

**CITY OF NEWARK
DELAWARE**

**CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMISSION
MINUTES**

January 12, 2016

MEETING CONVENED: 7:00 p.m. Council Chambers

MEMBERS PRESENT: George Irvine, Chair, John Hornor, Jason Kramer, Bob McDowell, Ajay Prasad, Kass Sheedy, Sheila Smith, John Wessells

ABSENT: Kismet Hazelwood

STAFF: Tom Coleman, Director of Public Works & Water Resources

GUEST: Mayor Polly Sierer
Councilman Stu Markham, District 6

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM MEETING HELD ON DECEMBER 8, 2015

MOTION THAT THE MINUTES FROM THE DECEMBER 8, 2015 MEETING BE APPROVED AS RECEIVED

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Councilman Stu Markham wanted to tell the group that he appreciated the efforts of the CAC. He stated he would like to see more ideas from the commission. Mr. Irvine said it was his opinion that conservation could be integrated into the Rodney/Dickinson project. Mr. Markham stated he understands the City is interested in acquiring the property. It is his opinion it will go forward with a referendum.

Mr. Coleman reported there is a new train station planned. It will have access from the Star Campus. The platform will be extended down underneath the bridge overpass.

In follow-up to the EEAC's presentation Mr. Irvine stated the CAC's sentiment was they endorse the EEAC and it will support it going forward. Mr. Markham encouraged the CAC to continue their efforts in this regard and suggested researching some grant writing. Mr. Irvine agreed and stated the CAC would be happy to do so with the support of the City. He further stated he does not want the CAC to be the implementing arm. The commission has ideas and can assist but the City has the manpower. The CAC are volunteers with limited time to do the implementation.

3. LED LIGHT REPLACEMENT PROJECT

Mr. Irvine asked Mr. Coleman for an update. Mr. Irvine stated he had heard the lights were too bright and had to be replaced with lower wattage bulbs on Ritter Lane. Mr. Coleman reported the project is going well. The wattage of the LED lights are 143 watts and compare to a 250 watt light. The intersections lights are normally 400 watts and although he does not know an exact LED number they are of a similar percentage breakdown. He also noted all of the "cobra" style lights will be replaced under the current purchase working with DEMEC. The next step is the "acorn" shaped lights that are found in the some of the City neighborhoods. They are significantly more expensive than the "cobra" style lights. Mr. Coleman stated at this juncture the thought is to wait until the price comes down even more. The LED lights last an average of five years versus one year for the current bulbs. He reported he cannot speak on detail but he had heard there was some issues where there the lights were tilted and were shining across the street more than the previous light had been. He will look into the matter. He did not believe the brightest was being altered but stated it may have been a possibility and would clarify this issue.

Mr. Irvine stated he mentioned this in case lower wattage bulbs could be purchased at even lower rate. Mr. Coleman replied the wattage needs to remain uniform along streets and there is a minimum wattage needed for this uniformity. Mr. Coleman stated the major thoroughfares will be completed initially; although there are some residential areas being done currently. Ms. Smith reported the new LED lights have been installed in her neighborhood. She stated it is a noticeable difference in her opinion. She stated it is an adjustment as it is not a warm light. She further stated the streets are brighter and the stars are visible as the LED lights put off lower light pollution.

Mr. Markham stated it may be beneficial to get a before and after satellite picture to use as a comparison. He wanted to add the City is purchasing the LED bulbs in conjunction with DEMEC. He would discourage interchanging bulb sizes as some of the savings is lost and it could complicate matters when it comes time to change the bulbs (i.e. having to make sure the person changing the bulbs has the correct size bulb at any given time). He further stated there is a map that shows the first phase of replacements to LED lights. He believes there have been 400 bulbs replaced thus far.

Mayor Sierer reported that she has received numerous unsolicited compliments on the lights. She further reported she believes it will be a "personal preference." Some people may like it, while others will not.

4. GREEN ENERGY

Mr. Hornor stated it was his understanding that the installation of solar panels by a leasing company was not permitted in the City. He further stated he had been researching the matter and determined the only reason it was not permitted was because at one DEMEC was concerned about how reliable the vendors were. However, the vendors are permitted in the County and he thought further thought was necessary to consider whether the solar vendors should be permitted in the City to encourage more solar.

Mr. Coleman reported one of the vendors, Solar City has installed some panels in the City. It is his understanding the issue was the way the contract was worded because Solar City remained the owner of the system, not the homeowner. Solar power was then sold to the homeowner. To his knowledge, it has been worked out where Solar City sells

the system to the homeowner and the vendor has found a way to do it within the regulations that are in place. Mr. Hornor suggested reviewing the regulations. Mr. Coleman stated the issue is that it is essentially another power provider. Mr. Coleman stated the Washington House, where Mr. Hornor resides, is a potential candidate to work with the City as well for green energy/solar incentives. Mr. Coleman if further detail is needed, Rick Vitelli, Electric Director will be the individual to contact. Mr. Hornor will ask Mr. Vitelli to attend an upcoming CAC meeting. Mr. Hornor will also research the regulations currently in place and report back to the CAC in the near future.

Mr. Markham cautioned the CAC to remember that is more favorable if the City does solar projects as the City is an electric company and gains significant revenue from this.

