

CITY OF DOVER PLANNING COMMISSION
December 15, 2025

The Meeting of the City of Dover Planning Commission was held on Monday, December 15, 2025, at 7:00 PM as an In-Person Meeting and also using the phone/videoconferencing system Webex. The Meeting Session was conducted with Chair Mr. Witham presiding. Members present were Mr. Lewis, Mr. Roach (virtual), Mrs. Denney, Mrs. Maucher (virtual), Mr. Baldwin, Dr. Jones, Mr. Reaves (virtual), Mrs. Welsh, and Mr. Witham.

Staff members present were Mrs. Dawn Melson-Williams, Ms. Sharon Duca, Mr. Jason Lyon and Mrs. Kristen Mullaney.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mrs. Denney moved to approve the Agenda as presented, seconded by Mrs. Welsh and the motion was carried 9-0.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES OF OCTOBER 20, 2025

Mrs. Welsh moved to approve the Planning Commission Meeting Minutes of October 20, 2025, seconded by Mrs. Denney and the motion was carried 9-0.

COMMUNICATIONS & REPORTS

Mrs. Melson-Williams stated that the next Planning Commission regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 20, 2026. Monday is a holiday so your meeting will move to that Tuesday. She will let the Commission know that we do have four applications that have been filed for that evening and if there is no objection, she is recommending that we start that meeting at 6PM rather than 7PM. If that seems amenable to the Planning Commission by consensus, we will move forward with that timeframe. (There was no objection.)

Mrs. Melson-Williams provided an update on the regular City Council and various Committee meetings held on October 27 & 28, 2025; November 10, 2025; November 24 & 25, 2025 and December 8 & 9, 2025.

Mrs. Melson-Williams stated that we are winding down the calendar year. We've stayed pretty busy even though the holidays are approaching. One thing that they did prepare for the Commission this evening is a Draft Schedule of Deadlines and Meetings for 2026. This outlines the application deadline process, the involved City Council and various Development Advisory Committee Meetings as well as the Planning Commission Meetings for the year. Your Planning Commission Meetings are scheduled to remain on the third Monday of each month unless that Monday is a holiday which happens in January and February. With this, you can see the schedule for the upcoming year. If there are no concerns with it, we will work to finalize it and work with our applicants as they seek to appear before you.

OPENING REMARKS CONCERNING DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS

Mrs. Melson-Williams presented the audience information on policies and procedures for the In-Person Meeting and Virtual Meeting using the Webex system.

OLD BUSINESS

Requests for Extensions of Planning Commission Approval: None

NEW APPLICATIONS

S-25-07 Revised The Old Post at 55 Loockerman Plaza – Public Hearing and Review of a Revised Site Development Plan Application and associated Revised Architectural Review Certification for redevelopment of the Old Dover Post Office property consisting of 1.267 acres for a mixed-use project known as The Old Post. The project involves the demolition of the rear warehouse portion of the existing building and adaptive re-use of part of the front 4,560 SF portion of the building for restaurant, commercial retail or business space and apartment units. In this Revision are proposed increases in apartment unit count from 36 to 42 units and architectural changes consisting of a second floor addition to the front wings of the building and a four-story 43,092 SF building addition proposed for a total forty-two (42) residential apartment units and with parking and other site improvements. The property is zoned C-2 (Central Commercial Zone), subject to the SWPOZ (Source Water Protection Overlay Zone), and subject to the H (Historic District Zone). The property is located on the north side of Loockerman Plaza and adjacent to Innovation Way. The owner of record is Old Post, LLC. Property Address: 55 Loockerman Plaza. Tax Parcel: ED-05-077.05-04-53.00-000. Council District 4. *For Consideration: Revised Parking Strategy Statement and Active Recreation Area Plan. This Revised project is the subject of HI-25-01 Revised The Old Post for Historic District Commission Review and Recommendation on the Architectural Review Certification on November 20, 2025.*

Representative: Mr. Frank DiMondi, Old Post, LLC; Mr. Chad Warren, Davis, Bowen & Friedel; Mr. Sal Leone, Project Manager (virtual), Mr. Freddy Bada, Moonlight Architecture (virtual)

