COUNCIL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

The Council Committee of the Whole met on February 26, 2026, at 6:10 p.m. with Council President Neil presiding. Members of Council present were Mr. Anderson, Ms. Arndt, Mr. Boggerty, Ms. Hall (via WebEx), Mr. Lewis, Dr. Pillsbury, Mr. Rocha, and Dr. Sudler. Mayor Christiansen was absent. Civilian members present for their Committee meetings were Ms. Smack (*Safety, Advisory, Transportation),* Mr. Garfinkel, and Mr. Shevock (via WebEx) *(Legislative, Finance, and Administration)*. Ms. Jackson *(Safety, Advisory, Transportation)* was absent.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Mr. Boggerty moved for adoption of the agenda, seconded by Dr. Pillsbury and unanimously carried.

Future Trends in Zoning and Economic Development (Linda Parkowski, Executive Director, Kent Economic Partnership

Ms. Linda Parkowski, Executive Director, Kent Economic Partnership, reviewed the presentation entitled "Choose Central Delaware (CDCC) Economic Forecast".

This item was informational, and committee action was not required.

Responding to Dr. Sudler, Ms. Parkowski stated that she believes zoning, housing growth, and the Dover/Kent MPO Comprehensive Safety Action Plan can coexist and complement one another. She stated that roadway and transportation safety are important and noted that DelDOT's shift from a level-of-service model to a safe system approach is a positive development. She expressed that this approach is well-intended and should integrate effectively with ongoing planning efforts.

She further explained that the Kent Economic Partnership (KEP) commissioned the East-West Freight Study to better understand how trucks and trains move materials to and from facilities, emphasizing the importance of coordinating freight movement with land use planning. She acknowledged that past planning decisions over the last 20 years have at times placed housing adjacent to freight rail lines and indicated that improved coordination and safety-focused planning will help avoid similar conflicts in the future.

Ms. Parkowski also stated that her organization works closely with the MPO and has commissioned several studies, including the connector road study from Garrison Oak to Horse Pond Road, as well as a rail study and other transportation-related analyses. She concluded by noting that additional truck parking is needed.

Dr. Sudler recommended including more information on the growth of the road infrastructure to start planning how to handle the traffic volume that will come as the city continues to grow.

Responding to Ms. Arndt, Ms. Parkowski stated that in the industrial land needs assessment, they are looking at both redeveloping current sites that are underutilized and new lands. She explained that the study is ongoing and they are looking to have it completed by the end of summer.

Responding to Mr. Boggerty, Ms. Parkowski stated that she had suggested to the County that one of the simplest ways to expedite development would be to designate certain uses as “by right,” thereby eliminating the need for extended public hearing processes. She indicated that if the goal is to incentivize specific types of development, such as housing, permitting those uses by right would help avoid months of delay.

She acknowledged that the City of Dover’s system differs from the County’s but advised that planners could provide guidance on how to structure an expedited process. She further noted that other jurisdictions across the country have implemented alternative approaches, including allowing construction to begin while permits are still being processed. She offered to provide additional information

Responding to Mr. Anderson, Ms. Parkowski expressed the opinion that, to effectively incentivize middle-market housing, such uses should be permitted by right. She explained that by-right zoning involves an administrative review process without public hearings and reflects trust in the administrative framework to implement established policy goals. She stated that if that type of housing is desired, the approval process should be simplified. She further noted that contractors would likely agree that such an approach would ease the financial burden associated with prolonged approval timelines, including the significant costs incurred while awaiting project approval.

Responding to Mr. Anderson, Ms. Parkowski expressed hope that planning and development efforts would begin to focus on the area near the Dover Air Force Base and the broader East Dover industrial area, with the goal of making it the next major project for the City of Dover and the County. She noted that several industrial parks throughout the county were currently in various stages of development, including projects in Smyrna, Milford, and Harrington, and that the Garrison project was nearing completion. She emphasized the need to initiate another industrial park project in Dover as soon as possible.

Proposed Audio and Visual Upgrades for the City Council Meetings (Joe Simmons, Information Technology Director, and AJ Rahman, Assurance Media)
Mr. Joe Simmons, Information Technology Director, and Mr. AJ Rahman, Assurance Media, reviewed the proposed audio and visual upgrades needed for the City Council meetings.

This item was informational, and committee action was not required.

Mr. Joe Simmons, Information Technology Director, provided an update on the status of the City Hall Council Chambers audiovisual (AV) system and discussed the need for upgrades. He stated that Assurance Media had recently conducted a comprehensive audit of the existing system and would present detailed findings and recommendations, while his remarks were intended to frame the broader discussion regarding next steps and direction.

Mr. Simmons emphasized that the Council Chambers are a critical space where city decisions are made and public input is received, and that reliable communication is essential. He stated that failures in technology do not merely create inconvenience but undermine public confidence. He explained that the current AV infrastructure is aging and no longer meets modern expectations for accessibility, reliability, and remote or hybrid participation.

He noted that the system had been installed incrementally over many years, resulting in a patchwork of equipment and temporary fixes that had become fragile and difficult to service. He cited outdated components, including a 12-year-old camera that had failed and could not be directly replaced due to obsolescence and lack of warranty or maintenance coverage. He stated that staff often rely on workarounds rather than sustainable solutions and expressed concern about potential downtime during meetings.

Mr. Simmons indicated that an upgrade was necessary to provide clear audio, assisted listening capabilities, captioning for remote participants, reliable hybrid functionality, user-friendly controls, backup systems, remote monitoring, and equipment suitable for continuous operation. He stated that the next steps would include evaluating the existing equipment to determine what could be preserved, identifying high-risk components for replacement, developing a budget, and drafting a request for proposals (RFP) for modernization. He concluded that AV infrastructure should be viewed as an essential component of civic operations and public communication rather than an optional technology.

Mr. AJ Rahman, Assurance Media, is a professional AV integrator in Delaware. He presented their findings regarding the City Hall Council Chambers AV system. He stated that much of the current equipment was at the end of its life and no longer supported, including the failed camera noted by Mr. Simmons. He explained that replacing individual components, such as the camera, would require replacing interconnected equipment, which could become very costly. He emphasized that continued use of temporary fixes or “band-aids” would likely be more expensive over time and would reduce system reliability.

Mr. Rahman stated that a full system upgrade would provide a stable, fully supported, and cost-effective long-term solution. He indicated that his colleague, Josh McKinley, an engineer and programmer, could address more technical questions for council if needed.

Responding to Mr. Lewis, Mr. Rahman stated that an exact cost for the AV system upgrade could not yet be determined. He explained that a full evaluation of the system had been completed, noting that while much of the equipment was outdated and at risk of failure, some components, such as the microphones, remained fully functional. He emphasized that certain underlying equipment for the audio system would need updates, and that a complete assessment was necessary to identify which components were likely to fail or required replacement to prevent further issues. Once that evaluation was finalized, a reliable cost estimate could be provided.

Responding to Mr. Lewis, Mr. Rahman stated that the expected warranties of the AV systems varied, with some products being covered for a minimum of one year, others for two or three years. He explained that a maintenance agreement could be established, which, depending on its level, would provide full replacement and service for any hardware that failed during the coverage period. This agreement would ensure that repairs or replacements were handled as needed each year.

Responding to Mr. Lewis, Mr. Simmons stated that the level of maintenance required depended on the type of equipment. While the IT department could manage standard computers, specialized AV components, such as encoders, bridges, and feeds to Comcast, required expertise from AV professionals. He recommended establishing a maintenance contract with an AV company to ensure proper upkeep of those systems.

Regarding cost, he explained that a precise figure could not yet be determined, as additional options could be considered if council chose to pursue them. These options included streaming meetings to social media platforms, upgrading remote meeting capabilities, and enhancing video retention and indexing tools to allow easy access to past meetings. He emphasized that the upgrade could not only replace aging equipment but also expand and improve city communications, offering a broader enhancement to public accessibility and engagement.

Responding to Mr. Rocha, Mr. Rahman stated that the issue with staff having to hold the microphone to the streaming camera so that the speaker can be heard online is a big part of the plan to repair the issue.

Responding to Mr. Rocha, Mr. Simmons stated that the choice of platforms for streaming meetings would ultimately be a decision for council. He noted that the existing agreement with Comcast, managed in part by Kay Sass, involved public funding for that service. He explained that while additional streaming platforms, such as YouTube or Instagram, were not required, having the capability to use them would be highly beneficial. He emphasized that expanding streaming options and social media integration were important considerations for the city's future communications strategy.

Ms. Arielle Rivera, Assistant City Clerk, stated that the current broadcasting company with access to the encoder and decoder is Telvue. During a review of their system improvements, they noted that they are beginning to incorporate the new ADA compliance features with subtitling, and they also have the capability to take the meeting recordings and upload them to a YouTube channel for staff. The changes simply need to be implemented.

