

**Mayor and City Council of New Castle
Regular Council Meeting
New Castle Town Hall–Delaware Street–New Castle
Tuesday, July 13, 2004**

President Castagno called the regular meeting of the New Castle City Council to order at 7:00 PM and led those assembled in the pledge of allegiance. He asked attendees to sign in and to take an agenda.

Roll Call

Present: President Castagno Councilperson DiAngelo
 Councilperson Miller Councilperson Padmalingam
 Councilperson Reese

Others Present: Treasurer Janet Carlin, Senator Dori Connor, Finance/Human Resources Director Marian Delaney, Mayor Klingmeyer, Police Chief McDerby, City Health Officer Herb Swanson, Public Services Director Jim Weldin

Approval of Minutes by Date

President Castagno called for approval of the minutes for June 8, 2004. Councilperson Miller voted to approve the June 8, 2004, minutes as written. Councilperson Padmalingam seconded the motion. Councilpersons DiAngelo, Miller, Padmalingam, and Reese all approved the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

President Castagno then called for approval of the minutes for June 23 and June 25, 2004. Councilperson DiAngelo asked who recorded the minutes. He learned that Finance/Human Resources Director Delaney typed the minutes, but had not recorded them. Councilperson Miller moved to accept the minutes for June 23 and 25, 2004. Councilperson Padmalingam seconded the motion. President Castagno invited questions about the minutes.

Councilperson DiAngelo again asked who had recorded the minutes. President Castagno replied that Council members had supplied the information for the minutes. Councilperson DiAngelo then asked **Earl Carpenter** about the sources for the article published in the *New Castle Weekly*. He also asked who had written the article published under his byline since Mr. Carpenter was absent from both meetings.

Mr. Carpenter replied that he had written the article as well as all articles that appear with his byline. He identified his sources as some members of the Council and some attendees at the meeting.

President Castagno asked if anyone wanted to add to the minutes. Councilperson DiAngelo noted that providing an accurate account of what had happened at the meetings would take hours. President Castagno then called for a vote. Councilpersons Miller, Padmalingam, and Reese approved the minutes of June 23 and 25, 2004. Councilperson DiAngelo opposed the motion. The motion passed.

Approval of Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Janet Carlin reported that as of June 30, 2004:

- Cash on hand totaled \$270
- Monthly deposits totaled \$290,220.76
- Wilmington Trust Accounts totaled \$225,573.01
- Certificates of Deposit and the Delaware Government Investment Pool totaled \$13,574.68
- Cash on hand totaled \$239,147.69.

Councilperson Reese moved to accept the treasurer's report. Councilperson Padmalingam seconded the motion. Councilpersons DiAngelo, Miller, Padmalingam, and Reese approved the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Approval of Directors' Reports

Police Chief McDerby reported on the following.

Chief McDerby has continued to interact with DelDOT on traffic calming in the area. Within the month, he hopes to help resolve the issues involved. He will also notify DelDOT that the Council passed a resolution supporting the closure of Collins Park into Buttonwood.

He thanked Councilperson DiAngelo for his hard work on Mr. Martin's retirement party. He reported that Mr. Martin deeply appreciated seeing so many friends there.

He also reported that the Police Department would not have park programs this summer. However, starting July 29, 2004, movies for elementary school children will be shown on Thursdays. The movies will be advertised in the *New Castle Weekly* and the *Wilmington News Journal*.

The bike officer who resigned has not been replaced because of the time necessary to train another officer. For the rest of the summer, there will be only one bike officer.

Public Services Director Jim Weldin reported on the following.

The City received a \$10,000 **Wildlife Fire Urban Interface Suppression Migration grant** from the Delaware Forest Service. The grant targets areas that are susceptible to wild fires. Dobbinsville, the primary area of concern because of the marsh there, will be sprayed to eliminate invasive vegetation. A public meeting will be held before spraying occurs.

The City also received a **grant from DelDOT and the Department of Agriculture** for planting trees in the Route 9 median strip into Buttonwood. The grant requires a 60% to 40% match, with the City contributing 60%. Within two weeks, the Department of Agriculture will recommend the kind of trees to be planted in the fall.

