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BEFORE THE NEW CASTLE COUNTY  
HISTORIC REVIEW BOARD  
STATE OF DELAWARE

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Department of Land Use  
New Castle, DE

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July 21, 2015

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PRESENT

DEPARTMENT OF LAND USE

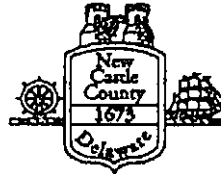
APP. 2015-0045-S/Z  
LAGRANGE PLAZA

Valerie Cesna  
Matthew Rogers  
Marco Boyce

HISTORIC REVIEW BOARD

Barbara Benson, Chair  
John Brook  
John Davis  
Ken Freemark  
Steve Johns

Thomas P. Gordon  
County Executive



DEPARTMENT OF LAND USE

**HISTORIC REVIEW BOARD**

**July 21, 2015**

**5:00 p.m.**

**Public Hearing Agenda**

**Department of Land Use  
87 Reads Way, Corporate Commons, New Castle DE**

HRB meetings are held on the 1<sup>st</sup> (Business Meeting) and 3<sup>rd</sup> (Hearing) Tuesdays of each month.

**ROLL CALL**

**OLD BUSINESS**

**NEW BUSINESS**

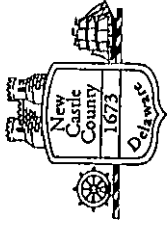
**App. 2015-0045-S/Z:** Northwest corner Pulaski Hwy. (US 40) and LaGrange Parkway. Exploratory Major Land Development Plan, PLUS Review and Rezoning for **LaGrange Plaza** proposes to rezone 5.25 acres from S (Suburban), CR (Commercial Regional) and H (Historic Overlay) to CR and H to construct a 10,720 s.f. retail/office building and a 6,560 s.f. restaurant. Concepts for the remaining LaGrange lands within the Historic Overlay district will also be discussed. CD 11.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

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The next meeting of the Historic Review Board will be a business meeting held on **August 4, 2015** in the Land Use Conference Room (87 Reads Way) at 5 p.m.

Individuals needing reasonable accommodations according to the Americans with Disabilities Act call 395-5400 (TT/TTY/TTD: DRS, 1-800-232-5460).



DEPARTMENT OF LAND USE  
HISTORIC REVIEW BOARD

ATTENDANCE RECORD

MEETING DATE: July 21, 2015

Please print legibly!

NAME	MAILING ADDRESS	AGENDA ITEM(S) OF INTEREST
1. Nancy Willing	Nancywilling@yahoo.com	LA GRANGE
2. Marco Boyle	MKbyeoNeeds.org	La Grange
3. Don Ross	1078 LaGrange Pkwy Newark 19702	La Grange
4. Sarah Jordan	4 GREENFIELD CT NEWARK DE 19713	La GRANGE
5.		
6. Tom Committee	18 W. Chestnut St. West Chester PA 19380	LA GRANGE
7.		
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MS. BENSON: Okay I like to call the New Castle County Historic Review Board hearing for July 21, 2015 to order. I want to say it's 5:30 by the meeting room clock. Okay we'll start with roll call. I'm Barbara Benson.

MR. DAVIS: John Davis.

MR. BROOK: John Brook.

MR. JOHNS: Steve Johns.

MR. FREEMARK: Ken Freemark.

MS. BENSON: Thank you. Old business. None. New business. Valerie will you read it into the record please.

MS. CESNA: Well I like to start by reading the rules of the hearing first.

MS. BENSON: Thank you.

MS. CESNA: This is a public hearing conducted by the New Castle Historic Review Board. The purpose of these hearings is to compile a record of relevant information regarding each application on how the proposed projects affect the County's historic resources. To make the most efficient use of time at this hearing the following rules of order are established.

Following the reading of each agenda item the applicant and their representatives will make a presentation not to exceed a total of 15 minutes. Board members may ask questions of the applicant at the conclusion of the presentation. The public will then be invited to speak in the following order. Those who wish to speak in favor, those who wish to speak in opposition, and those who wish to offer general comments. Speakers are encouraged to avoid repetition and to focus their remarks on historic

preservation issues. So that everyone has an opportunity to be heard all speakers are limited to five minutes. Any speaker may ask the Board to hold the record open for submittal of written testimony if the time limit is not sufficient for their needs. Speakers are not permitted to debate the applicant but may ask questions that the applicant may choose to answer during the rebuttal period at the close of the public comment period.

All testimony is recorded and transcribed, therefore, all speakers must come forward to the table one at a time and state their name, address, and organization affiliation if any before offering comments. Random comments from the audience will not be recognized and the public is asked to respect the applicant's right to an orderly hearing. No recommendations or decisions will be made by the Historic Review Board at these hearings today. The Board will evaluate the information, testimony, and comments received here at a public business meeting to be held the first Tuesday of next month.

We have only one agenda item this evening. It is Application 2015-0045-S/Z located at the northwest corner of Pulaski Highway also known as US 40 and LaGrange Parkway. Exploratory Major Land Development Plan, PLUS Review and Rezoning for LaGrange Plaza proposes to rezone 5.25 acres from suburban, commercial regional and historic overlay to commercial regional and historic overlay to construct a 10,720 square foot retail/office building and a 6,560 square foot restaurant. Concepts for the remaining LaGrange lands within the Historic Overlay District will also be discussed. The applicant please.

