

The City of Newark Conservation Advisory Commission Annual Report for 2013

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Overview					

This report summarizes the activities of the City of Newark’s Conservation Advisory Commission. The background is repeated each year for reference.

Background

Ordinance 77-56 created the CAC in November 1977,

“to advise in the development, management, and protection of its natural resources with appropriate consideration of Newark's human and economic resources. The Commission shall concern itself with conservation in its broadest sense and may, among its activities: (a) Recommend to City Council a program for ecologically suitable utilization of all wet lands, valley streams, and flood plains and other land areas, the condition and use of which will affect the environmental quality of life in the City of Newark; (b) Shall file an annual report; (c) Maintain informal liaison with the Planning Commission, the Parks and Recreation Department, the City Manager, and the City Council, and cooperate with other public and private bodies organized for similar purposes; (d) In addition to the foregoing, carry out any other duties, tasks, or responsibilities, consistent with the objectives of this Commission assigned to it by resolution of City Council.”

Ordinance 77-56 gave examples of programs that may be considered by the Commission, such as street tree replacement; improved recycling; beautification plans for volunteer groups; guidelines for multiple use of open space and public areas; community gardens; energy conservation; and review of Zoning Code amendments to encourage conservation, and also stated that “the above list shall not, however, limit the program which the Commission may undertake or be requested to undertake.”

CAC Membership

The CAC has 9 members when all positions are filled.

Mayor's Appointment: Steven K. Dentel - Term expires 3/13/15 (resigned April 2013)

Mayor's Appointment: John Hornor - Term expires 3/13/15 (began October 2013)

Mayor's Appointment: Thomas Fruehstorfer (Chair) - Term expires 3/13/14

Mayor's Appointment: Katherine Sheedy - Term expires 3/13/16

District 1 Ajay Prasad - Term expires 3/13/16

District 2 Nadine Bangerter - Term expires 3/15/14 (resigned February 2013)

District 2 John Wessels – Term expires 3/15/14 (began May 2013)

District 3 Bob McDowell – Term expires 3/15/15

District 4 Amy Smith – Term expires 3/13/14 (resigned March 2013)

District 4 George Irvine – Term expires 3/13/14 (began September 2013)

District 5 Cara Lampton - Term expires 3/15/15

District 6 Carol Anders Riggs - Term expires 3/13/16

Parks Director (ex officio) Charlie Emerson

An updated CAC roster is maintained on the City's web site at

www.cityofnewarkde.us/DocumentCenter/Home/View/620 (pdf format).

ANTI-IDLING

On 30 January the CAC and DNREC organized and Newark hosted a kick off event for the city anti-idling campaign funded by a Grant from DNREC. Newark Mayor Vance Funk, DNREC Secretary Collin O'Mara, U.S. EPA Region III Administrator Shawn M. Garvin, Christina School District Superintendent Dr. Freeman Williams, President and CEO of the American Lung Association of the Mid-Atlantic Deborah Brown, and other officials gathered in the parking lot of Newark High School to promote awareness of Newark's anti idling ordinance which was passed in 2009. The event was well attended and covered by various print and television media organizations.

Throughout the year the CAC arranged for the placement of signs throughout the city including 40 on the campus of the University of Delaware, 50 in City parks, and others at local schools and on each major road entering the City of Newark. Also, advertisements were also run in local media including the Review.

GREEN ENERGY

The primary Green Energy discussions for the year focused around the McKees Park Solar Project as Councilman Stu Markham lead the drive for the project.

The CAC suggested to City Council that the Resolution 05-H funds for 2013 and 2014 be allocated to the solar project if it should be approved. The CAC voiced its support of the solar project to City Council and it was approved at the 13 May City Council meeting. The panels would be paid for by the existing Green Energy tax, the selling of SRECS to DEMEC, and energy saved from the panels.

Mr. Scott Lynch of DEMEC was a guest at the June CAC meeting to discuss potential funding of the solar project. Later Mr. Lynch set up a meeting with City staff, a member of CAC, and a representative from The Solar Energy Power Association (SEPA) to discuss how other communities around the country had financed their own solar projects. Concerns of the City staff and CAC were shared with SEPA. SEPA later made recommendation to DEMEC outlining some potential funding plans. These plans included the ability of residents to "purchase a panel" and have their power originate for

that panel, seeking donations from citizens to pay for the panels, and having set amounts that individuals could pay each month to help subsidize the panels.

Further discussions will be required to reach a final decision on how to best finance the Solar Park. As of the end of 2013 the project is running behind primarily due to unanticipated obstacles presented as a result of the site's previous use as a landfill.

RECYCLING/LITTER

At the February meeting Mr. Fruehstorfer reported that plastic grocery bags were no longer being accepted for recycling due to the problems they caused as the processing centers. As a result a motion was made, and passed unanimously, that the CAC would begin research on the widespread use of plastic bags. This research continued throughout the year.