Senator Dori Connor successfully placed a \$36,000 grant for **Western Gateway Landscaping** in the bond bill. Essentially, this involves landscaping in front of the Carrie Downey School. There will also be a grant from the Beautification Committee and from Traffic Enhancement funds. State grants require a \$60% match by the City.

The **wharf railing** is fully funded. Senator Connor placed \$38,000 in the bond bill for the project, with the City required to pay 60% of the cost. In addition, Senator Connor and Representative Mulrooney each pledged \$5,000 for the project. The Trustees are expected to supply the remaining funding (\$12,500). Councilperson Reese asked if the State will give the City \$36,000 for the wharf railing. Mr. Weldin replied said that the State will give the City up to 40% of that amount. Councilperson Reese then asked if the \$5,000 pledged by both Senator Connor and Representative Mulrooney can be used as match money. Mr. Weldin said it could be so used. He also observed that since the contract was awarded, the rising price of steel has driven up the project cost to \$37,500. He explained that of the \$37,500, the City's share is \$22,500. With the \$10,000 from Senator Connor and Representative Mulrooney and \$12,500 from the Trustees, the City can meet the 60% requirement. The State bond would supply the rest to fully fund the project.

Councilperson DiAngelo asked if the City has a written pledge of the Trustees' commitment. Mr. Weldin replied in the negative. Councilperson DiAngelo revealed that he had approached the Trustees in May in the hope that the fence could be completed by July 1, 2004. However, the Trustees questioned whether or not the insurance company still requires the fence, and if so, whether or not another insurance company could be used. Mr. Weldin informed Mr. Gambacorta, who is in contact with the Trustees' finance committee, that the insurance company does require the fence and that after bidding out the contract, it was awarded to the same insurance company.

Councilperson DiAngelo wants the Trustees to put their commitment to contribute \$12,5000 in writing. He is unsure when their finance committee will meet and when the City can expect a written reply. He asked if the City would supply the money if the Trustees' money is not forthcoming. Councilperson Miller responded that if the Trustees do not provide the money, the City would approach private sources.

Mr. Weldin met with the developer concerning **plans and a construction schedule for Ninth Street paving and rebuilding**. The County is ready to rebuild the sewer there. He is waiting for prices from the company chosen to do the work. The company hopes to begin the work in three to six weeks. Connectiv is ready to replace the gas line. The City will prepare a bid package for the City Engineer's review. The bid package is expected to be issued before cold weather begins, no latter than November 30, 2004.

Century Engineering evaluated the bids for the **Greenway Construction project** and awarded the contract to Grassbusters Landscapers, which submitted the low bid that met the criteria. Mr. Weldin contacted Grassbusters to set up a meeting within the next few weeks, with construction to start within 60 days.

Mr. Weldin will meet with Senator Connor, Terry Haskins from Tetra Tech, and representatives from the New Castle County Conservation District to discuss possible funding for the **Washington Park drainage project**.

He attended a **Terrorism Training Workshop** in Dover on June 29, 2004.

He met with Kerstin Almquist and Sue Poskitt of the New Castle Flower Beautification Committee (NCFBC). Ms. Poskitt will represent NCFBC on the **New Castle City Parks and Recreation Committee**. She has extensive experience in fund raising. He is waiting to hear who will represent the Tree Commission.

The City has allotted \$5,000 for **playground mulch**. He hopes to have the mulch within two weeks so that the City can create safety zones around the swing sets in Penn Valley, Bull Run, and Van Dyke Park, and complete the safety zones in Suzi Park so that he can install the hardware purchased for the swings.

A company that makes **movable speed bumps** approached Mr. Weldin and Chief McDerby about positioning them in the City on a 30-day trial basis. The speed bumps can be moved to different area as needed. He reported that the company will install the speed bumps on Buttonwood Drive within two weeks. Their placement required no commitment from the City.

Director of Finance/Human Resources Marian C. Delaney reported on the following.

Finance

- The ending balance in the General Fund was \$24,932.34 as of June 30, 2004.
- The City made the last of nine yearly payments to the State Pension Office for the Police and Municipal Workers' Pension Fund buy out.
- Property tax bills have been run. They will be mailed by the end of the week.
- Copies of the City's new budget was distributed to the mail bins in the Administrative Office. This year's budget was condensed to 20 pages, six pages shorter than last year's 26-page budget. They are available for public perusal.
- Quarterly commercial trash bills are being mailed out to Jessups, David Finney Inn, The Arsenal, and the Delaware Credit Union.
- The Library and Good Will Fire Company have also been invoiced because their employees are on the City's health and dental plan.

