

City Council of the City of New Castle
Special Council Meeting at Town Hall- 201 Delaware Street- New Castle
Thursday January 30, 2014 at 6:00p.m.

Call to order: 6:00 pm

Roll Call:

Councilperson Megginson
Councilperson Cochran
Council President Ratchford
Councilperson Petty
Councilperson Vannucci

Also present:

Janet Carlin, City Treasurer
Daniel Losco, City Solicitor
Mayor Donald Reese

Resolution No. 2014-07 Location for Construction of Proposed pier

President Ratchford thanked everyone for attending tonight's Special Meeting.

President Ratchford wanted to take a few minutes to explain the term "Special Meeting." There is the regular monthly council meeting that meets every month. Sometimes due to timing or importance a Special meeting may need to be called, or if the regular council meeting is too lengthy, as was at our last regular council meeting due to the mid-year budget review.

All Council Meeting are open to the Public unless it is an executive session, and all meetings are posted 7 days in advance. Meetings are posted on the City's web site and on the board outside of the City Administration Building. The meetings are also when possible advertised in the Weekly newspaper. Tonight's Special Meeting had been scheduled for February 22, 2014, but due to bad weather the meeting was canceled. The meeting was rescheduled for January 30, 2014 at 6:00 p.m.

President Ratchford asked the City Attorney Dan Losco to explain to the citizens' of New Castle the reason for the special meeting tonight, also the timing, and the implications. City Attorney Daniel Losco said he rec'd a call two weeks ago from Mr. Stefan Smi from DEMA. Mr. Smi stated that under the Sandy Relief Act the city needed to apply for funding. The city must designate a place for the pier so it can apply for the Federal funding from hurricane Sandy. The city is going to apply for funding at the location at the end of Delaware Street. This does not mean council will be making a decision on the pier.

Council President Ratchford stated that the city has been studying this project for a couple of years. Council has kept the citizens informed, and there have been many, many meetings on the pier. The study has been to find the best place to place for the pier. Duffield is completely funded by the bond bill. The City has chosen the best people in the business. There have many consultants such as Civil Engineers, Environmental Engineers, Environmental Scientist, Geotechnical Engineers, Construction and Structural Engineers, Coastal and Hydraulic Engineers, Geologist, Hydrologist, Archaeology and, Historical consultants guiding the project. All information has been given to council, as the information is gathered. In August the designation of the pier was presented to the Planning Commission and in October it was presented to City Council. It is now January and the Council must make a decision.

President Ratchford read the Resolution 2014-07 Resolution designating the end of Delaware St as the location for the construction of a proposed pier.

Councilperson Vannucci motioned and Councilperson Megginson seconded the motion.

The Resolution was read.

President Ratchford asked if there were any comments from Council.

Councilperson Vannucci- Mr. Vannucci has been working with J&J Concrete Pumping for raising the Banks Building. J&J Pumping poured the piling for the pier that was destroyed during hurricane Sandy. It was J&J opinion that it would be a waste of money to place the pier back in the old spot. J&J has been in business for over 40 years. J&J has been doing business throughout the tri-state area. J&J was in agreement with the Duffield assessment.

Councilperson Petty- Duffield has given us the best information. We should go with the Duffield recommendation.

.Councilperson Megginson- We would not want to connect a pier to a crumbling ice breaker. We should go with the Duffield recommendation.

President Ratchford - stated we are expecting a lot more information. There has already been a lot of information to this council and the council before. Tonight the focus is on one specific issue the location so the City can apply for a federal grant.

President Ratchford - At this time we will take comments and questions from the floor.

Mr. Beale from the Strand - I have one basic question. What are the benefits to the citizens of New Castle?

President Ratchford -The City is waiting on the economic analysis from a consultant. We do not have all the information to answer the question.

Keith Adams- Is a there plan to restore the ice breakers, which are Historic, because of the condition of the ice breakers? Is this dictating where the pier is being located?

