

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE NEW CASTLE COUNTY PLANNING BOARD
FOR 2008

To: The Hon. Christopher Coons, County Executive, New Castle County
The Hon. Paul G. Clark, Council President, New Castle County
Members, New Castle County Council

From: Victor Singer, Chairman

Dated: April 1, 2009

RELEVANT ORDINANCE from the *New Castle County Code*:

Sec. 2.04.001. Annual reports.

All New Castle County Boards, Committees, and Commissions shall be required to submit an annual report to the County Executive and County Council no later than April 1st of each year. The report shall outline the board, committee, or commission's mission, accomplishments of the year, any challenges to the performance of its functions and suggestions for changes for that specific board, commission, or committee.

Sec. 2.04.002. Annual by-law review

All New Castle County Boards, Committees, and Commissions shall annually review and if necessary update its by-laws.

MISSION OF THE PLANNING BOARD:

The Planning Board (the "Board") is an independent board, created by State law, to wit, 9 *Del.C.* §1303. The Board is comprised of nine [9] members, who serve terms of three [3] years, except for the Chairperson, who serves at the pleasure of the County Executive. The members are appointed by the County Executive, with advice and consent of the County Council. They are compensated as determined by County Council. They must be residents of New Castle County.

The underpinning of the Board's mission is found in Sections 1304 and 1305 of Title 9 of the *Delaware Code*:

The Planning Board's mission is to consult with the New Castle County Land Use Department (the "Department") concerning the work performed by the Department and, further, to review the proposed comprehensive development plan and all proposed amendments and revisions to the Unified Development Code, including proposed zoning and subdivision regulations. After review of any such proposals, the Board shall report to County Council its recommendations with respect to actions to be taken in connection with such proposals.

Further specificity of the Board’s function can be found in the *New Castle County Code*:

Sec. 40.30.310. Planning Board.

The Planning Board shall consist of nine (9) members having the following powers and duties.

A. To review, hear, consider and make recommendations to approve or disapprove applications for zoning map and Code text amendments, as indicated in Table 40.30.110.

B. To initiate, prepare or cause to be prepared a zoning or land development code or amendments thereto, and make recommendations to County Council and the County Executive as the Board deems appropriate.

C. To prepare or cause to be prepared the Comprehensive Development Plan, or any element or portion thereof, and make recommendations to County Council and the County Executive as the Board deems appropriate.

D. To initiate, review, hear, consider and make recommendations to County Council and the County Executive to approve or disapprove amendments to the Comprehensive Development Plan.

E. To adopt additional or amended rules of procedure consistent with this Section to govern the Planning Board's proceedings.

F. To conduct studies of the County's resources and needs and to report its findings and recommendations, with reference thereto, from time to time, to County Council and the County Executive.

G. Any other power or duty provided for under State law or indicated in Table 40.30.110 of this Article.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

Except in the case of rescheduling for holidays, the Board holds public hearings on the first Tuesday evening of every month, or more often as need dictates. These public hearings are jointly held by the Board and the Land Use Department. The Board’s business meeting is typically held on the third Tuesday morning of every month. From January 2008 through December 2008, the Board held fifteen (15) public hearings. The chart, below, provides an accounting of the types and numbers of applications heard by the Board:

PB PH Date	Exploratory Plans	Preliminary Plans/TAC	Rezoning	Deed Restriction Changes	Text Amendments	Subdivision Appeals/Variations
1/2/08	1	-	-	-	1	-
2/5/08	3	2	1	1	1	-
3/4/08	-	1	-	-	-	1
4/1/08	-	2	7	-	-	-

PB PH Date	Exploratory Plans	Preliminary Plans/TAC	Rezoning	Deed Restriction Changes	Text Amendments	Subdivision Appeals/Variations
5/6/08	2		1		2	2
5/7/08	7	1	-	-	-	-
6/3/08	3	2	-	-	1	-
7/1/08	6	-	-	1	1	-
8/5/08	5	1	-	-	1	-
9/2/08	3	1	1	-	-	-
10/7/08	1	-	1	1	1	1
11/5/08	2	1	-	-	2	-
11/6/08	3	-	-	-	-	1
12/2/08	1	-	4	-	1	-
12/3/08	2	3	-	-	-	-
Totals	39	14	15	3	11	5

During the 2008 calendar year, a number of the applications presented at the public hearings included land development plans under the relatively recently adopted (and subsequently amended) “Workforce Housing” ordinance. Additionally, some of the applications implicated the redevelopment provisions in the Unified Development Code. Very often, the hearings that included these applications drew large crowds and resulted in negative public feedback. Although the Board does not necessarily make recommendations to County Council on these applications, the Board is uniquely positioned to serve as a ‘buffer’ between the public-at-large and County Council.

The Board undertook a comprehensive review of its Bylaws which resulted in the adoption of amendments to the Bylaws in August 2008 (attached). Moreover, the Board drafted and adopted Special Rules of Order, Public Hearing Procedure (adopted January 2009)(attached). Further, in 2008, the Board heard, discussed and issued written decisions on two appeals from administrative decisions of the Department of Land Use, Applications Nos. 2008-004-SA and 2008-0596-SA. The Board’s Bylaws, business meeting minutes, and written decisions on the administrative appeals can be located on the Department of Land Use website at this address: <http://www.co.new-castle.de.us/landuse/home/webpage4.asp>. In the alternative, for information, please contact the Board’s counsel, Julie M. Sebring, NCC Office of Law, at (302) 395-5130.