

City of New Castle Delaware
Regular City Council Meeting at Town Hall
201 Delaware Street – New Castle
Tuesday, July 10, 2018– 7:00 p.m.

Roll Call: 7: 00

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
Janet Carlin, City Treasurer
William Barthel, City Administrator
Daniel Losco, City Solicitor
Richard McCabe, Police Chief
Jeff Bergstrom, Building Official and Fire Marshal
Chris Rogers, City Planner

Minutes: 05/08/2018 Regular Council Meeting; 06/06/2018 Budget Workshop; 06/11/2018 Budget Workshop; 06/12/2018 Regular Council Meeting; 06/29/2018 Special Meeting.

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

Staff Reports

Approval of Treasurer's Report

Council President Ratchford congratulated Captain McCabe on becoming the city's future Chief of Police.

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

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

City Treasurer Janet Carlin reported for a total of \$5,484,892.46 unaudited \$3,130,222.00.

Ms. Carlin noted that the restricted funds are inclusive of the PNC investment of \$1,882,070.80.

Councilperson Di Mondì suggested that a brief synopsis of the city's state of indebtedness be read every month.

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

City Administrator Barthel reported:

- An email dated July 5 was received by City Building Official Jeff Bergstrom, from a city visitor, thanking him for the new sidewalks and handicapped ramps.
- Since 2014, through 2018, \$387,200 has been spent on handicapped ramps (including some engineering work), of which the city has paid \$187,357 and the Trustees have paid just shy of \$200,000.
- Per Mr. Bergstrom, something under 200 ramps remain to be installed, of the 575 ramps needed. These do not include the ramps installed at the courthouse, the library and the city hall.
- In response to a question from Councilperson Quaranta, Mr. Barthel confirmed that the ramp installations are due to a federal mandate under the Americans With Disabilities Act.
- Mr. Bergstrom reported that the street projects began today (July 10), with the repaving project on Centerpoint Boulevard. Baldt Avenue will be completed after Centerpoint Boulevard.
- DelDOT has informed Mr. Barthel that the purchase order for the Third Street work should be received within three weeks or so.
- The city is in compliance with the timetable laid out in the MOU with the Trustees.

Police Captain McCabe reported on an upcoming collaborative initiative between the Goodwill Fire Department and the New Castle Police Department, to assist in providing backpacks and school supplies for back to school. The event will take place on August 18, and more details will be forthcoming. Donations of supplies and/or cash will be appreciated.

Police Captain McCabe made the following report from June, noting a new map format in the provided packet:

- In June of 2018, there were 62 criminal arrests (up 82% from June of 2017), 178 traffic tickets, of which six were for parking (the 178 being up 62% from June of 2017), 59 traffic warnings (down 3% from June of 2017), 31 crime prevention checks (up 82% from June of 2017) and 119 crime reports (up 35% from June of 2017), and 216 field service reports.
- Year-to-date criminal arrests were up 111%, from 135 to 306; traffic arrests were up 40%, from 807 to 1,128; traffic warnings were up 17%, from 368 to 431; crime prevention checks were up 3%, from 109 to 112; crime reports were up 41%, from 577 to 812.
- Criminal investigators are investigating a robbery that occurred at Airport Plaza. Two suspects implied that they had a weapon, and demanded cash from a 65-year-old woman.
- Patrol investigated a robbery that occurred at the flea market on June 17. A suspect was identified, and an arrest warrant was issued. A knife was displayed in the robbery incident.
- Police responded to a sudden death, related to a heroin overdose.
- Officers have increased their movements at night, in response to reports of thefts and suspicious behavior downtown. Two juveniles have been apprehended and charged. A homeless couple that had been reported as wandering around downtown late at night

were moved along (no charges to file). A drug arrest was made, after a suspicious vehicle was reported around Washington Park. Theft reports in the area have decreased, since these events.

- Regarding a report of a road rage incident, in which a rifle was displayed, it has been learned that the incident started somewhere else.
- There were 23 traffic accidents in June.

Councilperson Di Mondì asked for Captain McCabe's thoughts on a curfew for people under the age of 16, related to vehicle break-ins that Councilperson Di Mondì has heard about. The Captain responded that such an ordinance could be looked into.

In response to a question from Councilperson Quaranta, the Captain noted that the homeless couple that he mentioned earlier are not the same homeless people that Councilperson Quaranta has heard about on a few occasions.

Councilperson Quaranta asked whether Captain McCabe is aware of a woman who lives near Councilperson. Quaranta, who often exhibits aggressive language and behavior in the neighborhood. The Captain is aware, and will follow up.

In response to a comment from Councilperson Platt, about the increase of crime in the area, and its impact on real estate prices, Captain McCabe provided more detailed statistics on increased arrests.

Council President Ratchford requested Captain McCabe review those arrest statistics at a future meeting, as well as address Councilperson Di Mondì's inquiry about a curfew.