Council President Ratchford - The old pier now rests on an ice breaker that the Army Corp of engineers owns. The Army Corp is not interested in doing anything with the ice breakers. In 1880, the Army Corp completed the ice breakers, and their stand is now that the project is complete. The Corp position is that they were done with the project in 1880. The City does not own the ice breakers they are owned by the Army Corp. In 1990, it was estimated that it would cost over 1 million dollars to repair one ice breaker.

Councilperson Megginson-In 1880 New Castle was a main shipping port. The Ferry was also at the foot of Delaware street, years later it was moved to Chestnut Street due to the high demand.

Keith Adams- Since the ice breakers are not doing the job they were built to do. Has the consultant looked at this?

President Ratchford- Yes, this has all been considered in the study.

Councilperson Vannucci - The pier has been there all of my life. I think it would be nice to have a pier. Council is not going to borrow money, or increase taxes to build the pier. We are looking for a grant to pay for the pier. I think it would be nice.

Sandy Beale, The Strand- Does not understand the designation of the pier. Once you have installed the pier how will the pier be maintained? How will the land be maintained? How will the pier be insured? How will we provide security? People are concerned about the expenditure. Should the city be bearing the burden? We don't have it now. Back to the question my husband asked. What is the benefit?

Council President Ratchford- It is a great concern for all of us. We have had a pier for many years. The pier is not a budget item. Mr. Barthel stated the pier has never been budget item. Council President Ratchford Very early in the process people were very interested in having the Kalmar Nickel and the Three Forts Ferry. Right now boats cannot come in at all. We are a good location for tall ships. The survey indicated that there was interest. Council is not making a decision. Council does not take any of this lightly.

Ron Gillespie-24 W 4th Is Duffield funded by the Bond Bill? Does Duffield have a contract? Are there minutes from January 8th meeting that I saw at the foot of Delaware Street?

President Ratchford - There are no minutes. President Ratchford asked Dan Losco to explain summarize.

Mr. Losco -FOIA There are no minutes required unless there is a quorum of a public body. That meeting was not a public meeting. Duffield is not required to take minutes. Duffield has a contract with certain deliverables. The City Planner was there along, with Council President Ratchford, City Administrator William Barthel, State Preservation office and two people from Duffield. The City is trying to keep this project rolling.

Mr. Gillespie- Is the latest survey available? Is there a design other than 2009? Is there a cost estimate?

President Ratchford- Duffield is still working on the design.

Mr. Gillespie- When the design is available are we able to look at all the documents? You are on a deadline?

Mr. Losco – Per Mr. Smi of DEMA, the Sandy Grant will be paid out mid-year 2014. We need to have a definable statement of where the pier is going to be, to be able to apply for the grant funds.

Mr. Gillespie- If you are going to build what is timeline?

Mr. Losco- Duffield is looking at that now.

Mr. Losco- If City is ever going to be eligible for money you need to keep the train moving.

Mr. Gillespie-Expand on the definition of a meeting.

President Ratchford-Wanted to talk a little more about the definition of "meetings." For a Public meeting you must give notice. A group of officials cannot meet in more than two or it is considered a quorum. Council may be meeting with DEL DOT or another group, or agency. This Council is very active. Executive sessions are usually to discuss personal matters. We do not discuss personal matters in a public meeting.

Louise Olstein, The Strand- I have a couple of questions. What was the competition when Duffield was selected? Who selected Duffield? I see the Proposal as a weakness being pushed to the point to make a selection to the placement of the pier. I just think it is a weakness to make a selection.

Let me switch a little bit from the waterfront. The Read House Laird green no one has done anything with the waterfront behind the Strand. We need shoring up on the Strand. Once you make a decision about the pier you cannot turn back. People are against it because of the location. It seems very casual, and this very serious part how the citizens feel.