Ms. Smith asked if there is a ceiling on the number of homes that can have solar. Mr. Markham stated there could be, but it has never been discussed thus far. He further stated the largest electric customers in the City are the University of Delaware, Dow Chemical, etc.

Mr. Coleman reported a lot of places are doing is going to a distribution and transmission charge versus splitting the charge. So there is a fixed charge and then a variable charge based on usage. The fixed charge would cover the fixed costs (i.e. crew maintenance, etc.). Most of the solar systems pay into the grid during the day and go off the grid in the evening. One of the issues we have is paying retail price for the power generated at a solar house where we would only pay wholesale buying it from a third party. Solar energy, while saving a homeowner money is more expensive to the City than generating it to the City and buying it from a utility.

Mr. Irvine suggested what if the City considers a carbon usage fee in the future as opposed to selling electricity. He suggested if electricity was significantly cheaper and residents were charged by how much carbon is used with that electricity. It is commonly referred to as a carbon tax. He is aware that the UK is looking into this for many of their larger cities to move away from a taxation regime based on usage to how much carbon. One could use more electricity in a very efficient way and be rewarded.

Mr. Markham stated he believed this pursuing this concept would be outside the purview of the City of Newark and any taxes along those lines would have to be at the state level. The state would have to implement it or grant that authority to a municipality.

Mr. Coleman reported the City was approached by a resident in Cherry Hill Manor about trying to get Delmarva Power to run natural gas into Cherry Hill Manor as they currently are heating with oil. Delmarva will run lines into Cherry Hill Manor but only if they receive agreements from a set number of units (approximately 5-6). Delmarva Power will then provide natural gas within approximately five years. Mr. Kramer asked if Delmarva Power would run the lines to the house or the street outside the residence. Mr. Coleman stated Delmarva Power would run the lines in the street and when the resident connected, Delmarva Power would run the service into the home. Mr. Coleman believed that Delmarva Power did not charge for this service.

Mr. Kramer suggested the City may want to consider incentives (waive the permit fee) to residents if they may the switch to natural gas over oil heat. Mr. Markham stated he is unaware of the permitting fees for natural gas. Ms. Sheedy expressed caution about how to approach such a conversion from oil to gas as there are oil companies that do business in the City. Mr. Coleman suggested the incentive to switch could be advertised as a way to promote high efficiency heating. After further discussion, the CAC will address this in the future.

5. FUTURE GOALS

There was nothing new to discuss.

6. A BETTER NEWARK AWARD

There were no new applications.

7. REVIEW OF PLANNING & DEVELOPMENTS REPORTS

There was nothing to report.

8. OLD/NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Irvine would like the CAC to consider recommending to City Council the City create a bi-annual reforestation project. Mr. McDowell reported there will be a second planting at Curtis Mill Park on May 14, 2016.

Ms. Smith stated the City of Newark is has a silver rating by the Arbor Day Foundation. It was her opinion it may be a good option to strive to achieve a gold rating, if there is such a rating. Mr. Coleman confirmed this is the "Tree City USA Designation" and he believes there is not a rating that is higher. Ms. Smith stated she will follow up with the Arbor Day Foundation.

Mr. McDowell suggest the CAC commit to one large project per year to focus on (ex. Plantings at Curtis Mill Park) with recommendations and coordination with the City. .

MOTION MADE BY MS. SHEEDY, SECONDED BY MR. MCDOWELL TO RECOMMEND A RESOLUTION TO COUNCIL ON REFORESTATION.

**MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 8-0
ABSENT: HAZELWOOD**

Mr. Irvine encouraged the CAC members to contact their respective council member to discuss potential programs to decrease plastic bag usage. He also suggested members reaching out to local businesses to ask their opinions on the matter. Mr. Irvine will reach out to the DNP. Mr. Irvine reported he had spoken to council member, Marge Hadden and the Mayor. He stated both were receptive to hearing additional details and were agreeable to endorsing the reduction of plastic bags as long as the business community were engaged in the process.

Mr. Wessells asked about Green Energy Day. Mr. Irvine stated it was his understanding that a subcommittee had been designated with Ms. Hazelwood, Mr. Wessells and another individual.

Mr. Kramer stated he will reach out to his contact at Bloom Energy to see if they are interested in participating. Mr. Prasad stated he knows the Manager of Public Relations.

Ms. Smith suggested combining Green Energy Day with another event such as Earth Day. She also reported UDEL had a group of students that were interested in conservation. She stated they typically schedule an event on a Saturday in the spring or fall. Perhaps they could be included.

Ms. Smith (when time allows preferably towards the summertime) and Mr. Wessells will come up with some ideas. Mr. Wessells will write up a proposal (business proposal) and report back to the CAC with their proposal. Ms. Hazelwood will also be included in this endeavor.

Mr. Irvine reported the 2015 Annual Report needs to be compiled.

- Executive overview (goals and achievements) – Mr. Irvine
- Energy Day – Mr. Wessells
- Plastic Bags – Ms. Sheedy
- Reforestation – Mr. McDowell
- Green Energy – Mr. Prasad & Mr. Hornor

9. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, February 9, 2016.

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:47 p.m.

Tara A. Schiano
Secretary

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