

**City Council of the Mayor and Council of New Castle
Special Council Budget Workshop Meeting
Town Hall – 201 Delaware Street – New Castle
Monday – April 30, 2012 – 6 p.m.**

Present:

Council President William Barthel
Councilperson John Cochran
Councilperson John Gaworski
Councilperson Ted Megginson
Councilperson Teel Petty

Also present: Treasurer Janet Carlin, City Administrator Cathryn Thomas, Finance Director Marian Delaney

Council Review of Requests for the 2012/2013 City Budget

President Barthel provided an update. The City did receive \$140,000 from the Trustees for the ARRA projects. It must be used by December 2012. In addition, at the last meeting he had done a quick calculation that came up with a deficit of \$320,000. With the money from the Trustees, and after he asked Administrator Thomas to recalculate the information, it was discovered the quick calculation incorrectly included money from grants. The bottom line is a deficit of \$33,000 in terms of income projections. Also, with the money for the ARRA projects, because it is being amortized over four years rather than five years, the payments will be \$60,000 versus the \$35,000 previously thought. The \$60,000 puts the budget at \$90,000 in the hole.

Planning Commission

Chairman David Bird went over the proposed budget for the Planning Commission. The 2011-2012 budget was for \$20,500. The accomplishments during the year, in addition to the monthly meetings, the Commission completed the riverfront study, initiated the parking study that is being done through WILMAPCO, submitted some proposed revisions for the Gateway Zoning, completed work on the redevelopment ordinance and reviewed the first application under that ordinance, and transitioned three new members to the Planning Commission.

The proposal for next year is to complete the parking study and any additional studies City Council may want. In addition, to further implement the Comprehensive Plan, the Commission would like to take a look at things at the neighborhood level and try to work with the residents of those neighborhoods. That would assist with the next Comprehensive Plan update.

Administrator Thomas said the last Comprehensive Plan was completed in 2009. The next update would be in 2013 or 2014. She asked Mr. Bird whether they could incorporate the neighborhood study with the next Comprehensive Plan update.

Mr. Bird said that is what they would like to do rather than do the entire plan in one year. They would rather not do it all at once. He does not see a major update of the plan. The Commission also will try to attract other funds to offset the costs. One major area of opportunity now is Delaware Greenways and alternative modes of transportation. There may be a way to link neighborhoods to bike trails.

The proposed budget of \$20,500, the same as 2011-2012, does not include money for offset of the City Planner's time.

President Barthel said he would like to see estimates on what each of the items would cost.

Mr. Bird said they do not have an amount from the consultant.

Administrator Thomas asked whether instead of doing a whole separate neighborhood plan could it be integrated into the Comprehensive Plan update.

Mr. Bird said yes that is the idea.

President Barthel said he would like to see Mr. Bird come back with the estimates.

Library

Julie Kirk thanked Council for its support over the past year. Last year's budget had a \$35,000 deficit. The current budget, for fiscal 2012, has a \$16,000 deficit. The Library is looking for the same level of funding from the City as last year, which will help it balance its budget this year. They have done changes in personnel to reduce line items. Last year City Council provided \$12,000. The difference was made up through various personnel adjustments last year.

President Barthel asked that Council be provided with updated financial statements.

Tree Commission

John Lloyd said pruning and removals for fiscal year 2012 was \$20,720, that was for 102 trees; \$3,600 for Dutch Elm injections; and \$1,180 for the consulting arborist. The total expenditures were \$25,500, which put the Commission over budget by \$12,728. No funds were spent on planting trees. The budget included \$5,000 from the City and \$5,000 from the Trustees.

The Commission is requesting \$1,500 for the consulting arborist and \$26,250 for pruning and removal. Proposals for Elm tree treatments were also presented. They also have backed up requests for planting, totaling \$10,000 for 25 trees at roughly \$400 per tree. The total is \$39,750. The Commission did some comparison on other services and the current ones used are the least expensive.

Councilperson Cochran asked about the increased costs.

Mr. Lloyd said the biggest chunk of money used to come from the Trustees. They used to give \$20,000 a year.

Administrator Thomas asked how much has typically been spent by the Tree Commission annually in the past. The Commission did not always spend all \$20,000 and had some surplus accumulated.

Mr. Lloyd said a lot of trees are getting old, and there are a lot new trees.

Administrator Thomas asked if the Tree Commission has a history of how much has been spent each year for the past 10 years.

Mr. Lloyd said they do not.

Mr. Lloyd said there were 50 trees planted this year, all on public property.

Councilperson Cochran asked the Tree Commission to come back with what they consider emergencies or necessities. He said the Tree Commission is going to need some funding, perhaps through fundraisers.

President Barthel said the Council has asked the Tree Commission in the past for a list of what needs to be done and has not received it.

A discussion was held on the history of the Trustees contributions for the Tree Commission.

Historic Area Commission

Sally Monigle said the Commission is considering having recordings of portions of HAC meetings which include HAC members going as a group to view the properties. They have been instructed not to go in groups of more than two to see properties, in order to comply with Freedom of Information rules. The idea would be to have a recording of the property and discussion. She said the recording device is not that expensive, a couple hundred dollars.

Administrator Thomas said she believes FOIA would require minutes of the recording made. She added that what Ms. Monigle is describing would be two segments of the meeting, both advertised, one at certain property locations and one back at Town Hall. Minutes would have to be made from both.

Councilperson Petty asked if Ms. Monigle has discussed the matter with the City Solicitor. She said she does not believe they are allowed to go to a site and must make a decision only on what is presented.

Ms. Monigle said she has not talked with the City Solicitor about recording idea.

Administrator Thomas said the City Solicitor approved going to the site, but not as a full group.

Ms. Monigle said HAC is not looking for an increase in the budget. The current budget is \$3,180.

Recreation

Finance Director Delaney read through the Recreation budget proposal. The fiscal 2013 request is up \$340 to \$27,365.

The program is required to have a certain number of counselors per child; the number varies by age of the campers.

Councilperson Petty said there were 80 campers signed up last year. There is a \$5 fee.

Ms. Delaney said the Trustees provided \$1,000 for Recreation.

Beautification Committee

President Barthel read a letter he received from Kerstin Almquist urging the City to contract out the maintenance for the Western Gateway to a landscaping firm twice a year. She asked that it be done to keep the Western Gateway worthy of the award it won.

Gene Dempsey said the letter was written but he does not think the Committee sat down and talked about it. He said he has examined several spaces along the way that still need some care and he believes Lori Kirk has done an exceptional job. The City is very responsive to the Committee's needs. He said that is not the issue. He said sometimes they could use someone with a lot of knowledge to come in and advise them. He explained Ms. Kirk is one person doing a big job, and it does make some people touchy about how it looks. He said sometimes there needs to be more patience. He feels the idea of having someone come in for advice should be talked about at the end of the summer. The schools were supposed to take care of their portion of the Western Gateway.

He said the Committee hopes the City can budget in the same amount again.

Mr. Dempsey apologized for the letter. He said it is representative that they would like to get another award but is not representative that they think a person is not doing a good job.

President Barthel said he read the letter so everyone was on the same page.

Councilperson Petty asked if the volunteers still do weeding or if they just do the planting. She said they used to have volunteers who would weed.

Mr. Dempsey said they have always have paid people to do the weeding.

Councilperson Megginson said that the City not only has Ms. Kirk, but also has other City workers helping when needed and available. He said he was upset with the letter. He said there is a lot of maintenance and it is increasing. There are 20 gardens that the City takes care of, including more than 100 rose bushes. And there are also urns.

Mr. Dempsey said the City has been more than responsive.

Councilperson Gaworski said the more you plant the more that has to be maintained.

President Barthel said the City can use money from the Gateway Fund to bring someone in during the fall for advice. The budgeted amount for the Beautification Committee has been \$3,500.

The Senior Center officials were not able to make it this meeting.

Ms. Delaney said to clarify that there is very little in reimbursements related to the Planning Commission.

A discussion was held about the need for additional information from the Planning Commission related to budget items.

Councilperson Megginson made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Councilperson Cochran seconded the motion.

The meeting adjourned at 7:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Dickinson
New Castle City Clerk