MR. RHODUNDA: Yes thank you very much. For the record my name is Bill Rhodunda. I'm with the firm of Rhodunda and Williams. I'm here tonight on behalf of Beacon LaGrange, LLC. To my right is the principal of Beacon LaGrange, LLC, Bob Simple. To my right is Tom Comitta from Comitta Associates and to my left is Scott Lobdell from Van Cleef Engineering.

This is a newly assembled team to process plans related to the LaGrange properties. This property is actually, this five acres is part of a much larger property. It's actually been before the Historic Review Board in the past. And I can see members shaking their head. They are familiar with the approval back in 2008 I believe of a 227 unit residential subdivision that's actually located directly behind this five acre parcel.

And you can see the lot lines actually that abut this five acre parcel is that residential community that's well under construction at this time. And I've not been involved in any of that but I had an opportunity to drive it through it. It certainly looks very nice and fits within the property very well.

The team you have before you now Beacon LaGrange, LLC the new owners want to continue forward with the project and present some concepts to you regarding the property. Now tonight we are here regarding this five acre parcel and will be addressing more specifically exactly what we are proposing for that parcel. I see you have the plans in front of you. It does relate to a restaurant pad site and an office building which we will be presenting. But also Tom Comitta is here tonight. We got him involved because there is a 50 acre parcel up the street, up Route 40, close right to 896

that will we will be bringing some concepts forward on and he has been brought on board to sort of take a close look at the historical aspects of that property and to help design some concepts for that.

But the main agenda item tonight does pertain to this five acre parcel. It does have a historic overlay just as all the other lands had in the LaGrange properties. I know you are familiar with that. If you look to the plan to my left three-quarters of that plan on the left-hand side as you look at the plan it's actually zoned commercial. This is a rezoning and the lands to the right are actually zoned residential at this time.

Scott has been working with the County on developing this concept as you are all familiar with the process. We can't get to the exploratory plan stage until the Historic Review Board provides their comments on this plan. But Scott has met with the County regarding the pre-exploratory plan and has had extensive discussions with the Land Use Department regarding the proposal that's before you tonight. This is at this point just a site plan recommendation that will be considered by the Historic Review Board. At a later time when village commercial is sought and when tenants are in place then your Board will come forward with specific architectural designs although we do have some representative type depictions we'd like to show you tonight and to get your input on what you think would be an appropriate architectural design and features for these properties. I know that you may have been involved with developing the guidelines for the residential properties that are being filed in that area. And

certainly this new owner of the property bringing all this forward wants to be consistent with what the HRB would like to see as it relates to appropriate architectural design.

But I'd like Scott now to go through with you this particular plan for the five acre parcel and discuss the site plan for consideration tonight. Thank you.

MR. LOBDELL: Scott Lobdell with Van Cleef Engineering. The plan as discussed it's a little over five acres, about 5.25 acres. We are proposing to put an office building and a restaurant on the site. As mentioned there's some residential lands on this parcel that's essentially a remnant of the original residential subdivision design for the LaGrange subdivision. So the County is trying to eliminate dual zoning on same parcels. So this is all one, the same parcel, the same tax I.D. number but it has two zones on it. So as part of this process we are requesting to remove the residential zoning portion which is closest to LaGrange Parkway and make the whole site commercial. And the uses that are proposed comply with the zone.

This layout has had some heavy influence from Marco and they had a lot of input in helping us get a design that we felt might fit on the site and then leave a lot of green space and preserve a lot of wooded areas. Obviously the darker areas on the plan are the wooded areas. The lighter green areas are the grass open areas on the site. That's one of the things we wanted to do is try to minimize the impact of the currently vacant site.

There will be some storm water areas on the site. A lot of green technologies. We'll use bioretention areas and then grass



filter strips instead of the open pond mentality that was used in past designs.

One of the questions I heard being mentioned earlier on the second sheet of the plan site you guys have there, there's two floodplain areas depicted on the plan. The red lines on that plan represent what's currently mapped on the floodplain mapping. We are in the process of revising that map. There was an error in the study that was done a few years back. The actually floodplain area is depicted in blue on the plans. So that plan does more to depict what's there now versus what it actually is. And as we go through this process we already started the process with FEMA and are reviewing the documents now. There will be an update and revised FEMA map issue so our plan represents that.

One of the other things we looked at was accessibility of the site. We met with DelDOT and again the planning staff and the right in and the right out was our primary entrance from the beginning. The question was how do we provide a secondary access point on LaGrange Parkway without impacting the residents but still allowing people to make use of some type of turning movement. So after evaluating different options we felt the best option was the right out only because what that allows people to do is after they get on, in the site they can leave the right out only and make a left-hand turn at the light instead of going out and making a U-turn at the next light. That also keeps people out of the residential development that try to come into the site. And we wouldn't have to do any modifications to the island that that are currently out in that area.

So one of the things I want to point out there is we listed are precautionary slopes. There's an area here it was deemed just before I think any of us came on the project. It was declared part of a historical trench area or travel way.

MR. FREEMARK: From the original.

MR. LOBDELL: Right. So we, we've preserved that. We are not going to, here all of this area around here is going to be preserved so that's going to stay the way it is now.

MR. FREEMARK: Thank you.

MR. LOBDELL: And yeah we are didn't want to mess around with that area there so that's all going to stay the same on the corner. We will be providing landscape buffers required by the County along the back between the residential and we are going to maintain the floodplain area as part of the plan prior to leaving the site under the new bridge culvert.

