

**City Council of the City of New Castle  
Special Meeting at Town Hall  
201 Delaware Street – New Castle  
Tuesday, August 23, 2016 – 9:30 a.m.**

**Call to order: 9:30 a.m.**

**Roll Call:**

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

Also present:

William Barthel, City Administrator  
Janet Carlin, City Treasurer  
Daniel Losco, City Solicitor  
Jamie Rogers, Chief of Police  
Jeff Bergstrom Building Official  
Kathleen Walls, Finance Coordinator

President Ratchford stated this would be a workshop meeting to discuss City Police time commits/costs at Airport Plaza City fees.

Mr. Barthel reviewed a handout showing a 5 year history of City Police complaints vs. Airport Plaza Police percentages of time committed out of those complaints. This shows the percentage of time committed to Airport Plaza. The average over the last 5 years was 18.6% of total police time, not including detectives. The detectives spent 58% of their time on cases involving Airport Plaza. This makes the estimated dollar commandment of the Police budget \$467,965.00. The tax amount paid on those parcels is \$251,716.00 leaving a deficit difference of \$216,249.00.

President Ratchford commented that approximately 25% of our Police budget is spent in that one area. Chief Rogers said these numbers are conservative. If one officer is on a complaint in the Airport Plaza area, another officer may be there to help, but that is not reflected in the number of hours for that complaint. The average is down 2% in 2016 due to the Farmers Market hiring two of the seasonal officers to patrol. President Ratchford asked what percentages of calls have a back up officer. Chief Rogers said ideally 100% for safety sake.

Mr. Losco asked if there is a seasonal increase of calls to Airport Plaza in the summer; and are the seasonal officers able to handle problems, or do they need to call in the regular Police. Chief Rogers stated the flea market is busier in the summer, but they are keeping it open longer into winter. The seasonal officers are greatly decreasing the number of calls to Airport plaza. Their

President Ratchford asked if any of the other areas of the City, such as Industrial parks had higher Police calls as seen in the Airport plaza. Twin Spans does have calls, but it is harder to pull out these numbers, Twin Spans Park is in the same grid number with Van Dyke Village, and the Police Station.

Councilperson asked if there was a particular time that was busier for Police calls. Chief Rogers stated the weekends when the Farmers Market is open are the busiest. The response time at the Airport Plaza can change due to traffic in the area.

President Ratchford asked for the Mr. Losco to outline possible options.

Mr. Losco has looked at State laws, as well as what some other municipalities have done. Wilmington has developed a business improvement districts, and they assess a tax or fee on the parties that are going to benefit from the additional services. As this would be penalties for excessive alarms or police calls it could discourage people from calling the police.

An approach used in Middletown is to use business license charges to include a percentage of gross product, this however would target the largest businesses, which may not be the ones using the police services.

Another approach would be a blanket tax increase on businesses. This could not just target Airport Plaza; it would have to be applied to all businesses. Another satellite Police office could be put in the area.

Airport plaza is a Trustee property, and they should have some commitment in coming up with a solution.

Mr. Vannucci asked if it would be possible to de-annex the property. Mr. Losco stated that was a possibility that could be researched. President Ratchford asked if our police would still be called if we de-annexed the property. Chief Rogers said the City Police would be called to back up on emergencies, but the time would not be nearly as much as it is now. It would probably revert to the State Police.

President Ratchford asked where the majority of the police calls are coming from. Chief Rogers said the majority of calls are not attached directly to a business. It could be an accident in the parking lot, or an assault in the parking lot. Home Depot and Pathmark accounted for many of the calls, but they were open longer hours. The violent crimes are mostly in the restaurants along Rt. 13.

President Ratchford said of the solutions it would be hard to pinpoint it to the businesses zone. Mr. Losco stated doing so would be problematic under State law to do so. The excessive consumption might discourage people from calling the Police. The substation would probably end up costing the city more in staffing, and that would take police away from another area of the City.

Councilperson Megginson suggested going to the Trustees, it is their property. There are a lot of things we have to consider.

Mr. Losco asked if the Airport Plaza had a private security company, would that decrease the City Police presence. Chief Rogers said he thought it would actually increase the number of calls that would be called in.

## **Discussion Regarding City Fees**

President Ratchford said Council wanted to review the City fees, to see if they are consistent with other municipalities.

Jeff Bergstrom said that jurisdictions are free to set their own fee schedules, and quoted the International Building Code; it's the intent that the fees collected by the department for building permit issuance, planning review and inspection be adequate to cover the cost of the department. This is to cover costs, not generate revenue.

Kathleen Walls said she had been asked to research Middletown business license structure. Middletown has a policy that larger businesses pay a percentage of their gross receipts over \$400,000. They took this policy from the City of Dover. Home Depot is \$9,400 a year, and Lowes is \$11,500, Amazon is \$12,000 and Walmart is \$35,000. Middletown's Budget is over \$500,000, most of that revenue comes from small businesses.

Our business licenses are all flat fees that is determined by the number of employees. Our highest is \$300.00. Councilperson Megginson asked if Home Depot only pays \$300.00 for their New Castle Business License. Mrs. Walls said that was correct. Councilperson Megginson asked how they arrive at their total. Mrs. Walls said they charge a percentage of gross sales for merchants, and for manufacturing it's based aggregate gross purchases for resale.

Mrs. Walls said Middletown has the same issue with as we do with businesses outside the city such as contractors not getting their business licenses until they get a job in city. Jeff Bergstrom said there is a 10% penalty per month for not renewing your business license at the beginning of the year.

President Ratchford asked of there was a difference between businesses in the City, as opposed to outside the City. Jeff Bergstrom said there is a difference, businesses in the City use City services such as the police and public works. So there could be a possibility of having a higher license fee for businesses inside the City.

Discussion of Special Trash Pick-up fees.

- We could increase the prices, but not significantly, we do not want to encourage residents to dump these items.
- Scrap iron could be sold
- Electronics can be disposed free of charge at DSWA sites.

President Ratchford asked how our fees compared with other municipalities. Some towns had a flat fee. But, our prices are in line with most other towns.

The Motion to adjourn into executive session was made by Councilperson Vannucci, seconded by Councilperson Megginson and passed unanimously. Council adjourned at 10:53 a.m.

Respectively submitted,

Kimberly Burgmuller  
Council Secretary