Council Member Markham was present at the March CAC meeting and was asked if, in his opinion, if a ban on plastic grocery bags would work in Newark. Mr. Markham suggested that the CAC consider other options instead of an outright ban. The options that were explored through the year included providing two reusable cloth grocery bags to University of Delaware students and City residents. The cost of providing the bags was researched and bags printed on both sides would cost \$1.49 per bag in batches of 5,000 bags. Offsetting the cost by encouraging local merchants to subsidize the cost in return for advertising on the bags was discussed. Another alternative that was developed was offering incentives for use of reusable bags. The incentives might be in the form of a stamp system in which stamps could be redeemed for parking in City lots or other incentives. It was also considered that a surcharge for plastic bags had met resistance in Maryland due to the impact on low income residents. The effectiveness of any action other than an outright ban was also considered.

In addition to the plastic grocery bag issue, the CAC also considered metal and carpet recycling during the year. Although the City has a "by request" metal pick up program, the CAC explored the possibility of having a metal recycling drop off point in the City yard on Phillipps Ave. A controlled access location was considered since metal for recycling has monetary value. City personnel felt this would not work due to liability issues and the fact that the gate to the yard is locked every day at 4pm and thus would not be convenient for residents.

City personnel also stated that carpet could not be separated out of normal single stream recycling pick up. Carpet recycling would have to set up as a special pick up if a location to take the carpet can be found. A CAC member reported that there is a recycler in the area that does take carpet. More research will be conducted.

Expanding recycling opportunities in the City and reducing the use of plastic grocery bags will continue to be issues for the CAC in the following year.

BETTER NEWARK AWARD

In June the CAC voted to award the “A Better Newark Award” to the University of Delaware for their various efforts in energy and environmental sustainability including solar installations, wind power, green transportation, single-stream recycling, green roofs, storm water management, and rain gardens. In addition, the University was extremely proactive in installing anti-idling signs all over campus.

Although a number of other properties were proposed for the BNA over the year and discussed during the meetings, these did not progress to the point that an award could be made.

NEWARK COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Mike Fortner (City of Newark Planning Department) spoke to the CAC about the City’s Comprehensive Development Plan. The Comprehensive Plan, a document that is adopted by the City, uses words, maps, illustrations, and tables and guidelines to direct the City’s current and future land use, economic development, environmental constraints, transportation planning, housing and implementation.

Mr. Fortner asked for feedback from the CAC. The CAC provided some initial feedback and committed to providing additional input as the plan development process continues specifically pertaining to sustainability, improving public transit, and other related issues.

DATA CENTER

Members of the public attended the September and October meetings to express their concerns about the proposed Data Center and Power Plant on the UD Star Campus. They were concerned about potential plant emissions and noise. It was determined by the CAC that as we were only a group that advises City Council there was little that the CAC could do. It was observed that it was the State of Delaware’s responsibility to regulate environmental emissions and there was little City Council could do. Without an actual plan with details of the proposed operations submitted to the City there was nothing the CAC could rationally comment on. It was agreed that if a plan was submitted to the City the CAC would review that plan and consider appropriate comments at that time.

LEED BUILDING STANDARDS

There has not been an update to the City's LEED standards since November 2010 when the City of Newark, Delaware's Mayor and Council unanimously approved a Planning and Development Department and Newark citizen's Conservation Advisory Commission drafted set of amendments to the City's Building Code that require all new major subdivisions to meet mandatory energy conservation standards derived from portions of the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Program of the United States Green Building Council.

With these new standards Newark helped ensure that reasonable energy conservation building standards are applied to new construction in the City. The City's adoption of updated Building Code requirements, utilizing aspects of the LEED Program, placed Newark in the forefront nationally of communities striving for a green future.

It was reported this year that LEED building standards continue to be considered for each new development (over 20,000 sf) in the City and new construction is more energy efficient as a result.

RAIN BARREL SALES IN NEWARK

A CAC member made a suggestion to have a rain barrel sale in Newark to help reduce city storm water runoff and increase water infiltration to help recharge our local groundwater. They were able to follow up with DNREC who then sponsored the event in conjunction with the Newark High School Annual Spring Plant Sale. The event was a great success and numerous rain barrels were sold to local residents.

NEWARK DAY

Members of the CAC had a booth at the annual Newark Day event to help publicize the actions of the CAC and encourage sustainability in the City of Newark. The group included in the display an anti-Idling information board and found that very few people were aware that the city had passed and Anti-idling Ordinance.

Also included in the display was information about the National Wildlife Federation Backyard Wildlife Habitat Program as Newark is attempting to get certification as a Backyard Habitat Community. The Backyard Wildlife Program encourages residents to create a welcoming habitat for wildlife in their yards by providing plants and structures that provide food, cover, and homes for wildlife in addition to reducing the use of chemicals in the environment and enlisting environmentally responsible storm water management methods to reduce storm water runoff and increase infiltration.