

**TOWN OF ELSMERE
PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
September 9, 2025
6:30 P.M.**

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Anderson called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

MOMENT OF SILENT PRAYER FOR THOSE WISHING TO DO SO:

ROLL CALL:

CHAIRMAN	ROBERT ANDERSON	PRESENT
COMMISSIONER	DEAN DYER	PRESENT
COMMISSIONER	JOHN POCKETS	ABSENT
COMMISSIONER	JA'NIKKA CARABALLO	ABSENT
COMMISSIONER	FRANK OBARA	PRESENT
COMMISSIONER	JONATHAN WATTS	PRESENT
COMMISSIONER	VACANT	

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Approval of the minutes from the August 5, 2025, Planning Commission Meeting.

ACTION: Commissioner Obara made a motion to approve the minutes from the August 5, 2025, Planning Commission Meeting with no corrections. Commissioner Watts seconded the motion.

VOTE: 4 in favor, 1 Vacancy, 2 Absent Motion carried

Anderson – Yes, Pockets – Absent, Dyer – Yes, Caraballo – Absent, Obara – Yes
Watts – Yes

OPENING STATEMENT:

Administrative Assistant for the Code Department Denise Lardani read the opening statement.

NEW BUSINESS: None

OLD BUSINESS:

1. 5-year Review of the Comprehensive Plan

Chairman Anderson stated this is not intended to be like a long drive into the book and all that, but I did not want to miss an opportunity. I don't know if you guys read through the comprehensive plan, but I just thought sometimes when we don't have anything on the agenda, we skip the meetings, and then, you know, this could be just an opportunity to kind of see what's on your mind, see if you picked up anything, see if you have any questions, and kind of give you the layout of where we're going to go moving forward.

Town Manager Steven Martin stated that he has contracted with consultant Sean O'Neill to guide us with the five-year Comprehensive plan review. It is basically an update and see if anything has changed or needs to be updated. Sean will be providing the maps in color and full size at the next meeting. The Town is looking to have some community involvement as well, but it should be a relatively easy process for the review.

There were questions and confusion about roads and locations of the roads. We are not actually changing. If it is in Elsmere now, it is going to stay in Elsmere.

Town Manager Steve Martin stated there is a road from Kirkwood Highway that should not bleed into New Road.

Chairman Anderson stated, so, I thought a good place to start would be on page two, goals of the plan and I would like to read those. Our goals as of right now are to strive to become a destination for New Castle County residents seeking a safe, affordable, and walkable community. Maintain the character of the Town's built environment while allowing for expansion, growth, and change in a clearly identified appropriate location. Improve the safety, aesthetics, and character of Kirkwood Highway and recognize its connection to the local community as Elsmere's main street with the long-term goal of being part of the Delaware on Main program. Maintain and enhance the Town's neighborhoods and small businesses by focusing on their unique characteristics and preserve areas with historic, cultural, scenic, environmental, and recreational value as important resources for a small, densely populated municipality. I like what it says, but, I mean, it is just to get you thinking about where we are at and what do we, you know, do we want to add goals or modify goals? It is something we can certainly entertain.

Commissioner Watts asked about making changes and the procedures.

Chairman Anderson stated if we want to make a change, it depends on the type of change. Like if you are talking about a map change or zoning change, which has to go to the mayor and council, correct?

Chairman Anderson asked would it be helpful if you turn to page 29 and just go through the zonings, I am not an expert on the zoning by any means. So just looking at the different zoning such as R1, the R2, RGA, does everybody have a general understanding of that? Unfortunately, we do not have the maps to sit here and look at right now, but it would be nice to see the maps because it would be helpful.

Chairman Anderson stated it is going to be really important to try to get the message out to the community that we are working on this, so that if they want to come and make comments, they do so now, not after it is done. Because I think last time, if I remember right, it might have been one of the fullest meetings I have ever seen. There were a lot of people here that were upset and, do you know what, we invited the public multiple times and only a few people show up.

Chairman Anderson asked if this statement is accurate in here that says within 18 months of the adoption of a comprehensive development plan and vision thereof, amend its official zoning map to rezone all lands within the municipality in accordance with the use of the land?

Mayor Personti stated that the belief that the zoning recommendation in the Plan, the Town had to act on the recommendation within 18 months of passing the Comprehensive Plan. This was disputed. For example, there was an annexation plan but that does not mean the Town will be annexing them, it means there is some consideration of annexing them in the future.

