**Minutes**

Comprehensive Development Plan Working Group

April 30, 2016 Meeting

Dewey Beach Life Saving Museum

1 Dagsworthy Ave, Dewey Beach, DE 19971

**10:00 am – Open**

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 am by Chair David King, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Present were members Elaine Bole, Dave Davis, Jim Dedes, Dave Ferry, Steve Judge, Jimmy O’Conor, Gary Persinger, Mark Richardson, Larry Silver, Kay Sullivan, and Phil Winkler and Ad Hoc member Jim Tyler; Dan Forman and Bill Lower participated via teleconference. Also present were Mayor Diane Hanson, Town Commissioner Dale Cooke, and several members of the public, including Emily Seldomridge and Chris Bason from Center for the Inland Bays, Carol Everhart from Rehoboth Beach – Dewey Beach Chamber of Commerce, Eleanor Tyler, Fran Weintraub, and others.

Approval of Mar 26, 2016 Draft Minutes. A motion was made and seconded to approve the draft minutes with minor editorial amendments. There was no discussion and this motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

**10:05 am Presentation by Chris Bason, Executive Director Delaware Center for the Inland Bays, on CIB’s future vision for the Inland Bays, including Rehoboth Bay, how Dewey fits into that vision, and how CIB and Dewey can leverage shared resources to make a better future happen.**

Chris Bason started by talking about some of the big changes in the Inland Bays watershed in recent years, including its waters being clearer as sea weed blooms are decreased, and expressed hope, when the Rehoboth waste water treatment plan drain pipes are removed in 2018 that there should be a dramatic improvement in water quality.

He also thanked Dewey for its past efforts in, for example, its pervious driveway regulations that lets rainwater percolate through the sandy ground before making its way back into the Bay, for opposing seismic testing and off shore drilling with their potential for harming sea life and spillage, and hosting a benefit concert for the inland bays in LA following the oil spill of a few years back.

Bason focused his remarks on three important issues:

1. Sea level rise – which he characterized as the most important issue facing Dewey. While a linear projection of past sea level rise rates only predicts a 3” increase in sea level over the next 20 years, because the land is so flat this is a huge volume of water. In addition, the rate of sea level rise is increasing dramatically and scientists are finding that contributions from polar ice sheets are likely to add significantly to near-term rates of sea level rise. There are infrastructure improvements that will have to be made; in that regard, new and improved forms of green infrastructure are becoming available. On the ocean side we know the solution; it involves sand dunes and dune maintenance.
2. Sediment planning. On the Bay side we need to protect our wetlands and beaches/shorelines using living shoreline technology and building up the wetlands as water levels rise. In this regard it is important to understand where one’s sediment is to use to build up areas at risk. Sediment planning is going to be very important in the future to protect and maintain Bay shores. CIB can help the town do this by working on regional resources planning
3. Storm water – water on the land. We are seeing more intense storms – both in terms of waves and of rain. The town needs to develop a plan as to where it can install green infrastructure to handle storm water and flood events, to prevent runoff, with sediment and pollution. Storm water retro-fitting is required, it will reduce pollution, reduce flooding, bringing community members together, and beautify the town. The goal is to get storm water into the ground fast – not discharging it untreated, directly into the Bay. Finally, the most important relationship in this process is a positive working relationship with DelDot.

Emily Seldomridge Watershed Coordinator CIB continued by talking about the grant recently awarded to Dewey for storm water management. Current storm water infrastructure is not sufficient to deal with the levels of storm water being seen today and expected in the future. The Town needs a plan to leverage other resources and create a holistic approach. To move forward the town will need to prioritize the various components of the overall plan, to implement as funding becomes available. This grant includes State funds, a cost share from the Town of about $50,000 and in-kind matches of labor from Town officials and volunteers, CIB, and DelDot engineers, and is similar to what CIB has found to have worked successfully in Bethany and South Bethany.

In response to questions, Chris Bason:

* explained the term “living shoreline”: stabilization of the shoreline through natural processes that maintain the important life and ecosystems of the Bay. Prior approaches involving rock and concrete walls kill the aquatic environment and flora/fauna and are no longer acceptable.
* indicated that any approach to attempt to wall in the entire Bay is just not possible, and recommended the UDel Sea Grant Program as an excellent source of information and collaboration.
* indicated that he has seen dramatic sea-level-rise-effect changes in the lakes and streams he has visited in the area over the past 12 years, and that there will come a time when abandonment of properties will be necessary.

