

## **MAYOR AND COMMISSIONERS MEETING CITY OF REHOBOTH BEACH**

**May 7, 2012**

The Workshop Meeting of the Mayor and Commissioners of the City of Rehoboth Beach, was called to order at 9:01 a.m. by Mayor Samuel R. Cooper on Monday, May 7, 2012 in the Commissioners Room in City Hall, 229 Rehoboth Avenue, Rehoboth Beach, DE.

City Solicitor Glenn Mandalas gave the Invocation followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **ROLL CALL**

Present:     Commissioner     Patrick Gossett  
                 Commissioner     Bill Sargent  
                 Commissioner     Pat Coluzzi  
                 Mayor                 Samuel R. Cooper  
                 Commissioner     Stan Mills  
                 Commissioner     Lorraine Zellers

Absent:       Commissioner     Mark Hunker

Also in attendance was:     City Solicitor Glenn Mandalas  
   City Manager Gregory Ferrese

### **CORRESPONDENCE**

Letter dated May 3, 2012 from Commissioner Mark Hunker in regard to delaying the discussion of the proposed City-wide property re-assessment. He asked that a meeting be held where he can attend in order to voice the concerns he has been hearing from voters in every section of the City. Direct communication is needed with homeowners via a planned public hearing and a direct mailer on what this will mean to them, how the process will work and what their recourse is should they not be happy with the result. If the Commissioners proceed, a fair and open Request for Procurement (RFP) is needed for these service. This cannot be awarded solely on price; it must be the best value to the City.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

There was none.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

Mayor Cooper called for the presentation by a representative of Parkmobile on the pay-by-phone parking meter payment system that will be used by the City this summer.

Ms. Tina Dyer of Parkmobile gave her presentation and provided an overview of how the pay-by-phone parking service works. This service will be offered by May 25, 2012. People can register online for free at [www.parkmobile.com](http://www.parkmobile.com) or via the qr code which is available on all marketing materials as well as stickers. Each zone will be qr code specific. There is a one-time registration, and people will be asked to create a user/password account and adding personal information such as a cell phone number, license plate and credit card. Once done with the registration, parking can start immediately. People can pull into an available parking space and look for the green Parkmobile stickers on the meters which will indicate the zone number applicable to that particular section, area and/or meter. Tap the downloaded mobile application or make a call via the toll free number available on the sticker. The zone number can be selected along with the amount of time for parking. A text will be received 15 minutes before the parking session expires. There minimum fee would be \$1.50 for one hour. Parkmobile is nationwide and can be used anywhere in the country. Ms. Carol Everhart of Rehoboth Beach/Dewey Beach Chamber of Commerce and Parkmobile will be hosting the ribbon cutting ceremony will occur on May 24, 2012 at 11:00 a.m. in front of the Building & Licensing Department. Mayor Cooper will be in attendance at the ceremony. The marketing plan is to have brand ambassadors in and around the City and the Boardwalk to educate people. Flyers will be provided that have instructional information. Parkmobile has a great integration with T2 Systems. There is a huge following on Twitter and Facebook, and Parkmobile is pleased with the amount of social media. Ms. Dyer will provide information to Main Street for the kiosk on the Boardwalk. Ms. Dyer said that Parkmobile is working well with Ms. Everhart and her team and the enforcement officers to make sure that they have all the information they need. Training will be done to make sure the handhelds are working properly, and they know what information to look for when enforcing. It

is taken on a case by case basis when someone puts an incorrect license number in and a ticket is written; but there is valid time on the meter. It has never occurred that Parkmobile has gone down.

Ms. Christine Hastings of Jolly Trolley, asked if the convenience parking fee is per transaction or a one-day fee, and who will be enforcing this system. Ms. Dyer said that the transaction fee is \$.50 per transaction. The enforcement officers from the Parking Department will be enforcing the system.

Mr. Walter Brittingham 123 Henlopen Avenue, suggested that literature about Parkmobile should be placed at the three change makers.

