



Eyes on County Council – October 21, 2025

HIGHLIGHTS:

- The public hearing for the **Atlantic Fields** project drew many speakers, all but one of whom opposed the project. In public testimony that lasted over four hours, speakers presented effectively on why the shopping mall should be denied. Council members asked probing questions, and speakers included State Representative Claire Snyder-Hall as well as attorneys representing Rehoboth Mall/Route 24 Alliance and Plantations Medical Group.
- **Belmead** was on the agenda. Jamie Whitehead, Director of Planning and Zoning, noted that DELDOT and DNREC answers to Council's questions about **Belmead** are now on the County website. **The public has until 4:30 pm, October 28, 2025 to submit comments.**

Public Comment:

- **Judy Rose Seibert** requested that the County Council agenda include specifics of the zoning ordinances in the "Introduction of Proposed Zoning Ordinances" agenda item.

Presentations:

- **James Adkins, Interim Director, University of Delaware Carvel Research and Education Center**, provided the Council with an update of the Center's work with the farming community in Sussex County and Delaware. The program includes a 347-acre research farm, an irrigation research farm, a poultry research house, and a poultry lab in addition to the Carvel Education Center.
- **Brandy Nauman, Director of Community Development and Housing** asked Council's approval for her department to apply for a state funded technical assistance provider that would work with the County's Community Development and Housing Department. Council voted unanimously to approve her making an application to the State Housing and Development Department for a state funded provider to work on affordable housing options.
- **Mark Parker, Assistant County Engineer, and Patrick Brown, Project Engineer** made requests for sewer project work; both were approved.

- **Hans Medlarz, Project Manager** spoke about possible new ordinances to limit runoff during construction. Council voted unanimously to proceed with writing ordinances to amend Chapter 90, section 90-6 and to add a new section 90-8 and 90-10. To amend Chapter 99-29: To amend Chapter 110, Articles I and III, Articles I and III, section 110-1 and 110-12 and to amend Chapter 115, articles I and 115-193 of the Code of Sussex County.

Old Business:

- **Change of Zone #2001 filed on behalf of Belmead LLC** – Mr. Whitehead, Director of Planning and Zoning, said that DELDOT and DNREC answers to Council's questions about Belmead are on the County website. The public has until 4:30 pm, October 28, 2025 to submit in writing or email any comments. Mr. Whitehead will provide an update to the Council at the next Council meeting.
- **Conditional Use of #2568 filed on behalf of Unitarian Universalist Society of Southern Delaware** - Ms. Gruenebaum requested a condition that the sign be turned off from 10 pm to 7 am. Council unanimously approved the condition and the Conditional Use, subject to sign-off by DelDOT on the application.

Grant Requests Approved:

- Urban Youth Golf Program Association for their school and community program expansion - \$1000
- Downtown Seaford Association for their annual Christmas parade - \$3000
- Seaford Tomorrow for their Friday Night Live event - \$1000
- Sussex County Science Fair for their 2025-2026 Science Fair - \$1000
- Jason Anderson Foundation for Youth Sports for their youth sports grants and scholarships - \$1500
- Cape Henlopen Education Foundation for their teacher grant program - \$2000
- Sussex County Land Trust for their 25th Anniversary event - \$1500

Public Hearings

Conditional Use #2395 – to grant a Conditional Use in an AR-1 Agricultural Residential district for a distribution warehouse on 10.9 acres, at the intersection of Park Avenue and Cedar Lane near Georgetown. The request was made by the business owner, who stated that the business would be adjacent to his cattle farm. It would be a warehouse for storage of several business activities, including locally produced hay and seeds. Seven buildings in total are proposed.

- **John Reiley** asked about proposal to start with 2 buildings and grow to 7, and had questions about change in capacity of truck traffic. He also asked how much of business is agriculture related. Response: construction of warehouses will be staggered, depending on DelDOT Phase 2 changes to Park Lane. The number of trucks is expected to grow from 2 a week to up to 3 times a week when at full 7 warehouses.

Only 30% of the business is agriculture related; mostly it's resale of closeout products. There are also daily postal deliveries and UPS/FedEx 2 to 3 times a week.

- **Jane Greunebaum** asked where the entrance to the facility would be. Response: DelDOT asked that it be put behind the existing house and connect to what will exist of Cedar Lane.
- **Matt Lloyd** asked whether there are any retail sales. Response: All sales are on line. The business repackages products and distributes through Amazon. There are no customers to the site.

There were no speakers in favor or in opposition to the C/U. The public record was closed.

Change of Zone #2037 – Atlantic Fields - request to change zoning from AR-1 Agricultural Residential to a C-4 Planned Commercial district for 72 acres on the northwest side of Route 24, next to Mulberry Knoll Road.

The attorney for the development project began his presentation at 2 PM and spoke for about two hours. Members of the public testified until about 8 PM.