**10:35 am Presentation by Carol Everhart, President Rehoboth Beach – Dewey Beach Chamber of Commerce, on the Chamber’s long range goals and vision, how Dewey fits into that vision, and how the Chamber and Dewey can leverage local, County and State resources for a better, more vibrant future.**

Carol Everhart’s main message is, from her perspective as Chamber President, that the direction Dewey has been taking recently has been very positive. Some points:

* Hotel/motel occupancy,. Dewey consistently beats Rt-1 and Rehoboth Beach in h/motel occupancy rates – 90% full.
* The Chamber’s mission is business, tourism and civic responsibility; its banner is “clean, safe, friendly”. The town beautification efforts are resulting in a very clean, very nice venue.
* Safe is related to infrastructure, the way the streets & sidewalks are maintained and the Chamber will be a town advocate for improvement in this area.
* Friendly is obvious in terms of the number of dog-friendly events, with over 600 doodles registered for the doodles on the beach weekend (April 30 –May 1).
* In the 27 years she has been here she has seen many positive changes: improvements in streetscape, organization structure in town hall, outreach. The Chamber is willing to do more for Dewey and asked, “What can we do for you”.

In response to questions President Everhart commented:

* Future demographics of residents and visitors? 27 years ago businesses in Rehoboth were open on a seasonal basis; then went to 52 weekends when the weather was nice; they are now open 52 extended weekends a year Th – Mon. How people rent is driving part of this with all the short term residential rentals. Also, residents and retirees in the outlying areas (e.g., Milford and Milton, and other towns within 20 miles of the shore) are coming in for nice weekends. Creating increased demand for infrastructure and increased traffic pretty much year round. A “herd of elephants” is coming and the infrastructure is not ready. In terms of tourism, this is a national destination and tourism is strong. The water is our best friend – close proximity to ocean and bay is a tremendous draw.
* What infrastructure? Roads and parking; mass transit. A big issue is limiting car traffic, but where do you park them? Any major parking plaza also requires rest rooms and other services. The Chamber shares its information and concerns with DelDot and DART, but capacity is capacity. As a bellwether, in some areas of N Car it got so crowded that people stopped coming in.
* Coordination with metro areas related to bussing people into the area? A new transit center is being built in Five Points area; scheduled to open in 2017 and be fully operational in 2018. It is intended to be a place suitable for interstate mass transit like Greyhound to come in and discharge to local transit for distribution to the local areas – and will include restrooms and related services. Today when motor coaches come into the area for day trips, parking for them is a big problem; the Chamber sends them to the Park and Ride. But the Park & Ride is closed in the winter, and this impairs winter tourism. Demographically, in Rehoboth the visiting demographic is the 40 to 55 year olds, in Dewey it is a wide demographic; those of us who have been here a long time, our kids, and their kids. Different generations have different mass transit attitudes and needs.
* How to work with DelDot and DART to get transit down here? The transit station will help the entire resort area when it opens. This will also help move workers.
* What can Dewey do related to economic development? Depends on whether you are trying to grow the town or not grow the town. If you want to grow the town you will need a recreation type of programming. Get a recreation programmer in to set up recreation programming – start with summer programs that can grow into year round programming. Control the type of entertainment being offered.
* Who is responsible for planning the shuttles from the transit center? DART. We have seasonal DART service now, but when the transit center is fully operational in 2018, the DART service will be year round. A major challenge will be to get more local people to drive to the transit center and take DART into Rehoboth and Dewey.
* What might “year round” mean for Dewey? Rehoboth’s businesses are now open 52 extended weekends a year. If you want it, you need to encourage and help the businesses stay open – need to work with the businesses to bring people into town. I think Dewey could be year round in less than 10 years if the Town wants it – maybe even if the Town doesn’t. People who now have rental properties or 2nd homes here, are coming down to stay. TJ added that this is becoming a national trend.
* Alternative routes to SR-1? The more the coastal towns become year round, the more the current summer gridlock will extend to year round. However, people don’t want to drive inland, they want to drive up along the coast.

A final comment by Commissioner Dale Cooke, the influx is coming and traffic will increase regardless of what we do; we need to understand how increased traffic in Dewey will benefit the town and strategically respond accordingly.

**11:09 am Discussion on communications protocols, including file naming and control of electronic documents created and used by the Working Group, led by Phil Winkler.**

The discussion was based on a draft communications document distributed prior to the last Working Group meeting (See addendum 1).

* King will get an electronic copy of the 2007 Comp Plan, and Winkler will send the relevant sections out to the breakout team leaders.
* Winkler asked that when team leaders send him documents, they include a cover letter that tells him what it is so he can get it in the right place in the evolving comp plan draft document.
* King had a few additional requests, including single space, Times Roman, 12 point, DRAFT watermark on the document, turn on line numbering. He will amend the draft document and create a model.
* A preliminary ordering of Chapter topics was presented (see Addendum 2), recognizing that the ordering and chapter titles are likely to change in the future as the document evolves.