We also did bring two, as mentioned earlier we brought two renderings of kind of what we want the feel of the buildings to be. As we mentioned they may change depending on the user slightly and then you guys will get a chance to review the building plans for them. But we wanted to show you guys some of the renderings we prepared for the look of each building on the site and get some input as to certain things you may or may not like that we can work with as we develop plans for official submittal so.

MR. RHODUNDA: And while he pulls them up these are just representatives but I think represent all of these that we want to have in them. And we've reviewed with the Board that were previously approved for the residential side and attached the

materials in a look that the Board wants. But tonight this is the first time you are seeing this. We would like your input on, you know, what you think the exterior of these buildings should look like. And certainly we want to be consistent with what's been approved and that there is a proper blending between this and the residential architectural guidelines that we have.

Unfortunately I know you are aware and you can see a lot of familiarity with this property with members of the Board. There's a 10 acre parcel down the road also associated with this. We are not, we don't have a plan for that at the moment but in between them unfortunately we have this little strip center with Aqua Bruce and things like that and certainly we are trying to bring up the quality and bring it consistent with, you know, what's been approved previously.

MR. LOBDELL: And in this layout this is the restaurant, the potential restaurant look. It has the patio on the side that's shown on the plans. We tried to stick with the brick look to match the sign that's out front now and some of the houses that are already in place. And the person who did the rendering, prepared the rendering we asked them to go with a more of a Williamsburg look which is given the historic nature of the area and the property we felt that might fit well with the area. So that that is the restaurant pad itself. And this second rendering is what we had in mind for the office building which has a little more dormer look to it with the tower at the top. And that would be the bigger building when you first pull in. So you can just visualize pulling into the site and that would be the look that we, a similar look to

what we would like to obtain out there in the site when you pull in. So and then the restaurant site being on the corner that would be the site you see when you pull into the LaGrange parcel.

So we would be more than happy to take any comments or concerns or questions from you.

MS. BENSON: Mr. Rhodunda is your team finished with their presentation?

MR. RHODUNDA: Yeah. We'd like to open the floor to comments or any questions you may have.

MS. BENSON: Thank you. Questions? Comments? John.

MR. BROOK: Yes. John Brook. How would somebody come in from the west to get into this property?

MR. LOBDELL: They would have to do a U-turn at the light.

MR. BROOK: Would they?

MR. LOBDELL: Yes. That was the only, that was the one issue we had. That was one of the two concerns we weren't able to address. The other being how do the residents get in? We felt there was going to be more traffic coming out to make a left then there would be residents coming in. So we didn't think it was too much of a stretch to have the residents come out and make the right in real fast to get into the site. But as far as coming in they would have to make a U-turn at the light to get into the site.

MR. BROOK: Okay. The rendering that you showed of the restaurant.

MR. LOBDELL: Yes.

MR. BROOK: It would not be accommodated by this this site plan. You had a road right next to.

MR. LOBDELL: That's more for visual just to have.

MR. BROOK: So it would be quite different. Your going to have a retention pond and you are going to have outdoor seating.

MR. LOBDELL: On the side. Yeah. We showed.

MR. BROOK: On the side that we looked at it from?

MR. LOBDELL: Yeah. I wouldn't, I wouldn't, that look there is more to just show the building, the side.

MR. BROOK: Okay.

MR. LOBDELL: I wouldn't.

MR. BROOK: So are we looking at?

MR. LOBDELL: I wouldn't put too much into the road itself. But that that would be if you take the seating area and kind of.

MR. BROOK: But we are looking at it from the LaGrange Parkway side is that right?

MR. LOBDELL: Correct.

MR. BROOK: Okay. All right.

MR. LOBDELL: You would have. That that road well it may not necessarily be right up against the seating area.

MR. BROOK: Yeah.

MR. LOBDELL: But that was again just more, this was more for the building.

MR. BROOK: For the building?

MR. LOBDELL: Yeah.

MR. BROOK: Okay.

MS. BENSON: Other questions? Comments? Ken.

MR. FREEMARK: Ken Freemark. My only comment at this stage is that it is somewhat impressive in terms of the design in presenting

this. Obviously they are going to get changed to some degree as you get tenants and that would be where the concern would be on how much control your going to have over what's presented once you get a tenant going in there for rent. So I think what you have presented, you know, from my point of view fits the area especially with what's across the street of People's Plaza. It's not quite as elaborate as this.

MR. LOBDELL: Thank you.

MR. FREEMARK: Stuck with that kind of a theme to over there so kind of draws that whole area together. It draws all the other structures in but time will tell.

MR. LOBDELL: And I'll, Bob correct me if I'm saying anything out of line here I think the intent with these sites there's a lot of commercial on Route 40.

MR. FREEMARK: Right.

MR. LOBDELL: I mean everybody knows that. I used to drive up and down that. And a lot of that does have that strip store look to it. I think the sense I mean the intent with this and some of the stuff you'll see later is to try to differentiate this site from other sites. This becomes more attractive.

MR. FREEMARK: A little bit in there.

MR. LOBDELL: So, you know, some of the things we've talked about, you know, I think the look and feel is something we want to kind of stick with. But, you know, some of the materials may change but, you know, it's not going to I don't think.

MR. FREEMARK: The office building is the most impressive.

MR. LOBDELL: Well and that's the idea. I mean when you pull in

you want it to really pop and see it from the road.

MR. FREEMARK: Yeah.