Responding to Mr. Rocha, Ms. Rivera stated that the city's encoder and decoder had failed, which was the primary reason meetings were not currently being broadcast live. She noted that she, Kay, and Andria had been in contact with Telview Solutions regarding the issue and that the replacement equipment would be covered at no cost to the city. Ms. Rivera stated that the installation of the new equipment would serve as the next upgrade when the technicians began work. She also noted that Telview Solutions provides technical support by phone and that staff often troubleshoot issues with them.

Responding to Mr. Rocha, Ms. Rivera noted that broadcasting on television was a benefit to the city, as Mr. Simmons stated, because funds were collected from the broadcasting services.

Responding to Dr. Sudler, Mr. Rahman stated that much of the existing equipment would be able to migrate to the new location. He noted that some components that are part of the current infrastructure, such as the speakers, would likely remain in place rather than be replaced immediately, as they were still functioning adequately but may become outdated. Mr. Rahman explained that much of the equipment located in the AV rack would be transferable. He further noted that, depending on the timeline for relocation, some equipment might be considered for upgrade due to typical technology lifespans of approximately five to six years, while certain components, such as control processors and touch panels, may have a lifespan closer to eight or nine years.

Dr. Sudler expressed concerns about keeping the failed equipment and replacing bits and pieces to cut costs. He noted that eventually those pieces will be outdated, too. He requested that Mr. Rahman provide the cost of replacing all the components and the cost of upgrading the system to one that is compatible with today's technology.

Mr. Simmons stated that the purpose of the presentation was to begin the discussion and obtain Council’s direction regarding potential upgrades. He explained that the project would ultimately require an RFP process and that specific cost estimates were not yet available. Mr. Simmons noted that costs could vary depending on whether the city chose to replace the entire system or reuse certain high-quality components, such as the existing microphones. He emphasized the importance of implementing a system that would be easier for staff to monitor and manage during meetings while also providing high-quality audiovisual service for both in-person attendees and remote viewers through television or potential social media platforms. Mr. Simmons also noted that the discussion was being held during budget season, so council could begin considering the matter in advance and review potential options with varied costs. He stressed that the current systems are aging, lack a maintenance plan, and could potentially fail at any time.

Dr. Sudler acknowledged that the city would soon begin budget hearings and noted that council would be addressing complex decisions related to balancing the budget and allocating restricted and unrestricted funds. He stated that he would like to see several scenarios presented, including a worst-case scenario involving full system replacement, a maintenance plan, and an option for replacing equipment only as needed. Dr. Sudler also recommended providing a projected timeframe for when equipment may potentially fail so council could plan financial appropriations accordingly. He emphasized the importance of timing in the budget process and expressed appreciation for the issue being brought forward in advance of budget hearings so council could better evaluate the matter and ensure responsible stewardship of city funds while maintaining quality service for constituents.

Mr. Rocha concurred with Dr. Sudler’s comments and stated that the matter should be presented during the upcoming budget hearings so council could determine how to incorporate it into the budget. He noted that he had raised concerns about the issue for several years and emphasized that delaying the project had likely increased costs. Mr. Rocha stated that the item should be included in the proposed budget, under the appropriate department, so council could review it and make a determination during the budget process if adjustments were necessary.

Responding to Mr. Boggerty, Mr. Rahman stated that a leasing option was available and noted that additional information could be provided, including a link previously included in email correspondence for review and distribution.

Mr. Boggerty requested that staff provide a comparison outlining the pros and cons of leasing versus purchasing the equipment outright. It was also acknowledged that an RFP process would be required, following an initial assessment of the existing system.

SAFETY, ADVISORY, AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

The Safety, Advisory, and Transportation Committee met with Chairman Boggerty presiding.

Adoption of Agenda
Mr. Rocha moved for adoption of the agenda, seconded by Dr. Pillsbury and unanimously carried.

Request for Waiver – Appendix A – Subdivision, Article VI – Subdivision – General Requirements and Design Standards, Section E – Lots, Item 5. (Site Development Master Plan for Dupont Plaza Master Plan): Waiver to allow creation of lots without Public Street frontage with the associated Subdivision Plan to subdivide the proposed shopping center into multiple lots (Dawn Melson-Williams, Principal Planner) (Property Owner: Rojan DD 15 LLC. Property Address: 747 N. Dupont Highway. Tax Parcel: ED-05-068.05-01-15.00-000. Planning Reference: S-26-04)
Ms. Dawn Melson-Williams, Principal Planner, reviewed the background and analysis regarding the Subdivision Waiver request for lots without public street frontage.

