

**CITY OF NEWARK  
DELAWARE**

**NEWARK COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY PLAN  
STEERING COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES**

**JANUARY 22, 2018  
GEORGE WILSON CENTER  
4:00 P.M.**

**Committee Members Present:**

Michelle Bennett  
Mark Brainard  
Paula Ennis  
Tim Filasky  
Jeremy Firestone  
Mike Fortner  
Helga Huntley  
Sheila Smith  
Bill Swiatek  
Bahareh van Boekhold

**Committee Members Absent:**

Susan Grasso

**City Staff Present:**

Mary Ellen Gray

**1. INTRODUCTIONS**

The meeting began with an introduction of the steering committee members and City staff present: Michelle Bennett, University of Delaware; Mark Brainard, City Manager's Office; Paula Ennis, Parks and Recreation Department; Tim Filasky, Public Works and Water Resources Department; Jeremy Firestone, Planning Commission; Mike Fortner, Planning and Development Department/Newark TriP; Helga Huntley, resident; Sheila Smith, Conservation Advisory Commission; Bill Swiatek, WILMAPCO; and Bahareh van Boekhold, resident.

**2. APPOINTMENT OF A CHAIRPERSON**

Mr. Fortner asked for a volunteer to be chairperson of the steering committee. Ms. van Boekhold stated she would be interested and asked what the role entailed. Mr. Fortner stated the chair controls the tempo of the meeting and works with staff on setting the agenda. Mr. Brainard motioned to appoint Ms. van Boekhold as chairperson. Mr. Swiatek seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously (10-0).

**3. OVERVIEW OF *DELAWARE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES PLANNING GRANT***

Mr. Fortner presented an overview of the *Delaware Sustainable Communities Planning Grant*. The DNREC grant is for up to \$80,000 to be used by the City to hire a consultant to help put together a sustainability plan.

Mr. Fortner stated the Planning and Development staff conducted a poll on Community Day, September 17, 2017, asking people to put dots on the sustainability categories they felt were most important, with #1 being clean transportation, #2 was renewable energy, and a tie for #3 consisting of sustainable development/urban design and waste reduction. Mr. Fortner noted, some of the lower scoring categories were local food systems, green infrastructure and buildings, and flood resiliency, which was the lowest scored. Although an option, there were no write-in categories provided by the public.

Mr. Fortner pointed out the revised timeline for the project. There are approximately four stakeholder meetings planned and three workshops, including an additional opportunity for community outreach during Community Day events in 2018. The projected date to present a recommendation to Council is January 2019.

#### **4. SUSTAINABLE NEWARK PLAN FOR PLANNING**

Mr. Fortner stated the first tasks for the committee were the review of the draft RFP outline and determining the role of the steering committee in review of the proposals submitted by applicants. He presented three options:

- Option 1 – Review of all proposals by all steering committee members. Submittals would be scored according to RFP criteria and 3-5 finalists chosen to be interviewed by the committee.
- Option 2 – Review of all proposals by in-house staff and a subcommittee comprised of a few volunteers from the committee. Submittals would be scored and 3-5 finalists chosen to be interviewed by the full committee.
- Option 3 – Review of proposals by in-house staff, who would choose 3-5 finalists to be interviewed by the full committee.

The City's recommendation would be Option 2 or some variation of that, but indicated there could be other options not already mentioned, as suggested by a committee member.

Ms. Huntley asked how many applicants were expected. Mr. Fortner said the RFP for the Rental Housing Needs Assessment Study resulted in 11 or 12 submittals. Mr. Brainard stated it could be as low as 6 or as high as 14.

Ms. Bennett asked if the committee would get feedback from in-house staff on anything that stood out to them or red flags that the committee may not recognize. Mr. Filasky stated in-house staff would review all the proposals regardless of the option chosen, and Ms. Ennis concurred. Ms. van Boekhold stated City staff would have more experience scoring the submittals with

regard to some of the criteria. Mr. Fortner indicated in-house staff will review all of the RFPs and provide input.

Ms. Huntley stated she liked the idea of City staff weeding out applicants who do not meet the minimum criteria and then having the committee review the rest of the proposals. She did not feel the need to see a certain number of proposals and felt a moveable target was acceptable in this regard. Mr. Firestone stated he preferred Option 2. Ms. van Boekhold stated she liked Option 2, but that she would like feedback from in-house staff on categories for which they were very knowledgeable, such as experience, reputation, and demonstrated ability. She also stated the committee needed to determine the number of proposals they wanted to review. Ms. Bennett stated that without knowing the number of proposals submitted, it was a little arbitrary to set a number at this phase, but stated she was comfortable with Option 2.

Ms. von Boekhold made a motion that the steering committee accept Option 2 as the plan to review RFP proposals, after first having the unqualified applicants eliminated by in-house staff. Ms. Huntley seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously (10-0).

Mr. Fortner asked who from the committee would like to review the proposals. Ms. Huntley, Ms. Smith, and Ms. van Boekhold stated they would like to participate. Ms. Bennett indicated Ms. Grasso, who was not in attendance at this meeting, stated she wanted to be involved in review of the RFP submittals.