Commissioner Mills reiterated that Parkmobile will be applicable at all the multi-space Reino meters, all and the single-space Duncan meters. Mayor Cooper said that the pay and display meter in the Convention Center parking lot has been given a zone number, but he was not sure that it has been put in the system to date.

Ms. Linda Kauffman, Laurel Street and Vice President of T2 Systems, assumed that the handhelds are done with a cellular connection. If a piece of equipment on the lot would need to be changed out, there is also the interaction of pay-by-space. T2 Systems worked to develop the interaction with Parkmobile in 2009.

Mayor Cooper noted that it could be critical if the fee structure would be changed and people would use a zone number from a lesser expensive zone. Ms. Kauffman said that if enforcement is set up by zone, then there might be an issue. The license plates within the zone will display on the handhelds. Ms. Dyer thought that rate structure information could be provided at meters.

Mayor Cooper also noted that there will be a session for the public today at 2:00 p.m. in the Convention Center to learn about the Parkmobile system.

Mayor Cooper called to discuss recommendations from the engineering firm Daft McCune Walker for increasing sight distance at the intersections of Baltimore Avenue and First Street.

Commissioner Coluzzi distributed a copy of the portion of an aerial map of Baltimore Avenue and First Street to the Commissioners prior to the meeting which shows the proposed placement for (2) bicycle parking stations with option curb extensions. The most accidents have occurred at the intersection of First Street and Baltimore Avenue. Visibility is very poor because vehicles are parked right to the intersection. The plan is to remove (4) parking spaces and install a bulb-out with bicycle racks on Baltimore Avenue. Monies in the amount of \$10,300.00 were leftover from the energy grant to put toward this project. The Streets & Transportation Committee is looking at the removal of two spaces on First Street to help increase sight. A parking space would possibly be removed on the southwest corner of Baltimore Avenue and possibly one space on the northeast corner.

Commissioner Mills said that he has been working with Mr. Mel Craig, Public Works Director, with regard to bike racks and studying issues, etc. He was comfortable with removing the two parking spaces on First Street as long as bike racks are not put in those spaces. He suggested giving consideration to the possibility of allowing scooters or motorcycles to park in the empty spaces. Revenue would be lost from the two spaces on First Street, but it would balance out with the safety issue. This project could be done on a trial basis. A study has to give consideration to the exact type of rack to use because of the space requirements, the aisle as a buffer when bicycles are being backed out and not into traffic, a physical barrier separating the vehicles and bicycles, the placement of the bike racks at an intersection vs. mid-block, and a bike rack on each side vs. one optimum size, etc. He asked whether bike racks could be placed at the water tower, and if this parking station idea should be limited to this intersection or be expanded to Wilmington Avenue and First Street. Commissioner Mills said that step one would be to remove the parking spaces to increase the sight lines, but the Commissioners should defer spending money on any of the options right now with the exception of possibly putting in a temporary bicycle parking station in the area going towards the Boardwalk on Baltimore Avenue at the first, second or third parallel parking spaces from the corner. This would provide one bicycle parking station instead of two stations. An analysis and design of streetscapes for Baltimore and Wilmington Avenues should be initiated, and the design should dictate where the bicycle stations should be.

Commissioner Coluzzi invited Commissioner Mills to attend a Streets & Transportation Committee meeting. Daft McCune Walker did the analysis for the proposal. Commissioner Coluzzi and City Manager Gregory Ferrese visited the proposed site of the bike racks and talked about the issues with accidents. Crash data provided by the Police Department showed that there are more accidents at Baltimore Avenue and First Street than anywhere else in the City.

Commissioner Sargent said that the proposal was done by a traffic engineer, and he suggested installing the

bicycle parking stations near the stop signs on Baltimore Avenue at First Street. The cost of installing a parking station may be done considerably less than the cost on the proposal. The proposed parking stations would be installed on a trial basis for one year. The parking space in front of the old Lingo's Market on First Street was probably the most hazardous space. With the removal of that space and the space on Baltimore Avenue, sight distance would be increased, and the corner would be safer.