Human Resources

- Insurance fees for State Health Care increased by 14%. There was no increase for Delta Dental.
- A temporary laborer was replaced in the Public Services Department.

- The City is in the process of finalizing a cleaning service contract to provide three weekly cleanings at the Police Station, one at the Public Services Building, and one at the Administration Building. The vendor is also to clean windows, tile and grout, mini blinds, and upholstery and shampoo rugs.

In response to Councilperson DiAngelo's earlier query about the \$20,000 computer-related budget item, Ms. Delaney revealed that when the City built the Police Station and put up the municipal plant on Wilmington Road, provisions were included to connect the servers for the Municipal Services Building, the Administrative Office, Public Services, and eventually the Police Department. Currently, the Public Service Building and the Administrative Building are connected.

The money was expended for fiber lines, TI lines, a firewall, Ethernet switches, and point-to-point lines, which have already been installed. A firewall is being maintained through Technology Matrix. She planned to meet the next day with Technology Matrix

Councilperson Miller asked about the decrease in insurance costs. Ms. Delaney reported that after meeting with several different carriers, the City saved \$13,000 over last year's costs.

Councilperson DiAngelo noted that as of June 30, 2004, the budget showed that the City ended the fiscal year \$141,067 in the red. Ms. Delaney commented that some figures, such as fund balances, were not shown in the report. The coming audit will produce the final figure. President Castagno reminded Councilperson DiAngelo that the City used reserves to cover the deficit.

Communications

Councilperson Reese noted that negotiations for the **stop sign at Second and Chestnut Streets** were still in progress. Chief McDerby has investigated the issues involved. President Castagno noted that a public hearing would be held concerning the plan. Councilperson Miller reminded the Council that several years ago, a public hearing was held on the same issue and that residents' objected because houses there are so close to the street that carbon monoxide from idling cars creates a serious problem.

President Castagno announced that DelDOT will hold a meeting at the Police Station from 7 PM to 9 PM for the New Castle State auditors. The meeting, to be held the night after the Council meeting, will focus on background, issues and opportunities concerning **Route 9 improvements**.

He also read a letter from John DiMondi complaining that the **glut of political signs at the City's entrances** has "made a mockery" of the efforts to beautify the City. He wants the City Council to pass an ordinance limiting the size of such signs to two feet by two feet and the time of their placement to be no more than one month before and one week after the event.

Councilperson Reese commented that in 1999 Wilmaco devised a plan to control traffic in and around New Castle. The plan discouraged **traffic at the Sixth and Chestnut Streets** intersection from going down Sixth Street. He invited those who are interested in seeing that traffic bypass the City to attend the meeting.

Business from the Floor

Earl Carpenter asked for the floor to reply to Councilperson DiAngelo's comments about the article on the budget meetings that appeared in the *New Castle Weekly*. President Castagno advised him to wait until the end of the Council meeting.

Business from the Mayor

Mayor Klingmeyer complained that the City's finances have not been accurately portrayed and that residents are not being involved. He insisted that the City Council must act in a public forum and called for greater citizen involvement in the decision-making process.

Business from the Council President

President Castagno read an email from Bev Ross announcing her resignation as Chair of the City's Election Committee. He then asked for nominations for an Election Committee chair and stated that assembling an election committee would be an agenda item for next time. Councilperson Miller cited the need to search for an Election Committee chair and for Councilpersons to nominate people to serve on the committee.

President Castagno next introduced **Senator Dori Connor** and thanked her for her efforts on behalf of the City.

Senator Connor's Report

Senator Connor explained how the **bond bill committee** works. As senior member of the Republican caucus of the Senate, she often has difficult decisions to make on the allotment of funds. The application of redevelopment funds requires a 60% (recipient) to 40% (State) distribution. Applicants must follow stringent rules and regulations. The Controller General lists the funds, and members of the committee decide which applications to approve. Eight million dollars was allotted for community redevelopment. Four million went to each caucus. Her caucus had major expenditures. It put a quarter of a million dollars in seven categories. Delaware Hospice got \$100,000. The remaining dollars were divided by the six Republican legislators. Each received \$384,066 to subdivide. Senator Connor "carried the water" for six other legislators in her caucus. By doing that, she was able to fund the wharf and the beautification projects. The beautification project application was for \$90,000. Of that \$38,000 could come from Community Redevelopment Funds (CRF). The Arasapha Garden Club made a \$2,000 contribution. The City can now begin to solicit funds.

