

**City of New Castle Delaware
Regular City Council Meeting at Town Hall
201 Delaware Street – New Castle
Tuesday, May 8, 2018– 7:00 p.m.**

Roll Call: 7:00 pm

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

Also present:

Janet Carlin, City Treasurer
Daniel Losco, City Solicitor
Jamie Rogers, Chief of Police
Jeff Bergstrom, Building Official and Fire Marshal
William Barthel, City Administrator
Jimmy Gambacorta, Mayor

Approval of the Minutes: 3/13/2018 Public Hearing Minutes; 3/13/2018 Regular Meeting Minutes.

Regarding the minutes from the Tuesday, March 13 meeting, Council President Linda Ratchford advised that there was an addition, and a clerk's correction. The Clerk cannot make a correction to previously approved minutes, so that paragraph needs to be deleted.

Staff Reports

After a motion and second, the minutes of the March 13 public hearing, the minutes from the March 13 regular meeting, and the staff reports were approved unanimously.

Report from the City Administrator & Staff

The unaudited Treasurer's report was presented by Janet Carlin, City Treasurer, as of April 30, 2018:

City Treasurer Janet Carlin reported for a total of \$3,533.663.18 unaudited \$4,014,308.15 as of 03/31/2018.

After a motion and second, the unaudited Treasurer's report, as presented, was unanimously approved.

Mayor Gambacorta reported that Saturday, April 21 was the 90th anniversary of the arrival of Giuseppe Mario Bellanca in America. In honor of this anniversary, the Friends of Bellanca

Airfield scheduled a ceremony at the airfield, featuring the unveiling of a full-scale model of the first airplane he built in America. Bellanca family members were present at the ceremony.

City Administrator Barthel provided the following information:

- Regarding the bank loan the Council approved, rate quotes were received from three banks. PNC Bank provided the lowest rate, which was locked at 3.25%. The loan amount is \$1,894,330.06. The City has agreed to pay monthly, and be paid quarterly by the trust, as per the MOU. The loan is scheduled to close on May 24. Tim Frey, from Saul Ewing, has been hired as bond counsel, as per the bank's requirement. Mr. Barthel expressed gratitude to the trustees.
- Regarding a suggestion that the utilities be buried underground, as part of the Delaware Street project, Mr. Barthel and Mr. Bergstrom met with MSC. It was determined at the meeting that there is a good possibility that the project will be broken into two phases; the first being Third Street to the wharf, and then Third Street to Sixth Street. This is due to MSC needing to line the pipes from Third Street to Sixth Street, and they are unable to start that until about a year from now. The beginning of the project is being geared up for spring of 2019, details to be worked out with MSC. Dave Athey, from AECOM, will be providing a cost estimate for a survey which needs to be done from Third to Sixth. The wharf to Third Street part of the project continues moving forward.
- Jeff Bergstrom will be meeting with Cirillo Brothers on 5/9, regarding the other projects previously approved by Council.
- The contractor who had done the work on the project on Ninth Street has offered \$20,000 for the Dobbinsville Police Substation building, although the offer is not yet finalized. Once the offer is finalized, it will be brought to Council for consideration.

In response to a question from Councilperson Quaranta, Mr. Barthel advised that the contractor who is making the offer on the Dobbinsville property has stated their intent as being a showroom for cabinetry, etc. They have also mentioned the possibility of wanting to add a second story to the building. That and other items will be conditions to the offer, including re-zoning and paving issues.

Police Chief Rogers made the following report from April:

- In April of 2018, there were 37 criminal arrests, 177 traffic tickets, and 87 traffic warnings. 132 warnings were given as part of a project to give warnings on vehicles facing in the wrong direction. The next step of that project will be issuing tickets. Continuing with the April statistics, there were 12 crime prevention checks and 103 crime reports taken.
- Four heroin overdoses were reported.
- There was a theft of a firearm reported.
- There were six drug arrests.
- Police handled 22 traffic accidents.

