

DEPARTMENTAL WEEKLY REPORTS

August 30, 2013

Planning & Development

Planning

On Wednesday afternoon, I met with UD Director of Auxiliary Services Rich Rind to discuss Unicity issues and UD's experience with the smart meter program.

Considerable time was spent this week preparing for the upcoming Planning Commission meeting – 9/3/13. The following items will be discussed:

1. The rezoning, major subdivision and site plan approval of the .708 acre property at 178 S. Chapel Street. The applicants are requesting rezoning from the current MI (general industrial) to RA (multi-family dwellings – high rise apartments), subdivision and site plan approval to build ten townhouse style apartments on the property.
2. A subdivision amendment regarding street and subdivision name changes.
3. A Comprehensive Development Plan update discussion.

This week the Department received two major subdivision applications for review – an addition to the Continental Court Apartments on S. Chapel Street and the redevelopment of 58 East Main Street. The plans have been distributed to staff for comments.

Some time was spent this week reviewing the October Planning Commission items including the addition of 14 apartment units at the Mill at White Clay and a minor subdivision at 392 Stafford Avenue.

On Friday, Code Enforcement Supervisor Steve Wilson and I joined City Manager Carol Houck in a meeting with Senator Bryan Townsend to discuss abandoned residential buildings and how we handle them.

This week some time was spent on the Rental Housing Assessment Study RFP review and setting up the Steering Committee for it.

On Monday evening, I attended the City Council meeting and Executive Session.

Some time was spent fine tuning the Department's 2014 Operating Budget submittal this week.

On Tuesday morning, I hosted and Development Supervisor Mike Fortner attended a meeting of City staff with the Newark Housing Authority and their developer to discuss the Cleveland Heights property redevelopment plan.

On Tuesday afternoon, Mike and I meet with IP Capital Advisors to discuss the Christina Mills Apartments project and the floodplain.

This morning Mike and I met with Mayoral Candidate Rebecca Powers to discuss Planning in Newark.

On Wednesday, Mike attended the Preliminary Land Use Services (PLUS) meeting in Dover to take part in the Pre-PLUS review for the City's Comprehensive Development Plan update. The purpose of the review was to discuss with staff from various state agencies – DSHA, DNREC, DeIDOT, and Office of State Planning – the update to Newark's Comprehensive Development Plan. The review is an opportunity to get early feedback on the Plan update. The Planning and Development Department will receive all their comments and recommendations in writing within the next 20 business days.

Economic Development

Planner/DNP Administrator Ricky Nietubicz began exploring possibilities for an “emergency fund” for Downtown Businesses, to assist in situations where a business suffers property or product losses that aren't covered by insurance or other means. Ricky is working with a small group of merchants to define parameters for eligible/ineligible losses, means of securing the loans (liens on real property, etc.) and how an application/approval process would work. Once defined, the proposal will be taken to the DNP Board for funding options and approval.

Time was spent this week gathering price quotes for change outs of street light banners to avoid tying up Electric Department personnel to do the job several times each year when seasonal banners are installed.

Community Development

CDBG/RS – with Mike's help, applications have been distributed to Committee members in advance of their first meeting on September 18th. Gathering additional information from applicants as requested by committee members.

Parking

Work continues on the redesign of the entrance/exit for Lot #3 on Center Street.

The end caps and islands have been removed to increase parking in Lot #3.

This week staff worked on the implementation of the smart parking meter project. Meters should be installed shortly.

Routine lot and meter maintenance activities were also performed.

Code Enforcement

A permit for the POD (temporary convenience store at Harrington Hall at U/D) was issued.

This week there were two callouts for false fire alarms at Regency Square Apartments and Fountainview building 2000. Both complexes were ordered to make repairs to both systems.

A C/O was issued for nine townhouse apartments at Hadley Mill on Cleveland Avenue.

The 51 North Chapel Street house addition has been completed.

Public Works & Water Resources

We met with Pennoni this week to kick off a study of the storm sewer systems in areas subject to the most severe flooding during the heavy rains earlier this summer. Initially, they will be visually inspecting the storm pipes for “smoking gun” causes of drainage problems like blockages, collapses and constrictions. During these inspections they will also be field verifying our maps for pipe size and alignment so if no direct cause for the flooding is found a full engineering analysis can be completed.

Work has continued on the curb ramp program with the contractor now working in the area around Ritter Lane, Beverly and Apple Roads. We have been working with the Planning Department on our CDBG application for 2014’s curb ramp program and hope to be able to complete approximately 60 ramps again in 2014.

Our field crews have been addressing several sinkholes that have formed above storm pipes around town as a result of the heavy rains earlier this summer.

We performed flushing of the water system in Nottingham overnight this week to address an area that was not flushed during our regular program earlier this year due to the NCAA tournament.

The water main cleaning and lining contract has been completed and should be advertized at the end of the week. We are going with a specific 3M product that will restore both the flow and quality characteristics similar to the cement lining we have done in the past but will also restore full structural capacity to the pipes. Over this past winter we had quite a few main breaks on Old Oak Road and Corbit Street. Conveniently, we are repaving Old Oak Road this year and Corbit Street in 2014 so this was a good candidate for a pilot program. We hope to have the work completed by the end of October.