**11:15 am Consensus agreement on revised Working Group mission statement and objectives/goals led by David King.**

King suggested a few editorial changes, as did others. Also, there was a desire to specifically include the concept of “recreational opportunities” into the vision statement. There was consensus approval of the document as read and subsequently modified. (See Addendum 3)

**11:22 am Break**

**11:30 am Presentation and discussion on the various factors that drive property values in and around Dewey Beach led by T.J. Redefer.**

TJ Redefer started his presentation by mentioning the wide range of types of property available in Dewey, including fee simple, land lease, time share, single family (small cottages and very large homes), town house, enclaves and planned developments, year round and seasonal use, vacation homes, residential rentals, 2nd homes and condominiums, as well as diversity of residential structures; he concluded by saying his goal was to show how the real estate market contributes to the overall economic vitality and sustainability of the town.

Tiny houses are now rare in Dewey, but the popularity of tiny houses are becoming a national trend that might extend to Dewey in the future as people begin making Dewey their year round home, and Dewey has to plan for this in terms of population density and zoning.

Impact of real estate on the Town’s financial sustainability. The real estate market is a substantial contributor to the economy in Dewey. There are about 40 sales each year in Dewey resulting in about $600K in transfer taxes; residential rentals result in more than $85K in business license fees (about 600 licenses out of some 1772 properties listed in the beach tax rolls), accommodation taxes are about $400K a year, building permits (over 300 permits each year, including some 10 new homes built each year) run around $200K to $300K each year. Total directly from real estate is in the $1.2 - $1.5M ball park.

Who sells in Dewey Beach? Sales are driven by sellers who have to sell due to a personal hardship – such as death, divorce, disaster, or health problems – or have a great opportunity to move on.

Who buys? Buyers are those who have past connections to Dewey Beach; at least 80% stayed here at one time. They want to come back to relive their past. Of the remaining 20%, many want to be in the area but cannot afford Rehoboth or Bethany. For them, Dewey offers great value.

Rentals? This use often influences the physical structure of the built environment. A large percentage of existing buildings will probably always be rentals, or 2nd homes. The landlords are sometimes investor buyers, but also likely dreamers who are looking to a future where they retire to Dewey full time. The rental occupants are generally a younger generation that just wants to come and have fun. The Town needs to plan for changes in these demographics and use; how much of this change we want to encourage and see.

Scofflaws? It is likely that upwards of 40% of those who rent, do not buy a business license or pay accommodation taxes; often renting to co-workers. Need to change this culture and create mechanisms that both promote full compliance and provide benefits to the owner-landlord and to the undocumented tenants. The comp plan needs to create a culture change wherein the town citizens feel it is their patriotic duty to pay their fare share; to be a good citizen and participant in the town. If everyone pays what they owe, rates will be lower.

Rehoboth By The Sea? This is a neighborhood; it is a low-density, wooded community that looks different than the Southern part of town. It is changing right now. While a large number of cottages are on leased land, it is not all leased land; some of the lease terms are for just a few more years and others are for 60 years. In principle, when a lease expires the owner has to turn the property back to RBTS Realty. However, RBTS is renewing leases and selling land, and when a property owner gets a new lease, they gain a valuable and appreciating asset. From the Town’s perspective, when an owner gets a new 60 year lease at $20K/year land rent, or purchases a piece of land worth $500K-plus, these owners are now even more invested in the community and will not be satisfied with a $30,000 cottage for long; they will be investing and building something different – and generally, in Dewey, this means a seasonal family retreat, 2nd home or future residence. The Town has to look at what it wants this neighborhood to look like and how the zoning code should be changed to encourage it to change in a way that fits with the Town’s vision for its future.

In response to a question about whether the town should want to develop in directions that increase property values and how might it accomplish that in a strategic manner, Redefer responded that the culture is a big contributor to that. It was very difficult to sell when there were so many articles about all the bad behavior in Dewey. Now that things are improving, we need to think about how the zoning code can be modified to encourage building housing appropriate for year round living.

He also noted that there are situation where there are multiple small condos and apartments on a single parcel, which are unlikely to ever be anything except rentals under current zoning code requirements – another aspect of the physical plant issue. The town is going to need to recognize this fact, and include these types of considerations into its strategic planning.

A final, and unanswered, question: what do we do in terms of trying to make a comprehensive development plan decision as whether to promote year round residential or rental structures? Resolution of this question is core to any vision of the future. As a follow up, Steve Judge pointed out that this is a process: someone buys for a seasonal rental, then it becomes used as a second home, then a permanent residence. That and the fact that there is no more beachfront property.