In response to a question from Councilperson Quaranta, related to suggestions made at the last meeting that the Chief reach out to the state police regarding police work and drug interdiction, Chief Rogers advised that he considers it inappropriate to report on the department's criminal investigations. He also announced an award that one of the police officers received from the DEA, related to a drug investigation. This is an example of work that is being done "behind the scenes."

In response to an inquiry from Councilperson Di Mondì, Chief Rogers advised that parking tickets are included in traffic arrest numbers.

Councilperson Di Mondì requested that parking ticket numbers be separated out from the traffic arrests.

Councilperson Di Mondì asked Chief Rogers for his opinion on what has caused the drop in state court revenue from last year, with arrests being up from last year. Chief Rogers responded that plea agreements account for some of it. How arrests that involve other agencies, such as the state police, are processed, also has an impact.

Council Communications

Within the Council Communications portion of the agenda, Councilperson Quaranta asked that City Clerk Brian Whitaker share his plans related to a conference that he will be attending. Mr. Whitaker related that the city has paid the required dues for him to join the Delaware Municipal Clerks Association.

Mr. Whitaker (City Clerk) advised that he has attended the Delaware Municipal Clerks school, which was educational on a variety of topics related to his position as City Clerk. While attending classes at this school, Mr. Whitaker accumulated class hours toward becoming a Certified City Clerk.

Mr. Whitaker (City Clerk) reported that he will be attending the International Municipal Clerks Association conference, which will be held in Norfolk, Virginia. The conference will be attended by City Clerks from all over the country, as well as internationally. The clerks will include those who are elected, appointed, employed, etc.

Council President Ratchford requested that Mr. Whitaker (City Clerk) provide an update at a future meeting.

Councilperson Di Mondì recommended that Mr. Whitaker (City Clerk) use his attendance at the conference as a qualification to present, when applying for the position of New Castle City Clerk in the future appointment.

Councilperson Platt reported that the City Council had toured MSC's facilities a couple of weeks prior to this meeting, and that the people working there are impressive, as well as the overall operation of the facility.

Councilperson Platt also reported that on Saturday April 21, a couple of concerns were brought up by citizens who visited him at his home:

- One of those concerns was code enforcement, and the fact that the same people are fined over and over again, but nothing is actually done to correct the problem, sometimes after years. Councilperson Platt would like the City Council to look into this.
- Another concern was that some citizens would like to restart an earlier program where there were liaisons between the City Council and different city departments. Councilperson Platt would like that idea looked into.
- A couple of other things were brought up by citizens, but he has not yet had a chance to look into them, so he will get to those items in the future.

Based on citizen inquiries, Councilperson Platt requested an update on the traffic light at Sixth and Delaware Streets.

City Administrator Barthel reported that DeIDOT had initially indicated that they wanted to present to Council at this meeting. They then cancelled, and indicated that they want to come to the June Council meeting. The expectation is that they will present their findings at that time, related to the traffic light at Sixth and Delaware.

Councilperson Platt reported that he had received a complaint from a citizen who lives on 14th Street, about kids playing basketball at all hours of the day and night. City Administrator Barthel reported that he had just been advised of that complaint, and he will look into it.

Police Chief Rogers reported that he is familiar with the situation. There is a basketball hoop on 14th Street, in the street. The police have been out there many times, including the Chief himself, and the people at the property have been warned many times that continued violation will result in removal of the basketball hoop.

Council President Ratchford suggested that they be warned in writing of the action to be taken.

Councilperson Quaranta asked City Solicitor Losco whether the city personnel have the power to take action, after several warnings have been issued, and then bill the property owner for the cost to remediate the problem. Mr. Losco responded with information related to enforcement possibilities, including taking of the property.

The topic was discussed further, including the difference between occupied and unoccupied properties, in these scenarios. Councilperson Quaranta requested that there be future discussion on this topic, inviting citizens to comment. Council President Ratchford requested that Mr. Platt and Mr. Quaranta meet with Mr. Barthel on the topic, and report back to Council.