MR. LOBDELL: Because there is, there's a lot of wooded areas up front so you'll see that when you pull in. But I don't think the intent here even if we change the plan I don't think the intent is to ever go back to a strip center look.

MR. COMITTA: The intent is to really distinguish the property on this site from what's out there and also tie into the whole historic overlay and and frankly the historic house that's up the street on the other property.

MR. FREEMARK: I'm assuming that people coming out of the development I mean to go to those buildings then it looks to me when I look at it they provide a blending in that area so they can remain off the through traffic area.

MR. LOBDELL: For?

MR. FREEMARK: I mean that right.

MR. LOBDELL: The right in, the right out?

MR. FREEMARK: Yeah the right in and right out.

MR. LOBDELL: Yeah there's a right.

MR. FREEMARK: They can get out in the flow of Route 40.

MR. LOBDELL: Yeah.

MR. FREEMARK: At that point. They could stay.

MR. LOBDELL: There's a right turn. There will be a right turn lane out there. We have to design all that to DelDOT standards.

MR. FREEMARK: That would be my concern because they go by there a 100 miles an hour.

MR. LOBDELL: Yeah there's a right turn lane. This will be

designed to meet DelDOT regulations as far as lanes. We've actually started that process with them and we are actually in the process of doing that. So they are not very flexible so it will be.

MR. FREEMARK: I was thinking more about the people coming out of there.

MR. LOBDELL: Sure.

MR. FREEMARK: Some point we are probably going to be . . .  
(Inaudible) . . .

MR. LOBDELL: And that was, you know, one of the reasons we didn't have an entrance on LaGrange Parkway is we didn't want the residents to have to deal with traffic even though it's only on a small portion.

MR. FREEMARK: Deal with the traffic.

MR. LOBDELL: Yeah we didn't want them to have to deal with the traffic internally on their roadway so. Yeah. So right now they are just coming out and going right to the light so it shouldn't impact too much.

MR. FREEMARK: Yeah.

MR. COMITTA: Or they could walk.

MR. LOBDELL: Or the residents could walk too. Yes.

MR. FREEMARK: That's certainly they can walk.

MR. LOBDELL: Sidewalks will be provided all the way through for interconnectivity.

MS. BENSON: John you had another question.

MR. BROOK: Yes. John Brook again. It seems to me an obvious question and maybe you are going to address it later is the parcel of land that's to the east of this property bordering on the Route



40. You have, your not here with that but that would probably lend itself to being developed commercially also.

MR. LOBDELL: Oh the 10 acre piece.

MR. BROOK: Yeah.

MR. LOBDELL: Down the street.

MR. BROOK: It's right here.

MR. LOBDELL: Yeah that's.

MR. BROOK: It's open space right now. Here. This piece right along the road.

MR. COMITTA: Yeah that's part of the residential.

MR. LOBDELL: That's part of the residential. That's permanent open space.

MR. BROOK: Is it permanent open space?

MR. LOBDELL: Yeah and that can't be developed.

MR. BROOK: Good. All right.

MR. COMITTA: And then we leap frog over the existing strip center.

MR. LOBDELL: Yes.

MR. COMITTA: And then continue.

MR. LOBDELL: Yeah the green area you see on there now that was all part of open space recorded as part of the LaGrange residential.

MR. BROOK: Okay.

MR. LOBDELL: It would be impossible, near impossible to get that to put anything on that.

MR. BROOK: But this part was for building Amazon is that right the part you want rezoned?

MR. LOBDELL: Ah.

MR. BROOK: From suburban.

MR. LOBDELL: That part up there. I'm not quite sure of the history completely. I think that was done initially when the subdivision went through they put a wide enough roadway in there for, a wide enough right of way in there for the road to come through. So I think once the design was done there was just this leftover remnant piece that was sitting out there.

MR. BROOK: But it's now zoned suburban?

MR. LOBDELL: Yes. It was zoned suburban as part of.

MR. BROOK: And you want to change it to commercial?

MR. LOBDELL: Commercial. Yes. To match the zoning on this portion of the site.

MR. BROOK: Okay.

MR. LOBDELL: To eliminate the dual zoning on the same parcel.

MR. FREEMARK: I think the reason why that John if I remember right the reason why they left that is because they weren't sure what that was going to be because of this cross over problem.

MR. BROOK: Yeah that could be.

MR. FREEMARK: So they left a wide enough berth in there that they could go in there any where to get into it.

MR. LOBDELL: Right. And then once the road was put in you had this remnant piece.

MR. FREEMARK: A left over of that.

MR. LOBDELL: And then you have this parcel with two different zones on it so.

MR. BROOK: Is the 6,560 square foot restaurant a big

restaurant?

MR. LOBDELL: That would be a big Texas Roadhouse type.

MR. BROOK: Would it?

MR. LOBDELL: User. That's generally kind of the top of the spectrum. We've seen them from anywhere between 3,800 and 5,500.

MR. BROOK: Okay.

MR. LOBDELL: Six to be the average.

MR. BROOK: One of the things this Board is going to be interested in is the signage that you, the signage that you might want to propose.

MR. LOBDELL: Yeah and I would recommend or suggest low profile.

MR. BROOK: Well I think the Board will probably insist on that.

MR. LOBDELL: Sure. Yeah I don't think it, just because of the visibility along the roadway to begin with I don't think you really need a big type of billboard sign.

MR. BROOK: Okay.

MR. COMITTA: And it will match the brick look of the design.

