

**City of New Castle Delaware**  
**Regular City Council Meeting at Town Hall**  
**201 Delaware Street – New Castle**  
**Tuesday, October 9, 2018– 7:00 p.m.**

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

**Public Presentation**

**David Majewski, a Board member** of the Good Will Fire Company, presented at the meeting, beginning with a brief professional bio. His presentation included the following information:

- The mission of the Good Will Fire Company is to provide professional fire and rescue, and basic life support services, to the residents and visitors to the City of New Castle and our surrounding environment.
- The city limits of New Castle represents about half of the company's response area. Mr. Majewski detailed the response area of the company.
- The Good Will Fire Company is one of the oldest fire companies in the State of Delaware. Mr. Majewski provided a brief history of the company since its inception, detailed how it is organized, and reviewed the company's current equipment and vehicles.
- The company has 45 members who are issued gear and respond regularly, eight full-time EMTs, and an on-duty supervisor.
- Mr. Majewski reviewed the training that company members and employees undergo and various community activities in which some of them are involved.
- Emergency medical calls for 2010 were 1,425. In 2017, there were 1,992. This increase is impacted by the aging population and the current opioid epidemic.
- This year's annual open house is Saturday, October 27, at noon. All are invited.
- The company runs on about a \$1.3 million budget, including \$630,000 that comes from the state, \$140,000 coming from New Castle County, \$140,000 from the Trustees, about

\$40,000 from the annual fund drive, \$360,000 from ambulance billing, \$12,000 from other sources.

- Expenses total about \$1.3 million, including day to day expenses, such as utilities, totaling \$297,000; personnel expenses of \$850,000, and other expenses.
- Mr. Majewski and the Good Will Fire Company have always had an excellent and close working relationship with the City Police, and that continues with Chief McCabe.
- Mr. Majewski would like to see emergency planning in the city updated.

Dorsey Fiske commented that she had learned that firefighter equipment that is exposed to certain levels of chemicals or fumes must be completely replaced. She also emphasized the importance of all who are able to, contributing to the company.

Council President Ratchford asked how the Good Will Fire Company's budget compares to fire department budgets of comparable cities. Mr. Majewski advised that he is still working on gathering that information.

Councilperson Leary suggested that the company make it possible for people to donate to them via their website.

Councilperson Quaranta asked about criminal activity associated with emergency calls. Mr. Majewski stated that drug-related calls are at the point of epidemic.

## **Minutes**

After a motion and second, the minutes of the regular City Council meetings of 8/14/2018 and 9/11/2018 were approved, unanimously.

## **Staff Reports**

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

## **Treasurer's Report**

The unaudited Treasurer's report was presented by Janet Carlin, City Treasurer; as of September 30, 2018 City Treasurer Janet Carlin reported \$4,822,980.42 in unrestricted finds, and \$2,355,536.91 in restricted funds, for a total of \$7,178,517.33 total cash in accounts.

Long-term indebtedness total is \$59,210. In addition, there is \$1,823,981 that the Trustees will be paying back.

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

## **Report from the City Administrator and Staff**

William Barthel, the City Administrator, reported that there is a DNREC loan possibly available to the City. The City had applied for a loan from DNREC about a year prior, related to expenses to improve Delaware Street. The loan application was declined at that time. The City applied for another DNREC loan in spring of 2018 and had been tentatively approved for a loan of \$367,500, tentatively meaning that the letter of approval includes items that the City needs to

respond to, to go further in the loan process. The final design and configuration of the drainage portion of the project will impact the loan amount. The loan term would be 20 years, at a rate of 3.1%, for a payment amount of \$24,696 per year. Mr. Barthel will be submitting the required additional documentation to DNREC by the end of this month. If given final approval for the loan, the City can then decide whether to accept the loan, at a future meeting.

Councilperson Di Mondì asked whether the City Council would have the opportunity to vote on whether or not to accept the loan, in a separate vote that only includes whether or not to accept the loan. Mr. Barthel and Council President Ratchford responded in the affirmative to Mr. Di Mondì's question.

If approved by DNREC, the loan will be part of the discussion at the 10/29/2018 special meeting related to the Delaware Street construction project.

Regarding the purchase of a street sweeper, Mr. Barthel reported that two manufacturers had been evaluated. The cost will be around \$245,000. Another quote, from a third manufacturer, is expected by next week. The final number is expected to be brought to Council at the November meeting when the Council can then make decisions about funding the street sweeper.

On the topic of putting signs on Route 9, to direct truck traffic, Chief McCabe will be ordering the sign soon. This has been part of discussions between the City and DelDOT.

Councilperson Di Mondì asked whether anything can be done about the fuel trucks coming through town, containing hazardous material, and driving so close to homes. Mr. Barthel responded that DelDOT had advised him that there is no authority to stop those trucks. The City has reached out to the refinery and asked that they contact the truck drivers about this. The refinery has stated that they will cooperate.