## **5. REVIEW OF DRAFT *REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS* (RFP)**

Mr. Fortner asked the committee for input on the format and selection criteria of the RFP. Mr. Firestone suggested breaking it down between scope and tasks, and Ms. Huntley suggested they start by discussing scope. Mr. Firestone stated clean transportation or renewable energy use were the community's preference, based on the Community Day survey. Ms. Huntley stated the scope of work was a little unclear as to whether the committee or the consultant would identify the areas of focus. Ms. Smith noted that the draft RFP states the committee works with the consulting firm to focus the study on 3-5 community-focused sustainability categories. Mr. Fortner confirmed that was his intent.

Mr. Filasky stated it might be clearer to list the identification of areas of focus as a deliverable. Ms. von Boekhold agreed and stated that one deliverable could be a presentation of best practices of cities similar to Newark. Ms. Huntley agreed that would be an early-on deliverable, as well as a presentation or document that summarizes Newark's challenges to sustainability, and a preliminary and final plan on how to meet those challenges. Mr. Filasky suggested having the consultant come up with the list of best practices as part of their presentation but stated that might already be included in the related experience listed on their proposal. The steering committee members proceeded to discuss whether best practices should be included as part of the initial proposal or as a deliverable. Mr. Fortner stated he felt it made sense as a deliverable, and Ms. Bennett concurred, stating that most applicants will give examples of best practices in their proposal presentation. Ms. Ennis agreed, pointing out that the RFP already touched on that.

Ms. Huntley stated another deliverable would be for the consultant to define our priorities, identify challenges to meeting our goals, and help develop a plan.

Mr. Firestone expressed a concern that the RFP was very broad, consultants could have different areas of expertise, and it may be difficult to choose the right consultant if you don't know your area of focus. Ms. Huntley agreed and suggested the committee narrow down the areas of focus to 3-5 categories. Ms. Bennett suggested looking at the feedback from the Community Day survey. Mr. Fortner stated that the plan was for the consultant to be an expert in sustainability who could help the City focus on the right categories, perhaps through feedback from the first public workshop. Ms. Bennett stated she liked the idea of additional community outreach and keeping all categories on the list to see what resonates with members of the community. Ms. van Boekhold also stated she would like to keep all of the categories at this phase. Ms. Smith stated it made sense to leave them all, as well as to add improved air quality and improved water quality.

Ms. Huntley stated she would like this to be a longer-term plan with a 10-20 year vision and specific action items for the first few years. Ms. van Boekhold stated she had researched different sustainability plans and they are usually long-term, and suggested a focus on a 20-year vision and 5-year plan. Discussion ensued regarding whether the RFP should state the number of years the plan is expected to cover. The consensus among the group was to leave it vague, stating only long-term.

Mr. Fortner reviewed comments submitted by Ms. Grasso with the committee, including integrating the City's efforts with UD efforts, working with major partners/key stakeholders, and smart city technology. Ms. van Boekhold stated at this stage it may be premature to consider the use of smart city technology, as areas of focus hasn't been determined. Ms. Huntley stated she was not in favor of including smart city technology in the RFP. Ms. van Boekhold agreed.

Mr. Fortner stated that Ms. Grasso suggested a realignment of the points associated with the RFP scoring criteria, making the first three 20 point each. Mr. Filasky suggested adding a point value for geographic location of the consulting firm, with a higher points value assigned to a local firm. Ms. Bennett agreed. Mr. Firestone suggested adding more definition to the expertise criterion, indicating that a good planner is not necessarily good at public engagement or facilitation skills. Ms. Huntley suggested adding working with communities or public outreach. Mr. Firestone suggested adding points for diversity. Consensus was to assign points for criteria as indicated below:

- 25 - Capacity to meet project requirements
- 25 - Expertise, including planning and public outreach, for the project
- 15 - Experience, reputation, and demonstrated ability
- 15 - Familiarity with public work
- 15 - Geographic location of firm
- 5 - Diversity

Ms. Huntley expressed a concern that the budget was not a determining factor in the selection of a consultant. Mr. Filasky stated that qualifications are used to determine the best applicant, not cost. If the top-ranked applicant's proposed budget is too high, the City negotiates with them or eliminates them and chooses the second-ranked applicant. Mr. Brainard and Mr. Fortner confirmed that a contract is negotiated with the chosen applicant prior to presenting to Council, however the contract is not executed until Council approves the recommendation of the steering committee.

Mr. Fortner asked for any other input on the RFP. Ms. Huntley stated there was a typo in the first sentence (the word chartered should be chartered) and an error on the date Comprehensive Development Plan V was adopted by Council. Mr. Fortner indicated he found an issue with a comma, and that he would fix all issues before the RFP went out through the City's normal channels. Ms. van Boekhold thanked Mr. Fortner for all the work done on the project to-date.

## **6. IDENTIFY WORK ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING**

Mr. Fortner stated the next meeting would most likely be scheduled for some time in April to review the proposals submitted.

## **7. PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment. The meeting adjourned at 5:37 p.m.

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