

**Sussex Preservation Coalition**  
**General Meeting 1/12/2023 2:30-4:00 pm**

(In person and on Zoom at Unitarian Universalist Church, Lewes)

**Attendees:** Diane Barlow, Steve Cottrell, P.J. Fowler, Dave Jaeger, Ann Jaeger, Rich Borrasso, Michele Cavanaugh, Jane Gruenebaum, Jim Henry, Jill Hicks, Marty Lamperer, Eul Lee, Maggie McLaughlin, Jennifer Peasnall, Susan Petze-Rosenblum, Lew Podolske, Theresa Ripley, Judy Rose Seibert, Karin Westerman

**Review/Discussion of SPC Mission: Jane Gruenebaum, President**

Part of our mission is to bring together individuals and groups (allies) who want to address such issues as land use and water quality in Sussex County. By working together on projects and initiatives, we can enhance our efforts and impact in ways that are more likely to bring about desired changes. An organizing tool or road map we propose to use is the Sussex County 2018 Comprehensive Plan, especially the chapters that reference land use, conservation, open space and utilities. (To view to plan, go to: <https://sussexcountyde.gov/sites/default/files/PDFs/2018CompPlan-Final.pdf>)

Discussion/Comments/Questions: Should environmental justice be included in our mission statement? Do we plan to have a vision statement?

**Update on Outreach Efforts: Jennifer Peasnall, SPC Outreach Coordinator**

Jennifer has contacted many environmentally focused groups and is in the process of meeting with contact persons to invite them to become Allies with SPC. (Ally - a group or individual who agrees with our mission statement, wants to be active with SPC, and wants to be listed on our webpage. Allies benefit by having their events advertised through SPC's Action Alert network.)

Potential Allies:

- Delaware Audubon - Steve Cottrell
- Sierra Club Delaware Chapter - Cheryl Siskin, Dustyn Thompson
- MERR Institute (Marine Education, Research and Rehabilitation)

- Delaware Nature Society - Mark Nardone
- Delaware Land Protection Coalition - Michelle Schmitt
- Rehoboth Beach Green Drinks - Charlie Garlow

Please provide Jennifer with names of other organizations to reach out to!

### **Update on Website: Jim Henry, SPC Board Member and Website Manager**

Drop down menus now present under headings:

- “Action Alerts” and “In The News” are listed under heading “Get Involved”
- “Allies’ 2022 Successes”, “Meeting Minutes”, and “Library” are listed under “What We Do”
- The names of individuals on the SPC mailing list will be listed automatically under “Who We Are”, unless they contact SPC to opt out.

If interested in creating a “billboard” (under “Who We Are”), send an email with ‘website’ on the subject line to [spcde.org@gmail.com](mailto:spcde.org@gmail.com)

If interested in receiving Action Alerts, send an email to [spcde.org@gmail.com](mailto:spcde.org@gmail.com)

If you have comments/suggestions for the website, contact Jim in the above email.

### **Update on Forest Preservation/Love Creek Elementary: Judy Rose Seibert, SPC Treasurer**

- Review: 84 townhomes were proposed and County Council suspended the hearing as there were several issues that needed to be addressed prior to the hearing. There is an easement that goes through the middle of the property to another 6.7 acre property.
- Saddle Ridge and Belle Terre residents are working with the owner of the 6.7 acre property and trying to 1.) garner funds to purchase the property with possible donation of the funds to the Sussex County Land Trust for them to purchase and conserve the property and to 2.) get agreement between the owners of the 6.7 acres and the owners of the land (where townhomes will be built) that ensures that some of the forested land will be preserved. Negotiations are still in process.

- Next Step: Sussex Land Trust will do a site survey.

