

City of New Castle Delaware
Regular City Council Meeting at Town Hall
201 Delaware Street – New Castle
Tuesday, June 12, 2018

Roll Call: 7: 00 pm

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

Also present:

Jimmy Gambacorta, Mayor
William Barthel, City Administrator
Daniel Losco, City Solicitor
Richard McCabe, Police Captain
Jeff Bergstrom, Building Official and Fire Marshal

Council President Ratchford wished Councilperson Leary a happy birthday. She also congratulated everyone on a successful Separation Day celebration.

Council President Ratchford announced that on June 11, Council passed a balanced budget, with no tax increase.

The agenda item listed as Resolution 2018-16; A Resolution Approving a Stop sign at the corner of Harmony and 2nd Streets, should have stated 3rd Street, rather than 2nd Street. Therefore, that agenda item will be postponed to another meeting.

After a motion and second, minutes from the 4/10/2018 public hearing, the 4/10/2018 regular meeting, the 5/16/2018 special meeting and the 5/20/2018 budget workshop were approved as amended.

Staff Reports

After a motion and second, the staff reports were approved as presented.

Approval of Treasurer's Report

The City Treasurer not being present, it was presented that the financial report for the period ending 5/31/2018:

Total cash in accounts: \$5,554,667.91. The prior period total was \$4,014,398, with a difference of approximately \$1.5 million.

After a motion and second, the unaudited Treasurer's report was approved, as presented to Council in their packets.

City Administrator Barthel reported:

- The city has received the final documents in regard to the drainage project on 3rd Street, from the state, for the full \$119,000. The documents have been signed, and the city is now waiting for the executed documents to be returned.
- The remaining previously-approved street projects are ready to go. Jeff Bergstrom has been talking with Cirillo Brothers, the contractor, and they are looking to start as early as Thursday 6/14. If not, hopefully by the following week.

Police Captain McCabe made the following report from May:

- In May of 2018, there were 61 criminal arrests (up 36% from May of 2017), 225 traffic tickets (up 32% from May of 2017), 75 traffic warnings (down 3% from May of 2017), 17 crime prevention checks (down 37% from May of 2017) and 233 field service reports (not tracked in May of 2017).
- Year-to-date criminal arrests were up from 111 to 244, traffic arrests were up from 697 to 950, warnings were up from 307 to 372, crime prevention checks were down from 92 to 81, overall crime reports were up from 489 to 693 (an increase of about 32%).
- In May, a patrol Sergeant was involved in an incident. The operator resisted arrest. The passenger intervened on the operator's behalf. A passerby stopped and assisted the patrol Sergeant by radioing for help and assisting with handcuffing the operator. Several other passersby were videoing the incident.
- Another highlight from May was an arrest for possession of 78 bags of heroin, with intent to sell.
- Councilperson Leary pointed out the Historic New Castle t-shirts being worn by a number of people. This is part of the new branding program. Businesses who wish to sell them may purchase them at cost and sell them for \$15.

Mayoral Proclamation Honoring the Life of John “Jack” F. Klingmeyer

Mayor Gambacorta read a proclamation honoring the life of John “Jack” F. Klingmeyer, who passed away on Sunday, May 27, 2018.

Old Business:

New Business:

1. DelDOT Presentation on findings of study and path forward regarding the Traffic Light at 6th & Delaware Streets. (Council President Ratchford – posted 06/05/2018.)

Peter Haag, of DelDOT, presented findings of the study related to a traffic light at 6th and Delaware Streets (handout provided to Council and available on the city's website). Highlights:

- This presentation is an update of the findings presented to Council in April of 2017.
- The signal at 6th and Delaware Streets has been identified as among the top ten to be reviewed by DelDOT (out of 1,000 across the state).
- The signal itself is out of date, as far as hardware and ability to be tripped by emergency services, as well as height clearance.

- In the three-year period of January 2013 through September 2016, there were 12 reportable automobile accidents within a tenth of a mile of the intersection. Four involved personal injuries. Three occurred in the intersection.
- Updated data since September 2016 (to June of 2018) includes findings of two accidents caused by vehicles running a red light, and one related to a parked car.
- Mr. Haag summarized the changes in traffic numbers and signal delays at the intersection, from 2015 to 2017, which are detailed in the handout.
- By today's standards, the signal would not be justified for a new installation, based on the traffic count and delay data.
- Mr. Haag discussed some attributes of an all-way stop.
- After the April 2018 meeting, DelDOT ensured that there were crosswalks in all four directions, at the intersection. These will be maintained and refreshed, as needed.
- Mr. Haag responded to specific questions put to DelDOT in the April 2018 meeting. These responses are in the handout.
- There are currently no plans by DelDOT to remove the signal equipment. This is subject to change, based on joint findings and plans between City Council and DelDOT.