President Ratchford - Council takes this as a very serious decision. The location came up very early in the process. At that point Duffield had to take a hard look at location for the pier, keeping in mind water for the Tall Ships to return. There were only two locations, the old pier and the end of Delaware Street. The Sailing Club was not suitable. Bull Hill was not suitable. New Castle wanted a very clear location. Duffield reviewed all information very carefully. The decision was not off the cuff. Many people are in favor of the project. It is not feasible to have the pier at the old location. In terms of the Strand, some of the Bond Bill money is being used to study the area between the Broad Dike and the Gambacorta Dike. Duffield is looking at our options what we can and cannot do.

Mr. Beaumont, The Strand -What is the purpose of the pier? Is it merely to attract the Kalmar Nickel? Or is it a pier to attract small boats?

Council President Ratchford-The City will not have Day boaters, what we will have is the Good Will rescue boat, Kalmar Nickel and the Three Forts Ferry. There will be no day boaters.

Mr. Beaumont -I am very happy to hear that there will be no day boaters.

Larry Koppenhaver 3rd Street- What happens after the pier is there? Who will be the Dock master? Is there a business plan? Is there an itemized list of all support services? Everything should be a written document.

President Ratchford - The City does not need anyone to be a Dock master. Our other pier which has been there for many years has never been manned. It is too early to answer some of your questions we do not have the information yet.

Mayor Donald Reese - This is the longest period that New Castle has been without a pier. We will have only large boats coming in, no cars, and no trailers.

President Ratchford - There will be no private boats and, no day boaters. We have had our pier for many years.

Mr. Beale - We have only heard from one person. What purpose does the pier serve?

Councilperson Megginson-it will bring revenue to the downtown. We are not going to spent any of New Castle money. It will be great to have Ferry boat to take people to Pea Patch Island.

This will not just help the businesses it will help everyone. New Castle has always been a Waterfront town. 1908 Shad fishing was great in the River.

At the Read Laird house they had a Yacht basin all of their friends would dock their boats. All the boats were taken over by the Coast Guard for the war.

Mr. Beale -The pier is not for citizens it is for business, why should the property owners pay?

Councilperson Megginson -We do not know this, and the pier probably won't be built in my lifetime.

Councilperson Cochran - Residents would enjoy taking a boat ride. Residents will use the pier, wait and see. It would be nice to take your grandchildren out on the pier. This is all if it is built. It may never be built.

Councilperson Petty - The pier is not a new thing. We have always had a pier. Residents will enjoy the pier. We are not reinventing the wheel. We are replacing something that has been lost. It would be so nice for people to see. The federal government is saying we must do this now.

Mr. Beale- Today the wharf area has a lot of ice. Look at the existing pier ice breaker go out beyond. It would be reasonable to have the pier go to the second ice breaker. The pier at the end of Delaware street will take away the view. I feel we should go out to the second ice breaker.

Millie Fleck from Delaware Street- FEMA money how can it used? Can anything be done with the eye sore that is there now?

Daniel Losco-Yes, grant money can only go towards the pier and taking the old pier down.

Marty Wright West 7th Street- Citizens are forgetting that everyone will benefit by having a healthy economy. It is not just a matter if we spend money to help local business.

Ron Gillispe – The pier will be an ongoing maintenance issue. When the Shad were plentiful and barges were in town, New Castle was commercial. It is now a bedroom community the pier would favor a group of merchants. Town is in a decline maybe would should just accept the fact.

Keith Adams - I am sorry; I don't think this is true. I could not go to sleep at night, if I thought the town was in decline. I would like everyone to know, my house will soon be on the National Historic Register.

Council President Ratchford- We are a City, we are commercial and residential. We are caretakers of our houses.

President Ratchford- asked for a motion for Resolution N0. 2014-07 Location for Construction of Proposed Pier. Councilperson Vannucci made a motion seconded by Councilperson Megginson the motion passed unanimously.

President Ratchford asked for a motion to adjourn Councilperson Vannucci made a motion Councilperson Megginson seconded the motion the motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted

Sally Denton