Commissioner Dyer stated I think the thing about striving to be a destination is to be a safe, affordable, walking community when I moved here 15 years ago. If I am being frank, I always thought Elsmere was a joke. At the time I was opening the ACI clinic here, we were looking for a house and I pulled down Spruce, and I saw what my house is. It has been an amazing place to live. I will admit it is in the police bubble, as I call it. But even outside of that, it has been a great place to live. I have no intention of leaving it.

Commissioner Dyer stated "I have come to appreciate that we are what we are." As long as we can maintain it and improve here and there. We want to be this, we want to be that. We are what we are and just embrace that, keep maintaining it, improving it as we can. For instance, the upgrade on the playground. I was amazed how quickly this one was redone and updated. That shows a lot to me. Even though I do not have small kids anymore, it is an aesthetic and a thing that is valuable to the town.

Commissioner Obara stated it sounds like we want to focus our efforts on improving what we have, instead of trying to build something new. There are just not a lot of options.

Commissioner Dyer said like the Racetrack Park, when they have events there, there is no parking. People get bused into the event and all the challenges there. We do not have a place like Bellevue. Where it is big enough and deep enough you can do some of those things. I mean, even like Battery Park. They have always used a trailer they do not have a fixed van, stuff like that. Point the music away. So that the people who live here do not

have to hear it.

Commissioner Anderson asked if anyone has ever been to the Arden Fair? This year was more crowded than I have ever seen, and it is such a small area. Maybe we can take one of those parks and have an annual Fair. Whatever you want to call it and have the vendors come out and pay you to be out there.

Commissioner Dyer said like the Brandywine fair was this past weekend. New Castle's is coming up in two or three weeks. There's certainly room for another Fair. Even if there's baseball fields on it. Maybe some of these ideas could we use especially if they do not cost us much. We just kind of set it up and see who is interested and throw it but do not give up on it after the first year.

Chairman Anderson asked as far as annexation goes. Do they actually require us to have a plan?

Town Manager Steven Martin responded yes it has to be in there.

Chairman Anderson so they do not want you to put the annexation in the plan but then don't want you to annex anything for instance Amazon, BJ's or as far up as the area of BJ's but an Annexation plan is required but the County does not want you to.

Commissioner Anderson ask if there are still plans to connect the dog park walk path to the other trail?

Town Manager Steven Martin stated it is a state walking path to have connectivity throughout the state.

Commissioner Anderson said it is still in the plan.

Commissioner Obara asked who makes the final approval of the plan and implements the plan.

Town Manager Steve Martin stated as far as implementing anything within the plan, it gets sorted out through council and Town Manager. For us to increase our walkability. (55:27) They're going to do bump outs at the intersections. The problem with the bike lanes is that people are trying to park and come down to the bike lanes and park.

Commissioner Obara asked was 2021 the first comprehensive plan that Elsmere had? Or was there one before that? Minter goes back to the 90s. So, does anyone do a retrospective between plans? To say, within this plan, we did X, Y, and Z. So, we take them out of the plan for the coming session. Or is it just like ongoing?

There were multiple conversations about Sean attending the next meeting and it would be greatly appreciated to have the Town maps available at the meeting.

The Commissioners had conversations about the date of the fall festival, which is October 18, 2025, and rain date is October 19, 2025.

ITEMS SUBMITTED BY CHAIRMAN AND BOARD MEMBERS: None

ADJOURNMENT:

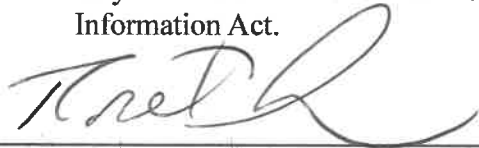
ACTION: Commissioner Obara made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Watts seconded the motion.

VOTE: 4 in favor, 1 Vacancy, 2 Absent Motion carried

Anderson – Yes, Dyer – Yes, Pockets – Absent, Caraballo – Absent, Obara – Yes, Watts – Yes

At this time, the meeting was adjourned.

Votes are recorded accurately. The audio tape(s) of this meeting will be available at Town Hall for a period of two years from the date these minutes are approved. The audio tape(s) may be reviewed at Town Hall by appointment and in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.



**ROBERT ANDERSON,
CHAIRMAN**



**DEAN DYER,
SECRETARY**

JANIKYA CARABALLO