

**City of New Castle Delaware
City Council Special Meeting and
Budget Workshop at Town Hall
201 Delaware Street, New Castle
Thursday, June 8, 2017
7:30 p.m.**

New Business

Council Workshop Session to discuss the 2017-18 City Budget

Roll call

Councilperson Valarie W. Leary
Councilperson Michael J. Quaranta
Council President Linda Ratchford
Councilperson Michael M. Platt
Councilperson John A. Di Mondì

Also present:

William Barthel, City Administrator
Janet Carlin, City Treasurer
Kathy Walls, Finance Coordinator

City Council President Ratchford asked for staff updates on changes, and asked for ideas as to what needs to be added to the budget.

Mr. William Barthel stated that he has identified \$36,500 in decreased expenses; out of this, we have been able to realize \$10,000 via a comprehensive plan; earlier he spoke of eliminating a public works position, but the saved amount (\$56,000) was not realized in the budget itself; capital improvements on 3rd Street of \$25,000 were not incorporated into the budget either; two new recruits for Police Department (PD) - two patrolmen were added, 17 people at the end of June.

Council President Ratchford asked Mr. Barthel about the police station, the new recruits, and the no change in total expenses. Mr. Barthel stated that there are 17 police officers, and there have been 17 officers for a short amount of time. Mrs. Walls asked Mr. Barthel about the police operations and the reply was that he wants to see a three-year report on operations, statistics are still being worked on. He discussed the police cars maintenance, and spoke to PD members outside of the budget meeting. Mr. Barthel pointed out the last column on the spreadsheet is "revenue under expenditures" which is \$ 77,534.00. Mrs. Walls stated that change is from the last budget - a request for clarification of \$809,654 surplus as of today, \$780,654 surplus expected after expenses, and \$603,600 is restricted with \$177,054 left over, after balancing the budget, it is in the black by \$77,534. Mrs. Walls explained what attributed to the surplus; she stated that the large chunks are the \$400K from transfer tax, \$300K for road projects and a large permit fee.

There was a discussion that referred to the increase with Mrs. Walls. She stated that it was budgeted for and it came out to be a little less than anticipated. The discussion about the budget continued and the question about the capital figure was asked. Mrs. Walls stated from the May monthly report, \$2,836,518 is unrestricted, \$379,432 restricted, and it was asked of her how much was spent. Her reply was \$90,000 on average for expenses, \$25K for pension expenditures, two APs totaling \$80K, and \$166K from MSC, remainder of June -\$29,000 is expected.

There was a discussion between Councilperson Leary, Council President, Ratchford, and Councilperson Platt about ways to increase certain items, for example; business licenses because at this point, the revenue is more or less what is projected. Councilperson Platt suggested that we bring back the Mayor's Court for traffic violations and it was mentioned that the Mayor's Court hasn't been functional for 10 or so years. Mr. Barthel stated that it has not been functional, but has been kept in the charter.

Mr. Barthel asked do we have any historical financial records that are easily retrievable. Mrs. Walls said "No". Mrs. Walls explained that we have copies of all audits, but not a more detailed breakdown; the bookkeeping system only dates back to 2011.

Council President Ratchford discussed the expenses from Public Safety. Public Safety was discussed and was asked if 948K is for Public Safety salaries projecting for 17 employees? Mrs. Walls said "yes". Mr. Barthel stated that the targeted number was 18. It was asked that, when we have 17 officers on payroll, are we saving money? Mrs. Walls said, "yes". The question came up are they shooting for that 18 officers? It was suggested that before personnel is added to the police station the Council should evaluate the performance of the police station. Councilperson Di Mondì stated that it is difficult to keep staff; there are two officers at the Farmer's Market; and they are not experiencing effective performance out of certain officers. Councilperson Di Mondì was asked not to discuss that topic at the meeting. In this discussion about the Police Department the police vehicles were asked about. It was discussed that the 2012 Dodge Charger patrol vehicle has - \$3-4K/year in maintenance.

A variety of different accounts and services were discussed. The number for phone services was \$1K; item 6195 is \$8.5K; they are different phone contracts and Mrs. Walls explained that Verizon; Paetec lines is the one that the officers use. She discussed that there is approx. \$25K for animal control on the dykes and that we need to have someone licensed, and this is for safety reasons; integrity of the dyke. Councilperson Di Mondì informed Mr. Barthel that he knows someone that is a professional trapper who they could use to trap the wildlife at the dyke and stated his objections in how the animals are purposed to be controlled. Councilperson Michael J. Quaranta: We have to maintain it or we will lose our status with the Federal Gov't, the Feds have finally decided to enforce their own rules.