Mrs. Melson-Williams stated that the image on the screen that you see is the proposed concept for the Old Post Project. This is a revised version of that Plan. It's located at 55 Loockerman Plaza. This project appeared before the Commission earlier this year; however, they have made revisions to their Plan, hence needing to reappear before both the Historic District Commission and the Planning Commission. The property at 55 Loockerman Plaza was previously owned by the City of Dover and is now in the ownership of the Old Post LLC, so some of our information may not have fully been updated in our Reports. The property is zoned C-2 (Central Commercial Zone) and is within the H (Historic District Zone). The property also lies within the SWPOZ (Source Water Protection Overlay Zone) for a portion of the site. That does not limit the proposed uses in any way for this project. Tonight, there are a number of things that you will need to consider as part of the application. First, she wants to talk a little bit about the revisions. The proposed project would demolish the rear warehouse portion of the building, keeping the front portion of what we knew as the Post Office, but with additions of a second floor on what she calls the front wings of the building. Then the building would be expanding with a rear addition of four stories. Previously, the rear addition was proposed at three stories and those second floor wings were not part of the concept. In changing the form of the building, they are increasing the number of apartments from 36 to 42 units. With these revisions to the architecture, it did reappear before the Historic District Commission at their November 20, 2025 Meeting for

consideration of its Architectural Review Certification. There was a separate Report that was provided from the Historic District Commission to Planning Commission. The Planning Commission has that in their packet but in summary, the Historic District Commission considered the proposal and is recommending that the Planning Commission grant approval to the Architectural Review Certification for the project, having reviewed the *Design Standards and Guidelines for the City of Dover's Historic District Zone*. The details of their recommendations are found in that separate Report. The next image on the screen shows the colorized version of the Site Plan. She did include that plan on the Commissioner's desks this evening. It was updated most recently associated with the Active Recreation Area Plan. You can see at the top of the page is Innovation Way, an existing street and that it where we take access to the rear parking lot. The building is shown in the "L" red color. It has a rear parking lot and then a parking lot area on its west side. The main front of the building still faces Loockerman Plaza and that is on the right hand side of this image. There are a couple of different access points into the building for focusing on the apartment aspects of it. This image also shows concepts for where there will be green space on the property including tree planting to meet those requirements and then a sense of some of the Active Recreation components that are required for this project. The Active Recreation Area Plan was revised with this Plan. There is a separate Report from when it was considered by the City Council's Parks, Recreation and Community Enhancement Committee. But in summary for the 42 apartments, they need to provide a minimum of 75 SF of Active Recreation per dwelling unit with a minimum of 2,500 SF provided on the site. They are meeting the area requirements by providing the following items. Those include two zen garden areas; one is on the east side of the building and you can see that there is a little bit of a meandering path. There is an intention to place benches and a place for a yoga station. Likewise, on the west side of the building, there is another green space area with benches. Interior to the building, there are places for bike storage and then also a gym space that is located on the second floor of the front portion of the building. With the Active Recreation concepts there, the Committee did, as noted, recommend approval. They noted the proximity of this location to amenities that you could walk to such as the Library and the other path systems that are nearby at Silver Lake. There was some notation about planting the right tree in the right locations, especially if there is over head electric lines in the area. But in general, that Committee recommended to accept the Active Recreation Area Report per the Active Recreation Area Report that prepared by Staff which has some additional comments really about clarifying certain aspects of things like surfaces for a walking path in that yoga area and then just more detailing as the Plan moves forward to clearly identify all of those locations. With this property the one other thing you need to consider is the Parking Strategy Statement. In the C-2 (Central Commercial Zone) per our recent changes to that zone, there is no longer a parking requirement based on use. The applicant, in order to make use of that, has to provide a Strategy Statement and they have done so. There is just over 60 spaces located on the property and then with the transfer of ownership, they also negotiated an easement to allow the use of that easternmost row of parking that's adjacent to their property that's actually on the parcel where the Library stands. So, that is under easement with the City of Dover to allow this property to utilize those spaces. Then of course, this is in the Downtown so there is a variety of other parking opportunities on-street and otherwise in the overall vicinity. The DAC Report does go on to include the comments from the Planning Office directly about the details for the project. There are additional comments from the other reviewing agencies including the Department of Public Works who will have to be looking at the entrance design from Innovation Way, the Department of Water/Wastewater,

and the Office of the Fire Marshal. There was a copy inserted of DelDOT's earlier comments regarding this site and then also comments from the Kent Conservation District and the Dover Kent County MPO. With this, it is a Site Plan for consideration and also involves your feelings on the Parking Strategy Statement as it's been revised, and the Revised Architectural Review Certification which deals with the construction onsite and the building. It also needs to address the parking to building separation reduction that is necessary at the rear of the building. Some of our Codes require that distance to be fifteen (15) feet and they've got something around eleven (11) feet at this point in time. Staff is recommending approval of that by finding where it is on the building and that it allows the continued adapted reuse of an existing building in a Historic District. The last component for consideration is their Active Recreation Area Plan.