Senator Connor met with Jim Weldin and Backflips to discuss the **wharf contract** and learned that the project would still be short \$10,000, even if the Trustees contribute the rest of the required \$22,500. She next contacted Mike Mulrooney, who agreed to match her \$5,000. Their joint contribution made up the necessary \$10,000. The \$10,000 came out of their street dollars. She reminded the Council that last year she advised the Council to increase their request to \$50,000 and that this year the City received \$55,000 in transportation dollars.

She also forwarded \$55,000 in Community Redevelopment (CRF) funds to the **Senior Center**, although last year, they received \$100,000. Because this year she carried the load for six others, she could funnel only a lesser amount.

She also channeled \$30,000 to the **New Castle Library's expansion plans**. Those dollars were put in last year, and because she and Sally Brown went to the State Department of Libraries and managed to eliminate the matched dollar requirement, the library will receive the entire \$30,000.

Through the Department of State, a 1.2 million dollar project was started at the **Court House**. The exterior was done this year. Next year, the interior work will be done (wiring, plumbing, air conditioning, etc.) at a cost of \$950,000, which will fully fund the Court House restoration.

The **Arsenal** exterior was restored two years ago. This year, air conditioning and other internal work will be performed at a cost of \$450,000.

Cindy Snyder is in the process of investigating the restoration of the **Sheriff's House** and submitting the plan to the Department of State as a preliminary to restoring that building.

These restoration projects now encompass all of the City's historic buildings. She invited everyone to report any other historic buildings that need preservation and reminded those assembled that as a fostering person on that committee, she will make sure the work gets done.

Senator Connor also revealed that through grant-in-aid, the **Good Will Fire Company** will receive \$39,747, from the regular budget.

The Separation Day project received \$27,810.

Stamping of concrete to replicate the look of **brick on the island at the intersection at the Penn Mart Shopping Center has begun**. She thanked Earl Carpenter for printing information about the cost, duration, and problems associated with the project. She revealed that the new completion date is Labor Day.

She emphasized the importance of the Wilmaco meeting to be held the next night and revealed that she would attend. She is interested to know if an agreement has been reached and whether the project has been funded. Other issues involved drainage within Washington Park. She and Representative Mulrooney have funded some related projects.

Senator Connor next discussed **the red-light camera program in Delaware**. The city of Wilmington has received permission to add ten more red-light cameras to the ten they now have. Dover will have six such cameras. Newark will have two. Seaford will have one. A sign at each intersection with a camera notifies drivers of the camera's presence.

In Wilmington, the cameras have been extremely successful, with 62% fewer people running red lights, resulting in far fewer accidents. Coffers have increased significantly, with the money going to law enforcement, and other endeavors. Last year, Wilmington took in \$577,000.

The fine is \$75 for each violation, which is classified as a civil action. There is no insurance report, no points added to a driver's license. The fine follows the car. Anyone who refuses to pay will have difficulty getting his/her registration until the fine is paid. The Senator advised against lending a car because insurance companies are looking for ways to cancel.

She noted that the State has many difficulties in unincorporated areas, including Routes 896 and 40, Routes 7 and 40, and Hare's Corner, all of which are major intersections, where masses of people run red lights. She identified intersections where people run red lights include Seaford, Dover, and Elsmere, as well as unincorporated areas. Secretary Hayward would like to put 20 cameras in unincorporated areas. The intersection at Naamans Road and Route 202 already has a camera, although they haven't been fining violators, just counting cars. In one 24-hour period in Dover, at Route 213, a total of 282 people ran the red light.

Lockheed Martin supplies Wilmington with cameras and maintains them. DeIDOT is affiliated with Nestor. The cost is approximately \$13.50 per citation for paper work for each violation. The cost is deducted from the \$75 fine. The remainder of the fine goes to the local police or the transportation fund. President Castagno asked about the revenue share for Wilmington. Senator Connor replied that the company providing the cameras receives \$43 for each citation, and the City receives \$32, and that the company owns the lights. The State gets no cut at all from Wilmington. The rent alone for one camera is \$4,390 a month and each intersection has two cameras, at a cost of \$8,780, plus \$13.50 for each ticket.

