

**City Council of the City of New Castle**  
**Regular City Council Meeting**  
**Town Hall, 201 Delaware Street, New Castle**  
**Tuesday, August 11, 2015 at 7:00 p.m.**

**Call to order:** 7:08 p.m.

**Roll Call:**

Councilperson Megginson - present  
Councilperson Vannucci - present  
Council President Ratchford - present  
Councilperson Petty - present  
Councilperson Di Mondì - present

Also present:

William Barthel, City Administrator  
Donald Reese, Mayor  
Janet Carlson, City Treasurer  
Daniel Tjaden, Police Chief  
Daniel Losco, City Solicitor  
Jeff Bergstrom, Building Official & Fire Marshall  
Nicole Poore, State Senator

**Approval of Minutes by Date:** 6/30 Special Meeting; 7/14 Regular Meeting; 7/22 Special Meeting; and **Approval to Accept Staff Reports:**

Councilperson Vannucci **Motioned** and Councilperson Di Mondì seconded approval of the Minutes and Staff Reports without changes. The motion **passed unanimously**.

**Approval of Treasurer's Report:**

City Treasurer Janet Carlson reported on the balances of the city's accounts as of July 31, 2015. The total cash on hand in all accounts is \$2,595,746.42.

Councilperson Petty **Motioned** and Councilperson Megginson seconded approval of the Treasurer's Report as presented. The motion **passed unanimously**.

**Report from the City Administrator & Staff:**

City Administrator Barthel reported:

- 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual River Towns Ride and Festival is on Saturday, October 3. The proceeds from the event will fund ADA curbs. Any donations of \$3,000 or more to sponsor the event will be memorialized on a curb.
- The refund from the excess in the Worker's Compensation Fund has been received in the amount of \$37,653. The payment exceeds the expected \$30,000.

Police Chief Tjaden reported:

- Thefts occurred in the Flea Market section of the Farmers Market. Vendor's sale items that were covered and left overnight were stolen. The theft is on film.

- President Ratchford asked about any impact from the new “No Trucks” signage at Buttonwood. The Chief has received a report of only one truck since the signs went up.

### **Council Communications:**

Councilperson Petty reported:

- The Buttonwood neighborhood is receiving some attention. The cleaning out of the drainage ditch has started. The new “No Trucks” sign has stopped trucks from turning onto Buttonwood Avenue.
- The City Administrator added that the City has started cleaning out overgrown brush in other areas in addition to the ditch.

Councilperson Vannucci reported:

The pipes were delivered to move the gas lines along 14<sup>th</sup> and Washington Streets. Work is anticipated to begin late this week.

### **Business from the Mayor:**

Mayor Reese reported:

The 150 participants in the Fireball Rally from Connecticut to Florida will stop in New Castle on September 27th. They will need to find clues in town. The Mayor is working with the businesses to provide lunch.

### **Business from the Council President:**

President Ratchford reported:

The City web site has been updated. Everyone is invited to make comments or suggestions that will make the site easier to use or that will make the City more welcoming.

### **Business from the Floor (concerning agenda items only):**

None

**Motion, Discussion and Vote on Resolution 2015-35**, a Resolution recognizing George O’Neal for 40 Years of Dedicated Service to the City of New Castle.

The **Motion** to consider Resolution No. 2015-35 was made by Councilperson Megginson and seconded by Councilperson Vannucci.

President Ratchford read the resolution.

**Resolution No. 2015-35 passed unanimously.**

**Motion, Discussion and Vote on Resolution 2015-36**, a Resolution Remembering the Life of Marcia Quillen.

The **Motion** to consider Resolution No. 2015-36 was made by Councilperson Petty and seconded by Councilperson Vannucci.

Council President Ratchford read the resolution.

**Resolution No. 2015-36 passed unanimously.**

**Mayoral Proclamation recognizing the 80th Anniversary of the Social Security Administration.**

Mayor Reese read a proclamation recognizing the 80th Anniversary of the Social Security Administration. The City of New Castle will recognize the milestone on August 14<sup>th</sup>.