Planning Commission recommended approval of the Subdivision Waiver – Lots without Public Street Frontage.

Responding to Mr. Boggerty, Ms. Melson-Williams explained that the subdivision of land represents what she described as an "invisible line plan," noting that property lines are not apparent on the physical site. She stated that site elements such as drive aisles, fire lanes, and parking would function as a unified development, and visitors or emergency responders would not necessarily be aware of the property boundaries. Ms. Melson-Williams indicated that, in her opinion, the subdivision would not create safety concerns. She also noted that the entrance to Leipsic Road already exists and was constructed as part of the adjacent Edge Apartments project, and that required linkages between the two sites are already included in both development plans.

Responding to Dr. Sudler, Ms. Melson-Williams stated that the property is located within a Source Water Protection Overlay Zone, specifically within the Tier 3 Excellent Recharge Area. She explained that this designation places limitations on the types of uses permitted on the site and includes regulations regarding impervious surfaces and the amount of paved or hard surface allowed. Ms. Melson-Williams noted that the applicant is currently working to ensure compliance with the applicable provisions of the city's zoning ordinance.

Responding to Dr. Sudler, Ms. Melson-Williams stated that the request before the committee was for a subdivision waiver to modify the shape of the properties. She clarified that the waiver would not affect how the properties are developed, nor would it impact regulations related to water recharge, stormwater management, or other applicable provisions. The request solely concerns the configuration of the property lines.

Responding to Dr. Sudler, Ms. Melson-Williams stated that the Source Water Protection Overlay Zone does not have requirements for minimum lot size or anything that would affect striking property lines.

Responding to Mr. Rocha, Ms. Melson-Williams explained that the applicant intends to divide a single tract of land into three parcels. Under the city code, each lot is required to have frontage along a public roadway. In this case, the northernmost parcel, which contains the largest building, would have no frontage on a public street. A second lot would have some frontage but not meet the full requirement, while the third lot would have proper frontage on a public road.

Responding to Mr. Rocha, Ms. Melson-Williams stated that the property has some frontage on Leipsic Road and a larger frontage on DuPont Highway.

Responding to Mr. Rocha, Ms. Melson-Williams stated that a similar situation had occurred with the Dover Mall, where large “big box” stores occupy individual parcels without direct frontage on DuPont Highway. She noted that two parcels behind the mall, located behind the loop road, also lack frontage, and a waiver had previously been granted in that case. She explained that such waivers are common in shopping centers where land is subdivided to accommodate tenant preferences for property acquisition.

Mr. Rocha stated that he did not see an issue with granting the waiver. He noted that, as Dr. Sudler had mentioned, the owner’s intent to sell the property could be beneficial, as owning the property may encourage business continuity and commitment to the city. Mr. Rocha expressed support for granting the subdivision waiver.

Ms. Arndt agreed with Councilman Rocha, stating that flexibility is beneficial for redevelopment. She also expressed appreciation for the thorough review the application had received from the State, the DAC, and the Planning Commission.

Mr. Neil noted that the site is located across from the Speedway complex on Leipsic Road, near a former Berry Van Lines location, and referenced the planned development of 250 apartment units and additional townhouses. While he acknowledged the city’s need for housing and the associated tax benefits, he expressed concern that the MPO had declined to conduct a study of Leipsic Road, which already experiences significant traffic from existing developments and the Speedway. Mr. Neil emphasized the importance of evaluating traffic impacts due to the anticipated increase in vehicles. He stated that he would vote to advance the project but stressed that a traffic study should be conducted promptly.

Ms. Arndt moved to recommend approval of the subdivision waiver as recommended by the Planning Commission. The motion was seconded by Mr. Anderson and unanimously carried.

Mr. Boggerty moved for adjournment of the Safety Advisory and Transportation Committee meeting, hearing no objection the meeting adjourned at 7:23 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE, FINANCE, AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

The Legislative, Finance, and Administration Committee met with Chairman Anderson presiding.

Adoption of Agenda

Mr. Neil moved for adoption of the agenda, seconded by Mr. Shevock and unanimously carried.

Mr. Rocha recused himself from the discussion regarding the People's Community Center Economic Development Fund Application.

Review of The People's Community Center Economic Development Fund Application (Councilwoman Hall and David S. Hugg, III, City Manager)

Mr. David S. Hugg, III, City Manager, reviewed the background and analysis regarding the People's Community Center Economic Development Fund Application.