MR. LOBDELL: Yeah we have the entrance sign there.

MR. BROOK: Yeah. Yeah.

MR. LOBDELL: It will be just a lower profile look.

MS. BENSON: Any other questions or comments to the applicant? Well hearing none for the moment thank you gentlemen and if you will just move back into the audience then we will ask for public comment.

MR. RHODUNDA: That would be great. And after that we would

like to present our 50 acre parcel after we resolve this issue here. If that's okay?

MS. BENSON: Yes.

MR. RHODUNDA: Okay.

MS. BENSON: Yes. Yes. We'll divide this.

MR. RHODUNDA: Okay thank you.

MS. BENSON: Now I will ask people first who wish to speak in favor of the project to come forward. Seeing none I will ask people who have concerns about the project to come forward and sit and give us your name.

MS. WILLING: What about for the good of the order, the third category?

MS. BENSON: Just general comments. No we are looking for people who have concerns with the project.

MS. WILLING: Well I'll make it fit. Nancy Willing. I guess I'll be representing Friends of Historic Glasgow. My old group. It's quite dormant. This was always known to have been a likely commercial development. It was part of the division of parcels and subdivision of the rezoned acreage. So I was glad to hear Mr. Brook's comment that we will be insisting on that because the HRB under this historic overlay has quite a lot of the purview of making decisions on how to design and how this thing will fit together. So the applicant is going to be very restricted by the will of this committee and hopefully responsive to the public in that way because this is a very important property.

This is not just a well should look at it as, you know, that is actually is fairly well established and has been in the record

plan as I remember must be left alone that which is the LaGrange, the Latrobe Canal. I know that it was a battle between wills of at that time of those who wanted to present as if there was no scintilla of history on this property against those who knew darn well better. And that was one of the things that's been very well proven. There are maps to show that exactly that is exactly what that is.

MS. BENSON: Nancy you have to speak to the Board.

MS. WILLING: I'm sorry. I will resist that. So like I said I was just caught up, I'm just so happy that the Historic Review Board membership here today is a lot that was there then and remember the arguments at the time. And also that are free, feel free to speak to the applicant about, you know, that these are things that are actually not necessarily protected at a high level but as I recall there was a, that these areas must be protected and that nothing can be, there can't be any development on them. I would have liked to have seen it raised to a higher profile where at least they are, there was some indication of what they were. Some kind of a historic signage or something but we'll leave that to another day.

So I like I said this is, these are nice renderings. We expected a commercial piece on this. This maybe should have been split into two agenda items since they are going to get another bite at the apple for these, you know, mysterious concepts they have for the 50 acre parcel which is also is a highly contentious parcel and has been through several iterations of other proposals that have been shot down or else given up on. So I'll leave that to

the next round I suppose.

MS. BENSON: Thank you. And I can assure you that I personally have a whole suitcase full of material on this property and I think we are all very aware.

MS. WILLING: Yeah.

MS. BENSON: Of the issues and what's going on. Anyone else who wishes to speak? Gentlemen you have any further comments? On this portion? All right then we will move onto the concept discussion. And welcome back to the table.

MR. RHODUNDA: Thank you very much. As I mentioned at the outset there's a 50 acre parcel closer to 896 that is largely farmland that's been farmed for many years. But there's an important historical structure on that property that upon purchasing the property we've, you know, walked that property, we took a look at what's out there. We know that the Board has an interest in preserving that house and this owner is very committed to doing that. We are trying to develop concept plans that, you know, make sense for the property that don't interfere with that very important historic resource. We are working now to try and figure out what that is going to cost to fix that house. I mean I was in the house and under former ownership it was not maintained very well. There's a lot of water leakage through various places I'm sure and a lot of mold and other things.

So what we are trying to do is come up with a concept for the property that includes that house and we are looking at various things that the house could be used for. Whether it be for a clubhouse or a historic resource that maybe represents some of the

historic issues that are within the whole property or something else. We are looking into all that. But the primary focus is basically how do we preserve that house? And I can tell you that this owner is committed to doing that. It's going to be a project but we are committed to doing that.

In regard to, you know, how this might fit in, how the development might be appropriate for this property the developer brought in Tom Comitta Associates. Tom is here tonight. And we asked him to get involved because this is a big project. It's an important project. We know that the HRB has a lot of interest in it. We come to the table without the history or I'd say baggage that has accompanied prior proposals and so we want to just throw out just some very general type things. And Tom if you just want to take the floor and please.

MR. FREEMARK: Can I just ask one question please?

MS. BENSON: Yes Ken.

MR. FREEMARK: Madam Chairman. And what is his technical position here? What is he presenting to us?

MR. COMMITTA: So, hi, I'm Tom Comitta, C O M I T T A. I'm a town planner and landscape architect from West Chester, Pennsylvania. Last Wednesday I celebrated my 42nd anniversary of working in the profession. The three projects that I worked on for New Castle in the past under contract to the Department of Land Use included the Claymont Renaissance and setting up the Design Review Advisory Committee in Claymont. And in Centerville, Delaware a Design Review Advisory Committee. And directly with the Department doing drafts of mix used ordinances for what was called the BRAC,

base realignment and closure.

In Pennsylvania where most of the work is that I've done the last 42 years are for Tom Comitta Associates has represented over a 115 municipalities as their planning consultant and delighted to be invited to work on this. And actually tonight we just have a very very brief presentation. At future meetings we'll come back with more detail.