Councilperson DiAngelo asked about the cost of one camera. Senator Connor explained that buying, rather than leasing, the cameras was not feasible because of the maintenance issue. Chief McDerby said that an out-of-state agency processes the films. Senator Connor re-iterated that the problem must be addressed because speeding is out of control. She asked for a designated police troop that does nothing but patrol, but couldn't get the necessary support.

Councilperson Miller asked about the money allocated for **repairs to the Arsenal**. Senator Connor reiterated that last year the exterior was done, and that this year the interior is being done.

Councilperson Padmalingam asked if the **company repairing Basin Road** is bonded and if the work is under warranty. He questioned the additional two million dollar cost. Senator Connor explained that the additional cost occurred because the contractor had no idea about the final cost until discovering the road's substructure. Because the area between William Penn Village and William Penn High School was incredibly deteriorated, the contractor had to remove the existing road down to the base. The contractor also encountered water problems.

DeIDOT's projected cost was 8.8 million dollars. The winning bid was 6.2 million dollars. With the problems the contractor ran into, the cost escalated to 8.8 million dollars, thus equaling DeIDOT's projected cost.

Senator Connor assured Councilperson Padmalingam that the company is bonded. However, she expressed the hope that the company did not use bad concrete like that on Route 1. Part of Route

1 will be closed because of the concrete used there, even though the concrete was environmentally friendly.

David June asked if a dollar amount could be put on highway deaths. Senator Connor responded that it was not possible to do so. He also asked if the cars of people with DUI convictions could be equipped with speed regulators. She replied that Newark is looking into doing so.

Tom Whitehead noted that the City is lucky "to have someone like you." He then asked about the 60% to 40% match required by the State and what would happen if the State gives the City \$60,000 and the City doesn't have the matching funds. Senator Connor replied that the line stays open until the City raises the money. If the City raises part of the money, the appropriate portion of matching funds becomes available. Reallocation of the allotted funds cannot occur until January.

Unfinished Business

Third Reading to Adopt Ordinance 427: President Castagno read Ordinance 427, amending the City code by rezoning a portion of land designated Open Space and Recreation (OS&R) to Historic Commercial (HC). The ordinance involves 111 Buttonwood Avenue, (tax parcel 21-005.00-048) consisting of 1.53 acres owned by the Buttonwood Civic Association (BCA). Councilperson DiAngelo moved to accept Ordinance 427. Councilperson Padmalingam seconded the motion.

Councilperson Reese expressed his opinion that the Trustees, rather than BCA, own the property. **Teel Petty of Buttonwood** disclosed that the Trustees gave BCA the land in question. Councilpersons DiAngelo, Miller, Padmalingam, and Reese voted to accept the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Deficiencies and Potential Hazards of City Sluice Gates: Councilperson Padmalingam explained that six months ago, new sluice gates were installed in Battery Park. However, the 12 foot by 10 Foot observation deck has only two railings. His concern is that children can jump off that deck into the water. He wants a safeguard to prevent children from doing so. President Castagno revealed that the sluice gates are the responsibility of the Trustees. He suggested making a motion authorizing the Public Services Director to send the Trustees a letter advising them of the hazards and request some remediation. Councilperson Reese agreed that they should be informed of the hazards inherent in the situation. Councilperson Padmalingam agreed that an official letter should be written and advised waiting for their reply. The Council members expressed no opposition to the Public Services Director writing a letter advising the Trustees of the hazards involved and requesting remediation of the situation.

Flooding on Route 9: President Castagno expressed his belief that the discussion scheduled for the next night included Route 9 Flooding. Councilperson Padmalingam said that the election in November was an opportune time to get at least one of the three candidates to pledge support for alleviating the problem. He estimates that alleviating the problem will cost six or eight million dollars and that 250 million dollars are in the State coffers. Senator Connor replied that the County does not deal with roads. As a result, it is unlikely that County will cover the cost of

fixing the road. Flooding is another issue. Flooding comes from tides running in and out at the bridge on Route 9. She advised that Secretary Hayward is aware of the bridge problem. She wants the bridge elevated over the water. Rectifying the problem is a concern not only of City residents, but also of families who live below the bridge. She expected the problem to be discussed at the meeting to be held the next night. She emphasized that a candidate does not know what the Secretary of Transportation will do. He/she cannot promise to eliminate the problem. If elected, he/she can only make a request. She offered to continue to attempt to alleviate the problem.

