

**City Council of the Mayor and Council of New Castle  
Special Council Budget Workshop Meeting at Town Hall  
201 Delaware Street – New Castle  
Thursday–May 26, 2011 – 6 p.m.**

**Present:**

Council President William Barthel  
Councilperson John Cochran  
Councilperson John Gaworski  
Councilperson Ted Megginson  
Councilperson Teel Petty (arrived at 6:10 p.m.)

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

**Review Budget Requests**

President Barthel said this meeting is the Council's second budget workshop meeting for the budget.

**Planning Commission**

Chairman David Bird provided a brief history of the budget for the Planning Commission. The average, including years with updates, has been \$30,000. Last year the budget was significantly less. He went through the current year's spending on a line-by-line basis. The general expenses line which had a budget of \$5,000 but had spending of \$15,000, that pays for planning consultant, URS. That includes attendance at meetings and when Marian Hull is asked to look in depth at certain things, meet with applicants and other matters. It does not tie to what revenues come into the City for applications to the Planning Commission.

It started last year looking at a capital improvement program but shifted gears when an opportunity arose for a WILMAPCO grant related to the riverfront, parking and access. The City was unsuccessful in getting that grant so all the planning study funds were not spent.

Mr. Bird said that for the upcoming year the Commission would like to work with Council on the Zoning Amendments. The Planning Commission also would like to focus on an area of opportunity: the riverfront. This is to encourage more people to come to New Castle by the river or to take tours that would emanate from New Castle, such as through the docking of the Kalmar Nyckel, a riverboat cruise or a bike ferry.

It was brought to the Planning Commission by the Historic New Castle Alliance's (HNCA) Design Committee that has been looking at the riverfront. According to other government agencies, the first thing needed is a Concept Plan. The Alliance talked with engineers about the cost of a plan. One firm said it could do it for \$6,000. Estimates for what it would cost to go from concept to permit application phase ranged from \$25,000 to \$50,000.

The proposed budget: cut professional training cut down to \$500. General expenses would rise to \$10,000. The actual number will reflect the amount of applications coming in. The planning studies amount is \$20,000. The expectation is it ultimately it will end up costing \$40,000 for both concept and permitting. That could be offset by outside funds.

President Barthel invited Linda Ratchford of the HNCA Design Committee to share with Council a broad overview of the project. He said he had attended a number of the meetings on the project.

Linda Ratchford said they had a meeting in January with state, federal and local people. Since then they talked with engineering firms and stakeholders, such as the fire company that could drastically reduce response time

by having a boat in the water. They talked with other people who might like to come to New Castle. One estimate is it would bring hundreds of thousands of dollars of economic development for New Castle. Hick Rowland did soundings for the committee. There is no place to bring boats in other than the Wharf area. She said they believe the Wharf area is feasible and great for residents.

Councilperson Gaworski said for some of these things the City needs to look at parking. There was resistance to parking previously at the old ferry wharf.

Mr. Bird said that as part of this WILMAPCO can be of assistance. Parking would be a component. They do not anticipate a lot of people would be parking at the wharf. Mrs. Ratchford said a lot of the traffic would be boats coming in.

Councilperson Cochran said they have talked with the Trustees about some additional parking in the Strand/Old Ferry area. Mr. Bird said in addition to the Strand area there has been conversation about putting some off Third Street.

Councilperson Megginson asked if the plan would call for a separate wharf. Mrs. Ratchford said they believe they can use the existing pier and build something parallel to the pier.

Councilperson Megginson asked about whether there is a need for dredging. Mr. Bird said that is not the anticipation based on soundings and types of boats to come in. Dredging would involve all sorts of additional things.

Councilperson Cochran asked about costs for maintenance and how much they expect it to cost. Mr. Bird said they have not gotten to that point yet, but if there is a floating dock the City might want to look at a vendor to maintain them similar to Delaware City. In that case, there would be a dockage fee. The Banks Building might be able to be used as a dockmaster's office.

Councilperson Gaworski asked if it is possible to extend the pier out to the next icebreaker and use that as a platform. Mr. Bird said that icebreaker is collapsing also. Those icebreakers are the property of the Army Corps of Engineers and are historical in nature.

President Barthel asked what might be included in the following year's budget. Mr. Bird said they anticipate next year's budget would be similar, but once they get the concept plan they can shop it around for grants. Mrs. Ratchford said it could go to permitting in a year if it goes very fast.

President Barthel said there are a lot of people at the meeting in support of this item. The Council is not going to take any comments on this matter at this meeting because it is a budget workshop. There are four other groups presenting requests. He suggested anyone interesting in commenting for or against it, or other items, to come to the regular meeting of the month.

Mr. Bird said they can come to the next Planning Commission meeting as well.

Michael Heyman, of Second Street, complained it is backdoor approach.

### **Library**

New Castle Public Library President Chris Cashman addressed Council. He thanked Council for its support of the capital campaign. He was at the meeting to ask for help with the Library's operating budget. Library officials are asking for an appropriation of \$36,000 for the next year. He provided Council with a summary of its budget over the past five years. Prior to the County having budget woes, the County was the main supporter and provided most of the operating funds. They also receive some money from the State and from the Trustees, along with a minor amount from fines, copies, etc.

