



LEWES PLANNING COMMISSION
Wednesday, May 20, 2026, 6:30 PM
The Bonnie Osler Meeting Room
Regular Meeting
AGENDA

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<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86537399801?pwd=kiESbxk8FPrUrsLAVaF4jkhYGMpsHY.1>

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The Bonnie Osler Meeting Room is located at 101 Adams Avenue, Lewes DE

Agenda Posted: 05/13/2026 Posted By:ASA

City of Lewes
LEWES PLANNING COMMISSION
Tuesday, April 7, 2026
MINUTES

The City of Lewes Comprehensive Plan Update - Public Informational Workshop was held on **Tuesday, April 7, 2026 in the Bonnie Osler Meeting Room** in accordance with proper notification, with the following present: Chair Rich Innes, Planning Commissioners Adam Thompson, Kevin Keane, Alan Roth, Marylinda Maddi, Debra Evalds, Thierry Poirey. Also present were Mayor Amy Marasco (ex-officio) and Councilmember Timothy Ritzert.

A. WELCOME & CALL TO ORDER

Planning Commission Chair Rich Innes called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM and welcomed attendees both in person and online. He emphasized that this was an important moment for the community, as they were beginning a process that would have real-world implications for Lewes and beyond. Chair Innes noted they were fortunate to have selected Michael Baker International as their consultant after reviewing nine applications, with three being particularly strong candidates.

Chair Innes addressed what he called "chronological NIMBY" (Not In My Back Yard) - the tendency to ignore problems that won't emerge within our immediate timeframe. He stressed that this comprehensive plan would overcome that by purposely looking forward to solve future problems. He highlighted two key aspects: the plan is mandated by law and has the force of law, and Lewes is serving as a bellwether for the state as one of the first municipalities to produce a plan under new Delaware legislation requiring climate impacts to be considered.

B. MEETING TOPICS

1. Meeting objectives and format (10 minutes)

Evelyn Kasongo from Michael Baker International introduced herself as the project manager and Nicole Rodi as the engagement and outreach lead. They outlined the meeting's three primary purposes: establishing understanding of what the comprehensive plan includes and excludes, clarifying roles and responsibilities of all involved parties, and confirming the workflow for the next 18 months. The goal was for everyone to leave the meeting aligned, engaged, and confident in their specific roles.

2. Purpose of the Comprehensive Plan Update (20 minutes)

Ms. Kasongo explained that a comprehensive plan is a long-range policy document with specific required elements including land use, housing, transportation, and the new resilience and climate action section. The plan is being updated because it's a state requirement and because conditions in Lewes have evolved since the last update, with changing demographics and new developments that need to be addressed.

The plan serves three main purposes: setting direction for future growth and redevelopment, informing zoning and planning decisions, and providing a roadmap for implementation by various entities including the city, county, and state agencies.

Commissioner Marylinda Maddi asked when the vision statement would be developed. Ms. Kasongo explained it would be built up through the public engagement process, with recurring themes from community input helping to shape the statement rather than being predetermined.

3. Process Overview: Phases, milestones, and touchpoints (15 minutes)

The team outlined a four-phase process: the current kickoff phase, followed by engagement and listening, then drafting chapters, reviewing chapters collectively, and finally plan adoption. The first three months would include the April kickoff, May engagement planning and advisory committee launch, and June public outreach rollout with data collection beginning.

Commissioner Thierry Poirey raised concerns about ensuring all critical elements were included from the beginning, citing annexation and mapping as examples of complex issues requiring extensive discussion. He specifically mentioned his concept of "city limits 2040," suggesting Route 1 could serve as the future city boundary. Chair Innes acknowledged these important topics would be addressed through the framing role of the Planning Commission but emphasized that today's meeting was focused on process rather than substance.

Commissioner Debra Evalds noted that the commission had already done preliminary work reviewing sections before selecting a consultant, so they should be well-prepared for the process ahead.