Council President Ratchford reported that MSC plans to put the utilities in Van Dyke Village underground, over the next three-year period, due to the infrastructure being at the end of its life, as well as the fact that it is currently difficult to reach the lines, to make repairs. That is the section of the city with the least reliable electric service.

When the project has been completed, after three years, the utilities cost will be about \$3,000 per year. MSC will be paying for the conversion, but wishes to bill the city for the utilities.

Councilperson Quaranta recommended that the residents in the area be given notice about the upcoming work. Mr. Barthel advised that MSC is planning to do so, but they are waiting for the Council to approve.

After further discussion, it was decided that Council President Ratchford would let MSC know that they may proceed; however, it is very important that every effort be made to inform all citizens in the area of the upcoming work plans.

Business from the Mayor – None

Business from the Council President

Council President Ratchford reported that the state has increased the storage capacity on the city's website. Recorded minutes will be able to be added to the site, until the written minutes are completed.

Council President Ratchford announced that she will table the first reading of Ordinance 515. The topic has been discussed previously, and there is more information that is needed, particularly on the questions of:

- What is the future of telecommunications?
- What is the role of government?

More information is needed on this topic, so it will be discussed further at a later date.

Councilperson Quaranta requested that City Solicitor Losco provide additional information on the topic, particularly along the lines of right-of-way, and government rights and responsibilities. Mr. Losco recommended that Cohen Law Group, out of Pittsburgh, be consulted on this.

Alice Riehl, of the New Castle Weekly, requested clarification of what the \$3,000 is for, that was spoken about earlier, related to the underground utilities in the Van Dyke Village. Council President Ratchford responded that the city would pay \$3,000 per year for the electricity cost of the street lights.

Certificate of Appreciation for Exceptional Citizenship – Presented to three Citizens by Chief Rogers.

Police Chief Rogers presented a Certification of Appreciation to constituents for their exceptional assistance to the Police Department, in preventing a suicide earlier in the month.

Business from the Floor (concerning agenda items only)

Victor Bryson mentioned that when he asked previously that the Police Chief look to the state for help, he did not mean any harm, and he does not blame the Police Department for the drug problems he had brought up previously.

Councilperson Quaranta commented that all citizens should be proactive and diligent in assisting the Police Department, and thanked Mr. Bryson.

Philip Gross followed up on an understanding from a prior meeting, that a representative would be coming to present at a City Council Meeting. Council President Ratchford responded that Pam, from MSC, will be coming to the July meeting. She will provide an overview of MSC, and talk about rates. Mr. Gross advised that if competition were allowed, he could get much lower electric rates. Ms. Ratchford will request that Pam address this, when she comes to the meeting.

Mr. Gross asked if there are specs available for residents to view, related to the street lights going into Van Dyke Village, and whether that will be an open bidding process. Ms. Ratchford responded that MSC will be installing the lights, and that question can be put to Pam, as well.

Councilperson Di Mondì stated that the city gets a percentage of MSC's gross. He also stated that Mr. Gross would be surprised at how competitive MSC is, rate-wise and maintenance-wise.

Rod Miller expressed concern about the safety of the intersection where Ferry Cutoff comes into the city. He finds it to be confusing and dangerous, and would like it to be discussed further.

Police Chief Rogers stated that the city would have to complete a traffic study, and provide the results to the state.

Mr. Miller commented that now that the weather is nicer, people are speeding again on East Third Street. A few days before this meeting, while Mr. Miller was on the sidewalk, talking to a neighbor, a motorist went speeding by on a scooter, the wrong way.

Police Chief Rogers asked that citizens call 911 when they see these things.

Adjournment motion carried at 8: 11 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Brian G. Whitaker

Clerk of the City of New Castle, Delaware

After a motion and second, the meeting was concluded, to go into execution session.

Next regular meeting date: June 12, 2018.

Posted 5/1/2018.