

**City of New Castle Delaware**  
**Special City Council Meeting at Town Hall**  
**201 Delaware Street – New Castle**  
**Monday, November 26th, 2018 – 6:45 p.m.**

Council President Ratchford stated that the purpose of this special meeting is to discuss the Delaware Street construction project.

**Roll Call: 6:45 p.m.**

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

**Also present:**

David Athey, City Engineer  
Janet Carlin, City Treasurer  
William Barthel, City Administrator

Council President Ratchford welcomed Leila Hamroun, the Historic Area Commission architect, as well as Planning Commission member Marco Boyce.

David Athey presented, including the following items, dispensing with some of the history of the project, which has been discussed previously:

- They still intend to do the storm sewer work, the realigning of that being the first phase.
- If decisions are made in time, the plan is to bid the project in the spring, with actual construction coming in the summer and fall timeframe.
- There was a meeting with DelDOT a couple of weeks ago, to discuss the mock-up that was brought up at the previous meeting.
- He is hoping that at this meeting, the alternatives will be reviewed, and some sort of resolution will be reached as to how to proceed, as well as discussing the mockup.
- A handout of the proposed plan was provided, with some details added, such as multiple bump-outs at the top of Third Street. The bump-outs would be a combination of brick and landscaped area.
- The proposed plan includes bump-outs in front of the Town Hall, allowing for shorter pedestrian crosswalks, which are clearly marked and highlighted.
- The proposed traffic circle construction was reviewed.
- A brick crosswalk and speed table are proposed at The Strand.
- The stormwater feature also will be reviewed.
- At the wharf area, there are bump-outs and green features that could double as filtering opportunities, with the green infrastructure.

Marco Boyce mentioned that some details that need to be ironed out include the patterning of the bricks, the kind of granite sets, the type of trees to put in, the type of landscaping to put in, vendor parking, and the orientation related to the ticket center kiosk. He also reviewed features of the traffic circle.

Council President Ratchford asked whether some of the work, such as the wharf area, could be done later. Mr. Boyce advised that the majority of the work should be done at once, although some of the amenities could be completed later.

Councilperson Di Mondì asked about specific parts of the traffic circle project being broken out into different parts. Mr. Athey responded that there would be a related increase in the cost of the project, although it would not necessarily be a dramatic increase.

Councilperson Platt asked about the cost of the raised crosswalks, and whether they are needed, since Police Chief McCabe had earlier indicated that there is not a safety issue involved. Mr. Athey responded that they are not necessary, and they were included for both safety and aesthetic reasons.

Councilperson Di Mondì questioned the suitability of the traffic circle.

Mr. Athey continued his presentation:

- The storm sewer needs to be replaced, from Second Street to The Strand, at a cost of around \$340,000.
- The road restoration, including the asphalt, pavement, granite curbs and brick work, is estimated at about \$1 million.
- The bump-outs are required, to complete the stormwater project, which is at an estimated cost of \$230,000.
- The bump-outs, plus some degree of landscaping, are estimated at around \$140,000.
- The raised crosswalks are estimated at around \$130,000.
- The traffic circle island is estimated at around \$230,000.
- Granite curb is quite a bit more expensive than concrete.
- The overall project estimate is at around \$2 million.
- The Third Street to Sixth Street section is completely separate. Including that section would bring the estimate to about \$2.7 million.
- The cost to pave Third Street to Sixth Street is estimated at \$1 million.
- Current unknowns include the sidewalks.

Councilperson Di Mondì expressed that the property owners may be responsible for the curbs and sidewalks. He also stated his concern that the issue of the quality of the road base, underneath the asphalt, be addressed.

Councilperson Platt asked about the possibility of recycling some of the granite. Leila Hamroun responded that yes, the granite could be cleaned and reused. She also stated her preference that granite be used, as opposed to concrete, due to both its appearance and durability.

Councilperson Di Mondì stated that the property owners should be assessed the cost of the curbs.

Mr. Athey reported that details of the mockup that had been discussed are still being worked out.

Mr. Athey also mentioned that an important item to be discussed is what restrictions will be put on the contractor, as far as traffic control during construction.

A DelDOT official had suggested to Mr. Athey that different colors of pea gravel be used for the mockup.

Marco Boyce explained that a stop signal would be introduced at the corner of Third and Delaware, to encourage traffic to slow, and allow for shorter pedestrian crossing distances. Additional sidewalk or patio area is a possible benefit of the proposed project. He also stated that the proposed project includes some protection for parked vehicles, and potential outdoor seating.

Leila Hamrout advised that the Historic Area Commission's part of the collaboration comes in with the materials selection, and the suitability of the improvements to the city. The purpose of the traffic circle is to improve circulation, not to create a plaza-type environment.

Council President Ratchford commented that she would like to have the Town Hall archway be more visible.

Councilperson Leary asked about the possibility that the potential improvements might put the city's designation as a National Historic Landmark at risk. Ms. Hamrout responded that she does not believe that would happen, but she could look into that.