4. **Roles & Responsibilities (25 minutes)**
 - a. **Lewes Planning Commission**
 - b. **Advisory Committee**
 - c. **Consultant (Michael Baker International)**

Lewes Planning Commission

Ms. Rodi explained that the Planning Commission would wear multiple hats throughout the process. Initially, they would serve as "framers," helping establish priorities, frame questions, and set the foundation for the vision and goals. They would then move into a "listening" phase, engaging with the public and other commissions to gather feedback. Finally, they would act as "architects," helping shape and inform recommendations by balancing community feedback with policy requirements and feasibility.

Advisory Committee

The advisory committee was described as serving 8-12 members who would function as outreach champions and subject matter experts. These would include representatives from community organizations such as BPW, the Lewes Chamber of Commerce, and other key entities. Their role would be to expand the message reach, engage with their regular constituencies, and serve as a sounding board for engagement strategies.

Extensive discussion ensued about the composition and naming of this group. Commissioner Evalds suggested the term "community representatives" might be more welcoming than "advisory committee." Various members debated the ethics of including people with financial interests in comprehensive plan outcomes, with some arguing for transparency rather than exclusion, while others advocated for avoiding conflicts of interest in the selection process.

Commissioner Alan Roth emphasized the distinction between advisors and decision-makers, noting that while advisors might have various interests in the community, the Planning Commission and ultimately the Mayor and City Council would be making the final decisions.

After considerable debate, Ms. Rodi suggested "community champions" as a compromise term that avoided semantic issues while emphasizing the outreach role these individuals would play.

Consultant (Michael Baker International)

Michael Baker International's role includes providing technical expertise, process planning and management, facilitating public meetings, conducting data analysis and synthesis, and physically drafting portions of the plan. Ms. Rodi noted her specific background in climate action, having helped develop Delaware's first climate action plan while working for DNREC, making her particularly qualified to help Lewes navigate the new climate resilience requirements.

5. Workflow, communications, and decision path (15 minutes)

The Michael Baker team emphasized that the process would be intentionally collaborative and iterative, with extensive sharing, discussing, and refining of ideas. The approach focuses on listening first, meeting people where they are both physically and digitally, and utilizing both traditional meeting spaces and community events like the City of Lewes 250 celebrations.

Public engagement tools will include a dedicated comprehensive plan website launching in May, public meetings and workshops, events tied to Lewes 250, and comprehensive plan branding with elements like "my voice is heard" stickers to encourage participation.

Commissioners discussed challenges with community engagement in Lewes. Commissioner Evalds noted that social media posts often receive minimal visible engagement despite people later expressing appreciation in person. She also mentioned concerns about the local newspaper's independence and advertiser influence, while noting that local television coverage is surprisingly accessible for community events.

Commissioner Kevin Keane raised questions about digital outreach methods and metrics for determining when sufficient community input had been gathered. The consultants explained they typically see major themes emerge after about three months of outreach, and while they sometimes set numerical targets, every community is different.

Commissioner Adam Thompson pointed out that many residents don't understand what a comprehensive plan is or its importance to the city's future, emphasizing the need for education as part of the outreach effort.

The discussion also addressed the challenge of distinguishing between city residents and the broader 19958 zip code area, which encompasses about 54 square miles compared to the city's 4.5 square miles. This creates complications for ensuring appropriate weighting of input from actual city residents versus those in the surrounding area who use Lewes address but don't pay city taxes.

Chair Innes established that all communications with consultants should go through him and Vice-Chair Keane to maintain proper organization and FOIA compliance while ensuring good communication throughout the process.

6. New Chapter Spotlight: Sustainability (10 minutes)

Ms. Rodi explained the new requirements under Delaware's updated titles 9 and 22, which mandate integration of climate resilience and sustainability principles throughout the comprehensive plan. This represents a significant change from previous plans, requiring consideration of climate impacts in land use, transportation, housing, and infrastructure decisions.