Mr. Barthel will be scheduling a call with DNREC and Dave Athey, to discuss grant opportunities related to flood protection.

Regarding the road projects, Jeff Bergstrom reported:

- The concrete work is almost completed.
- The Third Street drainage project is completed.
- A lot of the concrete work on Centerpointe is complete, and the water line has been installed.
- The Baldt Avenue curbs have been replaced.

Police Chief McCabe reported:

- He has signed an agreement with OEMS, to have a community-based training for Narcan administration. This training is open to anybody in the community who is interested in administering Narcan. Class size will be limited to about 20. Those who complete the training will have access to Narcan. The goal is for the Police Department to become a Narcan distribution center. In response to a question from Councilperson Leary, Chief McCabe explained that a requirement to call 911 if/when Narcan is administered would

be part of the training. Once the date of the training is determined, details will be posted on the Police Department's Facebook page.

- On 11/19/2018, there will be a fraud awareness seminar at the Senior Center, at 10:00 am. Information about this will be posted on the Police Department's Facebook page. Topics will include internet fraud, bank safety, etc.
- Councilperson Quaranta mentioned a recent rash of thefts and vandalism in the area of the town hall. The department is aware and working on this.
- Regarding the auto thefts in Van Dyke Village that were reported on at the September Council meeting, Chief McCabe reported that two of the stolen vehicles had been recovered. Fingerprints have been recovered. The group of teenaged car thieves is larger than previously thought, and they are hitting other areas, in addition to New Castle. The department has learned that vehicle owners' key fobs being left close enough to the vehicles to allow the door to be opened and the vehicle to be started, is part of the strategy being used to steal the vehicles.
- Two defendants were charged related to a burglary and copper theft incident that had occurred some months earlier, and they have pled guilty.
- In September, there were 22 criminal arrests, 191 traffic arrests, 69 traffic warnings, 27 crime prevention checks. 163 crime reports and 190 field service reports were written.
- Year-to-date: Criminal arrests are at 485, traffic arrests are at 1,617, 624 traffic warnings, 208 crime prevention checks. 1,207 crime reports have been written.
- A new report has been included in the provided packet, where the quality of life issues are noted. These are defined as crime reports where the crime was stopped, and an arrest was made.

Teri Gormley asked what criteria is used to decide what information to report to the newspaper. Chief McCabe responded that there are no actual criteria, that it is based on whether the event is newsworthy.

Regarding the Narcan program, Ms. Gormley asked about the costs involved, and whether there are particular social circles that would be using the Narcan. There will be costs, but those numbers aren't available yet.

### **Council Communications**

Councilperson Quaranta followed up with Mr. Rogers, regarding Councilperson Di Mondì's previous request that a committee or plan be developed to address some of the challenges having to do with the Riverbend development.

### **Business from the Mayor**

Mayor Gambacorta introduced a student from an international high school student from Seoul, South Korea, who is attending the Red Lion Christian Academy as a senior.

Mayor Gambacorta reported that he is working with the City to get street signs, directional signs, route signs, and sign poles straightened up. There are over 400 of these, about 50 of which have been taken care of. The Mayor will provide an update at the next Council meeting.

## **Business from the Council President**

Council President Ratchford reminded everybody to fill out the Planning Commission's Comprehensive Plan Community Survey. This can be done online, or a hard copy can be picked up at the city office or the library.

Ms. Ratchford and Mr. Barthel are working with DelDOT to get more directional signage related to the increased bicycle traffic that is a result of the opening of the Markell Trail.

On October 10, 2018, the tall ship Lynx, from Nantucket, will be formally arriving at the pier, at 10:00 AM. More information is available on the city website.

The last weekend of October, the AJ Meerwald will be returning to New Castle.

## **Business from the Floor (concerning agenda items only)**

Janet Wurtzel asked whether the Downtown Development District Plan is posted somewhere. Councilperson Quaranta advised that a link to the plan had been sent to her in an email.

## **Old Business**

Discussion related to **Ordinance 517**, An Ordinance requiring a special exception from the Board of Adjustment to permit tourist homes in the Historic Residential zoning districts, (Councilperson Di Mondì- posted 09/04/2018), including:

- Councilperson Di Mondì stated that the reasoning behind this Ordinance is a matter of equity, that every other residential area in the City has protection, allowing residents to voice their opinions to the Board of Adjustment, against having a commercial enterprise in their neighborhood. The Historical Residential district does not have this protection, and Mr. Di Mondì would like to see those residents have that protection. He brought the Ordinance up on behalf of a citizen who lost her parking and is concerned about people that she is not used to, coming and going next to her small townhouse.
- City Solicitor Losco explained that the Ordinance would require a special exception from the Board of Adjustment, for any party that wants to offer a tourist home in the Historic Residential district. This is not a permitted use in another residential district. It is currently a permitted use in the HR districts and the HC districts only.