In response to an inquiry from Councilperson Quaranta, Mr. Barthel requested that the involved parties to a discussion about property owners' responsibilities to maintain their properties, provide Mr. Barthel with their schedules, and they will set up a meeting.

Council Communications

Councilperson Leary reported that New Jersey's tall ship, the A.J. Meerwald will be in town July 27 and 28. This will be promoted in the next few weeks. Councilperson Leary also reported that the Kalmar Nyckel will be returning at the end of August, for two weeks. Related to this, Councilperson Leary suggested that an ad hoc committee be formed to review and act on Louise Eliason's recommendations from a prior Council meeting, on the topic of marketing and promotion of the city.

Business from the Mayor - None

Mayor Gambacorta reported that he will be putting his full attention to filling the expired and vacant seats on the Board of Health and City Planning Commission.

Business from the Council President

Council President Ratchford reported:

- The city of New Castle has been listed by Fodor's Travel as one of the top 25 cutest Main Streets in small towns.

- She is part of the New Castle County Bicycle Plan advisory group, which is putting together a transportation plan for pedestrians and bicycles.
- Trailfest will take place on 9/22. This will tie in to New Castle, details to be worked out.

Business from the Floor (concerning agenda items only) None

Presentation and Discussion concerning Downtown Development District Plan and City Incentives by Chris Rogers from AECOM (Council President Ratchford – posted 07/03/18.)

Chris Rogers, of AECOM, made a presentation to Council on the Downtown Development District Plan and City Incentives, referring to a handout provided.

Highlights:

- A state program allows for reimbursement of up to 25% of private real property investments into designated Downtown Development Districts (“DDD”), when the criteria is met.
- The City of New Castle was not selected by the state as a DDD, when it applied in 2016. Feedback from the state indicated that the grant application did not demonstrate enough need. Feedback also reflected that the potential designated DDD area was not compact enough.
- The city has completed an application to revise the DDD application, based on the feedback received, and a draft of that application will be provided to Council for review and approval.
- The revised district plan is a more compact geography.
- The proposed city incentives have been updated in the revised application, to reflect the new geography of the proposed DDD.
- Proposed city incentives would include property tax abatements, streamlined development review process, various fee and permit waivers, real property transfer tax waivers.
- Council would need to approve the DDD plan, including the incentives, to be prepared in the event that the state opens up the application process. Council would then need to approve the new application.

Councilperson Di Mondri would like to see the incentives limited to underdeveloped or distressed properties, in cases where the incentives are needed, and not used to help people get rich.

1. Motion, Discussion and Vote on Resolution 2018-18; A Resolution Requesting that DelDOT Retain the Existing Traffic Light at 6th and Delaware Streets in the City of New Castle. (Councilperson Di Mondri- posted 07/03/2018.)

After a motion and second to discuss the resolution, Council President Ratchford read **Resolution 2018-18**; A Resolution Requesting that DelDOT Retain the Existing Traffic Light at 6th and Delaware Streets in the City of New Castle, into the record (posted 7/3/2018 by Councilperson Di Mondì).

Council President Ratchford advised that, according to DelDOT, the city does not have the option of retaining the existing traffic light, as it must be replaced with a new signal. DelDOT would pay for the new signal, but the city would be responsible for costs related to special ornamentation. The city also has the option of changing to an all-way stop, under a one-year pilot program.

Councilperson Quaranta expressed that the people living near the intersection want the traffic light and, therefore, he would like to move forward with the DelDOT redesign of the traffic signal.

Councilperson Di Mondì stated his preference that the traffic light stay (be redesigned), with historic ornamentation incorporated.

Captain McCabe stated that his review of traffic accidents at the intersection in question determined that the traffic signal has been responsible for only one of those accidents in five years.

Councilperson Leary inquired about artists' renderings of what the new signal and equipment would look like.

Councilperson Platt would like to try the pilot program of an all-way stop.

Victor Bryson commented that the traffic light should stay, for the safety of pedestrians.

Pete Toner commented that the traffic light should stay, for the safety of pedestrians, and he would be open to a button to indicate that a pedestrian is crossing.

Bill Emery stated that an all-way stop would be less safe.

Phil Gross stated his preference that the traffic light remain.

John Ludwig questioned any advantage to an all-way stop.

Councilperson Leary stated that the data does not indicate that the traffic light is safer than an all-way stop.

Councilperson Platt stated that acceleration to "beat" a yellow light increases danger, and such acceleration does not exist at a stop sign.

Erin Sabatella would like to see the traffic light stay, for safety reasons.

Dorsey Fiske supports the traffic light.

Dave Baldini encouraged Council to obtain detailed written commitment from DelDOT, whatever decision is made.

Gene Dempsey supports the light.

Beth Thomas asked about the pedestrian crossing signals, when it allows people to cross.