The sustainability elements will be woven throughout all sections of the plan rather than confined to a single chapter, drawing from Delaware's recently updated climate action plan to help guide the city's future actions and set an example for other Sussex County municipalities.

7. Questions and open discussion (20 minutes)

Mayor Amy Marasco addressed the commission, emphasizing the importance of good communication and clear roles and responsibilities in preventing plan failures. She encouraged commissioners to attend City Council work sessions regularly and offered the city's assistance in identifying subject matter experts through their website database of residents who have indicated expertise in various areas.

Mayor Marasco also suggested a geographic approach to engagement, thinking of community input in terms of compass directions to ensure broad representation. She recommended focusing outreach messages on specific issues people care about rather than the comprehensive plan itself, noting that people attend meetings because of passion for particular topics, not because they're excited about planning processes.

Discussion continued about the selection criteria and timeline for the advisory committee, with commissioners debating whether members needed to be city residents or could include those from the broader zip code area who contribute significantly to the community through volunteer work and business involvement.

Commissioner Poirey pressed for clarity on decision-making authority and voting procedures, emphasizing that the Planning Commission must ultimately approve each chapter and the final document before submission to the Mayor and City Council. He stressed the importance of having hard deadlines, suggesting June 2027 as a target for final submission.

Extensive discussion occurred about the drafting process, with Commissioner Evalds advocating for commissioners to prepare initial drafts in their areas of expertise, while Chair Innes argued for maintaining a single voice through consultant-led drafting with commissioner input. They reached consensus that Michael Baker International would take the lead on drafting while incorporating commissioner feedback, which could range from bullet points to specific language suggestions.

The meeting concluded with clarification about the consultant's contracted eight meetings with the advisory committee, separate from additional meetings for plan drafting and review. The Planning Commission's next regular meeting was scheduled for the following Wednesday at 6:30 PM to continue planning the process and begin identifying advisory committee members and topic areas for community engagement.

C. ADJOURNMENT:

Chair Innes adjourned the meeting at 11:57 AM.

Minutes submitted by: Jeffery Coover, Administrative Support Specialist

Minutes generated by HeyGov.ai

Transcripts available upon request

City of Lewes
LEWES PLANNING COMMISSION
Wednesday, April 15, 2026
MINUTES

The Lewes Planning Commission met on **Wednesday, April 15, 2026 in Council Chambers at Lewes City Hall**, in accordance with proper notification, with the following members present: Chair Richard Innes, Vice-Chair Kevin Keane, Secretary Bill Wolff, Commissioners Marylinda Maddi, Adam Thompson, Thierry Poirey, Alan Roth, and Debra Evalds. Also in attendance were Barbara Curtis (Board of Public Works ex-officio) Luke Mette (Attorney), Building Official Jon Ward, and City Engineer Andrew Lyons

A. CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL & ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Chair Rich Innes called the meeting of the Lewes Planning Commission to order at 6:30 PM on Wednesday, April 15, 2026, in the Bonnie Osler Meeting Room.

B. TODAY'S AGENDA ORDER AND POSSIBLE FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Chair Innes announced a modification to the agenda order. The two presentations listed under New Business (Items E.2 and E.3) would be taken up first, following approval of the minutes. The minor subdivision application (E.1) would follow the presentations, and the Unfinished Business item on the Comprehensive Plan (D.1) would be moved to just before Updates from Ex Officio Members. The Chair noted the change was intended to accommodate the presenting professionals and members of the public present for those items.

C. REVIEW & APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

1. C.1. LPC 3-18-2026

Commissioner Roth raised a question regarding the prior meeting's minutes, which had reflected a motion to approve with "requested corrections" — specifically, a correction of the name "Jeffrey Lyons" to "Andrew Lyons" throughout previous minutes. He confirmed that this correction had in fact been made on the city's website. He inquired whether the minutes should more explicitly state the substance of those corrections.