And as I'm setting up these boards I just like to review with you on just three sheets of drawings that were put together too. I have sets here. So this packet has three sheets. Sheet one, sheet two, and sheet three. And they are very very simple. I mean they are not intended to illustrate any specific proposal for the actual development but more of a sensitivity toward and an understanding toward the property. I only have two left so I will. So in any event these three sheets are also enlarged. And the first of the three, sheet one of three is simply called Site Concept. It's actually the site context. And what we are showing on this Google Earth aerial illustration is sorry is simply the boundary of the 50 acres. The current condition has cultivated fields and the outline highlighted in orange is the farm complex and the color orange the historic LaGrange House. And otherwise just at a scale of one inch to 100th that we will show at other meetings an understanding of the property.

Right now we are just doing the site analysis. We are reading the historic resource reports that Tyce Strong Colander did. We've been to the site twice. Inside the building and around looking at the historic complex and the out buildings and just pretty much



touring the area, looking at the church and access and surrounding land use.

The second sheet, sheet two of three is just called Site Analysis. And again this is just an early version of it. But in terms of our overall analysis we were in collaboration with Bill and Bob and others talking about concepts that start with as Bill pointed out the historic house and potential adaptive reuse. What that potential adaptive reuse might be we are not exactly sure right now but something that would be integral to whatever might be proposed. We are also looking at accessibility to have a dash line that shows the potential for some type of a new loop.

In terms of differentiating the proposed uses thus far what we did after affirming that the view shed for the historic house would have to be very carefully reviewed, analyzed, nurtured, and so forth that there would be virtually no new development program that would interfere with that view shed. So from reporting and possibly just some attention to removing any vegetation that's not healthy that would obscure your view to the house and then planting additional plantings to enhance it that, you know, the heart of the sensitivity to the historic resource would be centered right around the LaGrange House.

Having said that to the east of it in the land that's highlighted village commercial and residential area potential what we are thinking of is that that would lend itself to that use and complementary to what is adjoining. And then we are also looking at the frontage enhancement area because we don't own the property in the front but admittedly it's from a different era. You know, it's

from the 50, 60 era of strip commercial development and something that we are trying to look at and say is there anyway to sweeten that, enhance it, beautify it in some way to set the stage for what's being proposed or what would be proposed behind it.

MR. FREEMARK: You don't own it?

MR. COMITTA: No. So that that's a concern because it's not a very graceful entry but it is what it is and we are going to take a look at that. On the west side of the view shed area of the LaGrange House itself is the largest portion of the 50 acre property. And whatever happens there we think it would be useful to have some type of landscaped edge that is attractive and complementary to anything in terms of the overall quality that's envisioned. And what we are looking at is a possible transition from a lower intensity residential use that would adjoin to a possible higher intensity residential area that would be to the north of that.

And then on sheet three just in terms of putting our toe in the water, yeah just a little baby step to think about it the color coded and shading starting with number one is the adaptive reuse of the LaGrange Historic House and Farm Complex and view shed enhancement. And that would continue to the north, northern extent of what's called here the New Loop Road.

And then number two the streetscape buffer at a portion to what we have shown to the scale which is to a 100 on the drawing. The so called village commercial mixed use area shaded in pink and then it's adjoin to what we are calling commercial enhancement area and then thereafter the two residential areas. One that would be

explored for townhomes and the second one for multi-family residential. What we need to do is actually take any of the proceeding plans, look at the best features of the other LaGrange residential, look at architectural design concepts, look at building concepts, and then come back to it at a later date with more detail. So all we wanted to do today is say that we are doing our homework and will be better prepared in upcoming months to come back in front of you. Thank you.

MS. BENSON: So this is the second portion of your presentation is really informational to us?

MR. COMMITTA: Yes.

MS. BENSON: And you will not expect any response from us at the business meeting?

MR. RHODUNDA: I don't think so. I mean if there are some general comments we'll certainly happy to hear anything about that. That's why we just wanted to introduce.

MS. BENSON: Okay.

MR. RHODUNDA: Where we are at now with this information.

MS. BENSON: But this is more informational?

MR. RHODUNDA: Yeah. We are not looking for any sort of vote or anything on that at the business meeting.

MS. BENSON: Yes.

MR. RHODUNDA: That's correct.

MS. BENSON: Yes.

MR. BROOK: Is it all right to ask questions of this part?

MS. BENSON: Oh yes it is.

MR. BROOK: May I?

MS. BENSON: I just wanted to clear that up. Yes. John.

MR. BROOK: Could you tell me a little bit more what you mean by for example village commercial and residential area potential. What kind of a thing do you envision?

MR. COMITTA: Sure. Well clearly over the last 60 years no one has given very much attention to the commercial strip environment along Route 40. It's all destination retail, individual curb cuts, non-distinguished buildings. And in fact poor positioning of buildings. Simply stated somebody just plunked down a whole bunch of commercial buildings over the last 50 or 60 years.

MR. BROOK: I think we agree with you on that.

MR. COMITTA: Yeah without really attention to what might be a more walkable and lets say tactile kind of commercial development. So in terms of lets just say in our 100 mile radius from where we are if someone talked about Peddlers Village in Lahaska, Pennsylvania where the buildings are more in a campus like arrangement. Or Old Bridge Village on Route 202 in Concord Township or any other commercial complex that is different then a conventional suburban sole curb cut destination franchise scape. And so what we are trying to determine is what would be a sweet arrangement of buildings, access, parking so it's more of a village commercial feel then same old same old commercial. .

