


Eyes on County Council – November 17, 2026

SUSSEX COUNTY
DELAWARE

Highlight Events:

- The council meeting was rather uneventful this week. **Open questions remain about the county's response to Senate Bill 23 and House Bill 450**, which became effective immediately when passed in July and which require the County's current process for approving development applications to be amended. The county paused the application process when the bills were signed into law, and county officials are working to define a process and a set of objective criteria for approving by-right applications. Because the approval process can no longer include a public hearing, the objective criteria for approving a development must be as comprehensive as possible to cover possibilities that in the past have been identified by public testimony, notably by neighbors familiar with local conditions.
- Meanwhile, the County Council is beginning work on the **10-year Comprehensive Plan update**, which is required by the state to contain an affordable housing plan, resiliency plans in the face of climate change, a plan for school capacity – all of which would logically tie into the objective standards for approving by-right development applications.
- **December 1 Council meeting** – mark your calendars! The results and recommendations of the Route 9 Corridor Study and Master Plan, an effort by DelDOT, Sussex County and the Office of State Planning Coordination will be presented to Council.
- **Remaining 2026 meetings** – December 8 and 15 – are likely to see discussions of the work being done to comply with SB23 and HB450. Existing county code rules for subdivisions must be updated to meet the SB23 "objective standards" requirement, and new rules to add requirements for items such as affordable housing, school capacity, infrastructure capacity and resiliency are likely to be proposed. **Public support for additional standards will be important.**

Administrator's Report:

Todd Lawson announced the recent death of former councilman **Vance Phillips. Councilman Matt Lloyd** gave a heartfelt eulogy for Mr. Phillips, who was Mr. Lloyd's uncle. He noted that Vance Phillips served on the Sussex County Council for 16 years from to 1991 to 2014 and was popular and well-respected.

Public Comments:

Gary Vorsheim spoke, noting that Sussex County should determine where roads can accommodate growth, what improvements are necessary, and how those improvements will be funded before making decisions about additional development in the 2028 Comprehensive Plan and Future Land Use Map. He recommended that Council start by coordinating transportation planning and future development decisions within the Henlopen Transportation Improvement District and identified some connected concerns:

- Love Creek – with the existing Route 24 congestion, the bridge and the planned Love Creek Elementary expansion make road improvements a current concern.
- Mulberry Knoll Road extension - a 2022 study relies on 2017 traffic counts and 2018 development commitments. Council should reevaluate the extension using current data, and include the possible effect if Jacobs Farm, a nearby 900-acre parcel of AR-1 land, were developed.k

Bottom line: Perform the traffic analysis based on current data and likely new development, and use the result to guide the Future Land Use Map.

An **unnamed caller** dialed in. He began by saying "Just say no". He stated that he wants development to be stopped, and that Council members were elected to represent our interests. He then complained about his housing development, stating that he has been in his home 5-6 years and that there are still unfinished areas. He asked the Council to change meeting times to the evening so that more people could attend, and ended with a complaint about traffic circles on Rt 24, and Rt 1. He repeated that "we have to stop."

Finance Director Gina Jennings proposed an ordinance updating the County code to streamline county operations by transferring responsibility for certain functions from the Assessment department to Panning and Zoning. The functions transferred were:

- building permit certification
- building construction standards and regulations enforcement
- application and building permit fee collection
- county code violation notifications
- in the 99-C section on submitting the preliminary plat, remove the statement that County property maps are housed in the Assessor's office.

Steve McCarron introduced the ordinance into the record.

Public Infrastructure expenditures:

- $325,000 for the Public Safety Complex Water Source Heat Pump replacement was approved; Joseph T. Richardson, Inc. will do the work.
- $77,442.16 for water storage tank modifications at the Coastal Business Park was approved.

Grant Requests:

- $2000 awarded to the Community Foundation of the Kiwanis Club of Coastal Delaware for their Kids Clothing & School Supply Drive
- $2000 awarded to West Side New Beginnings, Inc. for their "Go for the Gold" program.
- $1500 awarded to Autism Delaware for their Snowflake Soiree event.

Old Business:

The record was closed on **Change of Zone #2601** on behalf of Sandie, LLC, a request to change zoning from MR-RPC Medium Density Residential to amend conditions of approval for 4.29 acres on the south side of Plantations Blvd, near the intersection of Cedar Grove Road and Plantation Road.

Newly introduced Zoning/Conditional Use Ordinances

Change of Zone #2040 filed on behalf of Capano Management – request to rezone from an AR-1 Agricultural Residential district and CR-1 Commercial Residential district to an HR-1 High Density Residential district for 87.5 acres on Route 9 between Park Avenue and Airport Road.

Change of Zone #2044 filed on behalf of Atlantic Coastal Storage – request to rezone from a MR Medium Residential district to a B-2 Business Community district for ~6 acres in Millsboro, at the intersection of Route 24 and Gull Point Road.

Council Members Comments:

- **Jane Gruenebaum** commented that she spent the day with two constituents who alerted her that there have been and continue to be serious failures by developers to complete projects in their neighborhoods that are having adverse affects on the residents living there. She would like discuss and determine at a future meeting whether Council has the sufficient tools to respond to these issues.

Public Hearings: There were no public hearings.

Council Meeting Upcoming Schedule: Tuesdays – check agenda for timing and location

- Future meetings schedule:
  - December 1, 8 and 15.

Sussex Preservation Coalition Upcoming Schedule

- **December 15** – Shante Hastings, Secretary – DelDOT on roads in Sussex
- **January 12** – Cape Henlopen School District/school capacity

Council Meeting Broadcast:

- County Council Meeting - November 17, 2026

Related Articles:

Sussex works on plan to consider stalled subdivision applications | Cape Gazette

Sussex to apply for state grant for housing rehabilitation | Cape Gazette
State reviews townhouse project that includes affordable housing rentals | Cape Gazette
Construction of Northstar development begins | Cape Gazette
Sussex County making internal moves for better efficiency | Delaware Public Media
Kent County is facing some of the same problems as Sussex County with respect to by-right development:
Felton-area population could boom with proposed housing developments - Spotlight Delaware

Note: Eyes on County Council makes every effort to render events at public meetings accurately. It either explicitly quotes speakers, or paraphrases their statements as accurately as possible. If any representation in these notes is inaccurate, please contact us.