Commission Secretary Bill Wolff noted that a broader review of the minutes format was underway. He reported that, following a recent change to the Commission's bylaws placing the Secretary in a more central role in reviewing minutes, he had been in conversation with city staff and legal counsel about updating the minutes format to be more concise and precise, given that a full recording of each meeting is now available to the public. He indicated a recommendation would be forthcoming to the Commission on this matter.

Motion to approve the minutes of the March 18, 2026 meeting was made by Commissioner Keane and seconded by Commissioner Wolff. The motion carried unanimously.

D. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

1. Follow up discussion and next steps from April 7th meeting on kick off of 2027 Comprehensive Plan.

Chair Innes opened the discussion by noting that both presentations earlier in the evening were directly relevant to the Comprehensive Plan effort and would inform the Commission's work going forward.

Next Special Meeting. The Chair proposed scheduling a special meeting within the next two to three weeks with two primary briefings: (1) a presentation from the Office of State

Planning Coordination (OSPC), and (2) a presentation from Sussex County, given that the county is simultaneously developing its own comprehensive plan and coordination between the two efforts would be important. The Chair noted he would be attending a briefing in Dover the following morning on the new state requirement to incorporate climate impact analysis into comprehensive plans, and anticipated connecting with OSPC staff member Dave Edgell at that event. It was agreed that scheduling would be coordinated through the incoming interim city planner and presented to commissioners via a scheduling poll.

Interim City Planner. Chair Innes announced that the city has entered into a contract with Wallace Montgomery to provide an interim city planner. He noted that the individual assigned had previously been involved in planning work for the city and came highly regarded. Building Official Ward noted that the contract has a defined budget, and that the use of the interim planner's time at meetings and in the planning process would need to be managed accordingly. Chair Innes described this as a positive development that would complement the work of the primary consultant, Michael Baker International.

Community Liaisons. The Commission discussed what to call the citizen engagement group that will be convened to provide community input during the Comprehensive Plan process. After consideration of several options — including "Community Champions," "Community Ambassadors," "Community Voices Committee," and "Community Stewards" — the Commission settled on "**Community Liaisons**" as the preferred name, reflecting the two-way nature of the role: gathering input from the broader community and bringing it back to the Commission.

Chair Innes described the envisioned structure: commissioners would first finalize the chapter framework for the Comprehensive Plan (ten sections had been proposed, though the number is not fixed), and then match names from a developing list of citizen volunteers and subject matter experts to those chapters based on relevant expertise and community connection. The group is intended to be manageable in size — in the range of 8 to 12 members — and individual liaisons may maintain their own informal networks in the community to broaden input. Commissioners were encouraged to continue submitting names of prospective community liaisons.

Farmers Market Outreach. Commissioner Maddi proposed using the opening day of the Lewes Farmers Market (Saturday, May 2) as an initial public engagement opportunity for the Comprehensive Plan. She reported that permission had been obtained from the farmers market organizers for the Planning Commission to set up a table, and that she had volunteered to staff it. The Commission agreed this would be a good early touchpoint with the public. It was suggested that a banner be produced for visibility, and that the consultants prepare informational materials in time for the event. Branding for the Comprehensive Plan effort is also being developed by the consultants.

Microsoft Teams Site. Chair Innes noted that Michael Baker International is establishing a Microsoft Teams site to facilitate document sharing among commissioners as the Comprehensive Plan work progresses. Commissioners were reminded to be mindful of FOIA obligations in any communications through that platform.

Comprehensive Plan Timeline. Chair Innes noted that a formal timeline for the Comprehensive Plan process — with milestones tied to the deadline of submitting the Commission's completed plan to Mayor and City Council by next summer — was being developed by the consultants and would be shared with commissioners once available.

