

MINUTES

CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

November 27, 2018

Present: Desmond Baker (Vice-Chair), Joe Chickadel, Anthony J. Hill and Tanya Washington (Commission Members); and Gwinneth Kaminsky and Gemma Tierney (Planning).

Desmond Baker convened the meeting at 6:00 pm.

REGULAR MEETING

Approval of the minutes of the October 30, 2018 City Planning Commission Meeting

Mr. Baker asked the Commission to make a motion on the minutes of the October 30, 2018 City Planning Commission (CPC) meeting. AJ Hill moved to approve the minutes, and Tanya Washington seconded the motion. All members voted to approve the minutes.

New Business

Resolution 22-18: A proposal to remove a portion of Ball Place, an alley located within the block bounded by 4th, 5th, Tatnall and West Streets, from the Official City Map.

Gwinneth Kaminsky from the Department of Planning and Development presented the Department report for Resolution 22-18. Her presentation was accompanied by a series of slides. Ms. Kaminsky said that the City received a request from Mike Marinelli for the removal from the Official City Map of a portion of an alley called Ball Place. She said that Mr. Marinelli owns property adjacent to the shorter leg of the L-shaped alley and requested the removal of that leg to expand an accessory parking lot on his property. She said that the portion requested for removal is about 10 feet wide and 47 feet deep and connects with Tatnall Street.

Ms. Kaminsky provided historical background and presented historic maps of the alley. She said that there used to be worker housing in the center of the block, to which Ball Place provided access.

Ms. Kaminsky then presented a parcel map of the block and provided an overview of the current ownership of, and improvements on, the eleven parcels that now comprise the block. She also said that the eastern part of the block, which contains the short leg of the alley, is zoned C-3 (Central Retail), and the western part is zoned R-3 (One-Family Row Houses). She stated the traffic direction of each of the streets bounding the block (4th, 5th, Tatnall and West Streets). She also said that Ball Place does not contribute to local traffic circulation, nor does it serve its purpose of providing access to land-locked parcels because the eleven parcels that now comprise the block all have direct access to the street network.

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She then presented photographs of the alley showing several physical features that prevent the full length of the alley from being navigable: the deteriorating road surface, a fence along 4th Street, a grade change from Tatnall Street to the block interior, overgrowth, and concrete retaining walls.

Ms. Kaminsky said that property deeds indicate that the five parcels that abut Ball Place may have access rights to the alley. She said that only two of those parcels abut the portion of the alley requested for removal. One of the parcels belongs to the applicant, while the other parcel has access to both legs of the alley and would therefore still have alley access if the short leg is removed.

Ms. Kaminsky then reviewed comments received from other departments. The Department of Public Works' (DPW) Division of Water commented that there is a waterline under the long leg of the alley that was decommissioned in 1982. DPW's Division of Sewers noted that there is a sewer line under the long leg of the alley but does not know if it is operational. DPW's Division of Transportation has no issues with the street removal. She said that the Fire Marshal's Office initially noted concern regarding access to the rear of properties that would be developed in the future, but ultimately decided to support the removal because the provision of adequate emergency access to parcels is normally reviewed as a part of the subdivision process and the long section of the alley is not being removed. She said that the Department of Planning supports the removal because there are no findings to suggest that the removal would create a detriment to the surrounding properties or the public.

Ms. Kaminsky said that ownership of Ball Place could not be determined, but that the City Code permits alleys to be removed from the Official City Map by Council ordinance, while its ownership would be judicially determined in accordance with applicable State statutes. She then said that the CPC's recommendation on the street removal will be forwarded to City Council for their consideration and the necessary legislation is anticipated to be drafted and addressed in early 2019.

She said that a public notice of the propose street removal was mailed to affected property owners on November 14, 2018 and was included in the mailing of the CPC's November 27, 2018 meeting agenda on November 19, 2018. She said that the agenda was also posted in the lobby of the Louis L. Redding City/County Building and on the City's website on November 19. She said that the Department received no public comments.

Ms. Kaminsky concluded by stating that Resolution 22-18 recommends approval of the street removal request, subject to the Departmental comments presented.

Mr. Baker asked the Commissioners whether they had any questions or comments. Mr. Chickadel asked if a sample excavation of the alley has been done to determine if there is a cobblestone, Belgian block or brick layer below the surface. Ms. Kaminsky said that she is not aware of a sample excavation being done.

Mr. Hill asked for confirmation that there was no comment from the owner of the parcel to the south of the short leg of the alley. Ms. Kaminsky confirmed that a public notice was sent to this property owner and no comments were received. Mr. Baker asked if the letters were sent out as certified mail. Ms. Kaminsky said that they were not. She added that none of the letters were returned to the Department as undeliverable.

Ms. Washington asked if any rezoning was required. Ms. Kaminsky said that no rezoning was required because Mr. Marinelli's proposal to use the property as a contractor shop is permitted under C-3 zoning. Ms. Washington asked Ms. Kaminsky to elaborate on the proposed contractor shop use. Ms. Kaminsky said that it acts as a headquarters and a place to store materials. Mr. Baker commented that he was surprised that none of the residents of the apartments across the street had comments on the proposed use.

