



CIVIC LEAGUE For New Castle County

Informed Citizens for Sound County Growth

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**FEBRUARY
2008**

COUNTY COMMENTS

CIVIC LEAGUE FOR NEW CASTLE COUNTY
Informed Citizens for Sound County Growth

Tuesday, February 19, 2008

MEETING

7:00 PM at the Paul Sweeney Public Safety Building
3601 N. duPont Hwy
(Rte 13 South of DMV, North of Gracelawn Cemetery)

AGENDA

Alternative Energy Sources

Keep Our Lights Burning

New Castle County is going to need more electricity to avoid future brown-outs. Should we get this added power from Delmarva or Bluewater Wind?

Come to our Civic League meeting on February 19, at 7:00 pm in the New Castle County Public Service Building, conveniently located on route 13 South. Hear the fascinating proposals and ask questions of our two presenters:

Glen Moore, Vice President, Delmarva Power
Rob Propes, Project Director, Bluewater Wind

They will detail their plans for providing more electricity to meet our projected future needs. But first! Briefly visit their websites: Delmarva.com & Bluewaterwind.com

You'll be pleased and rewarded with the animation and information there. Plus you'll be prepared with questions to ask and observations to share at the meeting.

For the latest updates, meeting delays
or cancellations due to inclement weather,
check our website:

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STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLE

- ◆ Monitor and selectively evaluate government actions including laws, regulations and policy.
- ◆ Provide appropriate forums for informing as well as soliciting input from the public.
- ◆ Establish positions based on responsible studies and consistent with the aims and purpose of the organization.
- ◆ Advocate these positions.

Founded in 1962, the Civic League is non-profit volunteer organization, which studies and illuminates County and State government actions concerning comprehensive developments and the quality of life and is a vocal advocate of relevant positions.

County Comments is the official publication of the Civic League for New Castle County.

Dan Bockover,
President

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Find New Road Funds or Cut Costs

The recently reported delay in highway improvement projects due to a DeIDOT shortfall of funds may provide an opportunity to re-think them and cut their cost.

WILMAPCO has already endorsed consideration of leasing our roads to finance the proposed projects. Perhaps sale of the roads and imposition of new tolls won't be necessary however, if costs can be substantially lowered.

Highway designers don't welcome questions about their proposals though they will admit being subject to pressures other than pure ideal engineering considerations. With this thought in mind, here are four projects about which, admittedly un-professional, cost-cutting questions might be asked :

- ◆ Indian River Bridge. Can this local crossing be moved slightly inland to shorten the structure and avoid the pounding waves at the inlet entrance.
- ◆ Re-routing 301. With the addition of a small by-pass around Middletown, can this road be returned to its original pathway down 896 connecting with I-95 at Newark.
- ◆ Connecting DE 1 & I-95. Is a gigantic over-arching structure needed at this junction if traffic can be reduced by bringing 301 traffic straight into the Newark interchange.
- ◆ Re-connecting 202 & I-95. Can a simpler design be utilized based on traffic limiting capacity of adjacent Brandywine River bridge.

The Civic League is genuinely concerned about the long term wisdom of leasing or selling our roads to an outside profit-making entity.

Reassuring Energy Sources

Residents of New Castle County should be comfortable with the knowledge they are surrounded with an abundance of energy resources beyond reliance on imported oil.

Here are few “for instances”.

Right under our feet is a practically inexhaustible source of heating and cooling for our homes and businesses. It’s geothermal and it has only begun to be tapped. Recall that the interior of the earth is blazing hot and is predicted to stay that way for thousands of years. This heat begins to diminish only as it approaches the surface. That’s why *U. S. News & World Report* in their Jan. 17, 2008 issue reported the feasibility of drilling only four 150-foot deep wells to provide year-round heating and cooling for a home. Nothing needs to be invented; off-the-shelf equipment is readily available. The brand new New Castle Public Safety Building is entirely heated and cooled by geothermal.

Solar is increasingly being employed as a basic energy resource. Major advances are being made almost daily, with many of the innovations stemming from pioneering work at the University of Delaware. While solar only works when the sun is shining, its heat can be stored for use during hours of darkness. Inexhaustible, again, is the word that comes to mind when contemplating the harnessing of the sun for solar energy.

Natural gas is reportedly in abundant supply, perhaps for a few hundred years to come. More gas is available domestically than is generally realized, including from dozens of small wells in western Pennsylvania. A pipeline is proposed to bring gas down from Alaska. BP wants to bring in liquefied natural gas by ships docking across from Claymont, or perhaps elsewhere nearby.

John W. Rich Jr. is awaiting word on federal assistance in building a billion dollar plant to convert coal into diesel fuel on a mountaintop in nearby Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania, according to the January 14, 2008 issue of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. Around the world there is a super abundance of coal, though admittedly, a cleanliness concern needs to be resolved before substantially increased use will be acceptable.

Off the coast of Rehoboth Beach lies the potential for harnessing the wind to become a major supplier of electricity for New Castle County. The technology has been perfected for placing 150 wind turbines on towers a few miles out in the bay. Being analyzed now is the capital cost requiring a twenty-five year commitment for financing and a slightly higher than current cost per kilowatt-hour to cover operating expenses.

In the background of all these alternate energy possibilities is the unpredictable price of oil from the middle-east. Consider that the cost of producing oil now varies from a reported \$1 a barrel for oil almost bubbling from the earth in the middle-east, to \$22 a barrel coaxing oil from their depths in Venezuela, to \$28 a barrel releasing oil from the abundant tar sands in Canada. At any moment middle-east governments can afford to reduce their selling price per barrel. This possibility slows adoption of capital-intensive alternate energy solutions on the threshold of benefitting New Castle County residents.

Have a Sidewalk

You too can have a sidewalk if your driveway or development’s entrance fronts on a connector road in New Castle County. That is, if you are tenacious and willing to anticipate obstacles.

Success will come easier and faster with the support of your civic association, followed by the backing your area civic umbrella group, such as CCOBH (Council of Civic Organizations of Brandywine Hundred). When evaluating your request, DelDOT will want assurance that the community agrees that a sidewalk is desired.

Don’t overlook gaining the support from the array of users standing to benefit. These can include mothers wheeling a stroller, disabled people using motorized wheelchairs, homeowners walking dogs, children biking, the health-conscious walkers, the hungry heading for nearby restaurants, the lonely out socializing, shoppers heading for stores, and an endless stream of others – freed at last from the need to fire-up their car for just a brief jaunt – and contributing to clean air in the process.

You’ll discover many people want sidewalks but never believed obtaining them was possible. They need you to galvanize their support.

You can make it easier for officials to say yes to your proposal if you do some homework in advance. For example, someone needs to find out who owns the land needed. You may discover the state already owns the land, even though it is currently used for portions of lawns. You can contact New Castle County Land Use Department or DelDOT to see mapping.

Remember that a sidewalk or paved pathway can bend around trees and other obstructions. Keep this in mind when reviewing how wide a strip of land may be needed and who owns it. Yes, additional land can be purchased from current owners if needed.

DelDOT typically does not fund sidewalk construction unless the sidewalk is part of a larger project in an area, but fortunately there are other sources of funding for your project. Your sidewalk might be eligible for funding through the DelDOT Transportation Enhancement Program on a partial reimbursement basis with a match of 2 - 20 percent. You can also call your state legislator and ask about funding your sidewalk through their Community Transportation Fund – which is among the allowable uses for the fund.

If getting a sidewalk was easy, everyone would have already done it. Some issues may come up including total cost for land acquisition, drainage and other engineering challenges, sidewalk maintenance including snow removal, and lawsuit liabilities. If you anticipate these issues and develop answers early on, you will build strong support for your project.

Want to express **YOUR** opinion on any of these topics?

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