E. NEW BUSINESS:

(Taken out of agenda order per the Chair's announcement)

1. **Review of, and possible recommendation to Mayor and City Council to approve, approve with conditions, or disapprove the application for minor subdivision relating to 100/102 Cedar Lane, Tax Parcel: 335-4.20-163.00, Zoning R-3.**

Staff Presentation. Building Official Jon Ward provided context on the application. The applicants seek to subdivide a single city parcel into two separate fee-simple lots. The parcel currently contains two separate, freestanding single-family homes operating under a condominium structure. The applicants had previously sought and received from the Board of Adjustment all required variances — relating to lot area, street frontage, front yard setback, side yard setback, rear yard setback, and lot coverage — by a unanimous 5-0 vote.

The specific variances approved by the Board of Adjustment were as follows:

- **100 Cedar Street:** Lot area 2,080 sq. ft.; street frontage 40.71 ft.; front yard setback 0.8 ft.; side yard setback 6.1 ft.; rear yard setback 10.2 ft.; lot coverage 68.4%
- **102 Cedar Street:** Lot area 2,274 sq. ft.; front yard setback 5.3 ft.; rear yard setback 5.4 ft.; lot coverage 84%; all other dimensions compliant

Applicant Presentation. David Sieradzki (102 Cedar Street), speaking on behalf of co-applicants Emily Novick, and Colleen Powers and Shary Adams (100 Cedar Street), described the situation and the basis for the request. The two homes — both believed to have been originally constructed in the 1940s and subsequently modified — have no shared walls, no shared utilities, no common property, and no functioning condominium association or board.

The condominium structure was established by the prior owner shortly before selling the properties in separate transactions. Since then, the applicants have experienced ongoing difficulties with financing, insurance, property tax records, and even package delivery, all stemming from the inconsistency between the legal structure and the physical and practical reality. Each unit has separate water, sewer, and electric service through Lewes BPW, with separate billing. The applicants stated they are not proposing any new construction and are seeking only to have the legal record reflect the actual situation.

Mr. Sieradzki noted that prior to the Board of Adjustment hearing, all neighboring property owners were notified and no opposition was expressed by anyone living in the immediate area.

Commission Discussion. Commissioners asked several clarifying questions. City Attorney Luke Mette noted for the record that the Sussex County tax database already reflects two separate tax parcel numbers for the units; that BPW has deployed and separately bills for distinct utility services to each structure; and that the proposed subdivision involves no new construction, excavation, modification, or land use change. He advised the Commission against attaching conditions to its recommendation unless those conditions have a clear statutory basis in the ordinance, noting that courts in Delaware have found conditions lacking such grounding to be arbitrary and capricious.

Commissioner Evalds expressed concern that once subdivided into two fee-simple lots,

100 Cedar Street — which sits on a very small lot — could be sold and redeveloped with a larger structure. Mr. Mette responded that any future construction on either lot would need to comply with the zoning code at that time, and that hypothetical future development scenarios were not materially related to the subdivision application before the Commission. He advised against conditioning the approval on such concerns.

Following a request for further explanation regarding the land lease from Commissioner Maddi, Commissioner Poirey noted that the land lease structure applicable to city lots would need to be addressed following any subdivision approval, and that new leases may need to be issued. Building Official Ward confirmed this would be a matter to be resolved after any MCC approval, and the Mr. Mette advised the applicants to consult their own legal counsel regarding deed modifications.

Resolution. Mr. Mette read a proposed resolution into the record, summarizing the factual findings and setting forth seven grounds supporting approval, including: no new construction or land use changes are proposed; there is no functioning condominium association or shared property; utilities are separately deployed and billed; the subdivision will cause no detriment to neighbors; the Board of Adjustment has already granted all required variances; and the subdivision is consistent with the city's goals for harmonious development.

Motion to recommend to the Mayor and City Council approval of the minor subdivision application for 100/102 Cedar Street, for the reasons stated in the resolution read into the record by Mr. Mette, was made by Commissioner Roth and seconded by Commissioner Thompson.