Electric

Tri-M has been working on South College Avenue north of Park Place. They are preparing to pull new conductors on the poles along South College Avenue. Another contractor is installing poles on the Star Campus near the South College Bridge. This work is needed to reroute an existing pole line feeding into the campus which conflicts with road work and underground infrastructure.

The line crews are working a widespread scheduled outage on Ritter Lane to change several transformers and modify an existing pole for system reinforcement.

The line crews, engineering, and electricians are preparing to switch off the Chestnut Hill Substation onto two other substations in order to receive free testing on the transformer in exchange for training and a photo op for the electrical testing contractor that the City regularly uses.

The line crews and engineering have been working with smart meter engineers and Newark's IT personnel on establishing a critical fiber optic pathway on a pole at Casho Mill and Barksdale Roads. A data switch was replaced, but communications has still not been established. More troubleshooting and swapping of equipment will commence today.

The electricians and engineering have been installing and troubleshooting SCADA communication devices at two substations. Radio communications at one is intermittent so a new location for the antenna will have to be found.

Parks & Recreation

Administration & Planning

I conducted a staff meeting to review projects and get updates on department happenings.

Tom and I committed time reviewing and preparing comments on the Construction Improvement Plan for the Newark Shopping Center. The project includes a proposed connection to the Pomeroy and Newark Rail Trail.

We completed an inspection of the landscaping at the Lofts at Rittenhouse project for the issuance their CO.

We reviewed and commented on the Mill at White Clay subdivision plan.

Grindline (skate spot contractor) is making very good progress at the Phillips Park site. They have finished framing and forming the flatwork areas and placed rebar. Weather permitting; they may begin pouring concrete sometime next week.

Council awarded the contract (pending notification of grant award) for the installation of a subsurface drainage system in the outfield area of the LeRoy Hill Park Baseball Field.

Tom and I inspected the turf along the Pomeroy Trail. There are a few places where it didn't come in well. Tom will get with the contractor to make the necessary repairs.

I expect to receive the construction contract, related documents and drawings from Pennoni by week's end for the Curtis Mill Park project. I'll work with the Purchasing Office to advertise and distribute the contract soon.

Tom did park inspections and developed work orders as needed.

Tom met with Assistant Director of PW&WR to review issues on wash outs along the Pomeroy Trail and the installation of permanent corner markers at the Wyncliff Addition.

Tom met with the general contractor doing the tree pits and his sub-contractor who will install the trees. The trees will be planted in October.

Tom continued monitoring construction progress at the skate spots.

Rich coordinated with site superintendent for Grindline for use of our watering truck and the cutting of a train rail section to be used at the Phillips Park skate spot.

Parks Maintenance

Mowing operations continued.

The crew cut, painted and attached pieces of plywood to the openings of the tree grates at the new tree pits on Main Street. The covers will be removed when we are ready to plant the trees.

The pools at Dickey and Wilson Parks were closed for the season last week.

The crew continued working on planting bed maintenance and placing woodcarpet under play units in the park system.

The crew moved supplies and materials to Downes and West Park Elementary Schools for the start of the Before and After School programs at these sites.

Parks staff completed several general maintenance work orders and prepared soccer fields for practice.

We core aerated the athletic field at Kells Park.

Recreation Services

Paula completed flyers, PSA's and Channel 22 submittals in preparation for the start of fall programs.

Paula and two After School Program leaders attended a Food Bank of Delaware training session. The snacks provided by the Food Bank for the program will start on September 9.

Paula conducted a training and orientation session for the before and after school staff. The Stewards of Children training was included as part of orientation. The Downes School site is full with 70 kids and the West Park School site has 25 enrolled. We are ready for another busy and FUN year of school!

Paula met with two skateboarding instructors regarding the classes scheduled for September and October.

The final championships for our Adult Softball and Adult Volleyball Leagues were finally held after a long season battling Mother Nature!

Debbie continues to wrap up items associated with Safety Town.

Sharon has been working on statistics and financials for the year's events and writing PSAs for fall activities.

Sharon and Debbie have been preparing for Community Day. They are reviewing applications for food vendors, cross checking the vendor lists and comparing them to the main event spreadsheet, scheduling demos and performances, and working with the Health Department to make sure all food vendors have the proper permits. Vendor assignments are scheduled to go out on or about September 3.

Tyler completed the Wilson Center attendants schedule for September.

Tyler held a tennis instructor interview for fall classes.

Tyler held a post-camp meeting with the Camp GWC director to discuss this year's camp and changes for 2014.

The recreation staff completed their program statistical analysis for summer programs.

Tyler and Sharon represented Newark Parks & Recreation to promote our programs and volunteer opportunities at the Wraparound Delaware Resource Fair at Rockford Park on Thursday. Wraparound Delaware works with court involved youth who are on a non-traditional method of probation, called Low Level Supervision.

Joe and Sharon attended a Newark Day meeting with the City Manager and some downtown merchants to discuss Newark Day.