**12:12 pm Presentation and discussion of an initial survey to reach out to the Town’s various stakeholder groups led by Gary Persinger. (See Addendum 4)**

Gary Persinger noted that a lot of information is available for year round residents, but there is no basis to project anything re: the broader population, including rental data.

* Would like to see trends in rental information, especially in terms of the north end with major investments in property and homes;
* Traffic data available from DelDot automated cameras: 81,000 cars per day at outlets, and 21,000 down by the inlet. Counts might be 50% higher on weekends – all this info consistent with data from the Chamber of Commerce –average vehicle occupancy of 1.2, giving some 20,000 to 30,000 people through town each day during the summer
* Crime rate pretty flat, maybe down slightly; most prevalent category is riot/loitering, which includes disorderly conduct, loitering, and public nuisance.
* He sees surveys as an opportunity for public input. While proposing surveys of property and business owners, he is concerned with low response rates and the fact that we have no idea as to who responds and why. Recommended we pre-code the questionnaires so that we know something about the respondents, e.g., do property owners rent or not, area of town located, etc. A second survey would be distributed by operators of h/motels and businesses to learn about visitors. Best to have internet link for both surveys.
* He proposed an initial set of questions keyed to the meta-issues we have been discussing, with a 5-point response matrix. He commented that these might these might not be the final set of survey questions, and that the Working Group needs to review and refine them.

Comments and responses to questions,

* TJ Redefer. There are many services that provide access to undertaking on-line questionnaires. Many also offer help in framing the specific questions asked. It is important in framing any such questions that we, the Working Group, understand what are goals are in asking each of these questions. Many of the questions are leading or vague.
* Dave Davis. More concerned with delivery mechanism, and the need to drive people to respond to an electronic version
* David King. Felt we were going to use multiple surveys. The first to collect information and demographics on our property and business owners, and visitors, and how they use their properties and their plans for how such usage will likely change. We know a lot about 10% of the population of Dewey Beach, but very little about 90% of our citizens; more importantly, we don’t know anything about how they see their use changing – from rentals to full time residences. For people who stay in rentals, we should want to learn why they came here, how many in their party/family, will they come back and why, etc.

Sees a 2nd survey formulated once the Working Group breakout groups have more concrete ideas about a vision or multiple visions of the future, to ask the various stakeholders how they feel about each, and which they would like to become a reality, and use that info as feedback into the process.

* Jim Dedes. Has seen that one gets better response rates from mail-out surveys than email surveys. He would like to see a mailing to everyone. A consensus seemed to be to strive to reach everyone, and if that means mail and email, so be it.
* TJ Redefer. Suggested mailing out a post card with a link to the town web site, and offering an opportunity to win an iPad or some similar item.
* Diane Hanson. When she mails info out to her extensive email list, only about 60% - 70% even open the email; , even when dealing with severe storm warnings, not more than 75% open the email.

David King will be responsible for the next step in the “Have a say in Dewey’s Future” marketing campaign.

**12: 20 pm Review and action on Homework**

**Update and discussion of the SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) initially presented at the March 26th meeting, led by Paul Roessel, Dave Davis and Mark Richardson.**

Paul was not present, but had indicated in a prior email that they will get to work next week. King noted there are two issues that need to be addressed: 1) the competitive environment as detailed within the SWOT analysis; 2) how to use that analysis to map out our future vision(s) and driving the comp plan. This is something for all of us to think about.

**Meta-issue teams and membership assignments.**

King used input from Working Group members to assign to meta-issue teams for which they had indicated 1st or 2nd preferences whenever possible while keeping team sizes manageable (5 -7).

There was concern that coordinating meetings amongst groups of this size might be difficult, and team leaders indicated a desire of many of the team leaders to down-select their groups to include a total of 3 on each committee.

At this point there is no guiding documentation to constrain what areas each meta-issue group considers within their portfolio. King suggested looking at the current Dewey plan and those of our neighboring municipalities. It is his expectation that the meta-issue teams will carve out their own territories, and if there is overlap, that should be viewed as a positive result. (See Addendum 5 for a list of meta-issues and issue leaders)

**12:45 pm Update and Discussion of draft Comp Plan goals and objectives, based on a**

**general consensus among Working Group members on the fundamental questions facing**

**Dewey Beach as discussed at the March 26th meeting, led by David King, Dave Davis, and**

**Jimmy O’Conor.**

After a few minutes of discussion it was clear that most Working Group members were not prepared for a comprehensive discussion of plan objectives and goals, nor was there time left in this meeting for any quality discussion, so this item was tabled until the next meeting when approx. 90 minutes would be set aside for this agenda item.