Councilperson Michael J. Quaranta stated that he is interested in the landfill fees and he asked how we handle what is collected. He asked, does the City pay fees? Mr. Barthel stated that the City does pay fees and there is an arrangement. Mike Quaranta is asking about the landfill and how much we used to pay. Councilperson Di Mondì and the Council President discussed the fee increase. Councilperson Platt asked, where is the garbage being dumped? The answer that he was given was that garbage was dumped at the same place but in a different area.

The Council President discussed the pruning and planting of trees: \$20 K proposed budget; Tree Advisory Commission recommended \$30K; large trees are beyond our skill set; about \$5K for treating Ash trees; money for planting trees; \$15K budgeted, actual spending is above \$30K

Councilperson Michael J. Quaranta stated that we've missed the mark, and asked Mrs. Walls, would it be prudent to raise the budget by \$5K? We keep missing the mark from FY to FY. Ms. Walls stated that when there are storms and emergencies, they are forced to go over the budget. Mr. Barthel stated that, if there is a Tree grant, \$5K + \$6K from the city; it would be prudent to add an additional 5K.

Councilperson Michael J. Quaranta questioned the health and welfare, and the planting of the trees in the City and he wanted to know how to equalize the efforts across the city.

David Robinson: most street trees are east of the railroad; about 20 ash trees; the cost is hard to assess due to the tree diameter, there is a backlog of trees needing attention. He also expressed concern about the health of the trees and the treatment. He stated that \$5,000.00 would be enough to take care of the trees.

Councilperson Michael J. Quaranta asked, are there programs you know of wherein communities could acquire more trees?

Robinson: We do have something underway and unfortunately it is not moving as fast as I want. We are trying to establish a farm with Delaware Green Ways at Penn Farms. Public Works is dealing with smaller trees and does a lot of pruning when the tree branches get into the power lines.

Mr. Barthel: stated that there are trees we can't do; MSC has agreed to help us partly.

Councilperson Platt asked are we training our personnel to prune the trees because it is a dangerous task. Mr. Barthel said, "yes".

The **Motion** to increase the budget \$25,000 for the planting and care of the trees was made by Councilperson Di Mondì, and **seconded** by Councilperson Michael J. Quaranta.

The **Motion** was passed **Unanimously**.

The Council meeting moved on and the discussion was about the salaries of the City Clerk's; City Treasurer and Finance Clerk. The Councilperson Leary discussed the economic development; possibly getting the city on board with the main street program again. It was mentioned that the point-person to coordinate with other groups; need another \$500 in that category. Councilperson Michael J. Quaranta questioned Mrs. Walls as to the reason why public official liability is more expensive than police liability because there have been claims against the City. Mrs. Walls stated that there have been public officials that had liability issues.

The next topic of discussion was about curb ramps. Councilperson Michael J. Quaranta and

Mr. Barthel had a discussion about the curb ramps. The curb ramps have to be done before the end of March. Council President Ratchford discussed about trying to add to existing contracts and it was brought to light that there is a grant budget; they do not know what the State of Delaware will give for municipal street aid, and it will not be available until the end of June.

David Baldini: stated that there are a number of issues that are coming up that are more detail oriented; flood plain issues etc. We have to get input from all neighborhoods through public outreach.

Councilperson John Di Mondì wanted to know if the money could be spread for the project which is this going to be spread out over two years. Mr. Barthel stated that he reached out to two parties that are familiar with the City in contracts.

Councilperson Michael J. Quaranta said the biggest driver in the costs is that the state has later done a substantial addition of requirements; two thirds of increases are due to state mandates that have to be met by state planning and the last comprehensive plan and now we are in the next ten year cycle.

Council President Linda Ratchford discussed the 70K unallocated; contribution requests from the library, and many other organizations.

Councilperson Michael J. Quaranta purposed a part time summer works program for youth in the city aged 16-18; period of 6 weeks at around min. wage; cost approx. \$4K. Councilperson Di Mondì stated that the City used to have a program and that he suggested that we need to have a selection process to make it fair. He suggested that the program should be a reflection for the entire City from one teenager in each section. It was suggested to have this program set up as quickly as possible, if approved today.

The **Motion** to restart a summer youth program for applicants from the age 16 to 18 was made by Councilperson Michael J. Quaranta and Councilperson Platt **seconded** the motion.

The **Motion** was passed **Unanimously**.

Councilperson Leary discussed the Main Street program and she mentioned that there are a number of different cities that have this program and there is a partnership with the historic New Castle alliance; must be full-time. Councilperson Michael J. Quaranta joined the discussion pulling together what is available; not quite ready to commit to full-time; contractor would be a better idea; grant fulfillment. Council President Ratchford stated that a part-time contractual person could take the load off city employees in terms of events.