**New Business**

**Update from Senator Nicole Poore**

Senator Poore provided highlights of recent accomplishments for improvements in the City. She thanked the people of Dobbinsville for being heavily invested in their neighborhood and concerned for the safety of the 79 children that live in the neighborhood. The Senator and the DelDOT representative were amazed at the amount and type of traffic on a Thursday evening at 6 PM and determined that work is needed. The traffic lights are being reactivated. Within the next year, the entire area along Route 9 will be reconstructed. New Castle County Police will send Crossing Guards for the first two weeks of the school year and will monitor the traffic to determine if they are needed to continue on a daily basis. DelDOT will re-line the crossing area immediately. Route 9 from Federal Lane to Washington Street will be repaved for River Towns Ride.

Representative Mulrooney was unable to attend tonight due to a conflict with another meeting. Each legislator is allocated \$250,000 of CTF funds to be used to reinvest in the safety of roadways. The funds are not typically used for sidewalks but the sidewalk at Clymer Street and Route 9 will be fixed. Verizon will fix the dip caused by their pole. Representative Johnson will use some of his CTF funds to help with improvements at Ferry Cut-Off.

Councilperson Vannucci reported that the dip by the pizza shop caused by drainage problems will be fixed within year.

Councilperson Di Mondì thanked Senator Poore for taking the time to address Council and for being responsive to City needs. He registered his complaint that DelDOT is using Route 9 as relief valve for Route 13 because it can't handle traffic. The City has tried to do something, but has not been successful. Councilperson Di Mondì claims the State pays Newark to go after traffic using their streets to bypass the I-95 tolls. The truck traffic coming through town is taking down wires and trees. The traffic is not just local with some coming from the refinery that should be using Route 13. He continued on another DelDOT topic regarding the poor quality of the construction work on Washington Street with the concrete already deteriorating. The new street design took away on-street parking for residents and replaced it with a bike lane and grass berm. Rather than address issues, DelDOT refers complaints to the State Representatives. It is bureaucracy out of control with no accountability.

Senator Poore responded that she is disappointed to hear about the lack of responsiveness from DelDOT. The new Secretary of Transportation that started last year has a very

different approach that focuses on customer service and responsiveness.

Councilperson Di Mondì believes the new signs from NJ and PA direct traffic to Route 9 and people have found it's a short cut to the beach. The signs should be changed to redirect traffic. Senator Poore will look into it.

Robert Thomas of 7th Street inquired about responsibility to clean the storm drains. The City Administrator responded that it is a joint effort between the various governments.

**Motion, Discussion and Vote on Resolution 2015-37**, a Resolution to approve the FY14 City Audit, as presented by the City Auditor.

Vincent Barbone thanked the Mayor and City Council for allowing Haggerty & Haggerty to do the audit. The report being presented is for the FY ended June 30, 2014. The audit includes comparisons to FY 2013. The City is currently using modified cash basis accounting and is working to convert to full accrual.

Mr. Barbone provided an overview by section of the audit report. For income and expenses, the expenses are greater than income, but the difference is covered by funds from MSC. The budget is balanced with an ending surplus. Most grant funds come from State and Federal programs.

Overall, no material weaknesses or issues were found. There is no evidence of fraud so the City is receiving a clean report. The City staff was commended for their efficiency and support of the auditing process.

Councilperson Di Mondì voiced concern that Council is just receiving the draft and it's a year later. Mr. Barbone agrees that the audit should be completed in six months. Future audits should be timelier. Main function at the start of this project was to revamp financial statements and bring the City to full accrual basis. The process has been ongoing for several years. For 2015, the City should have timely, full accrual reports and audits. One of the difficulties is that the pension plans are underfunded and must be presented, but the City has no control because the pension program is part of the State pension program.

Councilperson Di Mondì would like to have audited numbers for the budget hearings. Mr. Barbone commented that on a cash basis, there is very little difference, but when converted to full accrual accounting the audited numbers will be helpful.

Councilperson Di Mondì asked about numbers on page 7 that show income only covers 88% of the budget. The difference is the funding from MSC which is not guaranteed. The City has no means to make up difference and is vulnerable. Mr. Barbone responded that increases to the utility rates from the Commission or City Property Taxes can generate the revenue needed. Eventually, he would like to incorporate the MSC audit into City audit. Council advised that MSC is a separate entity and not a City commission, so the MSC audit cannot be included with the City's.

President Ratchford inquired about the blank on page 14 for employee benefit accruals. Mr. Barbone advised that information is on page 13 and wasn't carried forward.