Commissioner Gossett noted that sight distance is an important factor. To clear out more space would be important and a safety factor at this particular corner. He asked if criteria and methodology have been established on how to evaluate the effectiveness of the bike racks during the trial period of one year. Commissioner Coluzzi said that there is no methodology at the present time, but perhaps there may be a monetary use in some way to make sure the parking stations are being used. The Committee is also looking to see what can be done to make this concept work out better than some of the current bike racks in place. The Committee along with the traffic engineer and consultant will discuss the methodology. For right now, the installation of pylons and bike racks and removal of meters for the parking spaces on First Street would be done, but her feeling was to also move forward with the bump outs.

Mayor Cooper said that the bump outs would need to be looked at, particularly the major bump out on the southwest corner, because longer vehicles would be drastically affected with maneuvering around the bump out. The evaluation should also look in the area and see where other bicycles are located. He is willing to try the bicycle parking stations as a trial, but an eight foot wide parking space is not a lot of room. The big factor is where the maneuvering room will come from.

Mr. Walter Brittingham, 123 Henlopen Avenue, said that there is an enforcement issue with trucks on Baltimore Avenue, and there will be loading/unloading issues with where the bicycle parking station will be located. The Commissioners need to think about the huge traffic problems before doing anything in that area. He thought there was a law that there cannot be anything located within 15 feet of a stop sign. The stop sign would also need to be relocated so it is back far enough as to not be run into.

Commissioner Coluzzi thought that the traffic engineer has taken the 15 feet into consideration with regard to locating the parking station. She would like to see the Commissioners move forward with this project and have it put in place before the start of the summer season. The main push has always been safety and pulling people away from Rehoboth Avenue. Commissioner Coluzzi would like to direct the City Manager to move forward with this project. She will get back with Mr. Bob Palmer to make sure he understands where the Commissioners want to go with this project that they are not looking to do a permanent sidewalk at the present time, but to do something with the pylons. For safety purposes, Mr. Palmer thought that the parking area should be raised. Commissioner Coluzzi thought that the parking stations on the northeast corner of Baltimore Avenue could have the raised sidewalk, and the other station could just have pylons to see how it might work. The cost will include the price of the new bicycle racks.

Commissioner Gossett said that the balustrades and pylons are a minimal investment to make without having impact on the infrastructure such as digging up the street and ADA ramping, etc. which would need to be done at a future time. This could lead the Commissioners in a direction to give them the sound and current data needed to make those decisions in moving forward throughout the City.

Commissioner Sargent thought that a parking station on the southwest corner of Baltimore Avenue would be used more than the northeast corner. A lot could be learned from installing one station for this year.

City Manager Ferrese noted that this project would be done by outside contractors. He would like to meet with Commissioner Coluzzi and Mr. Palmer to see what his opinion is as to whether both parking stations can be done by the second week of June 2012. He requested guidance to move forward and whether one or both parking stations would be done. Mr. Ferrese will check with Mr. Palmer to see if the engineer is comfortable with doing both of the parking stations. Commissioner Coluzzi thought that both the parking stations should be done because of the increased number of bicycles in the City.

Commissioner Gossett suggested that members of the Streets & Transportation Committee talk with the owners and operators of the businesses in the immediate area regarding what is planned and the anticipated impact.

Mayor Cooper called to discuss the proposed plan for a dock at the Rehoboth Beach Museum with Bob Ehemann of DNREC, Division of Parks and Recreation.

Mr. Bob Ehemann of DNREC, Mr. Scott Thomas, Executive Director of Southern Delaware Tourism, Mr. Mark Carter of Dogfish Head and Mr. Paul Kuhns, business owner, were in attendance at the meeting.

Thomas, Mr. Carter and Mr. Kuhns are also board members of the Lewes-Rehoboth Canal Improvement Association.

Mayor Cooper noted that at a past meeting, a presentation was given regarding the Lewes-Rehoboth Canal and a water taxi. The price tag for this project would be just short of \$1,000,000.00. It was his understanding that there was the thought of applying for a grant to the program which Mr. Bob Ehemann administers. This is where the question came in whether the Commissioners are at the point to be comfortable to do this.