Mr. Baker asked if there were any additional questions or comments. As there were none, he called for a motion on the resolution. Mr. Hill moved to approve the resolution, and Ms. Washington seconded the motion. All members voted in favor of Resolution 22-18.

Other Business

Regional Transportation Plan 2050: WILMAPCO Staff will present an overview of their Regional Transportation Plan 2050 (RTP), which is the long-range transportation plan for New Castle County, DE and Cecil County, MD. The presentation will summarize the goals, objectives and actions that form the plan, and touch on projects that are planned for Wilmington. This presentation is part of WILMAPCO's public outreach campaign for the RTP. This outreach includes soliciting comments from municipalities, civic groups, stakeholders/partners and the public to ensure that the plan meets the needs of the region.

Dave Gula, a Principal Planner with the Wilmington Area Planning Commission (WILMAPCO), came to the podium to present on the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). His presentation was accompanied by a series of slides. He noted that the plan and a survey were available online for those who wanted to learn more and provide feedback (www.wilmapco.org/rtp/). He said that WILMAPCO must regularly update four documents: the RTP (updated every four years); the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP, updated annually), which is used to put together studies from the agencies that work with WILMAPCO; the Congestion Management System (CMS, updated annually); and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP, updated annually), which lists funded projects and matches DelDOT's Capital Transportation Program (CTP). He noted that public outreach is ongoing, and that WILMAPCO's products are all available online.

Mr. Gula said that the RTP provides goals, objectives, and actions needed to achieve the goals, and an extensive list of projects. He said that there are two categories of projects in the list: financially constrained projects that are on the CTP and are therefore funded, and aspirational

project ideas that primarily originate from WILMAPCO's community studies and that are not yet funded.

Mr. Gula then outlined the schedule and steps for updating the RTP; the structure, role and some of the key findings of WILMAPCO's regional progress report and public opinion survey; and the RTP's goals, objectives, and actions to achieve the objectives. This and other information from his presentation is included in another presentation on the 2050 RTP that is available as a pdf slideshow and audio recording at the link above. Mr. Gula also said that there are performance measures associated with each objective and, as an example, described some of the performance measures related to the objective of planning for energy security and resilience. He noted that one of the performance measures, Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT), has been trending upwards in New Castle County, indicating that more work needs to be done to reduce it.

Mr. Gula said that the RTP identifies more developed and densely populated areas as priority areas for transportation investments. He said that focusing investments in these areas reduces suburban sprawl and serves more people.

Mr. Gula described three Federal requirements for the RTP. These requirements are that it should work to achieve cleaner air quality; realistically reflect expected funding; and include road, transit, pedestrian and bicycle facilities. He provided an overview of project costs versus available project funds for New Castle County and Cecil County. New Castle County's available funds exceed its expected project costs. He then outlined the Wilmington-specific financially constrained and aspirational projects on the RTP project list.

Ms. Washington asked if the proposed road diet for Governor Printz Boulevard, which was one of the financially constrained projects, had considered the traffic impacts of the planned Purpose-Built Community mixed-income residential development project to take place in the Riverside neighborhood. Mr. Gula said that the proposal came from DelDOT and he is not sure what factors they considered. He also noted that he believes the road diet configuration he described is only for the portion of the road outside of the City, because the City portion had been rehabilitated relatively recently. He said that he would ask DelDOT about their considerations relating to the Purpose-Built Community development. Ms. Washington said that this development may also need to be addressed in the design of the aspirational 12th Street Connector traffic calming project.

Ms. Washington then asked Mr. Gula to further explain how the Walnut Street project, another financially constrained project, will reconfigure the traffic lanes on Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard at Walnut Street. Mr. Gula explained the planned configuration in more detail. Ms. Washington asked if the reconfiguration will result in a hard left turn from MLK Boulevard to Walnut. Mr. Gula described the way that a driver is expected to experience moving through the intersection and said that the project will simplify the timing of traffic movements and keep the intersection from failing when traffic volumes increase during the I-95 renovations. Mr. Baker asked if the project will address traffic backups on MLK Boulevard between French and Walnut Streets. Mr. Gula said that the lane widening and timing changes will address this issue. Mr.

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Baker asked if the project will include sensors and other smart technology in its traffic control system. Mr. Gula confirmed that it will. He added that the intersection will also become more comfortable for pedestrians.

Mr. Baker asked whether the RTP will address Maryland Rail Commuter (MARC) trains. Mr. Gula said that the reconstruction of the Newark Train Station will be completed in 2021, and that they hope to figure out how to connect Newark to the MARC Penn Line by that time. Mr. Baker, Mr. Gula and Ms. Washington then briefly discussed the current limitations and costs of commuting by rail from either Wilmington or Perryville, Maryland, to points farther south, and the possibilities for extending MARC's Penn Line to Newark to address these issues.

Mr. Baker then asked whether Delaware's other two counties are part of a Metropolitan Planning Organization, like New Castle County is part of WILMAPCO. Mr. Gula said that Kent County is part of the Dover-Kent MPO and Sussex County works with the Salisbury-Wicomico MPO.

Adjournment

Mr. Baker called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Hill moved to adjourn, and Ms. Washington seconded the motion. All members being in favor, the meeting was adjourned at 7:08 pm.