Mr. Haag confirmed that if it were decided to keep a traffic light at that intersection, a newer-style traffic light would have to replace the current outdated light (the specific newer signal type to be determined). This would be at no cost to the city.

The police report for every accident that occurs within a tenth of a mile from the intersection is reviewed by DelDOT, to confirm whether it should be attributed to that intersection, as opposed to another nearby intersection.

The intersection is not large enough to consider a traditional roundabout, although possibly a smaller roundabout could be considered.

Councilperson Di Mondri stated that in his experience, drivers never follow the law at three-way and four-way stops; but rather, whoever insists on going first goes first.

If Council decides to replace the light with a four-way stop, the signal will remain (turned to four blinking red lights) for a monitoring/trial period, the length of which to be decided upon by the City Council, before being removed, if removal is decided.

If after the monitoring/trial period, Council requests that the signal be reactivated, DelDOT will do so, and will then re-design the light, to bring it up to current standards.

Police Captain McCabe expressed that a four-way stop at this intersection might create traffic issues at 3rd Street, which would generate citizen complaints. He also would like to compare and review the Police Department's crash data with DelDOTs.

Regardless of whether the intersection is controlled by a signal or a four-way stop, DelDOT's intention is to continue with the four crosswalks, for pedestrian safety. Whether pedestrian signals would be installed would be determined if and when a new signal were installed.

Councilperson Quaranta brought up concerns about vehicle noise, brought up by residents at and near the intersection, specifically noise due to each car at the intersection stopping. Mr. Haag stated that he is not aware of complaints about noise resulting from other similar traffic control conversions.

Councilperson Leary brought up some concerns she has experienced herself and has been told about by others, one being that there are times when a person has to stop for a red light at the intersection, when there is no traffic on the cross-street. A four-way stop would allow the drive to go through the intersection more quickly, in that scenario. Also, she passed along concerns about people speeding up to get through a green light at a signal-controlled intersection.

Mr. Haag confirmed the scenario related to waiting at a red light, when there is no traffic on the cross-street. Regarding drivers speeding up to catch a green light, he stated that stop signs are not intended to be a speed control, and that some all-way stop intersections experience people who run the stop signs.

Councilperson Quaranta commented that stop signs are not always visible, depending on their placement, and the familiarity of the driver with the intersection. He also asked what Mr. Haag's experience has been, related to making changes like this for a test period, and then going back to the original configuration, after the test.

Mr. Haag responded that actual changes from a signal to a stop sign resulted in people being happier with the stop signs, in the majority of cases.

Regarding visibility of the stop signs, issues with that can be addressed with such things as pavement markings.

Comments from the Floor

Carol Hickman commented that she and some other residents of the area are concerned about accidents, especially involving parked cars. She also stated that she has not noticed any difference between 2015 and now, in traffic on Friday and Saturday nights and any other time.

Marco Boyce asked a question.

Mr. Haag responded that DelDOT would work with the city on the item that Mr. Boyce inquired about.

There was discussion of sizes of stop signs. Some are as small as 30"x30"; standard is 36".

Russ Smith commented that the traffic on Route 9 is rather heavy, and he has not heard that topic addressed.

Pete Toner reiterated Mr. Haag's earlier statement that once a signal light is removed, it generally is never put back in. He asked about pedestrian options at a four-way stop, and stated that drivers at a four-way stop do not proceed as the law requires, but rather some people just go, while others do not, and this endangers pedestrians.

Phil Gross stated that, as long as there would be no cost to the city, he sees no need for further discussion. The city should proceed with replacing the current signal with a new, upgraded signal.

Dave Baldini expressed concern about noise from vehicle radios, as well as environmental concerns, with a four-way stop. He also commented that regardless of whether the intersection is controlled by a signal or an all-way stop, it doesn't address the larger issue of too much traffic in the area, in general.

Mike Alfree commented that clear documentation should be kept of whatever decision is made.

Gene Dempsey expressed that he believes that the traffic light should remain.

2. DelDOT Update regarding Truck Traffic through Dobbinsville. (Council President Ratchford – posted 06/05/2018.)

Mr. Haag presented on the topic of citizen concerns about truck traffic noise through Dobbinsville. A handout was provided to Council, and is available on the city's website. Three possible solutions are:

- Reduce the speed limit for trucks from 25mph to 15mph. This would have to be formally requested and approved by the City of New Castle.
- Install truck diversion signs; northbound trucks to Route 9, and southbound trucks to SR141 southbound and SR273 westbound, both to avoid Dobbinsville.
- Install signs advising trucks to not use compression brakes in Dobbinsville.

Councilperson Di Mondì expressed his preference that trucks be limited to 15mph throughout all of New Castle.

Councilperson Platt expressed concern about the reactions of cars stuck behind trucks going 15 miles per hour.

Councilperson Leary commented that a 15mph speed limit for trucks might discourage trucks from driving through the city.

Police Captain McCabe confirmed that police enforcement is an option in cases where sign instructions are not followed, such as "no trucks" signs.