David June advised sponsoring a regatta to raise money.

Installing Gates at the City's Railroad Crossings: Councilperson Padmalingam noted that the issue of unprotected railroad crossings had been discussed previously and that the CXX railroad company was expected to address the issue. No discussion was forthcoming.

New Business

Councilperson DiAngelo read a letter from the Very Reverend Arthur B. Fiore, VF, requesting a change in the traffic pattern on Harmony Street, between Fifth and Fourth Streets. He explained that St Peters has a parking lot at the location, with the entrance west of Fourth Street. As a result, delivery services only have access to the service areas of Social Hall, the gym, and the cafeteria through the school's parking lot. As a result of the circuitous route necessary to get to these locations, delivery trucks often disregard the one-way direction, and make an illegal turn onto Harmony Street. Reverend Fiore asked for changes in the traffic pattern to "allow safe and direct access to the parking lot."

Councilperson DiAngelo surveyed the Harmony Street property with Chief McDerby. They believe that the requested change would not cause problems. Rather the change will make it easier to get into the school from both directions. With proper signs the change would be safe. President Castagno noted that making Harmony Street one-way to Fourth Street would fulfill the request and impact only five or six residents there. But he feared that making the street two-way between Fourth and Fifth would be impractical because of cars parked on both sides of the street. Councilperson Reese asked about the logistics of delivery trucks leaving the school's parking lot. President Castagno said that trucks would go out and then left.

Councilperson DiAngelo talked with a resident who had no problem with the street becoming two-way. He noted that the street is wide enough for cars parked on both sides to allow traffic to go through.

Councilperson Miller asked police Chief McDerby his opinion. Chief McDerby replied that with proper signage he saw no problems with making the street two-way.

President Castagno next asked for comments from the public. **John DiMondi** noted that if the street is one way to the parking lot, cars coming down Harmony on the church side will park facing each other. He asked if cars that come down Fourth Street, make a left and park next to the cemetery must back out. Councilperson DiAngelo answered that cars do not park on that side

of the street, rather they park only on the right side of Fourth Street and that cars go into the parking lot to turn around.

Herb Swanson noted that in most cases cars park on the right side, and that he “just about ran down somebody” going through the parking lot. After school is out, the whole right side of Harmony is all parked cars. He suggested considering the problems associated with the request before making a decision.

President Castagno noted that by charter, there must be a public hearing. He then asked the City Planner to work with Councilperson DiAngelo and Chief McDerby to investigate how the change would affect the church and the neighborhood and to arrive at a solution to present at the next Council meeting. The City Planner suggested putting together a proposal incorporating the solutions. President Castagno asked Council members for their approval of the plan. They all approved.

Councilperson Miller pointed out the awkward situation caused by cars going toward the river and cars parked toward Sixth Street, which causes problems when they try to turn around. She agrees with Herb Swanson about the problems with the proposed changes to Harmony Street.

Bank Resolution to Pay Insurance and Financial Services, LTD, \$58,903.00: Councilperson Miller presented the third and final reading of the resolution to pay Insurance and Financial Services, LTD, the amount specified as a down payment on 2004/2005 insurance premiums.

Councilperson Miller moved to accept the third reading of the resolution. Councilperson Reese seconded the motion. Councilpersons DiAngelo, Miller, Padmalingam, and Reese approved the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Comments from the Floor

Earl Carpenter addressed Councilperson’s DiAngelo’s earlier comments about the article on the budget hearings printed in the *New Castle Weekly*. He revealed that the purpose of the paper is to inform residents of happenings in town, and that he alone writes everything printed with his byline. He took time to talk with people about the three-to-two budget decision. He cited that his sources for the article were President Castagno, Council members Padmalingam and Miller, and several residents. He also used quotes from Mayor Klingmeyer’s letter. He invited Councilperson DiAngelo to participate more fully in the news process.