Mr. Bob Ehemann of DNREC is the grants coordinator for the Delaware Land and Water Trust Fund Program which facilitates funding to municipalities and counties. Currently, the City has applied at least preliminarily with a pre-application, and there is no committal by the City with any funding, etc. This is an idea which was presented. It is his responsibility to help facilitate a project and provide technical assistance where possible. From a grants coordinator point of view, the first thing Mr. Ehemann looks at is whether there is permission from the owners of the property. The City does not own the Canal or the banks of the Canal, but there has been coordination with putting in the observation platform. What he has requested for the grant program is that there would be another commitment of at least 25 years from the Army Corps of Engineers to allow this new type of dock and ramp to be built on its property. Step 2 would be to demonstrate the public usefulness. From a grants coordinator's point of view, it is not a strong argument to invest in a private concessionaire operating a water taxi service. Step 3 would be the public involvement and if this is something the City would really want to have. This would be a gateway for the City not only for water access but also for the Junction Breakwater Trail. Incorporating this motorized access going north and south into the City of Lewes would provide the potential to allow people to commute and recreate going north into Lewes and back. There is a network of possibilities for people with different recreational pursuits to utilize this area. There is an expectation when providing a public amenity such as having the potential to be able to park there. People who are coming into the City on their canoes and kayaks will have an expectation that there will be a place for them to dock their boats and have them safely parked there. With regard to accessibility, there is approximately 25 feet from the water's edge up to the high ground where the observation deck is. The ADA requirements would be that there is no steeper slope than 1:8 so for every foot of vertical climb there is eight feet of ramping. At 25 feet, there would be approximately 200 feet of ramping. A five foot landing would also need to be provided every 30 feet. Before investments are put into one area, the Commissioners need to look at the holistic canal to see if this is the ideal spot to have it. From a recreational standpoint, there is a lot of potential for use for the City.

Mayor Cooper thought that the grant which was received was for a feasibility study of a water taxi, etc. There is no data as to what the parking demand might be, what other things there may be to support this, etc. This is premature to be rushing out to design a dock space or a facility for \$1,000,000.00 that the Commissioners have not thought through.

Commissioner Coluzzi noted that a feasibility study was done. There have been three public meeting and two presentations to the Commissioners. In terms of the design, this project certainly could be done according project, and the majority of the money would be spent by the Association to do fundraising. It was looking at a public/private partnership, and the necessity of having the City involved with the public/private partnership is to get grant opportunities.

Commissioner Zellers voiced concerns about the parking issue, whether this is the right place for the facility, maintenance of the facility after it is built, liability and security which the Commissioners have not addressed. Commissioner Mills agreed. After the first presentation, his expectation was that the proposed project would come back to the Commissioners for discussion on the merits of it and then decide to commit or not.

Commissioner Sargent thought that an ideal place for the facility would be in area of Henlopen Acres, but it may not be interested.

Mr. Paul Kuhns said that in prior Comprehensive Development Plans (CDP), there has always been a discussion of having some kind of a water front along Canal Street. It has been a suggestion by the Planning Commission throughout the last two to three CDP's that this would be a part of the City which could be developed as some type of a water park with a walkway area and boardwalk along the water as well as on the top of the bank. He did not think that a lower area exists for the placement of the facility. There has always been discussions of different of the back property of the Museum with the first phase being the Museum and patio area being built. The second phase was putting in the overlook and walkway in the last year with the help of the State and the City. There has always been the idea of a possible third phase extending down to the water. There have been a number of people who have been positively swayed by the concept. A number of vendors

have contacted the Historical Society with regard to a water taxi service, and someone has been working on the plans for privately providing a taxi service from the Dewey area to the Lewes area. A lot of people have thought that this would be the best area to use because it is right on the main thoroughfare of Rehoboth Avenue, and parking would be available in the lot at the Museum and along Canal Street.

Ms. Linda Kauffman, Laurel Street, said that conceptually she likes the idea; but her concern is whether or not public money will be used. Thinking about this as recreational is one thing, but she wondered how many people would actually use the water taxi service for commuting to/from work. She encouraged the Commissioners to look at this resource for what it is. The water taxi service would be weather and tide dependent.