Councilperson Di Mondì stated his objections regarding the Main Street project because he estimated that only 25% of the City is the Historic Section and the other 75% of the City does not have any connection to the other parts of the City. He explained that this program is to benefit business in the Historic Section and the program will not benefit anyone else in the City. He believes that that the Police Department needs to take care of Van Dyke Village. In addition,

Mr. Di Mondì cited that there are properties that are not well kept in that development. Councilperson Di Mondì stated that there is not an amusement tax and there is not an entertainment tax. Councilperson Di Mondì stated that the City is not alike and that the wages in some of the neighborhoods are blue collared workers making less than \$45,000.00. Councilperson Di Mondì continued to state his objections and Councilperson Platt agreed with him on certain aspects.

The **Motion** was made by Councilperson Valarie Leary for hiring a contract person to work within the parameters of and with the Main Street Program for economic development, grant writing, event planning, part-time, \$35K who will work under the Main Street guidelines, and with the already affiliated program of NCCP and Councilperson Michael J. Quaranta **seconded** the motion.

The Motion passed, with the Council votes recorded as follows: (3-2)

Councilperson Valarie Leary - Yes
Councilperson Michael J. Quaranta - Yes
Council President Linda Ratchford - Yes
Councilperson Michael M. Platt - No
Councilperson John A. Di Mondì - No

Councilperson Platt brought up the concern about the sidewalks; trees affecting the quality of the areas, and that we are having problems selling homes because of tree damage. Councilperson Leary and Council President Ratchford discussed that it is the responsibility of the homeowner and that this issue falls under the tree budget. Mr. Barthel stated that there has to be clarification over who manages the trees. Councilperson Platt stated that City owned trees are disturbing the sidewalks.

A request to put in a portable toilet at the end of the path – at the edge of the gravel parking lot was made which will cost \$1200. A question was asked as to whether this is the responsibility of the Trustees.

The **Motion** to buy a portable toilet for \$1,200.00 was made by Councilperson Michael Platt and Councilperson Valarie Leary **seconded** the motion.

Motion to put a portable toilet somewhere along the path.

The Motion passed, with the Council votes recorded as follows: (4-1)

Councilperson Valarie Leary - Yes
Councilperson Michael J. Quaranta - Yes
Council President Linda Ratchford - Yes
Councilperson Michael M. Platt - Yes
Councilperson John A. Di Mondì - No

Contribution requests were made:

\$750 for Arasapha

The **Motion** was passed **Unanimously**.

\$10K from the New Castle Community Partnership, for branding (**motion** for \$7500 passed, 3 to 2)

The Motion passed, with the Council votes recorded as follows: (3-2)

Councilperson Valarie Leary - Yes
Councilperson Michael J. Quaranta - Yes
Council President Linda Ratchford - Yes
Councilperson Michael M. Platt - No
Councilperson John A. Di Mondì - No

Laura Fontana, President of NCCP, discussed the branding program; this program would be for four days; a person would come to town and speak to business owners and other locals; Mrs. Fontana stated that this program serves to promote tourism; NCCP has devoted \$5K from its own budget for implementation; they have \$2K - 2.5K allocated from the State of Delaware, which they have until April of next year to use; Fontana stated that they will get the funding regardless, but it would be nice to have support from the City

Historical Society asked for \$8.5K

Councilperson Michael J. Quaranta **motion** to contribute \$5K, with the stipulation that the money not be used for personnel and it was **seconded** by Councilperson Leary.

The Motion passed, with the Council votes recorded as follows: (4-1)

Councilperson Valarie Leary - Yes
Councilperson Michael J. Quaranta - Yes
Council President Linda Ratchford - Yes
Councilperson Michael M. Platt - Yes
Councilperson John A. Di Mondì - No

New Castle Senior Center has asked for \$4K to defray utility costs
Councilperson Leary made the motion for \$3K and it was **seconded** by Councilperson Platt.

The **Motion** was passed **Unanimously**.

Library, requested \$5K (motion to provide them with \$2.5K)

Council President Ratchford made a **motion** to contribute \$2.5 K to the Library **seconded** by Councilperson Leary.

The Motion passed, with the Council votes recorded as follows: (4-1)

Councilperson Valarie Leary - Yes
Councilperson Michael J. Quaranta - Yes
Council President Linda Ratchford - Yes
Councilperson Michael M. Platt - Yes
Councilperson John A. Di Mondì - No

Beautification group asked for assistance but did not specify a number, but \$1,500 has been an amount in the past (motion for \$1,500 passed); total \$29,750.

Council President Ratchford made a **motion** to contribute \$1,500 to the Flower Beautification Committee **seconded** by Councilperson Leary for the Flower Beautification Committee.

The **Motion** was passed **Unanimously**.

The **Motion to adjourn** was made by Councilperson Platt, **seconded** by Councilperson Leary and passed unanimously. Council adjourned at 10: 08 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Brian G. Whitaker
City Clerk of New Castle, Delaware