Staff recommended approval of the grant by the Legislative, Finance, and Administration Committee in the amount of $47,363.

Dr. Sudler requested, for ethical and litigation purposes, that the City Solicitor provide guidance on whether a resignation would require a 30-day period before a council member could participate without recusal. He emphasized wanting clarity to avoid potential violations or scrutiny.

Mr. Anderson noted that even if recusal was required, no personal benefits had been received and confirmed that the matter under discussion was a voting issue.

Dr. Sudler expressed that he would feel more comfortable obtaining an interpretation from Mr. Boggerty, given his human resources background, or having someone contact the City Solicitor to clarify the requirements.

Mr. Boggerty stated that, while the matter is not strictly a human resources issue, the timing of a recent resignation raises ethical considerations. He explained that resigning this week and then being involved in a matter where funding is requested, with the potential for reappointment afterward, could create public scrutiny. Mr. Boggerty noted that, under the City Charter, board members are generally not supposed to authorize funds to entities they serve. He described the situation as a close call and advised that it is ultimately a moral decision for the individual and the Council President to determine whether the person should participate or if someone else should be appointed to hear the matter. He clarified that this was his consulting opinion, not a directive from the City's bylaws.

Mr. Lewis recalled a prior situation involving Bay Health, where he is employed by the organization, and there was a vote on hospital expansion. He stated that he consulted the City Solicitor, who advised him to recuse himself, which he did, as reflected in the meeting minutes.

Dr. Sudler stated that, according to the city's ethics training, a conflict of interest does not have to be direct; even the appearance of impropriety is relevant. He expressed that, given the recent resignation, participating in the meeting could create such an appearance. Dr. Sudler clarified that he was not implying any intentional wrongdoing but emphasized the importance of protecting the city and constituents. He recommended that Mr. Anderson recuse himself to avoid any perception of impropriety, noting that the final decision remains with him.

Council President Neil took over as chair.

Ms. Hall stated that she had several areas of concern based on information that had been presented. She noted the importance of allowing Pastor Grimes and Mr. Stafford to give their presentations without wasting their time. However, Ms. Hall suggested that, due to the complaints received, the Council should consider holding off on a vote until the merit of those issues could be determined.

Mr. Hugg explained that the application had originally been presented in January, along with a similar application for the Railhaus, and was postponed, allowing for additional information. He stated that the application proposes creating a workforce development program to assist community members, particularly those who have been incarcerated, in overcoming obstacles to employment, such as a lack of identification or an unprepared resume. Mr. Hugg noted that he had previously recommended approval of a grant in the amount of $47,363 to develop and implement the program at the People's Community Center, based on funding requirements and information obtained from Dr. Hodge and others.

However, Mr. Hugg expressed concern that several outstanding complaints regarding the use of the building and its operations, which were brought to his attention, remain unresolved. He stated that these issues need to be addressed before moving forward with providing additional funding for the program.

Responding to Mr. Boggerty, Mr. Hugg stated that, to his understanding, the proposed program was new and would serve many of the clients that they already serve in their operations.

Mr. Neil requested that the application submitted by the People's Community Center, located within the People's Church, for economic development funds be denied at this time. He cited multiple complaints regarding zoning violations, ongoing unsafe activities at the center, and the potential for litigation. Mr. Neil noted that five convicted sexual offenders reside at the facility while programs for children operate in the same building (**Attachment #1**). He acknowledged the need for services for individuals with addiction or mental health issues, but stated that the behavior of some individuals at the site had not improved and was negatively affecting surrounding neighborhoods and the downtown area.

He detailed that streets, backyards, and public spaces have been misused, including incidents involving trash, needles, public sexual activity, and solicitation. Mr. Neil indicated that as many as 23 properties, including historic homes converted to offices, have been sold due to the deteriorating conditions. He referenced a formal complaint submitted on December 2, 2025, and a follow-up letter from attorney Kevin Baird on February 4, 2026, which raised similar concerns. He noted that responses from staff and the City Solicitor had not been shared with council.
Mr. Neil acknowledged that three elected officials, including one Council member, serve on the Center's board, but stated they cannot control the behavior of individuals once they leave the facility. Mr. Neil stated that while he agreed individuals served by the center needed food and shelter, he expressed concern that the activities occurring there were not changing the dynamics of their lives and were negatively impacting the surrounding community. He stated that the city could not allow the inability of some individuals to act rationally to diminish the quality of life of others.