### **Treasurer's Report:**

- Received \$84 at last General Meeting; received \$500 from the Center for Inland Bays
- Bank account for SPC will be set up at PNC after next board meeting

### **Update on Master Plan Zoning District: Jill Hicks, SPC Vice President**

- Sussex County officials are considering a master plan zoning district ordinance to provide property owners with an option to develop large mixed-use commercial and residential projects on sizable parcels (400+ acres) **with one application**. (Villages of Five Points is an example of the type of development suited for a master plan zone.)
- Per Vince Robertson the Master Plan Zoning District is “another tool for use by developers, officials, and County staff”
- County Council next steps:
  1. Continue working on draft
  2. Consult with DelDot on road coordination
  3. Submit a draft of the ordinance to State for PLUS review (for information about PLUS, see <https://plus.stateplanning.delaware.gov/pages/about-plus>)
  4. Submit to Planning and Zoning
  5. Planning and Zoning will have public hearing - SPC REPS NEED TO ATTEND
  6. Submitted to County Council for another public hearing - SPC REPS NEED TO ATTEND
  7. If adopted, it will be a code revision to Chapter 115.
- PowerPoint deck regarding the plan will be added to SPC website
- Discussion: If adopted, will only the P&Z public hearing be required? Will ‘conditional use’ be part of this? Is this the same as “planned urban development”? Will this change the ordinances that are in place? The County code needs to be changed - it has the county handcuffed - if zoning is AR 1, developments will continue to be approved, regardless of public opinion. We need to influence the Council to make changes in the Code.. Pressure Council persons to

support the Comprehensive Plan. Change County Council members - 3 Council persons will be up for election in 2 years. Help to influence the decision process of who gets chosen to be on the Planning and Zoning Commission: Three of the County Commissions are up for reappointment

- **GOOD NEWS!** This week County Council denied a land-use map change and upheld the SC Comprehensive plan with regard to parcels east of Rt. 1 from the Nassau Bridge, north to Milford. We need to thank the Council!

### **Update on Council Priorities and Woodlands Preservation Project: Rich Borrasso, SPC Board Member and SARG**

Council Priorities:

- SARG plans to meet with all County Council members to discern their priorities vis-a-vis the Comprehensive Plan
- SARG has met with three to date: Hudson, Reilly, Schaeffer. Will continue to try to schedule with Green and Vincent.
- All 3 stated that woodland preservation is a priority

Woodlands Preservation Project:

- Will work on putting a document together that says why trees are important. Either trees must be preserved or re-planted.
- Rich is confident this will be on the agenda for discussion; then will draft a document that may become an ordinance that will have public hearings and be voted on for approval

Discussion: Jane spoke with Sen. Russ Huxtable who said that a tree ordinance is being considered at a state level. Need to follow up on this. If we can't stop a development, we can place conditions on how it's done. Land needs to be used in a manner that is congruent with the Plan and the surrounding communities.

### **SPC New Project Proposals - Discussion: Jane Gruenebaum and Jill Hicks**

- District Engagement Sessions: Once a quarter, have a roundtable in each district, hosted by SPC, and invite residents, Council person,

media (?) to dialogue about priorities and concerns. Would benefit both Council and residents. SPC will need volunteers; maybe we could engage homeowners associations. Hold meetings in fire halls? Meetings can't be perceived as political - rather as a non-partisan community conversation. Another idea: Maybe the roundtables could be focused on one or two hot issues, we could bring a couple of Allies who can speak to the issues. For example: Master Plan? Future Land Use Map changes? Need to educate the public about hot-button issues through the media to stir up interest.

- County Engagement Teams: Looking for volunteers who will attend meetings at Council and keep SPC informed about issues that are coming up. We could post Council agendas on the website. Also need a State Engagement Team to monitor PLUS agenda; also need to monitor DelDot and DNREC. Also need to the Invasive Species Council

### **Code of Ethics Update - Rich Borrasso**

- County reported in meeting on 12/13/22 that they follow the State of DE's code of ethics
- County shared the 'conflict of interest' disclosure form which seemed irrelevant because it pertained to 'procurement and purchasing' (rather than the matters that Council members address!)
- State of Delaware doesn't have a 'conflict of interest' disclosure form either
- Rich is recommending to County Administrator, Todd Lawson, that Council members sign a form that indicates they have read and are aware of and they are following Title 29, Chapter 58 of the Delaware Code (State Code of Ethics).

### **Adjourn**

**Next Meeting:** Thursday, February 9, 2023 at 2:30 - 4:00 pm  
South Coastal Library, 43 Kent Avenue, Bethany Beach,  
Delaware 19930

<https://www.sussexpreservationcoalition.org/>  
Respectfully submitted by Maggie McLaughlin