A roll call vote was conducted:

Commissioner	Vote
Marylinda Maddi	Yes — variances obtained from the Board of Adjustment and all other reasons stated
Adam Thompson	Yes — for all reasons stated
Thierry Poirey	Abstain — felt the process was rushed and that insufficient information was available to make a fully informed decision
Kevin Keane	Yes — for the reasons stated
Rich Innes	Yes — noting in particular the importance of government working efficiently for its citizens
Alan Roth	Yes — for the reasons stated, and noting that the resolution specifically addresses the condominium structure, substantially limiting the precedential reach of the decision
Bill Wolff	Yes — for the reasons stated
Debra Evalds	Yes — despite reservations about the very small lot sizes, citing the genuine hardship created by this unusual situation

The motion carried 7-0, with 1 abstention. Mr. Mette indicated that moving forward a signed resolution would be provided to the applicants and to Mayor and City Council.

2. Presentation and discussion on the Disaster Housing Technical Assistance Pilot Program.

Deputy City Manager Janet Reeves introduced the item, noting that the city had been participating in a Delaware disaster housing technical assistance program developed jointly by the Delaware State Housing Authority (DSHA) and the Delaware Emergency Management Agency (DEMA). She introduced the presenting team: Jen Reitz of the Institute for Public Administration at the University of Delaware, Vanessa Cullen of DSHA (serving as Emergency Management Coordinator), and Danielle Swallow of the city.

Ms. Reitz delivered the presentation, providing an overview of disaster housing preparedness concepts, the statewide framework, and the pilot program's Phase 1 findings and Phase 2 objectives.

Background and Framework. Ms. Reitz explained that disaster housing focuses on the continuum from emergency sheltering through interim housing and ultimately to permanent housing recovery. She emphasized that the period of interim housing — between immediate sheltering and return to permanent homes — is the most consequential to address through advance planning, as shortening it reduces long-term economic, psychological, and social harm to a community. She noted that Delaware has all the conditions to make a disaster a matter of "when, not if."

She described the statewide context: in 2025, DSHA and DEMA produced a Disaster Housing Strategy and a Disaster Housing Preparedness Guide, which served as the foundation for this pilot program. Lewes was selected to participate in a three-phase technical assistance process.

Phase 1 — SWOT Analysis. Phase 1 consisted of three workshops covering fundamentals of housing recovery, hazard risk mapping, and an internal SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis. Strengths identified included the city's history of planning, its advisory committee structure, and its resiliency fund. Weaknesses included ordinance gaps — for example, current codes likely prohibit things that would be necessary in a disaster context, such as parking an RV on a property during home reconstruction or placing a dumpster on-site during cleanup. Additional weaknesses included the absence of a recovery plan and unclear permitting timelines. Opportunities included the current technical assistance program and the ongoing Comprehensive Plan update. Threats included the very limited space for interim congregate housing, the existing affordable housing shortage (which a disaster would severely worsen), and deed restrictions from HOAs that could override any regulatory changes the city adopts.

Phase 2 — Pre-Disaster Recovery Ordinance. Ms. Reitz described the goal of Phase 2 as drafting a pre-disaster recovery ordinance — a set of provisions embedded in the city's code that are automatically triggered upon a declaration of disaster, rather than requiring council action in the middle of a crisis. Key components under consideration include: provisions for temporary uses and housing (RVs, modular homes, hotel and short-term rental use); streamlined debris removal and environmental clearance processes; allowances for temporary repairs and partial occupancy during reconstruction; review of non-conforming use standards; expedited processes for the historic district; and a potential development moratorium provision — not to halt development, but to create a brief structured pause to enable "building back better" rather than simply rebuilding in place.

Discussion. Commissioner Evalds asked whether a statewide approach might be more appropriate given Delaware's flat topography and vulnerability. Ms. Reitz acknowledged the value of state-level action but emphasized that a one-size-fits-all state ordinance cannot adequately address local regulations, which are specific to each municipality. Chair Innes noted that a multi-level response — local, state, and federal — is ultimately required.