MR. BROOK: Okay. And higher intensity residential area what's that mean? Townhouses?

MR. COMITTA: Well as indicated with the site analysis sheet the idea of lower intensity would be townhome and the higher intensity would probably be some type of multi-family or apartment

complex.

MR. BROOK: Okay.

MR. COMITTA: All the while I think in terms of building type scale proportion and sort of the detailing of the building that they would be complementary. It's just that one would be attached kind of vertical slices like a townhome would be and the apartment would kind of be complementary to the townhome but would be for rental.

MR. BROOK: Okay. May I continue?

MS. BENSON: Yes. Go ahead John.

MR. BROOK: The view shed of this historic home at one time the Board maybe it still does I don't know considered potentially all of this area part of the view shed.

MR. COMITTA: Okay.

MR. BROOK: But I do notice that unless I misinterpret what you've done here you have the view shed coming from the north rather than Route 40.

MR. COMITTA: Well the arrows are orienting in this direction from the south to north.

MR. BROOK: Oh okay. All right.

MR. COMITTA: Yeah.

MR. BROOK: So we go from narrow to wider rather than wider to narrow? Okay.

MR. COMITTA: And and, you know, to your point I think once we get a little bit more detail the question would be to what extent would that modify it? It's just that we are saying it needs to be recognized.

MR. BROOK: Yeah.

MR. COMITTA: How many feet on either end of that house that we are going to sit anything next to it is a delicate matter just so that there is a graceful transition from the LaGrange property per say to anything that's new.

MR. BROOK: Yeah. And I do, I do think that the view shed is important to the property.

MR. COMITTA: Absolutely.

MR. BROOK: But you have no further plans to talk about today on what you might use the historic property for?

MR. COMITTA: No. We went through the building and we talked about I'm going to just use the word clubhouse or community meeting room. Something integral to the new neighborhoods that people might be able to enjoy it in that way but that's as far as we got so far.

MR. BROOK: Okay. But it would probably, it would have to be something that would be financially supportive of the property.

MR. COMITTA: Correct.

MR. BROOK: Because it has not been well cared for. I mean I've been very disappointed.

MR. COMITTA: Agreed.

MR. BROOK: In the manner in which this property has been disregarded and abused. And that was the whole reason for this being made a historic overview area was this house. And if we wait much longer it won't be there. It will crumble into the earth.

MS. BENSON: Ken you had a comment, question?

MR. FREEMARK: Ken Freemark. This is a little bit off subject but I've had some experience with development along Route 40 a few

years back. And one thing that caused a real disturbance after the fact and continues as far as I'm concerned causing a disturbance this is just to alert you that this is history coming it could affect what looks like along here. DelDOT has come up with some scheme to create bike paths along Route 40 from apparently one end of 40 to the other. The bike paths consisted of a road blacktop. Okay. I mean and it exists in some areas. It's spotty. And when we ran into the problem to try to discourage it it went nowhere. And so what we have along 40 now is these little spots of bike paths. Every time somebody does a development they get trapped into this piece of bike path out of blacktop along Route 40. I'm just going to, I mean I'm sure that you but you know sometimes things don't get told until you are down stream a ways. I'm just alerting you to that. I don't know how that stands in there but that would have a major affect on what it would look like along here because it pushes that stuff back.

MR. COMITTA: Thank you for mentioning that. We'll check into that.

MR. FREEMARK: Yeah I'd do that. I mean I don't know where it stands because I haven't been involved in it for a few years.

MR. LOBDELL: Can I add something to that?

MR. FREEMARK: Yeah.

MR. LOBDELL: There is a.

MS. BENSON: If you'll come up and identify yourself again for the record. Sorry.

MR. LOBDELL: Scott Lobdell, Van Cleef. I can add the original plan that was done for the LaGrange residential it encompasses this

whole area and there was a bike path you were talking about the shared use path that DelDOT requires is actually recorded along the entire frontage so.

MR. FREEMARK: Okay. So it's already there?

MR. LOBDELL: Right. Yeah what we did with the County last year we actually worked it out with the County that as each portion is developed that that bike path will have to be put in so everything is connected all the way down.

MR. FREEMARK: And then the only comment to add to is do whatever you can to keep it from being blacktopped.

MR. LOBDELL: That's a, yeah, unfortunately our hands are tied by the material. But if there's a way we can sell it to DelDOT in a different manner.

MR. FREEMARK: In the front of this thing they have this strip that's ridiculous and blacktop is not going to get maintained. It's ugly to begin with.

MR. LOBDELL: Sure.

MR. FREEMARK: I mean it might be worthwhile to putting a little.

MR. LOBDELL: Yeah and that's something I think we can talk to DelDOT about to see if there are other options considering what we are trying to achieve here.

MR. FREEMARK: Yeah.

MS. BENSON: Steve.

MR. JOHNS: Have you read the archeological reports for this property?

MR. COMITTA: Not all of them but I did read the summary



report. So I read the summary report. I believe there are like six boxes that are in someone's attic. And then I got the summary report and I read it. And basically and I have it with me but what basically the summary of the report was focused on the house. That any presumption of artifacts over multiple years of cultivation unfortunately aren't there any more. And so that that's pretty much what the summary is.