Councilperson Quaranta asked about the possibility of restricting truck traffic in Dobbinsville to certain hours. Mr. Haag expressed concern about how truck drivers would be notified of such a restriction. He also commented that diversion of trucks, through signs to alternate routes, might also cause diversion of other vehicles to those alternate routes.

Councilperson Di Mondì expressed that the term "truck" would need to be defined.

The purpose of the alternate route signs would be encouragement to use an alternate route, not a requirement.

Pete Toner asked whether Police Captain McCabe believes that a 15mph speed limit for trucks would then discourage the truck drivers from driving through Dobbinsville. Captain McCabe responded that it might.

3. Motion, Discussion and Vote on Resolution 2018-14; A Resolution Approving handicap parking at 632 Delaware Street. (Council President Ratchford – posted 06/05/2018.)

After a motion and second to discuss **Resolution 2018-14;** A Resolution Approving handicap parking at 632 Delaware Street, Council President Ratchford read the resolution (posted 6/5/2018 by Council President Ratchford) into the record.

Council President Ratchford advised that Wallace Hair Salon had initiated the request to the city, for the handicapped parking space.

City Solicitor Losco advised that the city can, at its discretion, restrict handicapped parking designations to certain hours.

An employee of the salon, Marjorie Hitchens (Wallace Hair Salon) stated that the hours of the salon are Monday through Saturday, starting usually around 9:00 AM, and sometimes being open until 10:00 PM, depending on business needs.

Councilperson Quaranta expressed concern that a handicapped parking designation at the location in question would then limit parking for non-handicapped parking, exacerbating an existing parking shortage in the area. Councilperson Di Mondì agreed.

City Solicitor Losco advised that if the Resolution were approved, it could be reversed.

Mr. Barthel advised that the city has designated handicapped parking spaces in the past, for specific individuals who have made the request, and then reverted those spaces back to regular parking when the handicapped space has been no longer been needed.

Resolution 2018-14; A Resolution Approving handicap parking at 632 Delaware Street, was passed by a vote of four to one.

After additional Council discussion, Council voted for the **Resolution 2018-14**, as follows (4 to 1):

Councilperson Valarie W. Leary voted Yes.

Councilperson Michael J. Quaranta voted Yes.

Council President Linda Ratchford voted Yes.

Absent Councilperson Michael M. Platt voted Yes.

Councilperson John A. Di Mondì voted No.

4. Motion, Discussion and Vote on Resolution 2018-15; A Resolution Approving No Parking on Penn Street. (Councilperson John Di Mondì- posted 06/05/2018.)

After a motion and second to discuss Resolution 2018-15; A Resolution Approving No Parking on Penn Street, Council President Ratchford read the resolution (posted 6/5/2018 by Councilperson Di Mondì) into the record.

Councilperson Leary commented that if the street is designated no parking, people who currently park there might start parking in the condominium parking lot, which is for condominium owners only.

Police Captain McCabe stated that there have been five documented dispatches to the area in question, since January of 2017.

Councilperson Di Mondì stated that the area has no curbs or sidewalks, and parking there is a safety concern.

Resolution 2018-15; A Resolution Approving No Parking on Penn Street, **was passed unanimously.**

5. Motion, Discussion and Vote on Resolution 2018-17; A Resolution Approving the Vending Request of Frozen Sunshine, LLC as a Roving Truck operating within the City Limits of New Castle. (Council President Ratchford – posted 06/05/2018.)

After a motion and second to discuss **Resolution 2018-17;** A Resolution Approving the Vending Request of Frozen Sunshine, LLC as a Roving Truck operating within the City Limits of New Castle, Council President Ratchford read the resolution (posted 6/5/2018 by Council President Ratchford) into the record.

Ken Takvorian was present at the meeting, representing Frozen Sunshine, LLC.

Councilperson Di Mondì requested that a time be designated as the latest time they would be open, and the representative agreed to 8:00 PM.

The business would be both roving and parked, depending on the needs of the client(s).

Councilperson Platt commented that the wharf would be off-limits, as far as on a regular basis.

It was moved and seconded that “before 8:00 PM” be inserted into the resolution. The modification was passed unanimously.

Resolution 2018-17; A Resolution Approving the Vending Request of Frozen Sunshine, LLC as a Roving Truck operating within the City Limits of New Castle, **was passed unanimously, as modified.**

City Clerk, Brian Whitaker reported on his recent attendance at the International Municipal Clerks Association Conference in Norfolk, VA. Approximately 2,000 clerks attended the conference, which involved many classes and educational workshops. Mr. Whitaker found the conference very beneficial and enlightening and hopes to return in the future.

Mr. Whitaker stated that he would like to become more of a leader in the community, and take on additional duties and responsibilities.

Meeting adjourned at 9:24 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Brian G. Whitaker
City Clerk of New Castle, Delaware