Mr. Howard Menaker, 16 Dover Street, asked if a feasibility study has been done for the water taxi. He thought that a private investor was going to do a feasibility study for the water taxi and would come back with numbers of estimated ridership, hours of operation, etc. The feasibility study for the dock has been done.

Mr. Mark Carter said that a feasibility study for the structure has been completed by the engineering firm, and the next thing would be to bring the service on board. The benefit of the dock/park-like area is an enhancement to the community with a welcoming appearance to view. If there is a dock located there, people will figure out a way to use. Secretary Collin O'Mara and Governor Markell want walkable/paddable/bikeable communities, and the City is at the cusp of this concept. Infrastructure-wise, this project can occur. From an ADA standpoint, the engineering firm has confirmed the design of the plan can be used. From a water taxi standpoint, a survey will be completed by July 9, 2012 with regard to collecting demographics, use of the canal and how the water taxi would be used such as for commuting, dining, recreation, shopping, events, cultural activities, etc. Mr. Carter will provide this information to be shared with the Commissioners along with the feasibility study for the infrastructure. The Association needs the City to partner in this project with funding and moving forward.

Mr. Walter Brittingham, 123 Henlopen Avenue, thought that maybe there should be a business license or taxi bill created between Dewey Beach and Lewes. The sewer plant road is the place that has the optimum use differential. A walkway could be put in down to the dock. He suggested that the City ask the Army Corps of Engineers to investigate the inlet of the canal at Rehoboth Bay because it is partially closed, and the channel marker had to be moved over.

Ms. Christine Hastings of Jolly Trolley said that the idea of having a greenway and waterway connection is wonderful. Technically, this would not be a water taxi, it would be more of a water shuttle.

Commissioner Coluzzi said that the City's buy-in is needed to move to the next step. The engineering and design of the project would be approximately \$100,000.00, and the cost for the City would be approximately \$35,000.00. The City would need to get into a contractual relationship with the Association and perhaps the Museum.

Commissioner Mills suggested that questions should be compiled and forwarded to the Association, and get feedback at the Commissioners' next meeting so those questions can be resolved.

Mr. Paul Kuhns said that this project consists of two things: 1. Shuttle. 2. Dock. Presently, the shuttle in and of itself is almost taken out of the City's hands because someone has signed up to do a shuttle between Dewey Beach and Lewes using two commercial enterprises where there are current docks. With regard to the feasibility of a shuttle, this person has a captain, boat, has put a price tag on the shuttle service and will be starting the service around Memorial Day. The Secretary and the Governor have signed onto this conceptually for the last four or five years.

Mayor Cooper noted that all questions need to be answered before the City commits money to this project.

Commissioner Gossett said that the canal is a connection to bring Lewes, Rehoboth and Dewey together and will be a viable link to increase Rehoboth's popularity. The City would need to be prepared to manage it. A sub-committee of Commissioners or a working group could possibly be established going into this. This needs to be looked at in a long-term plan on how to bring this forward. The Commissioners need to take a comprehensive look at this proposed project. This is an idea which is ripe but needs further information and further develop. The Commissioner need to pursue this project.

Commissioner Coluzzi suggested that a list of questions be submitted to the Association. She thought that the some members of the Planning Commission and Commissioners should be involved in this.

Commissioner Mills was comfortable with the Commissioners working on this project in the public arena.

Commissioner Zellers agreed. The Commissioners could then get more of the public involved and get a gauge of how much support it would have in moving forward.

Commissioner Sargent said that the concept of a fully developed canal is wonderful. This project has a huge price tag just to start it. He suggested doing something in conjunction with Henlopen Acres for a fairly low cost. Commissioner Gossett – have discussions with other representatives along the canal.

Mayor Cooper said that the bigger the success of this project, the more problems it will create; and if the Commissioners do not address those problems upfront, then they will be disappointed in what they create.

Mr. Tom Zellers asked if Lewes has contributed any money to this project. Commissioner Coluzzi responded with no.