Mr. Neil further stated that the Attorney General's Office was not expected to object to the City of Dover reestablishing the Aldermen's Court. While he noted it would not be a panacea, he stated that it could provide a more responsive, community-based court and help restore accountability. He requested that staff provide information regarding the cost of reestablishing the court.

Additionally, Mr. Neil reported that the Delaware State Health Department had filed a complaint regarding the kitchen being used to serve approximately 75 to 100 individuals. He stated that the report had been provided to City Code Inspectors and subsequently forwarded to the Police Department; however, the council had not yet seen the contents of the report.

Mr. Neil concluded by stating that there continued to be ongoing concerns with the building and its impact on the surrounding area. He emphasized the city's responsibility to ensure that property uses did not negatively affect the tax base needed to support city services. Based on these concerns, he requested that the item be pulled from the agenda and denied at this time.

Mr. Neil moved to recommend removal and denial of the application submitted by the People's Community Center located within the People's Church for Economic Development Funds. The motion was seconded by Mr. Shevock.

Mr. Boggerty questioned what programs had been offered by the People's Church throughout the duration of its operations, stating that, given the number of years the center had been in operation, he would have expected work-life skills programming to already be established. He expressed concern that such initiatives appeared to be under consideration only now.
After briefly reviewing the proposed budget, Mr. Boggerty also inquired about a line item reflecting $1,000 in rent for the organization that would be implementing the program. He asked what space within the facility would be utilized for that purpose and noted that while $1,000 per month may not seem significant, it would total approximately $12,000 annually.

Mr. Boggerty further noted that several institutions in the area already provide similar services, including Polytech and DelTech, which offer workforce development programs, skills training, and GED preparation. He suggested that transportation assistance to connect individuals with these existing programs might be a more effective approach and stated that partnerships and collaboration with organizations already providing these services could be more efficient. He also noted that the People's Church had previously received significant funding from the city, including funds during the COVID-19 pandemic, and stated that he was concerned about providing additional funding without seeing measurable outcomes. Mr. Boggerty concluded by stating that, based on the concerns raised during the meeting and the matters that had recently come to light, he would not support the request at this time until those issues were resolved.

Mr. Lewis stated that he agreed with the comments made by Council President Neil. He noted that when the matter had previously come before the committee, there were issues with the application. He referenced an email sent to council members by Mrs. Francis Perry, which raised concerns regarding possible misrepresentation of information in the application, including references to veterans.

Mr. Lewis further stated that, to his understanding, the Veterans Affairs Department already operates its own workforce development programs. He indicated that the concerns raised in the email were significant and contributed to his position on the matter.

Additionally, Mr. Lewis stated that he believed the proposal would duplicate existing services, noting that the Department of Labor already provides workforce development programs. He reported that he had spoken with representatives from the Department of Labor, who indicated that they already offer a range of programs available to assist homeless individuals seeking employment and job training.

Based on these concerns, Mr. Lewis stated that he would not support the funding request.

Responding to Mr. Neil, Mr. Hugg stated he was not aware of a recent decision from the solicitor and that no response had been received to the solicitor's letter to Mr. Baird. He noted that staff were reviewing several zoning issues, particularly regarding building uses that were inconsistent with current zoning. He reported that, following a meeting with planning, code enforcement, the fire marshal, and emergency management staff, serious violations relating to building use and condition were identified. Mr. Hugg recommended that the matter not proceed at this time. He acknowledged that a potential legal risk existed due to zoning issues.

Pastor Hodge introduced Pastor Grimes of Solid Rock Baptist Church and Harold Stafford, founding director of the HELP Initiative and former Delaware Secretary of Labor, noting that Mr. Stafford served on the board to guide workforce development efforts. He stated there appeared to be three main issues and noted several factual misunderstandings. He emphasized that all parties shared a common goal of reducing street homelessness, supporting individuals in stabilizing their lives, and protecting property values.

Pastor Hodge clarified that the economic development application was unrelated to the church's shelter operations, which had historically provided emergency winter housing for the homeless. He described the workforce development program's target population as individuals seeking to re-enter the workforce or stabilize their lives, and emphasized that the program was not intended to duplicate existing services, including those for veterans, but rather to operate through partnerships with organizations such as Neighborhood Partners and the Delaware Department of Labor. He noted that funding had been secured to renovate a segregated space for program activities, including workshops, computer access, and vocational assessments.