Mr. Cashman said the County reduced its appropriation to the Library in fiscal 2008 and fiscal 2009. It has remained the same since. In the recently passed County budget the Library received the same \$357,291. The issue is that over these years, the Library has built and moved into a new building and now have increased operating costs. The Library has not been successful in its efforts to get additional funding from the County. The Trustees have increased funding over the last five years. The cash amount has risen from \$8,000 to \$45,000, and the rent contribution has jumped dramatically. The State also has increased its funding.

Mr. Cashman said for this fiscal year, total revenue will be \$771,000 and expenditures will be \$795,000. The Library will run a deficit this year of \$24,000. The Library does not have big reserves. Unless the Library finds additional funding, it will be able to stay open but have no money for materials or programs.

President Barthel said the Council will need an audited financial report.

Mr. Cashman said the Trustees recently put up \$250,000 to match any contributions for the capital campaign to try to retire that. The Library remains short on the capital campaign. The Trustees have not said anything about a match of capital funds. The Library since the expansion sees 8,000-9,000 patrons per month. Many programs and organizations now meet at the Library.

Councilperson Cochran asked if the groups using the Library provide a donation for the space.

Mr. Cashman said that because the Library is part of the County system they are not allowed to charge for meeting space. Some may make donations. The majority of patrons are City residents. The Library does not have a way to track the number. The Library cannot charge for anything beyond fines.

### **Tree Commission**

Chip Patterson said the Tree Commission is a child of the City, created by ordinance. City crews manage the trees but do not have equipment nor the expertise for some work. For many years, the Tree Commission has operated on the same budget, roughly \$20,000. The funding had always been in \$5,000 increments that came every quarter. Any funds not spent went into a reserve for storm damage. The Trustees have given \$5,000 for green projects which Council has given to the Tree Commission. The Tree Commission is asking for \$5,000 per quarter into its account. If not used, it could go into a reserve or go back to the general fund.

President Barthel said he thought that during the budget process a year ago they talked about the Tree Commission coming back quarterly, and perhaps more often, to talk about the amount needed and why the \$5,000 annual amount was not enough.

Mr. Patterson said by showing expenses they have done that. Complaints from residents about trees are handled immediately. The Tree Commission does not think the City Council wants to hear from citizens that the Tree Commission is not being responsive. The next priority is a citizen may bring a complaint about a tree they want removed because of sidewalks, foundations or sewer issues. The Tree Commission brings in an arborist. If it is hazardous it becomes a priority to remove. Plantings are normally done spring and fall, there is some discretion there. Also there is some discretion on systemic treatment of trees.

Mr. Patterson said the Tree Commission has \$1,000 to \$2,000 remaining in its account.

Councilperson Megginson thanked the Tree Commission for the explanation in the weekly newspaper about the trees on Delaware Street.

### **Beautification Committee**

Gene Dempsey thanked Council for its support and time. The City is looking more beautiful. The Beautification Committee has gotten funding from the Trustees, but it is for Station Park. The fall planting is going to cost

\$1,200, spring planting will cost \$1,500 and roses will be \$300 next year. There are also some trees that need to be replaced and an additional \$300 for Station Park next year.

The committee is out of money. It received \$200 this year from Arasapha Garden Club. He asked the City Council to give it consideration for funding.

Councilperson Cochran asked what the budget was last year. Mr. Dempsey said last year it was \$1,500.

President Barthel thanked the Beautification Committee for all of its work. Mr. Dempsey said the entrances to New Castle now look as good as any place.

Administrator Thomas said at previous meeting Karl Kalbacher from the County Economic Development mentioned how great the entrance to the City looked with the plantings. It was a very big compliment to the work of the City and the Beautification Committee.

### **New Brochure**

Administrator Thomas said the brochure, which relates to the Revolutionary War era, would be an added item for tourism. The project was started ages ago. It is up to Council if it wants to pay for the printing. She does not expect it to be an annual expense, but initially is estimated to cost about \$1,500.

Finance Director Marian Delaney said that as long as she has worked at the City there has been a Tree Commission. She said she wondered if there was not a commission if that would mean the City would need another employee to handle calls and other work.

Councilperson Cochran said Mr. Patterson was correct. The Tree Commission is hearing the complaints that otherwise would come to Council. He said the Tree Commission is doing a great job.

### **Recreation**

Councilperson Petty and Finance Director Delaney went through the budget for this area. The hourly rate for the coordinator did not increase, nor did the rate for the counselors. The request is \$16,000 for salaries. The City goes through the University of Delaware to advertise for a coordinator and the counselors. The City is hoping to have all the workers from the university. Overall the budget is pretty much on target with a budget of \$27,900 last year and a projected budget of \$27,025 this year.

### **Senior Center**

Rob Dill, representing the New Castle Senior Center, said the main concern is energy costs, which is hurting the organization financially. In addition, Municipal Services Commission started charging for the sprinkler system within the building. He believes it is \$180 a month. They have no idea what the State will provide. The Senior Center is looking for any help the City can provide. They are requesting \$1,000 a month, up from \$625 a month.

President Barthel asked what the group got from the state. Mr. Dill said there was a small cut in State funding last year. President Barthel said the City will need their financials.

Councilperson Petty made a motion to adjourn the meeting into an Executive Session to discuss the FOP contract. Councilperson Megginson seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

The workshop meeting adjourned at 7:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Dickinson  
New Castle City Clerk