To that end members were asked to send any additional items to David King that they believe were missed in this first draft and that they would like to see included in an updated draft version of this document to be discussed at the next meeting.

**1:00 pm Comments, Homework Assignments, and Closing**

With no further comments there was a motion to adjourn and a second. There was no further discussion, and the motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

ADDENDA

**Addendum 1**

**DRAFT DOCUMENT DISCUSSED AT THIS MEETING**

**DB Comprehensive Plan Communications Strategy**

**Assumptions**:

* The Comp Plan will be developed using Microsoft Word or compatible software.
* All members have internet access and email accounts.
* The Comp Plan Committee will adopt a Table of Contents for all the topics to be in the final report.
* Each Comp Plan chapter will be assigned to specific members (a sub-group) and each sub-group will have a single member (Point person) to communicate with the entire committee.

**The Strategy**

1. We develop and formalize the Table of Contents Titles/Chapters along with the contents (topics) of each chapter. Chapters and topics are numbered 1.1, 1.2, and1.4,…. 2.1, 2.2,….. 3.1, 3.2, etc.

2. The committee will be divided into smaller teams (2-4 persons each), each of which will be assigned a particular chapter.

3. One person within each team will be responsible for consolidating the work of the team and submitting it to me via email each week or so. If a team consists of subject-matter-experts then so much the better.

4. File names will be C#MMDD.doc Where # is their Chapter# and MMDD = month and day. The word DRAFT will be on each page 1.

5. Software used is Microsoft Word, NeoOffice or Pages in Word compatibility mode.

6. Documents will be emailed to me when completed in draft form.

7. I will maintain a database of files received, chapters, contents, etc.

8. Weekly/Daily backups will be made to the town server accessible to Ashely, me, you, etc.

9. Groups are encouraged to maintain backup copies of their work on thumb drives or similar backup media.

10. Minimal formatting should be applied to each document. No indents and double-spacing between paragraphs is recommended.

**Addendum 2**

**DRAFT DOCUMENT DISCUSSED AT THIS MEETING**

**Comp Plan Outline**:[[1]](#footnote-1)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Chapter 1 Introduction (e.g., State requirements; purpose; authority)

Chapter 2 Existing Situation (e.g., history; progress since last plan; demographics & housing updates)

Chapter 3 Working Group Process, and Future Vision

Chapter 4 Economic Development

Chapter 5 The Natural Environment

Chapter 6 The Built Environment

Chapter 7 Public Safety

Chapter 8 Town Hall (e.g., Governance & Municipal Operations)

Chapter 9 Quality of Life

Chapter 10 Implementation (e.g., recommendations, inter-governmental co-operations)

**Addendum 3**

**DOCUMENT AS DISCUSSED, AMENDED AND APPROVED AT THIS MEETING**

**2016 Comprehensive Development Plan Committee and Working Group**

**Mission Statement**

The mission and purpose of the Comprehensive Plan Committee and Working Group is to fairly address the interests and needs of the town’s constituents, namely residents, property owners, businesses, and visitors, in a way that results in a plan for Dewey's future that is balanced and ensures a stable and positive image and future for the town, optimizing its key attributes which include a beautiful and healthy beach and bay, small town feel, vibrant family and social life, safety, recreational opportunities and quiet enjoyment, fiscal responsibility, and natural resources.

**Objectives:**

* **review the Town’s 2007 Comprehensive Development Plan and those of its neighboring Coastal DE municipalities,**
* **establish a shared vision of Dewey Beach 2035 that assures a stable and positive future for the Town, and**
* **develop an updated Plan that will engage all of the Town’s stakeholders to work together to move the Town forward over the next 10 years toward that vision.**

**Addendum 4**

**DRAFT DOCUMENT DISCUSSED AT THIS MEETING**

**Addendum 5**

**DOCUMENT AS DISCUSSED AND AMMENDED AT THIS MEETING**

Meta-Issue and Other team leadership assignments

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Meta-Issue**  | **Lead** |
| Vision/history | Davis |
| economic development | Silver |
| natural environment | Bole |
| built environment | TJR |
| Public Safety | Johnson |
| Town Hall | King |
| Quality of Life | Lower |
| **Task Groups** |  |
| Data needs | Persinger |
| Objectives and Goals | King |
| SWOT | Roessel |
| Mission Statement | Davis |

1. Chapters 4 – 9 include objectives and goals, Chapter 10 includes recommendations; transportation issues included in Chapters 6, 7 & 9 as appropriate. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)