Mr. DiMondi stated that they are excited about this project. Obviously, it's been a long time coming for what was going to happen with the old Post Office. He remembers when he used to visit there with his father to get their mail. Some of the other partners have also been in Dover a long time and have had fathers who have had successful businesses in Dover. They did the same thing, so we are kind of excited. When we won the bid, we competed against nine or ten other bidders to get the property and one of the things that we did promise was to try and keep the front of the Post Office looking similar to the way it was when he used to walk in in the 1960's with his father to get the mail. So he thinks that they have kind of kept that to be quite honest. You are going to walk up to the building and it's going to look kind of like the old post office but it's going to have a little bit of a modern touch to it; especially the tower in the back. When you look at it from the side, it will have a much different view but we are pretty excited about the design and how it came out. It's got 42 apartments and downstairs, they have about 4,500 SF of commercial space that will hopefully be a restaurant or two or maybe a meeting space with some patios out front where you could maybe have some outside dining with some umbrellas to help out not only our residents but also our Legislators or people who want to go across the street to have a meeting or get something to eat. We think we've got a pretty good plan. We recognize that it is kind of the gateway; we call it the "new gateway to Dover." It is going to be the first really big new building that you are going to see as you come in down the boulevard. We take a lot of pride in the project and we look forward to getting started.

Mr. Lewis asked the applicant to speak about how they mentioned keeping the front of the building impacted and the parking spaces available by keeping the esthetic of the front; one of the letters here mentions that. Responding to Mr. Lewis, Mr. DiMondi stated that he doesn't think the front staying the same has altered the parking to be quite honest. The parking was on the sides on the east and west wings and then the majority of the parking is from the back and side of the building anyways. It had a large parking area where the trucks were coming in to deliver the mail.

Mr. Warren stated that there are 62 parking spots to the rear of the building and the letter was written in regards to the Fire Marshal and that separation distance. It is just keeping the front and original portion of the Post Office there but constructing our apartment building to the rear. We are really tight with space from the rear of the building to the parking so we are proposing to reduce that distance from fifteen (15) feet down to eleven (11) feet. We have spoken with the Fire Marshal and since there is two doors and three windows that just access the stairs of the building, they weren't too concerned about it. They said their access to the building would be

from the sides; either from Innovation Way or from the parking spaces to the west side of the building. So, the Fire Marshal didn't see any issue with it that we are aware of.

Mrs. Melson-Williams stated that going forward a few slides shows a clearer version of the parking spaces. The row of parking that's there that is where you see the shading for the handicapped spaces is the row we are talking about and its distance to the building. Between that parking and the building, there is a sidewalk and then the steps or the ramp system to get to that door.

Mr. Lewis stated that the reason he brought it up was because it was one the list of things of restrictions that you guys were doing that impacted the parking and he was curious about how something in the front would impact the back.

Mr. Witham asked if there was one major reason or a series of reasons which required you to revise your plans. Responding to Mr. Witham, Mr. DiMondi stated that they had a change in ownership of the LLC which allowed us to kind of go back and look at the original design. One of the things that they are running into was the expense of the project and what we were able to squeeze out of it when it came to apartment sizes and how many apartments we got. So, we kind of went back to the drawing board and decided if they could go up on the wings on the front of the building and pick up some extra apartments which is exactly what we did. Then it became a parking issue if we went up another floor from three to four stories to still get enough parking. Based on what we did, we sort of maximized the site and now we can't fit anything more on there even if we wanted to.

Dr. Jones asked who they plan to market your apartments. Responding to Dr. Jones, Mr. DiMondi stated that they will be priced at market rate.

Dr. Jones stated that they are trying to attract what kind of population. Responding to Dr. Jones, Mr. DiMondi stated that obviously our goal is to support the employment in Downtown Dover. You've got the Courthouse, the Hospital expanding so you may get nurses or doctors. During the DAC Meeting, we heard the Dover Air Force Base get excited saying they would like to have some apartments in Downtown Dover. So maybe some military members would like to live there.

Dr. Jones stated that the restaurant that you are hoping to have; what kind of restaurant? Responding to Dr. Jones, Mr. DiMondi stated it would not be fast food. Obviously, he can't talk too much about it. We have had some conversations but we are kind of a ways off. If we are gracious enough to get your approval tonight, we will maybe start demolition in the late winter or early spring. It's going to take us about a year to build so we are quite a ways out before we can really get into any kind of negotiations but to answer your question, it would be nice to get a breakfast spot or somewhere that serves breakfast and lunch or maybe a coffee shop of some sort or something like that.