Mr. Scott Thomas of Southern Delaware Tourism said that the City of Lewes is ahead of the game with infrastructure. Rehoboth will have to get its infrastructure viable first to be the hub of the entire system. Lewes is moving ahead with utilizing the Canal Park facility to be part of the system.

Commissioner Coluzzi said that questions should be sent to her, and she will forward them to the Association.

This item will be placed on the next agenda.

Mayor Cooper called for the presentation and discussion of the City's current property assessment and proposal for a city-wide re-assessment.

The meeting was paused at 10:58 a.m. and reconvened at 11:03 a.m.

Mayor Cooper gave a presentation to provide an overview of property assessments. He provided the a portion of the Delaware Constitution which basically states that taxes shall be uniform from the same class of subjects. The City has the authority to exempt such property from municipal property tax. It shall be exercised by the respecting incorporated municipality when property in the said municipality will be best removed to public welfare. Another section within the Constitution basically says that if real estate is going to be assessed for tax purposes, the land and improvements will have to be assessed. In 22 DelC 11, it says that if a complete re-assessment is done, the roll-back rate needs to be calculated which is the tax rate that would give the City the same tax revenue it did the year before absent improvements, new houses, etc. Taxes can be increased, but the roll-back rate has to be published. Within the Title 24 Profession and Occupations, the council of real estate appraisers shall develop standards in cooperation with the association, counties and directive of the league of local governments for licensing and training of assessors in order for municipal and county assessment departments to be in compliance within three years of the development and adoption of set standards. The council on real estate appraisers has adopted these standards required by this section. They were published in a final form on December 1, 2011. As of December 1, 2014, anyone employed as an assessor by the City must be licensed as a State licensed assessor. Appraisers provide a retrospective evaluation. The current assessment system in the City is based on a re-evaluation which was completed in 1968 by Associated Surveys Company. Printed assessment cards are used to record the information about each property. The tax bills are printed from a computer where the assessment figures for each property are entered from the assessment cards. A manual is used which was created by Associated Surveys Company in 1968 of values and factors performed on maintenance assessments. Since 1968, the manual has been updated by a combination of professionals and citizen property owners who have served on the Assessment Board. The assessed value is set at 50% of the fair market value determined in 1968. A copy of a tax card was provided which has the address, sales history, assessment history as changes are made, sketch of the house and factors taken into account. The manual says that there are six different type of housing in the City for assessment purposes. Mayor Cooper prepared a sampling of a front footage assessment. It could be an instructive tool to look at the assessments across the City. There are factors that go into the final evaluation such as a reduction factor because of extra frontage, etc. During the period from January 1, 2011 through late April 2012, 96 properties were sold where real estate transfer tax was paid. One property eliminated for this analysis had storefronts within a condominium that is used as a restaurant and has five different units. The sales price seems out of line with the assessment. The total sales price for the parcels was \$74,515,820.00 for an average of \$784,377.00 per property. The total assessment of the properties was \$1,757,349.00, and that is split between \$326,738.00 for the land and \$1,430,00.00 for the improvements. These 95 properties generate \$31,280.81 in property tax revenue at the current tax rate of \$1.78 per \$100.00 of assessment. All data and assumptions presented in this section are based on the sales and assessment information for these 95 parcels. Mayor Cooper was in no way representing that the 95 parcels are indicative of an average in the City. The current assessment proportion for the test

parcels is 19% land and 81% improvements. In regard to the distribution of sales price of the test parcels, the most expensive one was \$3,700,000.00 and the least expensive was \$203,000.00. If the assessment of the test parcels were addressed by the average increase reflected by the sales prices, the average assessment would have increased by a factor of 21.2%. By using the sales prices, the assessments would be to be increased 21 times. The new tax rate if assessments would be adjusted by a factor of 21.2 would be 8.4 cents to yield the same \$31,280.00. Forty-nine parcels would see a reduction in taxes, and forty-six parcels would see an increase in taxes. With regard to the distribution of tax change in dollars, the biggest one would increase by \$597.53, and one would decrease by \$402.30. With regard to the distribution of tax increase as a percent of the taxes paid today, someone's taxes would increase by 675.78% and the biggest reduction was 71.69%. In the parcels seeing the highest, largest increase in taxes was the parcel that sold for the highest price. Nine parcels with the highest percentage increase in taxes were all vacant lots. The parcels seeing the largest increase in taxes is a business property. The six properties with the largest percentage decreased in taxes are all townhouses built in the last several years. Several parcels shown on the assessment list as vacant have houses which have been recently demolished and are currently having new homes built on them. This illustrates one of the huge issues the City has in the inequity. One property had a land assessment of \$3,150.00, and the improvements have been assessed at \$15,000 before, and the property sold for \$890,000.00. This was the assessment before the house was demolished. The improvement represented 82% of the assessed valuation. The purchasers relinquished 82% of the purchase based on the assessed values. If the assessments represented the true values, this would represent a loss of more than \$750,000.00. With regard to reasons to re-assess, large inequities have crept into the system since the last re-assessment with the largest of these being the fact that the land has increased in value at a much faster rate than buildings in demand. Land next to the beach has increased more than land near the canal. The inconsistent application of assessment formulas is a significant factor. The City has not done a good job of re-assessing the houses. The current assessment records are stored on paper cards with no backup. A re-assessment would use all records and would reside in computer file that are easily backed up and will be much easier for staff to work with. State law mandates that the City changes the way assessments are performed within the next 2.5 years. Unlicensed people will not be allowed to perform assessments. Mayor Cooper would like to see the Commissioners move forward with this re-assessment. Mayor Cooper noted that Commissioner Mark would like to see an RFP process, and he sees the value in that. Mayor Cooper has spoken with other municipalities in the County. All but one uses PTA/DELVAL; and for the most part, people are happy with it. Mayor Cooper spoke the Mr. Dick Carmean, City Manager of Milford who said they do not use PTA/DELVAL, but run assessments on a computer program they paid \$250,000.00 for. Mayor Cooper acknowledged that the intention in the instructions of the RFP would be that a visual inspection of each property in the City would need to happen to establish the new baseline.

Commissioner Mills thought that the purpose of this meeting was to discuss the re-assessment and come to a consensus and vote on it. He had performed assessments for a period of time along with Mr. Roger Poole. By not assessing on a regular timeframe, many inaccuracies can creep into an assessing system. Data omissions, changes to data and land valuation changes are not caught, monitored or updated. A better descriptor for City-wide re-assessment is equalization whereby at one point in time all the land and improvements are revalued using one set of standards in valuations. An equalization process purges the disparities that have crept into a system that is updated too infrequently. While the law allows for municipalities to purchase tax records from the County and use its records, at the time this was written, several cities had just performed their own equalization processes, abandoning purchase of the County records for the reasons of all the inaccuracies in the system. In 1993, there was a financial planning task force sub-committee on property taxes and assessment of the City. In part, that report says that because of the fear of inequities over a period of 25 year at that time, a new re-assessment was in order. Based on research with the County, the County was expected to re-assess within two to five years probably mandated by the State. That has not come to fruition. In 2004, two assessors sent a letter to the Mayor and Commissioners articulating some of their concerns with the inequities over the years. It was recommended that a City-wide re-assessment study or full re-assessment should be performed based on inconsistencies in the system. Some of Commissioner Mills' random notes identified problems and inconsistencies causing non-uniformity of assessments. Another reason for re-evaluation is the concern that the City cannot reasonable show accuracy on the cards because of all the City agencies such as the Planning Commission, etc. that rely on the cards. Commissioner Mills said that in a letter to the editor Senator Bunting said the County should re-assess. According to the Director of the Board of Assessment in the County, this matter is not on the Council's radar. Currently, there are no assessors in the City. City appraisers will need to be certified. With the price reduction of the cost for re-assessment, it is significant from what was received in 2004. No agency would want to use the City's system. The timing is right for a re-assessment. There probably would be time to do an RFP.