It was moved and seconded to change the wording of the resolution to reflect the DelDOT redesign, as opposed to the “as is” wording. The amendment passed unanimously.

Councilperson Di Mondri reiterated that the city does not have to accept DelDOT’s redesign, but would have to pay for changes.

Resolution 2018-18, as amended, was passed unanimously.

2. Discussion and possible decision on contract offer on Dobbinsville Police Substation (Council President Ratchford – posted 07/03/2018.)

City Administrator Barthel provided details and conditions of an offer that was received on the Dobbinsville Police Substation property, some of which include:

- Purchase price \$20,000.
- City to re-zone property to Retail/Commercial.
- Buyer would blacktop up to boundary lines.
- Buyer to secure a survey or mortgage inspection plan of the property, to determine if there are any boundary-related encroachments, related to an air conditioning unit serving 703 Center St.
- At settlement, buyer would execute a purchase money note and mortgage in the amount of \$20,000, such note not requiring payment if the buyer has received a certificate of occupancy and completed renovations as detailed in the offer.

City Solicitor Losco pointed out that the zoning change would require a change to the comprehensive plan. Also, the city would be responsible for dealing with any encroachment that might be found, via survey, of the air conditioning unit servicing the adjacent property.

Councilperson Di Mondri asked what kind of legal fees to the city would be involved. Mr. Losco responded that it would be less than \$10,000.

The property is currently zoned Residential.

Robert Thomas expressed concern about whether the structure could support the potential second floor that was mentioned in the offer.

After a motion and second, it was unanimously approved to authorize the City Administrator to enter into a contractual relationship, in relation to the property offer.

New Business:

1. Discussion of Buttonwood Church Request to Use City Property on corner of Buttonwood Avenue and Lincoln Street for overflow church parking. (Council President Ratchford – posted 07/03/2018.)

Discussion followed, related to the request by Buttonwood Church to use city property on the corner of Buttonwood Avenue and Lincoln Street for overflow church parking. The City

Solicitor, City Administrator and Building Official will move forward with looking further into leasing the property to the church for parking purposes only, with conditions imposed.

2. Discussion of Installation of Temporary Speed Control Devices on 8th Street between South Street and Route 273. (Councilperson Platt – posted 07/03/2018.)

Discussion followed, on the topic of installing temporary speed control devices on 8th Street, between South Street and Route 273. The City Administrator and staff will proceed with this, as a test case.

3. Motion, Discussion and Vote on Resolution 2018-16; A Resolution Approving a Stop sign at the corner of Harmony and 3rd Streets. (Councilperson Leary – posted 07/03/2018.)

It was moved and seconded to consider **Resolution 2018-16; A Resolution Approving a Stop sign at the corner of Harmony and 3rd Streets.** The resolution, which was posted by Councilperson Leary on 07/03/2018, was read into the record by Council President Ratchford.

After discussion, **Resolution 2018-16; A Resolution Approving a Stop sign at the corner of Harmony and 3rd Streets,** was passed unanimously.

4. Motion, Discussion and Vote on Resolution 2018-19; A Resolution to consider recommendations from DelDOT concerning truck traffic through Dobbinsville. (Council President Ratchford – posted 07/03/18.)

It was moved and seconded to consider **Resolution 2018-19; A Resolution to consider recommendations from DelDOT concerning truck traffic through Dobbinsville.** The resolution, which was posted by Council President Ratchford on 07/03/2018, was read into the record by Council President Ratchford.

In response to a question from Council, Captain McCabe noted that a limitation of the times of day in which trucks are allowed on the road in question, is enforceable.

It was moved and seconded to amend the resolution to include a request that truck traffic be prohibited on the roadway in question, between the hours of 9:00 PM to 6:00 AM. The amendment was passed unanimously.

After discussion, **Resolution 2018-19, A Resolution to consider recommendations from DelDOT concerning truck traffic through Dobbinsville,** was passed unanimously, as amended.

5. Motion, Discussion and Vote on Resolution 2018-20; A Resolution for the City of New Castle to become a Supporter of Future Trails of Northern Delaware. (Council President Ratchford – posted 07/03/18.)

It was moved and seconded to consider **Resolution 2018-20; A Resolution for the City of New Castle to become a Supporter of Future Trails of Northern Delaware.** The resolution, which was posted by Council President Ratchford on 07/03/2018, was read into the record by Council President Ratchford.

Resolution 2018-20; A Resolution for the City of New Castle to become a Supporter of Future Trails of Northern Delaware, was passed by a vote of four to one.

Resolution 2018-20; was Passed by a roll-call vote, voted, as follows (4 to 1):

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

After a motion and second, the meeting was adjourned at 9: 44 pm.

Next Regular Meeting Date: August 14, 2018

Respectfully Submitted,

Brian G. Whitaker

City Clerk of New Castle, Delaware