Commissioner Poirey raised the question of construction resiliency and building codes, noting the tension between more resilient construction and affordability. Building Official Jon Ward responded that the city has adopted the 2021 International Residential Code and that, following a FEMA Community Assistance Visit, the city has been working through an ad hoc committee to adopt Appendix G of the IRC, which incorporates coastal construction standards (ASCE 24) specific to AE and VE flood zones. He noted this work had been delayed by changes at the federal level but that the city recently received direction from the state to move forward. Ms. Cullen and Ms. Reitz both affirmed that the Comprehensive Plan process presents a parallel opportunity to address longer-term resiliency goals, including reconsidering future development in flood plains.

Councilmember Ritzert (ex-officio) asked for clarification on who would be responsible for writing the ordinance. Ms. Reitz and Ms. Cullen confirmed that DSHA and UD would draft the ordinance based on priorities identified by the city. Chair Innes indicated the Planning Commission would serve as the initial body to review the draft before forwarding it to Mayor and City Council. Deputy City Manager Reeves confirmed that the city's participation in the program had been previously approved by Mayor and City Council. Chair Innes noted the Commission would be glad to participate and that this pilot program represented an ideal opportunity to get ahead of the risk.

The presentation slides were to be uploaded for public access.

3. Presentation and discussion on the Technical Assistance Pilot Program for Zoning and Land Use Reform.

Deputy City Manager Reeves introduced Tom West of the Rossi Group, noting that the city was one of nine municipalities selected for this DSHA-sponsored pilot program focused on zoning and land use reform. She noted Mr. West's familiarity with Lewes, having previously served as the city's planner.

Mr. West presented on behalf of a team also including Anne Marie Townshend and Savannah Edwards of the Rossi Group.

Background. Mr. West described the origin of the program: DSHA's 2023 Housing Needs Assessment found that Delaware needs an average of 2,400 new housing units per year, at least half of which should be affordable. House Bill 442 created the Affordable Housing Production Task Force, whose report — which identified municipal zoning reform as a key strategy — led to state Senate funding for this pilot program. The Rossi Group was assigned to work with Lewes, Newark, Dover, and Laurel; Smart Growth America is working with Rehoboth Beach, Milford, Georgetown, and Bridgeville; and McCormick Taylor is working with Sussex County.

Approach. Mr. West described the five-stage process: (1) initiation and kickoff; (2) framework analysis of existing zoning, subdivision ordinances, and building review

processes; (3) barrier identification and strategy alignment; (4) drafting of amendments; and (5) outreach and public engagement. He noted that a Housing Resource Committee (HRC) at the state level would provide expertise and help ensure that successful models from this pilot can be replicated in other communities.

Housing Conditions. Mr. West presented data on housing cost burden — roughly 50% of renters statewide are cost-burdened (spending more than 30% of income on housing), as are approximately 22% of owner-occupants. He noted that home values in Lewes are among the highest in the region and that all values spiked sharply around 2020 and have not declined. He also presented commuting data showing that the majority of the city's workforce lives outside Lewes, reflecting the intersection of housing affordability and workforce retention.

Potential Reforms. Mr. West outlined the menu of potential zoning and land use reforms identified in the state's framework, asking commissioners to consider which might be applicable to Lewes as a starting point for the pilot's work. These included: further refinement of Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) regulations; allowances for "missing middle" housing types (duplexes, townhouses, small multi-family); provisions for modular homes; pre-reviewed design plans for missing middle housing; increased building heights for multi-family; establishment of an inclusionary zoning program; and reduction of parking minimums to lower construction costs and promote walkability.