Councilperson Leary requested that this topic is set aside for the time being, to allow for further study and consideration.

A motion was made and seconded to table the Ordinance, for purposes of forwarding it to the Planning Commission for input, and to have the City Solicitor do more research on the topic. The motion was passed by the following voice vote:

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

City Planner Chris Rogers presented on the Downtown Development District Plan, including the following items:

- Mr. Rogers summarized the history and intent of the state's Downtown Development District Act.
- The City of New Castle applied for incentive funds under the act, in 2016, and was not selected.
- The City has modified their Downtown Development District plan, incorporating changes that were suggested at a debrief that took place after the 2016 application was declined.
- The application process is not currently open, and it is not known if/when the process will be opened.
- If the current proposed plan is approved by the Council, the City will be in a position to re-submit their application with the new plan, if/when the application process is opened in the future.
- The major difference between the proposed plan and the previous one is the boundaries that are used. Also, need is demonstrated more specifically, related to housing rehabilitation and redevelopment.
- The topic of tax abatement is not included in the proposed plan. If and when the application process opens up, the City Council will need to adopt a resolution that supports that plan, if they want to submit an application.
- Passage of Resolution 2018-26 would allow the City to be reimbursed for the funding that has been spent to develop the proposed plan.

After a motion and second, Council President Ratchford read **Resolution 2018-26**, A Resolution to adopt the Downtown Development District Plan (Council President Ratchford posted 10/02/2018) into the record.

**Resolution 2018-26** was passed unanimously.

After a motion and second, Council President Ratchford completed the first reading of Revised Ordinance 516, An Ordinance to amend the City of New Castle Comprehensive Plan and to rezone tax parcel 21-017.00-045 (708 W. 7th Street) and tax parcel 21-017.00-046 (706 W.7th Street) to the RC (Retail Commercial) zoning classification. (Council President Ratchford – posted 10/02/2018.)

After a motion and second, Council President Ratchford read **Resolution 2018-27**, A Resolution Approving the Mayor's Appointment to the **Board of Health of William Hentkowski** and Joanna Viola. (Council President Ratchford – posted 10/02/2018) into the record.

Councilperson Quaranta spoke in favor of **Resolution 2018-27**.

**Resolution 2018-27** was approved, unanimously.

**New Business**

After a motion and second, Council President Ratchford read **Resolution 2018-28**, A Resolution Approving a Stop sign at the eastbound corner of Delaware and 3rd Streets into the record. (Council President Ratchford – posted 10/02/2018.)

Police Chief McCabe stated that the stop sign mentioned in **Resolution 2018-28** would improve pedestrian safety.

Councilperson Quaranta expressed concern that visitors to the City who are stopped at the proposed stop sign, which would be located at an intersection that is not symmetrical, might not realize that oncoming traffic does not stop, and asked whether Chief McCabe had a reaction to that concern.

Chief McCabe responded that the proposed location is a natural location for a stop sign.

Roderick Gillespie expressed concern that people might not see the proposed stop sign, due to vehicles being parked so close to it. He read a portion of Standards Governing Use of Stop Signs by Municipal Roads, specifically related to the suggestion that an Engineer is involved in the decision about stop sign placement, as well as reasons listed in the document, for stop signs to be placed. He stated his preference for fewer stop signs, that deference is given to through traffic, and that some existing stop signs should be removed.

Council President Ratchford commented that according to Police Chief McCabe, a pedestrian and a dog had both been hit by vehicles in the general area where the stop sign is proposed to be placed.

Roderick Gillespie asked how much parking would be taken away, if the stop sign were placed. Several people responded that there would be two parking spaces lost (30 feet).

Councilperson Quaranta commented that he would like there to be more public input on **Resolution 2018-28**.

Councilperson Di Mondì commented that before proceeding further, the Resolution should be sent to the Planning Commission and to HAC for review.

There was a discussion among Council members about options to improve pedestrian safety.

After a motion and second, it was approved by a vote of four to one, to do more research on placing a stop sign at the location in **Resolution 2018**.

### **Public Comments**

Dorsey Fiske commented that **Ordinance 510** was very poorly drawn up.

Ms. Fiske also commented that she is disappointed by the lax manner in which the City Council has pursued storm and hurricane protection, and urged the Council to take the topic more seriously.

Rod Miller commented that tourist homes should not be a permitted use in the City.

After a motion and second, the meeting was adjourned.

Adjournment motion carried at 9:44 pm

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Brian G. Whitaker**

**Clerk of the City of New Castle, Delaware**

Next Regular Meeting Date: November 13, 2018