

Planning Commission Minutes

Thursday, July 17, 2025 - 7:00 PM

Old Academy Building
315 Main Street
Odessa, DE

Those present at 7:00 P.M.:

- Amanda Russell, Chairperson
- Michael Callaghan
- Tom Carle
- Shelley Perry

Not Present:

- Bill Devlin

Also Attending:

- Harvey C. Smith, Jr. – Mayor
- Amy Marie Ottinger – Town Secretary
- Mike Irons – K Hovnanian Homes Division President
- Jonathan Contant – K Hovnanian Homes Land Planning Manager
- Pam Scott – Saul Ewing LLP Odessa Commons Land Use Counselor
- Charles Barnett – Morris & Ritchie Associates Principal Engineer
- (12) Town Residents and Interested Parties

I. Call to order – The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM.

II. Approval of Minutes

MOTION BY AMANDA RUSSELL, SECONDED BY SHELLEY PERRY, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM MAY 16, 2024 AS WRITTEN.

MOTION CARRIED. VOTE: 4 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTAIN

III. New Business

- a. K. Hovnanian Homes & Olde Odessa Ventures – Odessa Commons Preliminary Planned Development (PND) Review
 - Jonathan Contant, Land Planning Manager with K. Hovnanian Homes, provided the handout “Odessa Commons” dated July 17, 2025, attached hereto as Attachment A (*12-page handout*) to the commissioners.
 - Charlie Barnett, Principal Engineer with Morris & Ritchie Associates, presented an overview of the Odessa Commons Planned Neighborhood

Development (PND). They are presenting a preliminary plan to the town which has been reviewed by both the town engineer and the zoning administrator, attached hereto as Attachments B (*2-page letter*), C (*2-page letter*) and D (*6-page Architectural Design Manual*). Last week they were provided with comments from both entities, attached hereto as Attachments E (*2-page report*) & F (*2-page report*). They have reviewed the comments and provided letters in response to the town, attached hereto as Attachments G (*2-page letter*) & H (*3-page letter*). Mr. Barnett provided a brief overview of the streets, entrances, public utilities such as sewer and water, and overall landscaping design. He also discussed the approximate ½ acre of land to be dedicated to the town to be used for parking at the Memorial Park.

- Chair Amanda Russell raised the question of whether the open space on the plan would fall to the town for upkeep. The developers confirmed that it would not be the town, but the HOA that would do upkeep on open spaces. The town would only be responsible for the streets in the residential area which is a code requirement by the town. The proposed fountain on the commercial side would be privately maintained.
- The developers confirmed that since several traffic studies have been done in the area, a new traffic study will not be necessary. The entrance(s) will be established by DelDOT. As soon as town council provides an approval of the preliminary plan, the developer will begin the next stages working with DelDOT directly.
- Commissioner Shelley Perry reviewed the questions posed by the zoning administrator and the responses that were provided to the commission. She asked if berms would be incorporated in the overall design plan. The developer stated there will not be berms but instead there will be aluminum fences and brick masonry columns with heavy landscaping in both the residential and commercial areas. She asked if there would be a bus stop and where its location would be. The developer stated that DART determines bus stop locations which they believe will be located in the commercial portion, and not on Main Street/Rt 299.
- Stormwater management design will be reviewed by the New Castle County Conservation District and a plan with best practices will be incorporated.
- Amanda Russell brought up the parking area for the Memorial Park. The developers stated that they can make the land into a parking lot, but it will be up to DelDOT to determine if it can be connected to Rt 299. They will propose that to DelDOT and they will likely incorporate that into their entrance improvement plans. It was recommended that the citizens contact their local legislators to help the process along.

IV. Old Business – There was no old business.

V. Public Comment

- June Anderson (Leahy Street) asked questions about overall plan design and where sidewalks would be located. She also asked if there would be a connection to Mechanic Street. The engineer stated there would be no connection to Mechanic Street.
- Carole Coleman (High Street) asked about the number of homes and dimensions of the properties. She also asked if the number of homes would drop due to DelDOT traffic planning. The developer stated that DelDOT does not have the ability to control the housing numbers.
- Leon Kraemer (Leahy Street) asked if the Post Office will be able to provide service to all of the new homes. The developer stated that they may have to provide cluster boxes for mail delivery. The Mayor stated that in conversations with the postmaster, the town has been told that they have enough boxes to accommodate the projected growth.
- Mike Crilley (Leahy Street) asked if there is currently no investor for the hotel, and do they have investors lined up for the other businesses. Pam Scott replied that the commercial portion of the property is on the market, and they are actively marketing the community. He asked Mayor Smith if the fire house had weighed in on the project. The Mayor stated that they will once they receive the plans from the Fire Marshall's office.
- Ann Baker (Main Street) expressed concerns over the increased traffic that the project will bring to Main Street. There was additional discussion over traffic studies already performed by DelDOT and the study data.
- Meghan Mahoney (Cantwell Ave) asked about occupancy of the proposed hotel. The engineer stated a 91-room hotel is being proposed.

Chair Amanda Russell explained that next steps are to make a motion to move the project to Mayor & Council. If the commission does move the project forward tonight, the developers will need to provide updated drawings before they proceed to Mayor & Council. Council will then vote to enter into a development agreement.

MOTION BY AMANDA RUSSELL, SECONDED BY MICHAEL CALLAGHAN, TO MOVE THE PRELIMINARY DEVELOPMENT PLANS SUBMITTED FOR THE ODESSA COMMONS DEVELOPMENT, CONDITIONAL UPON THE REVISING OF THE PLANS TO INCLUDE THOSE COMMENTS PROVIDED IN THE TWO REPORTS SUBMITTED BY THE TOWN'S ENGINEER AND THE TOWN'S ZONING INSPECTOR, TO MAYOR & COUNCIL.

MOTION CARRIED. VOTE: 4 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTAIN

VI. Next Meeting Date and Time – Next meeting of the Planning Commission is Thursday, August 21, 2025 @ 7:00 PM.

VII. Adjournment

**MOTION BY AMANDA RUSSELL, SECONDED BY MICHAEL CALLAGHAN, TO
ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 7:43 PM.**

MOTION CARRIED. VOTE: 4 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTAIN