

FORT DUPONT REDEVELOPMENT AND PRESERVATION CORPORATION
STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING

The Fort Dupont Redevelopment and Preservation Corporation (FDRPC) Strategic Planning Committee meeting was held via Zoom with the anchor location at the FDRPC office at 260 Old Elm Avenue, Delaware City, Delaware on March 15, 2023 with Chair John McMahon presiding. Committee members present were Dr. Courtney Stewart (Office of Management and Budget), Mr. David Edgell (Office of State Planning Coordination), Mr. Michael Graci (Resident of Fort DuPont), and Ms. Wendy Rogers (Resident of Fort DuPont).

Mr. Tim Slavin, Executive Director, was also present. Others present were Ms. Sheila Bravo, President and CEO, and Mr. Earl Sissell, Vice President of Consulting, of the Delaware Alliance for Nonprofit Advancement (DANA), and Ms. Susan Detwiler, a DANA related consultant.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair McMahon called the Fort DuPont Redevelopment and Preservation Corporation (FDRPC) Strategic Planning Committee meeting to order at 2:32 p.m.

INTRODUCTIONS

Mr. McMahon, Mr. Slavin, Dr. Stewart, Mr. Edgell, Ms. Rogers, Ms. Bravo, Mr. Sissell, Ms. Detwiler, and Mr. Graci introduced themselves and briefly provided their background information.

OVERVIEW OF THE PLANNING PROCESS (SHEILA BRAVO AND EARL SISSELL)

Ms. Sheila Bravo, President and CEO of the Delaware Alliance for Nonprofit Advancement (DANA), provided an overview of the planning process. She advised that the first part of the process is exploratory and includes having an opportunity to listen to the community, the Board members, the partners in the town and other Fort DuPont partners to help the board get perspective on what people are thinking about the organization and its future endeavors. Ms. Bravo stated that the inquiry would include interviews, focus groups, a town hall, and an online survey. She advised that the interviews can help to inform the focus groups, the focus groups help to inform the town hall and the town hall conversations help to inform the survey.

Ms. Bravo advised that they hoped to:

- Develop a list of people to participate in one-on-one interviews and to develop the questions to be asked.
- Decide who they want to participate in the focus groups so that they can start to schedule meetings.
- Schedule a town hall meeting.
- Understand how involved the committee members want to be in the different activities.

Ms. Bravo advised that after they gather the information they will be working with the committee and, when appropriate, the Board to start to identify whether or not they want to revise the purpose, identify the vision, talk about the values of the organization, decide on strategic outcomes that they would like to see over the next five years and then develop a strategy. The work of the planned development comes after they have received input from the community. Ms. Bravo noted that they use a wide array of ways of listening so that they can ensure that they are capturing the diverse perspectives of stakeholders for Fort DuPont.

Mr. David Edgell asked if this was a process DANA had successfully used with other similar boards and why DANA selected this particular process for the Fort DuPont Redevelopment and Preservation Corporation's Board. Responding, Ms. Bravo advised that many of their clients like to have some type of stakeholder input. The breadth and scope of how they do that outreach tends to depend on reputation and identity. For example, she noted that she worked with an organization a couple of years ago that had a lot of community concerns because of a leadership change. They used the process to really listen to what the community's hopes and dreams were for the organization and that helped identify the kind of leader that they wanted and informed the search process. Ms. Bravo advised that it has also been done with organizations that have not talked to the community in a while and they want to make sure that what they think they should be doing is still what the community thinks they should be doing. Mr. Earl Sissell, Vice President of Consulting with the Delaware Alliance for Nonprofit Advancement (DANA), stated that the history of Fort DuPont helped shape the way they looked at it in terms of wanting to provide input from as many of the organizations and constituents as possible so that the plan that is developed can serve as a bridge in building the relationship with the community and the entire community has a feeling for what Fort DuPont is, what it values and where you want to take the organization over the next several years so that history also informed how they selected the various groups and the structure of the data gathering.

Members reviewed the list of individuals that DANA would be contacting to schedule interviews, as follows: John McMahan, Kurt Foreman, Secretary Sean Garvin, David Baylor, Ruth Ann Jones, Courtney Stewart, Senator Nicole Poore, Representative Melissa Minor Brown, Representative Valerie Longhurst, and Delaware City Mayor Paul Johnson. Mr. McMahan advised that he could be removed from the list and that he was more interested in learning what the community is experiencing and thinking and getting an idea of how they think FDRPC is progressing. Mr. Slavin noted that his impression of the list was to give names that could suggest people for the focus groups as well and they could populate a lot deeper into the community. That is why the mayor and the city manager, as well as the elected officials from the area were included.

Ms. Detwiler advised that the interviews were confidential and the results will not identify who said what. Ms. Bravo stated that this was a good time to bring in people who might not love the Board because it allows them a chance to participate early in the process to help them understand where there may be some areas that they will need to explore further, either in the focus groups or town hall. The first 15 interviews are really helping to shape the kinds of questions and conversations that they will have in the future.

Dr. Courtney Stewart suggested interviewing or getting feedback from either Governor Carney or his chief of staff, Mr. John Starkey, because the FDRPC is receiving most of its funding through the state. She offered to contact Mr. Starkey in advance to let him know that DANA would be contacting him.

Referring to the contact list, Mr. Edgell suggested that the questions that are going to be asked and the purpose of the interview might be important for some of the people on the list. For example, Mr. Kurt Foreman has been on the Board a relatively short time and if you are asking questions about businesses and development and where the FDRPC needs to go in the future, he might be a really critical voice to help them from an almost outside perspective. Mr. Edgell noted, on the other hand, if they are looking for a lot of history, Mr. Foreman may not have it, but he might have the perspective and the connections for what the future is going to be. He thought that maybe Mayor Johnson or Mr. Baylor might suggest one or two local community members who might be helpful, noting that it would be interesting to hear how the FDRPC is perceived on the Delaware City side of things. Additionally, he thought having Ms. Wendy Rogers or Mr. Mike Graci, who have been residents of Fort DuPont for some period of time, would give both perspectives and that is critical to helping them identify if there is a real divide between

the town and the FDRPC, what that divide is, what the perception is, and how to address it in the future through this planning process.

Chair McMahon stated that he definitely thought they needed at least two residents of the city. He advised that he was not too worried about the City Council or city administration, but that he wanted to know what was percolating with the city residents themselves with respect to what FDRPC was doing or what they intend to do. Chair McMahon suggested that one of those people would be the Chief of the fire department, who seems to be very much informed of everything that is transpiring, and the gentleman from the planning committee who comes to almost all of the FDRPC meetings and certainly is involved. Mr. Slavin advised that the President of the fire company is Mr. Wally Poppe and he would be a good resource. He also advised that Mr. Tim Dilliplane was a former Board member and the chairman of the Planning Council. Chair McMahon also suggested interviewing Ms. Susan Frank and Mr. Bryon Short, the previous two chairs of the FDRPC. Ms. Bravo advised that it would be helpful to have more than 15 names in the event that some people were unavailable for interviews.

Ms. Bravo advised that the interview questions would help them understand what the relationship is with Fort DuPont and they will ask them to describe in their own words what they believe Fort Dupont's mission is, what they believe the past successes have been, what some of the challenges have been, what they would like to see five years from now, and what they think might need to take place to achieve those dreams. She noted that they would also ask the interviewees who else they recommend DANA speak to or invite to the focus groups and any other considerations they think that the Board should make while planning for the future of Fort DuPont.

Chair McMahon thought it was important to capture the attitude amongst the residents of Fort DuPont and Delaware City after the transition from the last board to this board and, more importantly, the transition to Mr. Slavin as the Executive Director. He commended Mr. Slavin on the absolutely incredible job he has done. Chair McMahon stated that he would like to know if the community understands what Mr. Slavin and the Board have done, and whether they are going in the right direction instead of throwing barriers up in front of each other. Ms. Bravo suggested asking the residents to describe the relationship between Fort DuPont and Delaware City and then asking if the relationship has changed with Tim Slavin coming on board. Mr. Slavin suggested reframing the question by asking how they can close the chapter that came to a conclusion last year and transition to this new chapter. He noted that the previous Executive Director will soon be gone from the position for one year and, on July 1st, he will be in the new position for one year. Mr. Slavin stated that he would like to know how they are doing building the trust of the community so that they can change that narrative.

Mr. Edgell stated that they have a new Board, a new Board Chair, a new Executive Director, and there was a distinct change that was legislatively and internally driven. He noted that there have definitely been two chapters and they are now in chapter two looking forward to the future. Mr. Edgell stated that there was definitely a clear change that occurred about a year ago and he would like to know what has been different, how they are doing, what their impressions are, and what they are looking for in five years. Are they on track in the right direction to get to where the individuals think they ought to be going and, if not, that would be good to hear because that might help with the focus group questions and other introspection.

Mr. Edgell definitely thought there was a question to be generated from this very distinct change in course that was brewing for quite a while.

Mr. Sissell suggested that they could ask what impact they sense has resulted from a leadership change at Fort DuPont, followed on by what their hopes would be for the relationship between Fort DuPont, its

residents, and the city going forward. One is about a change now, and the other is about what might be their hopes for the future in terms of what they want to see as a relationship between all of the entities. Mr. Edgell thought another question could be what do they want Fort DuPont to be in five years. Chair McMahon suggested a three-to-seven-year window to determine the community's expectations and how they will get there.

Mr. Graci asked if they wanted to try to identify from the focus groups or interviews what the top five issues or concerns were and what the top five wishes or enhancements were over the next so many years for both the residents of Delaware City and Fort DuPont and how they should be prioritized because they might have different concerns or challenges and different objectives. Ms. Bravo advised that they had suggested three focus groups of about 90 minutes each. She stated that it might make sense for one group to be residents of Fort Pont and another group to be residents of Delaware City.

Mr. Slavin stated that there seemed to be an impression that there was a chasm between the residents of Fort DuPont and the residents of Delaware City and, in his opinion, that was not the case. Both have welcomed each other and made a lot of inroads so that there is a seamlessness in some ways. Mr. Slavin suggested that it may be a community building opportunity if they had two focus groups with a mix of people living in Delaware City proper or on the Fort DuPont campus.

Ms. Bravo suggested that two of the focus groups could be a mix of residents and the third focus group could be with professional partners or people in official positions because the conversation they may have might be different than the people who live there.

Ms. Detwiler advised that in the past they have had the focus groups with a general topic for each one and then the people who were interested in that particular topic would sign up for that one. Responding to Mr. Edgell, Ms. Bravo stated that they would try to get people who have insights and knowledge that they want to intentionally glean from so they have typically done invitations for the focus groups and then the town hall is open to anybody who wants to participate. Mr. Edgell stated that he liked the idea of having topics but felt that holding three groups with a mix of residents and professionals would be a good idea because maybe having some people from Delaware City, some people from Fort DuPont, and some partners or legislators would offer somebody to hear everybody out. He also thought that separating everyone out would perpetuate the perceived divide. Ms. Bravo stated that as they start to hone in on certain themes or categories they can get more intentional feedback with the town hall and the survey.

Ms. Bravo suggested having three focus groups with a list of 30 to 50 people to be invited. She stated that they would use the interviews to source some of the invitation list. Responding to Mr. Graci, Ms. Bravo advised that potential participants with known agendas are invited for interviews and not the focus groups because the focus groups are not designed to be sessions where people complain and that one person's voice can start to rise above everyone else's. She suggested that if there was anyone with a strong opinion and the committee wanted to make sure that they have had a chance to give their opinion, the interview gives the greatest opportunity for them to have the most input.

Responding to Ms. Bravo, Chair McMahon stated that he thought the best results would be obtained without the Board participating.

OPEN DISCUSSION OF PLANNING PROCESS AND TIMELINE

Ms. Bravo stated that they would work with Mr. Slavin to schedule the focus groups and the town hall with at least one of the focus groups being a zoom meeting for those who have accessibility issues and possibly more than one, depending on the participants preference. Ms. Bravo recommended publishing

the notices ahead of time so that the community knows there are going to be focus groups and a town hall so they understand their options to participate and it creates a welcoming invitation.

Ms. Bravo advised that once the interviews are complete, they will start to create an outline for the survey, which they will want to launch right around the same time as the town hall to obtain input quickly and then summarize that information for the Board.

NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting date is to be determined.

ADJOURNMENT

By unanimous consent, the meeting adjourned at 3:26 p.m.

APPROVED: August 1, 2023