

**Special Meeting of the
Mayor and Council
Minutes of Meeting June 15, 2022**

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Murray at 4 o'clock p.m. Also in attendance were Councilmembers Richard Duncan, Carol Cary, Frank Smith and Clarence Tingle.

The meeting was properly posted.

The first item on the agenda was the discussion of conceptual plans for property located on Dupont Boulevard and Cypress Road, District 5-33, Map 16.00, Parcels 25.00 and 32.00 owned by Long Family of Sussex County, LLC. Mark Davidson of Pennoni Associates, Bob Wheatley and Joseph Calabro were all in attendance representing Appennine Development Company and the Long Family of Sussex County, LLC. Mr. Davidson identified the location of the parcels. Parcel 32.00 is located along Dupont Boulevard and consists of 3.31 +/- acres and Parcel 25.00 is located along Cypress Road and consists of 44.09 +/- acres. Total acreage is 47.40 +/- acres. The property is currently zoned GC – General Commercial. Mr. Davidson stated that the town's 2020 Future Land Use Map identifies the properties as shopping, business, and trade. Mr. Davidson reviewed the unusual shape of the boundary lines, road front footage and also the tax ditches included in the property. He commented on the percentage of single-family homes, 86% in the 2016 Comprehensive Plan, and multi-family homes, 6% in that same plan. He acknowledged that the last four years are missing. Mr. Davidson referenced the 2015-2020 Delaware Housing Needs Assessment which noted that the eastern Sussex housing market is the fastest growing and most expensive market in the state. He noted the lack of affordable housing in this area. Mr. Davidson stated that one of the goals listed in the town's Comprehensive Plan is "to continue to support the balanced range of housing types to include workforce housing and home ownership opportunities." He further stated that one of the recommendations in the town's Comprehensive Plan is "to work with local developers for opportunities to provide workforce housing options while preserving the character of the town." Mr. Davidson stated that they used the town's Comprehensive Plan and Future Land Use map as a guide for putting together their concept. He referenced another recommendation that stated "consider a mixed use zoning classification for larger parcels of land along Dupont Boulevard." Due to the minimum road front footage along Dupont Boulevard, Mr. Davidson stated that it makes it hard to plan anything Commercial.

In reviewing their concept, Mr. Davidson stated that they did keep a small area of Commercial along Route 113. Mr. Davidson stated that they studied all the zoning districts and decided that the best fit for the area was MR Multi-Family Residential, which allows a variety of housing at a variety of densities, adding that their proposal is straight from the town's code. The concept includes Commercial along the front, approximately 120 luxury garden style apartments – supported by a clubhouse, pool and onsite management – single family attached (townhouse) units and single family detached units. He reiterated that their desire is to offer affordable housing to a multitude of people. He believes the concept meets the town's Comprehensive Plan's Future Land Use goals and recommendations.

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Mr. Davidson presented renderings of the luxury style apartments and clubhouse. He stated that the clubhouse would be available to all residents of the development. Mike West asked about the square footage of the apartments. Mr. Wheatley ventured that the three-bedroom apartments would be approximately 1,200 to 1,400 square feet and that the two-bedroom apartments would be approximately 1,000 square feet. He stated that the apartments would be rental properties and not to be purchased by individuals. The commission was concerned about density. The town currently allows 2.2 to the acre. Mr. Wheatley stated that their idea is to bring a variety of affordable housing types to the western side of town. He acknowledged that he could not envision this plan on the eastern side of town, along the Route 54 corridor but that he does think the property is an ideal location to bring a different housing opportunity to residents of the town. Mr. Davidson confirmed that the current density of the conceptual plan is 5.8 to the acre.

Mr. Wheatley stressed that it would not be a low-income development. There would be no subsidies or special mortgage terms. The development would be geared toward gainfully employed residents and retirees who need affordable housing. The price point for apartment rental would be \$1,500 to \$2,000 monthly and town homes and single-family homes would sell for less than the half million-dollar homes along Route 54. He realizes that it's a new concept for the town but believes that the size and location of the site make it an ideal opportunity.

Councilman Duncan voiced concern about apartment rentals. Mr. Wheatley stated that the clientele is driven by the price point. He acknowledged the town's concern and stated that they understand what the town does not want to happen. Since there would be no state assistance of any kind, the management company would require background and criminal checks for potential renters.

There was considerable discussion about potential commercial opportunities, traffic patterns within the development, density and DelDOT requirements. The Mayor stated that he would like to see more commercial growth in the area but that he also understands the need for affordable housing. His concern is density. Mr. Wheatley stated that, realistically, 2.2 to the acre does not promote affordable housing. He reiterated that this is why they found the smallest parcel of land where the new concept will work and introduced something new.

Dr. Cary stated that it certainly gives the Council something to think about. Town Manager Stacey Long stated that developer is basically asking if the town would support the higher density concept plan so that they know how to move forward. They do not want to incur major expenses to prepare preliminary plans if the Council would not support this type of development. Councilman Tingle stated that he is against it. Councilman Smith stated that he would like to see the commercial side developed prior to any residential development. Mr. Wheatley stated that with this particular project, the commercial would develop last. He stated that businesses don't come until the people do.

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Stacey noted that members of the Planning and Zoning Commission were also concerned about the density and she shared some of their concerns.

Councilman Duncan made a motion to table the discussion at this time. Motion seconded by Councilman Tingle and carried by all.

Mr. Wheatley thanked the Mayor and Council for their time and invited them to call him with questions or concerns as they continue to think over the proposal.

There being no further business to discuss, Councilman Duncan made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Motion seconded by Councilman Tingle and carried by all.

Respectfully submitted,



Sandra H. Givans
Assistant Secretary/Treasurer