Attorney Jim Fuqua focused on 4 areas:

1. Statutory mandates regarding zoning decisions:
 - He noted that the Atlantic Fields parcel is denoted in the 2018 Comp Plan as part of a growth area, and said that no one's opinion, including Council members, could change that.
2. Traffic conditions and developer contributions to transportation infrastructure:
 - He explained the road improvements provided by the developer (mandated by DelDOT): multiple roundabouts on Mulberry Knoll Road, turning lanes at the other entrances, and a traffic light on Route 24 at the main entrance to the shopping complex.
3. The Atlantic Fields site plan, proposed uses, and impacts:
 - He stated that two of the businesses would own the store, the rest would be leased. He said that it is Council's responsibility to provide for job creation.
4. The P&Z approval of the plan, with conditions:
 - He said that Council should only contradict P&Z's approval if it finds errors in P&Z's work.

Questions from Council members were answered by Mr. Fuqua, the developer's traffic engineer, and the developer's engineer.

Jane Greunebaum:

- The land was farmed for generations, with fertilizers and pesticides in use. Has there been a PFAS assessment? Fuqua: No other developments have done this kind of assessment, we did the environmental assessment that was required by law.
- Asked about a) the wellhead protection area, since Rehoboth draws its water supply from the area; and b) whether the allowable amount of impervious surface area is being exceeded? Fuqua: everything is in compliance.
- Regarding the workers at the shopping complex: a Costco worker earns about \$46,000 yearly, not enough to live nearby. Is there any provision for workforce housing? Fuqua: we're building a shopping complex, not a housing project.
- Road improvements: are the roads, in particular Mulberry Knoll Road, being widened? Fuqua: as per DelDOT, Route 24 is already widened at the site. Mulberry Knoll Road will be widened at some point but not necessarily to four lanes.

John Reiley:

- You mentioned 13,400 cars per day, but the Atlantic Fields TIS cites 26,000 car trips. Cars leaving the site as well as arriving at the site must be counted.
- What is the current carrying capacity of Plantation Road between Route 1 and Route 24? Focus must be on macro effect as well as micro effect. Concerned that Route 24 will be oversaturated. The developer's traffic engineer said that DelDOT LOS criteria was used.
- Would rather see ongoing contributions to fire/EMS as opposed to a single donation.
- Asked whether workforce housing could be added as a 2nd floor above stores.
- The planned stormwater retention method has a 50% failure rate. The developer's engineer stated that the water is filtered/cleaned before it's allowed to infiltrate the ground.

Matt Lloyd:

- Said he favors the project because of shopping and economic benefits, and said that this project checks all the boxes for a growth area – on a collector road, near a hospital, perfect for eastern Sussex because the stores are population-driven. If not here, then where?

Steve McCarron:

- Noted that the 1750 jobs claimed to be provided by the project exacerbates the workforce housing problem. The C-4 zoning designation is designed to allow housing along with commercial, but this project doesn't have any.
- Favors ongoing contributions to fire/EMS as opposed to a single donation.

- DelDOT engineers expect Route 24 traffic to increase by 50% over the next decade.

Doug Hudson:

- Expressed concern about having a sidewalk between the two nearby schools on Route 24 and the shopping complex, because it will encourage children to walk along a crowded motorway to reach the shopping complex.

28 members of the public spoke: 1 in favor, 27 opposed. Speakers included State Representative Claire Snyder-Hall as well as attorneys representing Rehoboth Mall/Route 24 Alliance and Plantations Medical Group.

- **Several speakers** chided Attorney Fuqua for his dismissive answers to Council members' questions.
- **The attorney for the Route 24 Alliance and Rehoboth Mall** stated that the plans submitted by the developer lacks important details.
 - **Matt Lloyd** questioned the attorney on whether Atlantic Fields would be in competition with Rehoboth Mall.
- **Claire Snyder-Hall** said that she speaks to many people in her district, and that the #1 concern is infrastructure. Building a "destination mall" is a bad idea.
 - **Steve McCarron** asked Claire Snyder-Hall for her help in Dover with Sussex issues.
- **Jill Hicks** spoke against the project because of its effect on Sussex County as a whole.
 - She pointed out that having a Costco in sales-tax-free Delaware will draw traffic from across the Delmarva peninsula.
 - She suggested that the parcel would be an excellent site for workforce housing.
 - She showed a photograph of Redner's at night, with tall street lights illuminating a wide area, to illustrate what residents on either side of the shopping complex would endure.
- **Robin Delgado** spoke about Mulberry Knoll – the forgotten stretch. She cited county ordinance #2550, which refers to infrastructure.
- **Several residents** expressed concerns about locating a Costco at the proposed project location:
 - Costco-specific traffic engineers typically underestimate the number of car trips that a Costco generates. A recent study of the Bel Air Maryland Costco traffic study found that car trips had been underestimated by one million trips.
 - The store would be the only Costco on Delmarva. It would draw traffic from all over Sussex County, adding more traffic to Route 1 as well as other county roads.