Dr. Jones asked if their Active Recreation Area Plan, will it include anything for children or are you certain that there will be no children in the apartments. Responding to Dr. Jones, Mr. DiMondi stated that is a good question because when we changed our design up, we went away

from a bunch of studios and increased it so that we have some two and three bedroom apartments so we do expect that we will get some families in this building. He would have to go back and look at that because that is a great question. Maybe in the gym we can offer something for the kids. He knows that outside there is a little zen garden on the right and they've got benches and stuff out there, but from a recreational standpoint we would have to go back and check that out.

Dr. Jones stated that she would like to see that because with the attraction of perhaps a small family, you would need something.

Mr. Witham stated that he was wondering how they were going to make the adjustment to change the slope on the ramp. How is that going to be configured? Responding to Mr. Witham, Mr. Warren stated that the previous design included some stairs from a large hallway to get into the gym which they had plenty of room and they were able to expand those stairs into a ramp to accommodate access that way.

Mr. Witham asked if there won't be any stairs or is the ramp in addition to the stairs? Responding to Mr. Witham, Mr. Warren stated that it will be mainly a ramp. It will be only a ramp.

Mr. Witham opened a public hearing.

Mr. Zach Prebula – Kent Economic Partnership 555 Bay Road Dover, DE 19901

Mr. Prebula stated that they are the economic development organization for Kent County and we focus on business attraction and also supporting businesses looking to expand. This project would be a great addition to Downtown as it adds commercial space to help attract businesses while also providing additional housing opportunities for residents. And we ask the Commission to please support this project.

Mr. Freddie Bada – Moonlight Architecture

Mr. Bada stated that they are the project architects and they have taken a lot of efforts to try and enhance the look of the building to compliment the Downtown architecture, yet keep the historic aspect of the building. So even though we are tearing off parts of the sides of the building and going up another story, we have tried to keep that historic look at not alter from the Loockerman Street perspective.

Mr. Witham closed the public hearing.

Mrs. Melson-Williams stated that this is noted as a Revised Site Development Plan. For your consideration is their Parking Strategy Statement as revised, the revised Architectural Review Certification including the request to allow that parking to building separation reduction distance. The Architectural Review Certification was recommended by the Historic District Commission subject to that Report and its conditions and then you also have the Revised Active Recreation Area Plan, again as recommended by the Parks and Rec Committee and forwarded to you.

Mrs. Denney moved to approve S-25-07 which would also include the Parking Strategy

Statement as well as the Active Recreation Area Plan. She thinks this is very well thought out and she is sure this was an extra expense to have the brick side and all but, she thinks that this building as we are seeing it just really lends itself to the area, the architecture and the historic aspect of the City of Dover; the Capital City of the State that started the Nation.

Mr. Witham asked Mrs. Denney to clarify in the motion if she approves the revised Architectural Review Certification as well.

Mrs. Denney moved to approve S-25-07 which would also include the Parking Strategy Statement as well as the Active Recreation Area Plan. She thinks this is very well thoughtout and she is sure this was an extra expense to have the brick side and all but, she thinks that this building as we are seeing it just really lends itself to the area, the architecture and the historic aspect of the City of Dover; the Capital City of the State that started the Nation and also including the Architectural Review Certification. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Welsh and the motion was carried 9-0 by roll call vote. Mrs. Denney voting yes; in keeping with her motion. She thinks this is a lovely addition and change and it somewhat saves at least the front façade of the Post Office. Mrs. Maucher voting yes; based on DAC comments. Mr. Baldwin voting yes; it will be a great addition. Dr. Jones voting yes; it seems like it's going to be an exciting project and she hopes there will be consideration for the inclusion of children in the active recreation area. Mr. Reaves voting yes; for reasons previously stated. Mrs. Welsh voting yes; for reasons previously stated. Mr. Lewis voting yes. Mr. Roach voting yes. Mr. Witham voting yes; it's an excellent use of a valuable resource in Dover and as the applicant stated, it opens the gateway to the Downtown Area which he thinks is going to be very helpful. He would love to see a flagpole; he doesn't know whether or not that is in the plans.

NEW BUSINESS

No items of New Business.

PUBLIC COMMENTS OPPORTUNITY

No members of the public spoke.

Meeting adjourned at 7:54 PM.

Sincerely,

Kristen Mullaney
Secretary