Dr. Sudler stated that the proposed program primarily served as a mediator to connect participants with existing services and occasionally host workshops, rather than providing a unique or differential advantage in workforce development. He noted that partner organizations, including Neighborhood Partners and Solid Rock Baptist Church, already had space to host workshops, and questioned the necessity and amount of funding requested.

He emphasized support for housing and homeless services, including assistance for vulnerable populations, but expressed concern that unresolved compliance issues, such as zoning, health, or code violations, needed to be addressed before additional city funding could be considered. Dr. Sudler concluded that, given current budget constraints and existing community services, approval of economic development funds at that time was not feasible, and that any proposal would need to demonstrate a clear, extraordinary advantage to justify funding.

Pastor Hodge stated that the program provided an advantage through partnerships and affirmed that the organization was in compliance with health and code regulations.

Mr. Neil expressed concerns that, despite claims of compliance, the city could be held liable if legal action arose, noting that the property's current use did not align with zoning and code requirements. He cited multiple detailed letters from residents reporting that activities at the location, such as feeding 75–100 people nightly, were negatively impacting the surrounding residential area, including property damage and quality-of-life concerns. He emphasized that while the program's goals were positive, the same services could be provided at alternative locations without affecting local homes, and that the city could not defend noncompliant uses.

Pastor Hodge stated that having a satellite location in the neighborhood would increase accessibility for individuals who might not travel to other sites, such as Blue Hill Mall, due to psychological or logistical barriers. He noted that situating services locally could facilitate workforce readiness assessments for populations less likely to access distant locations and asked Mr. Stafford to confirm this point.

Mr. Harold Stafford stated that he was the co-founder and board president of the HELP Initiative in Dover, which had provided services to over 20,000 residents since its founding. He noted he was not speaking in his former capacity as Delaware Secretary of Labor. He explained that the organization supported Pastor Hodge's workforce development program by supplementing services, providing funding for pre-apprenticeship positions, and partnering with vocational schools to train and employ participants, including individuals recently released from correctional facilities. Mr. Stafford emphasized that establishing a satellite location in the neighborhood would increase access to workforce development services for populations unlikely to travel to other sites, aligning with past efforts to bring services directly into the community.

Responding to Mr. Neil, Mr. Will Grimes, Pastor of Solid Rock Baptist Church, stated that the first floor of the CURE building housed Restore Central Dover, providing community development and engagement services, and the second floor was used by Delaware State University, clarifying that these functions were separate from the proposed workforce development activities. He emphasized that the center's programs were designed to bring resources directly into the community, serving residents who would not otherwise access college or Department of Labor services. Mr. Grimes noted that many of the people being assisted were already part of the neighborhood and that the center's work had positive outcomes for participants. He asserted that the People's Community Center was contributing to solutions for vulnerable populations rather than creating problems, though he acknowledged that the organization could improve how it communicated its successes.

William G. Faust, Jr., Dover, expressed concerns regarding the proposed funding, noting that the Department of Labor already provided similar services and questioned the sustainability of the program after grant funds were expended. He cited fiscal constraints and emphasized the council's responsibility to protect vulnerable residents. He raised public safety concerns, particularly regarding the presence of sex offenders in the facility and potential conflicts with participants, including single parents and children. Mr. Faust concluded that the program should not receive funding until outstanding issues, including allegations and compliance questions, were resolved, and recommended postponing or voting against the proposal.

Cameron Llewellyn, property owner and business operator in Dover, stated that he owned several properties and businesses in the city and expressed concerns regarding the activities associated with the People's Community Center. He questioned whether workforce development activities were a permitted use within the applicable zoning district and raised concerns about the number of services advertised at the location and whether they were properly licensed.

Mr. Llewellyn reported that, based on his observations and security camera footage near his property, individuals frequenting the area had created public safety and quality-of-life concerns, including drug activity and medical emergencies. He stated that these issues had negatively impacted nearby businesses, including his own, including the closure of a retail shop operated downtown. He further alleged that individuals seeking assistance at the center were not receiving adequate services and called for further review, including an audit of the organization's finances and operations.

Andrea Freud, S. Bradford Street, stated that she had lived in the neighborhood for many years and previously participated in the Mayor's Unsheltered Working Group. She indicated that she supported efforts to address homelessness, addiction, and mental health issues, noting that her professional experience as a Superior Court Commissioner provided her with direct knowledge of these challenges.

Ms. Freud reported that conditions in her neighborhood had significantly worsened in recent years, particularly since 2023, citing increased drug activity, prostitution, and safety concerns. She stated that these conditions had impacted residents' quality of life and their ability to safely walk in the neighborhood. While acknowledging the need to assist vulnerable populations, she expressed concern that locating services in a residential area placed a disproportionate burden on nearby homeowners.

Ms. Freud also noted that, during the meeting, she overheard a conversation suggesting that a council member who had previously served on the organization's board may have resigned in connection with a potential mayoral run and being able to better assist the center. She stated that she was uncertain of the accuracy of what she heard, but raised the matter due to concerns about a potential appearance of impropriety.

Ms. Freud concluded by encouraging the city to pursue solutions that assist individuals in need while also protecting the safety and quality of life of neighborhood residents.

Ms. LaChelle Paul, Dover, stated that the issues being discussed were part of a broader, long-standing challenge in the city related to homelessness, drug activity, and public safety. She described participating in community cleanups in several neighborhoods and reported observing drug use, discarded materials, and other related activity during those efforts.

Ms. Paul noted that individuals experiencing homelessness often moved from one area to another when enforcement actions occurred and emphasized that the issue required a comprehensive community response. Drawing on her prior experience working at a shelter, she discussed the importance of providing structured services and resources, such as employment assistance, identification documents, and job readiness programs, to help individuals transition to stable housing and employment.

Ms. Paul questioned the proposed funding request and suggested that any financial investment should focus on resources that directly assist individuals in obtaining identification, employment, and other necessary services. She acknowledged the role of faith-based organizations in providing support but emphasized the need for accountability and clear expectations for individuals receiving services.

Ms. Paul concluded by urging the city to address crime and public safety concerns, including the establishment of a previously discussed mobile police substation, and to work toward a balanced solution that supports individuals in need while protecting neighborhood residents.

Mr. Anderson stated that he agreed with several points raised by Ms. Paul regarding public safety concerns in the downtown area. He noted that the council had previously approved the creation of a dedicated downtown policing unit based on a professional recommendation from the Police Department, but implementation had not yet occurred. He acknowledged the suggestion of a mobile police station by Dr. Sudler and explained that the Police Department had indicated a dedicated downtown unit would be a more practical approach due to cost considerations.

Mr. Anderson expressed hope that funding for such a unit would be considered during the upcoming budget process. He also emphasized the importance of neighborhood watch programs and community involvement in addressing safety concerns.

Mr. Anderson further stated that programs such as the one proposed could potentially help address underlying issues rather than contribute to them, noting that some services referenced were already supported through other grant funding. However, he suggested that the applicant might consider withdrawing the request at this time due to the concerns raised, indicating that reapplying later would be preferable to having the request formally denied.

Mr. Neil called for a vote, seconded by Dr. Sudler.

Ms. Arndt requested that Ms. Rivera restate the initial motion.

Responding to Ms. Arndt, Ms. Rivera stated that Mr. Neil moved to recommend denial of the application submitted by the People's Community Center located within the People's Church for Economic Development Funds.

Responding to Dr. Sudler, Mr. Neil confirmed that they could bring their application back at a later time.

Mr. Neil moved to recommend denial of the application submitted by the People's Community Center located within the People's Church for Economic Development Funds. The motion was seconded by Mr. Shevock and carried by a roll call vote of nine (9) yes (Hall, Boggerty, Pillsbury, Arndt, Sudler, Lewis, Neil, Shevock, Garfinkel), one (1) abstention (Anderson), and one (1) absent (Rocha).

Mr. Anderson resumed his role as the chair, and Mr. Rocha entered the meeting again.

Training, Conference, and Travel Policy Updates (Tammy Kelledes, Assistant Controller/Treasurer)

Ms. Tammy Kelledes, Assistant Controller/Treasurer, reviewed the background and analysis regarding the proposed Training, Conference, and Travel Policy changes.

Staff recommended acceptance of the Training, Conference, and Travel Policy as amended.

Mr. Rocha moved to recommend approval of the staff recommendation to accept the Training, Conference, and Travel Policy as amended. The motion was seconded by Dr. Pillsbury and unanimously carried.

Mr. Anderson moved for adjournment of the Legislative, Finance, and Administration Committee meeting, hearing no objection the meeting adjourned at 8:56 p.m.

Mr. Neil moved for adjournment of the Council Committee of the Whole meeting, hearing no objection the meeting adjourned at 8:56 p.m.

Fred A. Neil
Council President

Attachments

Attachment #1 - Redacted Complaints Regarding the People's Church Community Center