Joe attended the superintendents' meeting with the Director.

Joe is organizing the skate spot ribbon cutting that will take place on Thursday, September 12 at 3:30.

Joe and Charlie met with Grindline about the Phillips Park skate spot drainage swales.

The first week of fall registrations went well with hundreds of individuals signing up for recreation programs.

Finance

The City Manager and I participated in a conference call with Fitch Ratings Agency on Monday, August 26, 2013. The call went very well. The analysts will use our conversation in conjunction with a review of the City's most recent Comprehensive Annual Financial Reports (CAFRs) to make a determination on our credit rating, which is currently AA+ with Fitch. No negative rating action is expected.

Customer Service

The Welcome Center officially opened for business on Tuesday, August 27, 2013. Denise Walsh is staffing the Welcome Center with support from full-time customer

representatives as needed. In addition to greeting customers, processing sign-ins, and taking payments, Denise is documenting problem areas and opportunities for improvement.

We continue to flex the meter reader schedules based on the progress of the smart meter installation. We know in advance which days involve manual turnoffs, manual reads, or high work orders; on those days, most meter readers will continue to work normal hours. However, on days that involve ERT readings or cycles with a high proportion of smart meter installs, the schedules will be reduced accordingly. Due to the progress of the smart meter project, we expect to reduce staff from 3.0 Full-Time Employees to 2.5 Full-Time Employees by the end of the week.

Accounting

The internal budget hearing schedule for all department directors was developed last week. The PW&WR hearing took place last week, and the rest will follow next week. This year, there will be three rounds of budget hearings, in part because we are doing CIP and Operating Expenditure (OpEx) Budgets at the same time; in part to institute a form of quality control over the budget process. The first round of CIP hearings was completed in May in the event the Charter amendment did not pass. The second round of hearings is scheduled next week to formulate the first draft of the OpEx budget. The third round of hearings is scheduled in mid-September so that the OpEx budget can inform the process to finalize the CIP budget. We anticipate presenting the CIP budget at the October 1, 2013 Planning Commission meeting.

Alderman's Court

This past week we held three Court sessions and one Case Review session. This resulted in 70 Arraignments, 40 Trials processed, and 11 Case Reviews. There were 4 prisoners videoed from prison.

Police

On Friday, August 23rd, Newark Police responded to the 200 block of Witherspoon Lane in regard to an assault with pepper spray. The resident advised officers that her boyfriend's ex-girlfriend, defendant Corinna Watson, started banging on her door at approximately 3:00 a.m. The resident's boyfriend looked outside and observed Watson's vehicle in front of the residence. The boyfriend went downstairs to speak with Watson and upon opening the front door, Watson barged inside the residence. Watson started spraying pepper spray at the boyfriend. The resident's 9-year-old daughter, who had run downstairs due to the commotion, also suffered from the effects of the pepper spray. Corinna Watson then fled the area. EMS responded and treated the victims of the pepper spray on scene. Officers checked the area for Watson with negative results.

On Monday, August 26th, Corinna Watson turned herself into NPD. She was arraigned through JP Court 2 and committed to Baylor Women's Correctional Institution in lieu of \$12,000 cash bail.

At the August 26th Council meeting, Corporal Patrick Craig was presented with a City of Newark Council Proclamation. Corporal Craig was recognized for saving two women from the White Clay Creek during a recent flood.

The Newark Police Department trading cards are currently in production and are near completion. The department anticipates beginning the kick off campaigns in local elementary schools at the end of the month.

The University of Delaware students have returned. To date, no major incidents have occurred.

City Manager's Office

IT

The following items have either been completed or are currently in progress:

- A new Uninterruptable Power Supply (battery) has been purchased for the Data Center. This will allow us to properly maintain uptime in the event of a power outage within the building or city.
 - The new device also will provide environmental monitors for Heat and Humidity.
- The City has requested that the Public Domain Name "Newark.DE.US" be moved from University of Delaware control to the City's IT Department control. We have submitted necessary paperwork to expedite this change.
- In preparation of our Wide Area Network (WAN) project to connect all remote city offices to the main office is underway. We have contacted Verizon to increase the DSL speed for each remote office (Parking/Yard).
 - We have also started discussion with Verizon to provide DSL internet to two (2) parking booths. This will alleviate traffic congestion by allowing high speed credit card payments to be processed (versus dial-up).
- The current phone system is under review in preparation of a project to replace the outdated system with a newer, more robust system.
- The Honeywell Smart Meter project is ongoing and on-track.
- The CityView upgrade project is ongoing and on-track.
- The Customer Service Center has been activated and an employee has been moved (computer and phone) into the space. We are using this start up as an opportunity to work through kinks and make final decisions for its operation.
- We have started planning the Maximum Solutions (Max Galaxy) upgrade for Parks and Recreation. This is expected to take place in October, pending scheduling changes.
- Eight (8) training laptops have been purchased. These laptops will be used initially for CityView training, but we are already identifying other systems (Max Galaxy) that can utilize these training laptops.

CSH/mp