Commissioner Coluzzi thought that an RFP should be done first. Then once the firm is onboard, a communications program could be designed. It would be good to minimally send out information to all the property owners to let them know this will occur. Then a public meeting should be held to answer the property owners' questions, etc. prior to the re-assessment.

Commissioner Zellers said that the more the Commissioners talk about this matter and start the RFP process, more people will be aware that the Commissioners are thinking of proceeding with this process.

Mayor Cooper said that the City Manager can start drafting the RFP. Then the Commissioners would vote to send it out.

Ms. Linda Kauffman was in support of the re-assessment. The more public input that is gotten and the more understanding, the more successful the Commissioners are going to be.

Commissioner Mills said that this commands a formality that the Commissioners should take a vote on it and that would charge the City Manager with performing the RFP. Then the public will know, if that is approved, the re-assessment will be done.

Commissioner Sargent was comfortable with initiating the process. Commissioner Zellers said that the Commissioners could then continue to have discussions about certain instances and if there will be exemptions for low-income, elderly, etc. Commissioner Coluzzi said that the Commissioners need to have an effective communication program and send information out to all property owners. Commissioner Gossett agreed. This will be an education process. An open letter should be drafted to the property owners on what the process will be about, outlining the timeline, etc. The current appeals process needs to be reviewed. Mayor Cooper thought that the Charter may possibly need to be changed.

Ms. Kauffman thought that this matter should be put on the agenda for a formal vote. Putting it in Charter as an automatic re-assessment would eliminate this kind of conversation. City Solicitor Mandalas noted that this one way to make it mandatory.

#### **CITY MANAGER'S REPORT**

City Manager Gregory Ferrese reported that the newsletter will be going out to the printer by the end of the week and should be mailed out to the residents by the end of May or first week of June 2012. Courtesy notices have been received and will be delivered to all the hotels, motels, rooming houses, realtors, etc. next week. The ADA Ramping Project is winding down, and additional funding will be requested so that in Fall 2012, this project can be bid out to be able to do another phase of the project. The Delaware Avenue restrooms are open. He gave a special thanks to Commissioner Couzzi and all the volunteers for the additional landscaping at Grove Park, and a special thanks to Commissioner Zellers in regard to the rain garden to be installed on May 9, 2012 in front of City Hall and for the flower baskets that will be put up on the street light poles at Lake Gerar Bridge. All part-time employees have been hired, and all the departments are gearing up for Memorial Day Weekend.

Commissioner Zellers noted that one basket is in place at Lake Gerar Bridge, and the others will be installed and planted on May 11, 2012, weather permitting.

#### **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

There were no reports.

#### **CITY SOLICITOR'S REPORT**

There was nothing to report.

#### **COMMISSIONER ANNOUNCEMENTS/COMMENTS**

Commissioner Gossett announced that on May 11, 2012 at 6:30 p.m. the Planning Commission will be meeting with regards to Silver Lake, and again at a Workshop Meeting on May 12, 2012 at 10:00 a.m.

Commissioner Zellers commented that if community volunteers would like to help plant the rain garden. There approximately 60 plants to be planted.

#### **Discuss items to include on future agendas.**

Items to be included on the next Regular Meeting agenda are the vote for the RFP and submission of questions about the water shuttle service.



Mr. Walter Brittingham noted that the stormwater outfalls at the end of the streets will be worked on in May through June 2012. Signs need to be posted near the Henlopen Hotel about not crossing the dunes. The City should go on notice to DelDOT on projects that will or may possibly affect the City. Discussion is needed in at least the City Manager's office along with formal notifications. He asked if there has been more conversation about solidifying the bike lane on each side of Canal Bridge from DelDOT. There are plenty of projects going on in the City where building permits should be posted closer to the edge of the property for people to see without walking on a person's property to know what the permit is about.

Commissioner Coluzzi said that Representative Schwartzkopf has been talking with DelDOT, but she did not know any more than that.

The Mayor and Commissioners Regular Meeting will be held on Friday, May 18, 2012 at 7:00 p.m.

There being no further business, Mayor Cooper adjourned the meeting at 12:00 p.m.

**Respectfully submitted,**

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**(Patricia Coluzzi, Secretary)**