Councilperson Di Mondì expressed his preference that the Delaware Street improvements be in line with the Saturday Evening Post, circa 1962 or earlier. He disapproves of the use of modern-looking materials, whether or not they can be seen from the street. He also objects to lost parking spaces. He would like vendor parking in the area to be severely limited.

Councilperson Platt asked whether the circle size can be scaled down. He stated that losing the parking in front of the Town Hall would be more acceptable if picnic tables, or something along those lines, were added.

Councilperson Leary asked how much the circle could be reduced in size.

Council President Ratchford brought up the desire for there to be space for street events. She asked if the new crosswalks would still be a possibility, if the traffic circle were not installed.

Mr. Boyce responded that the biggest thing that the traffic circle solves is traffic concerns.

There was discussion of other options that had been discussed in the past, instead of the traffic circle.

In response to a question from Council President Ratchford, Mr. Athey explained that the \$230,000 estimated for the traffic circle includes the granite, the brick, the curbs, and a centerpiece. Without the traffic circle, some of the other elements of the proposed plans could be kept, as well as some of the parking. To keep the parking, some of the bump-outs might need to be eliminated.

Councilperson Leary asked about bringing in handicapped parking spots, and eliminating the traffic circle.

Mr. Athey reviewed the proposed plan for The Strand, referring to the handout and slides, including a slight raise in the asphalt, to slow traffic. That area represents roughly 40% of the green infrastructure project.

There was discussion of right-of-way, and which areas are within Battery Park, as well as which areas might be the Trustees' area of responsibility.

Councilperson Leary asked whether the cobblestones on The Strand and the cobblestones on Market Street are original. Ms. Hamrout was unsure. There was discussion about how and whether the cobblestones might be incorporated into the proposed plan.

There was discussion about the proposed plan for the wharf, including the addition of some parking spaces, stormwater management, possible brick walkways, a potential native botanical planting area within a possible parklet, and restroom and shower facilities for the ships that come in.

On the topic of delaying part of the project, rather than completing all of it, Councilperson Leary commented on how that might increase the overall total cost of the project.

Councilpersons Platt and Di Mondì mentioned that a gazebo-type structure in the circle might be nice, possibly with benches.

Teri Gormley, of the New Castle Weekly, requested clarification of how the project would impact parking spaces. There would be a loss of parking spaces with the traffic circle, and a gain of parking spaces at the wharf, for a total net loss of five spaces. She also mentioned that the newspaper had received letters regarding the sketch of the proposed project plan.

On the topic of costs:

- There is the roughly \$1.9 million loan, for which the Trustees have agreed to reimburse the city.
- Of that, the current projects are at about \$933,000, leaving a balance of about \$945,000.
- About \$400,000 in funds were committed a couple of years ago.
- The Community Transportation Fund money received was \$175,000, specifically for Delaware Street.
- This leaves total funds at \$1.5 million.
- There is \$172,000 in Municipal Street Aid money.
- The city is awaiting another \$61,500 from the state, to be received after the first of the year. Combined with the Municipal Street Aid funds of \$172,000, this is a total of \$233,500.
- This brings the total to about \$1.7 million.
- The stormwater management aspect of the project has been revised to \$230,000. There is the not-yet-accepted loan from the bank for this, of \$237,000.
- In total, there is just under \$2 million for the project.

Councilperson Platt asked about alternatives to granite, that look like and hold up like granite. Mr. Athey responded that they could probably find something that looks like granite. Councilperson Di Mondy asked how much granite is at MSC. Mr. Platt will look into that.

Council President Ratchford stated her understanding that, without the traffic circle, the streetscape could be improved, some green infrastructure could be installed, better crosswalks could be installed, and there would be better paving, for the \$1.9 million.

Ms. Ratchford asked whether a mockup would still be needed, if they decided not to do the traffic circle. Ms. Hamrout responded that leaving a mockup there for a couple of weeks, for people to understand the changes, would be a good idea.

Councilperson Di Mondy stated that a decision should be made about whether or not the traffic circle is wanted, and if so, the mockup should be done. If not, there is no need for the mockup.

Mr. Athey commented that how to proceed with the mockup is dependent upon the purpose of the mockup; whether it's to inform the people about changes that are coming, or whether it's to provide an opportunity for them to comment, with the possibility of changing course later.

Ms. Hamrout suggested that there might be value in mocking up the bump-outs.

Councilperson Di Mondy is comfortable with the proposed plan, excluding the traffic circle.

Councilperson Platt would like to see some additional green area and a better view of the archway, and not installing the traffic circle.

There was agreement to Mr. Boyce's suggestion that an alternate concept be put together for review, without the traffic circle.

Eliminating the traffic circle would not leave enough funds available to complete the work needed from Third to Sixth.

Mr. Athey reiterated that he is including a pretty healthy contingency in his cost estimates.

Mr. Athey will proceed with the parts of the project that are not in question.

Mr. Barthel will look into scheduling a meeting for Council to decide whether to accept the \$367,000 bank loan.

After a motion and second, the meeting was adjourned at 8:28 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Brian G. Whitaker

City Clerk of New Castle, Delaware