Discussion. Commissioner Evalds noted that the housing subcommittee that worked on the ADU ordinance had explored many of these topics and found that the fundamental barrier in Lewes is land cost — the price of land in and around the city renders affordable housing economically unfeasible regardless of zoning changes. She noted this is why the ADU approach was prioritized, as it allows individual property owners to create additional housing without requiring new land acquisition. She also observed that many data points presented appear to reflect the 19958 zip code broadly rather than the city proper, and that seasonal vacancy further skews census-based figures.

Commissioner Roth questioned the status of the task force's first recommendation — that the state provide \$100 million per year for affordable housing production — noting that proceeding with zoning reform in the absence of that financial commitment may have limited impact. Mr. West acknowledged he did not have a definitive answer on the status of that funding recommendation.

Chair Innes offered that this pilot program is a valuable resource for the city and that the information gathered through the process will serve as useful data for both the Comprehensive Plan and any future ordinance work. He asked commissioners to treat the reform survey in the packet as a homework assignment — a non-binding data point — and to submit their individual responses, copying Deputy City Manager Reeves, by the following week. He acknowledged the complexity of the issues and emphasized that completing the survey would not bind the Commission to any particular direction. Mr. West concurred, noting that communities in the pilot have typically focused on one or two reforms rather than the full list.

Commissioner Roth recommended that members review a recently published New York Times essay (April 8th) by economist Chris Hughes, titled "*This Is Why America Is Short on Homes*," which argues that the Federal Home Loan Bank system has effectively stopped supporting home mortgages and affordable housing production. He offered to share the article with fellow commissioners.

F. UPDATES FROM EX OFFICIO MEMBERS AND CITY STAFF BPW Representative

Barbara Curtis announced that April 25 is the BPW's Hazardous Waste and Electronic Waste Take Back Day at the Schley Avenue facility. She noted that latex paint is not accepted.

City Councilmember Tim Ritzert reported two items: (1) April 25 is also a city-sponsored free document shredding event on Schley Avenue, running from 8:00 AM to approximately 1:00–2:00 PM, with a two-box limit per household; and (2) at the City Council meeting on Monday, April 13, the home business ordinance was passed and signed into law. He noted this had been a long-standing item and acknowledged the Planning Commission's significant contribution to the process.

Commissioner Debra Evalds (HPARC Representative) provided a summary of the April HPARC Commission meeting, describing it as particularly productive with five full applications considered. Highlights included: approval of a true ADU — a garage with living unit above on Savannah Road — which she noted was encouraging as an indicator that the ADU ordinance is beginning to achieve its intended purpose; continued progress on the Groome Church application, with an impressive new plan approved subject to staff and chair detail review; and approval of a new single-family home at 411 West Third Street, adjacent to a historic campus. Commissioner Evalds described the latter project as architecturally notable — a one-story home referencing the vernacular of Lewes' simple coastal cottages in a modern way, which did not maximize the lot. She commended the applicants at the meeting for their preparation and their constructive engagement with the HPARC process as a model for how applicants should approach that body.

G. PUBLIC COMMENT

Donna Albright (32769 Hastings Drive), addressed the Commission, identifying herself as a former two-year parking ambassador at Savannah Beach and the Johnnie Walker Beach parking lot. She raised several safety and maintenance concerns regarding the Savannah Beach parking facility, including: the absence of adequate lighting (she noted light posts are currently laying on the ground as the beach season approaches in two weeks); the absence of speed control measures, with vehicles regularly traveling at 40–50 mph through the lot; and sanitary conditions in the restroom facilities. She stated she had raised these concerns previously with the Mayor and other city officials, including photographically documenting conditions, but that no corrective action had been taken. She urged the Commission to be aware that these conditions constitute a safety hazard and requested that the city take action on lighting and speed control before the beach season opens. Chair Innes thanked Ms. Albright for her service and her continued advocacy on this matter.

H. ADJOURNMENT:

Motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Evalds and seconded by Commissioner Roth. The motion carried unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 9:07 PM.

Minutes submitted by: Jeffery Coover, Administrative Support Specialist

Minutes generated by HeyGov.ai

Transcripts available upon request