- One resident noted that she had lived near a Costco, and stated that the Costco-related traffic never ceased and the infrastructure never caught up; and pointed out that Route 24 must accommodate school buses and pick up/drop off of school children twice per day.
- **Wendy Taylor** pointed out that this is not the first time a C-4 application has come before County Council. Attorneys for previous C-4 applications (Overbrook Falls, Townsend Village Center) gave similar arguments for approval, yet the applications were denied. Legal issues were resolved in the County's favor.
- **William Zack** noted that since the stormwater infiltration system has a 50% failure rate, there should be contractual requirements for cleanup.
- **A homeowner** who lives adjacent to the proposed site pointer out that the applicant's statement that the truck traffic generated by the retail businesses would be 'just a continuation of what's already occurring' is false; that the only truck traffic ever seen on Mulberry Knoll Road is seen when construction for new houses occurs.
- **An environmental scientist** stated that developments of this size need comprehensive environmental assessments. She requested that projects that include gas pumps have all nearby wells marked on the site plan.
- **One speaker** noted the negative impacts of overnight lighting and noise for residents living along the boundaries of the shopping center were noted; also that the 73 paved acres will create a heat island.
- **One speaker** expressed a lack of confidence that the anchor store commitments will hold. She cited the Redner's location on Route 9, where developers had promised a Kohl's store.
- There were many speakers concern about traffic:
 - **Local residents** presented first-hand accounts of how challenging traffic is on Plantations Road and Mulberry Knoll Road today.
 - **Several residents of Welch's Pond** expressed concerns:
 - DelDOT lack of plans for Mulberry Knoll Road;
 - One of the roundabouts slated for delivery truck use empties into the medical center parking lot;
 - One roundabout is directly in front of Troop 7 building – will the police be impeded leaving their site?
 - **Several speakers** were concerned that the traffic modeling is inaccurate. 73% of the intersections studied in the project TIS are evaluated at LOS (Level of Service) E (subject to stoppages, with significant delays) and F (stop-and-go, long delays).

There will not be adequate road capacity by 2028, the project completion date for Atlantic Fields.

- **One speaker** noted the lack of planned improvements for Mulberry Knoll from Dorman Farm to Cedar Grove Road where there is no shoulder or bike lane at present.
- **One speaker** noted that the Plantations Medical Group facilities have a single entry point, on Plantations Road;, and said that the plan to direct business deliveries to that entrance will have a negative impact on established businesses, groups and patients.
- **Several speakers** cited County code section 115, which states that it is council's responsibility to consider the present and future needs, the health, safety, morals, convenience, order, prosperity and general welfare of the inhabitants of Sussex County Delaware, including lessening congestion in streets or roads.

Result: The public hearing for Atlantic Fields was closed. The public record remains open pending responses to Council questions for DNREC, DelDOT and Sussex County Conservation District.

- 2 weeks to will be allowed, to collate and send questions to Planning and Zoning.
- P&Z will allow 2 weeks for responses
- A further 2 weeks for public input will be allowed.
- Then P&Z will review the input with council before a date is set for a vote.

Change of Zone #2052 – Marlin Cove - a request to change zoning from AR-1 Agricultural Residential to MR-RPC Medium-Density Residential for 210 housing units on 60.8 acres, on New Road near Lighthouse Road, west of Fenwick Island.

Council member comments:

Doug Hudson commented that the section of road at Rt 54 and New Road is very thin where the project would be. He questioned the developer on what DelDOT required for New Road widening and how much of these changes the developer is required to complete. Response: Developer expected and agreed to do all the widening across the frontage of their development; and also to install 2 right turn lanes.

Public Speakers:

- No one spoke in favor of the application.
- Two people spoke in opposition; both own property adjacent to the planned development.

- **Speaker #1** is concerned that her existing working farm and hunting activities would be impacted by the proximity of so many houses.
 - Matt Lloyd asked her to elaborate. Response: the proposal would impact her livelihood and finances. She would have to limit hunting as hunting within 100 yards of a dwelling is not permitted. The developer confirmed houses would be built approximately 70 feet from property line.
- **Speaker #2** is concerned with the impact on traffic and said it already backs up 5 miles to Ocean City. Another development is also expected to be completed across New Road from this development, so how is traffic to be managed?. Further, there is concern related to their wellhead in light of DeDOT requirements for turn lanes onto New Road - the right of way needed would encompass their wellhead. Mr. Moore noted that Council cannot set a condition on a developer for an easement.

The public record was closed, and a decision on the application was deferred.

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

- Next meetings November 4 – Cool Spring Crossing public hearing is on the agenda

Council Meeting Broadcast

[County Council Meeting - October 21, 2025](#)

Related Articles:

Sussex County Council defers vote on Atlantic Fields:

https://www.coasttv.com/news/update-sussex-county-council-defers-vote-on-atlantic-fields-shopping-mall/article_7b141b88-9851-4457-a31e-3b03096ee0d5.html

Sussex County divided over plan for shopping center half the size of Christiana Mall:

<https://spotlightdelaware.org/2025/09/28/sussex-divided-over-plan-for-shopping-center-half-the-size-of-christiana-mall/>