MR. JOHNS: I wasn't involved in the original LaGrange project. But this property has come before us since I've been here. And when it came it was similar in that it had that loop road but there was very little density and I thought maybe I want to say six lots that were on that loop road. And during that presentation what I remember hearing is that that whole field left of the house where you have a higher intensity residential is important historically as far as possibly the skirmishes that occurred between the american forces and the british forces leading up to Coochs Bridge. And I could be wrong with that but there was some importance with that area and the view shed from the house across those fields was important and the road was an unacceptable.

MR. FREEMARK: Unacceptable yeah.

MR. JOHNS: Block to that view shed. And and basically that's why those six lots failed because that's how I remember it. And I'm not saying that that would happen again. You can bring anything you want in front of the Board. I'm just telling you what I remember the last time I saw this property was that I was thinking maybe you could put the road really down low and you would look over it and then the road wouldn't be the problem then. I'm just saying that

that's how I remember this property.

MR. FREEMARK: According if let me just follow up on that just to say.

MR. JOHNS: Sure.

MR. FREEMARK: Also that road was very contentious because the traffic came down this piece off of 896. It was a speedway to avoid the traffic light. And those people come down here and get to get on 40 and they are going to use this as a short cut to 40. So you are going to face that resistance so.

MR. JOHNS: I know DelDOT would love to see that road over there.

MR. FREEMARK: Yeah.

MR. JOHNS: They wanted to see it before. So I'm not, I'm just telling you I'm not saying it can't be done. I'm just telling you that.

MR. FREEMARK: Be aware of it.

MR. JOHNS: The last time that was an issue.

MR. COMMITTA: And to the points about the site in the final archeological evaluation by Tyce Strong Colander January 29, 2007 on page 27, item 525 summary of recommendations they had three and a concluding paragraph. Number one, none of the four areas that were investigated produced evidence of significant archeological features below the plow zone and, therefore, not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Number two, of the 16 features that were identified at the interface of plow zone and intact soil deposits only one was cultural in origin and was compromised by plowing to the degree

that it did not contain pertinent information.

And Number three, information to the plow zone is yielding redundant information for the chronology of prehistoric occupations. Whatever that means.

And then it concludes by saying for all the reasons listed in the report we recommend no further archeological investigation for the four locations described herein. So if there were some flags raised then we would follow but that's what the conclusion indicated.

MS. BENSON: There's also a report done by people interested in the Revolutionary War. You'll need to get all those reports and then you plot it out for us so we can see what your thinking about and where exactly.

MR. COMITTA: Okay. Thank you. And do you know who we could contact to get those reports?

MS. CESNA: You should have them. Bill you looked at the box of reports that I have. It's in there.

MR. RHODUNDA: Okay. We'll have to go back and double check. I know I've paged through a number of reports but the Department has a couple of boxes. We can go through that.

MR. COMITTA: Okay. Very good. Thank you.

MS. BENSON: Any other questions? Comments? Thank you.

MR. COMITTA: Thank you.

MR. RHODUNDA: Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you for your time.

MS. BENSON: We have only.

MR. BROOK: Madam Chairman.

MS. BENSON: Yes John.

MR. BROOK: Is that something that we should ask if anybody has any response to that in audience?

MS. BENSON: Well I don't think so because it's just a preliminary concept.

MR. BROOK: Okay.

MS. BENSON: Because we don't have anything to really to react to except to say we'll see you again. Yeah.

MR. BROOK: Okay.

MR. FREEMARK: I think it would be premature.

MS. BENSON: Yes. I think it would be.

MR. BROOK: Okay.

MR. FREEMARK: Thank you very much.

MR. RHODUNDA: Thanks for your time.

MS. WILLING: Back again.

MS. BENSON: Yes. Val we have only one other item on the agenda and that's public comment. Is there any?

MS. WILLING: Yeah. I like to speak at public comment. Nancy Willing from Historic Glasgow. Repunt some of my comments right now. This was a 236 acre property with many levels of historic importance over many centuries. And when it came to push and shove those of us who appreciate as a revolutionary war study probably was a little bit disappointed when it went through the New Castle County Council for its final vote because they were extremely focused, I remember particularly Stephanie McClellan leading the discussion on the prehistoric sites. And as I recall there were 13 significant sites identified in this 50 square, in this area here

and also appreciate that the view shed was considered to be the entire area. But most importantly the 13 sites that I think also in here because there was a school interested in this one and anyway the significant sites identified here I believe that by law would have to be mitigated fully. And so that was a financial hinderance to most developers on.

So I realize these are preliminary comments that were heard but the, of the 236 acres the original applicant was allowed to develop because preserving this section not just the resource of the house as we just heard, it is the resource of this farm property. You guys have it in your written reports that was what was expressed and promised to the public. We had to sweat out years and years of this. You know, the 236 acres this is what you guys decided. And I don't think that a Board that comes again can ignore the past decision of a Board. I don't think there's a fresh look at something that's so vital. I think the notes on the plan are there.

So that's kind of what I have to say except that I'm sorry that Mr. Nichols went into bankruptcy. I don't know how much this new owner paid for the property but if they didn't do due diligence at that time I mean that's not anybody else's fault but their own. So they are not entitled I don't believe to develop this land this way but we'll have to let that play out. Thank you very much.

MS. BENSON: Thank you. Any other comments? Anything else to come before the Board? If not is there a motion to adjourn?

MR. JOHNS: So moved.

MR. FREEMARK: Second.

MS. BENSON: All in favor?

. . . (Everybody said aye) . . .

MS. BENSON: Motion carries. (Whereupon this hearing was concluded at 6:30 p.m.).