Councilperson DiAngelo asked Mr. Carpenter if he had consulted himself or Councilperson Reese. Mr. Carpenter replied that because Councilperson Reese’s remarks were presented in a letter published in the paper, he felt no need to repeat them.

Tom Whitehead suggested ending the discussion since it accomplished nothing. However, he questioned why taxes had not been raised in 13 or 14 years. He favored a modest increase in the tax rate. In the 2 ½ years he’s been a resident, the town is always begging for money from the Trustees. He doesn’t understand how the City can operate on a shoestring. Nor does he understand why a modest increase is not put into effect every few years. He advises raising the

rate a modest 10 cents. He warned that if the City waits to raise taxes for a long time, the rate increase has to be huge.

Teel Petty of Buttonwood stated multiple concerns. First, she asked about the \$10,000 the City has received for eliminating Fragmities around New Castle. She expressed a hope that the huge patch of Fragmities in Buttonwood will be included in those plans. Her second concern is about the lack of a park in Buttonwood. In the past Buttonwood always had a park for its children. The Buttonwood Civic Association has offered the Trustees three parcels of land that they have refused. These parcels could be used for parks. Her third concern is why the funds allotted for eliminating drainage problems in Buttonwood haven't produced results. To date, nothing has been done. The drainage ditch there looks worse than ever, clogged with trees and cattails. Her fourth question concerned the train crossing in Buttonwood. The weeds there are so high that drivers have to get on the tracks to see a train coming. If weeds are cleaned away, drivers could see what's coming. Moreover, crossing lights are undependable because sometimes the lights are on when no train is coming. In addition, speeding in Buttonwood has not improved even though the police see the speeders. She wants some action taken before a tragedy occurs.

John DiMondi asked how much the City has spent of the \$700,000 received from the Municipal Services Commission (MSC). Councilperson Miller revealed that the City used \$400,000 to finish off the year. Finance Manager Delaney explained that the City had spent \$300,000 by the end of June and that on July 1, 2004, the City received half of the new fiscal year's appropriation. Mr. DiMondi noted that the City has spent \$500,000. He asked what would be left for next year. Councilperson Miller reminded him that the City is into the new fiscal year. Mr. DiMondi then asked what the City would do once property taxes are in. He noted that the budget is unbalanced by more than half a million dollars and that of the \$700,000 in the budget, \$500,000 has been spent. Councilperson Miller replied that the money would come from the budget, which is \$100,000 less than last year's budget.

David June disclosed that recently one of his neighbors who owns property on 14th Street called to complain about people in the neighborhood not caring for their property. He wants a referendum for a modest tax increase to address some of the problems.

Councilperson DiAngelo commented on the budget article in the *New Castle Weekly*. His reason for voting against the budget was not revealed in the article. His reason was that budget lacked provisions for parks and recreation and storm drains. He believes that even a one-penny tax increase would pay for the wharf fence and playground swings. He wants a modest increase, not a 20-cent increase, to make the City financially secure. Otherwise, the City will have to ask businesses and contractors for contributions to equip parks.

He also noted that since his election to the City Council in 1999, the budget has increased yearly and that the contingency money from MSC is gone. He stated that Finance Director Delaney told him that she would like at least \$100,000 in a contingency fund.

He pointed out that unless the City gets an increase from MSC, it will have problems. Over the years MSC has raised the City's rates \$5.00 a month, or \$60 a year. If the City raised taxes \$5.00 a month, it would amount to \$60 a year.

Councilperson Reese cited the letter concerning election signs and agreed that a gentleman's agreement should exist that County Council candidates would not erect signs more than a month before the election and would remove them soon after the election. But he doesn't see how the existing signs can be removed. Councilperson Miller noted that most of the signs are on private property and that only the owners can remove them.

John DiMondi noted that a City ordinance controls signage, but that the County regulates some signage. He objects to having signs erected six months before the election when City residents need a permit to paint their front doors.

President Castagno called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Councilperson Miller moved to adjourn the meeting. Councilperson Reese seconded the motion. Councilpersons DiAngelo, Miller, Padmalingam, and Reese approved the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:20 PM.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on August 10, 2004, at 7:00 PM in the New Castle Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted.

Darcy Mozer
City Clerk