President Ratchford is pleased that the audit shows that we are fiscally sound and following all procedures.

The **Motion** to consider Resolution No. 2015-37 was made by Councilperson Di Mondì and seconded by Councilperson Vannucci.

President Ratchford read the resolution.

**Resolution No. 2015-37 passed unanimously.**

**Update on Mt. Salem church and historical marker celebration.**

President Ratchford stated that the Mt. Salem Celebration Committee is requesting that East Fourth Street between Harmony and Chestnut Street be closed from noon to 2 p.m. on September 12th. The President introduced the leader of the celebration committee, Ms. Josie Roy.

Ms. Roy thanked Council for the opportunity to speak on behalf of Mt. Salem Church Members and Friends. Ms. Roy thanked Ms. Alice Riehl for attending their meetings to document their progress and publish their story in the *New Castle Weekly*.

Ms. Roy reported that the Mt. Salem Church Members and Friends have taken steps to make sure that the African American History of New Castle is preserved. Since March, they have worked with Delaware State Archives and State Legislators to make sure the Church and grounds are preserved. The Church was built by African Americans by hand without the assistance of an architect. The cemetery includes veterans from 1864 and many African Americans from the community including her father. The group has discovered new documents that are exciting. The Church is on the National Historic Registry and may be added to the National Historic Landmarks.

The group went before the Delaware Peninsula Conference and the Board of Trustees to report that they are starting a movement to make sure history is not forgotten and the Church is preserved. The Historical Marker is ready and will be installed on September 12 during a celebration from 11:30 am to 1 pm. It will be a joyous day with celebration continuing at Goodwill Fire Hall from 1 to 2 PM.

Meetings of the Mt. Salem Church Members and Friends are at Buttonwood School with dates and times announced in the *New Castle Weekly*.

**Forgotten Cats:** Presentation from Wynne Hewitt, Director of Community Outreach and Development and volunteer regarding grant from Pet Smart Charities to trap, neuter, vaccinate and return (TNVR) cats in New Castle--free of charge—to reduce number of unwanted cats and kittens.

Forgotten Cats mission is to trap, neuter, vaccinate feral free roaming cats and return them to the same environment to reduce their population. The Delaware chapter of the organization has been active for 10 years and is one of the largest in the country. Their process is a humane way to deal with large populations. They manage by reducing the food supply as the colony eventually dies off. The group received a grant from Pet Smart Charities for \$200,000. They will target specific areas and 19720 has been selected. They need assistance from the community to know where the cat colonies are. Feral cats are usually afraid of humans so you don't see most of them. This project will result in fewer nuisance complaints and a reduced risk of disease. The organization will also neuter and vaccinate pet cats. Ms. Hewitt asked for assistance to help spread the word. She suggested flyers in water bills, information on web sites, etc.

President Ratchford agreed to put the information on the City web site. The City Code Enforcement Officer will be asked for any knowledge of feral cat populations.

**Motion, Discussion and Vote on Resolution 2015-38**, a resolution authorizing a curb plaque program and affirmatively disavowing any intent to give the curbs individual names and confirming that the program is only to recognize City donors.

The City Administrator explained that the purpose of the program is to generate funds for ADA compliant curbs. Donations to the River Town Ride and Festival of \$3,000 or more will result in a plaque on a curb.

Mr. Bergstrom reported that a survey of the conditions of the curbs and signs has been completed. The available dollars for repairs are limited. This is a way to make the dollars go farther. The rationale for prioritization of installing the ADA compliant curbs is the amount of foot traffic, the locations of handicapped parking space and where handicapped citizens live.

Mr. Barthel said the Council previously approved the study for downtown. Construction of the new ADA compliant curbs won't begin until spring.

Councilperson Di Mondri suggested that a graphic that shows what it will look like would be helpful.

The **Motion** to consider Resolution No. 2015-38 was made by Councilperson Megginson and seconded by Councilperson Vannucci.

President Ratchford read the resolution.

**Resolution No. 2015-38 passed unanimously.**

#### **Comments from the Floor**

None

The **Motion to adjourn** was made by Councilperson Megginson, seconded by Councilperson Vannucci and **passed unanimously**. Council adjourned at 8:43 pm.

Council met in Executive Session to discuss personnel matters.

Respectfully submitted,

Janet Wurtzel  
Clerk of the City of New Castle