/improvement of its roadways and storm sewers
* **Extra curb cuts as a pedestrian safety concern.** Bring to DelDOT’s attention as a road condition (on DelDOT’s app), and they will look into it, determine why it is there, and possibly remediate.
* **Majority of roadways in Town are State owned**. Town seems to be responsible for repaving, etc. The State owns about 96% of all roadways in Delaware; the Community Transportation Fund was created to allow local legislators to provide funds for the maintenance/improvement of “suburban” streets by local municipalities. DelDOT cannot afford to fund repaving of all suburban roadways. (DelDOT’s gateway provides information on ownership of roadways, also information if roadways are in State snow clearance reimbursement program).

11**:55 pm Closing**

The next meeting is August 13, 2016 at the Dewey Beach Lions Club on McKinley Ave., 9:00 am to noon. With no further comments there was a motion to adjourn and a second. There was no discussion, and the motion passed by unanimous voice vote.