

City of New Castle Delaware
Regular City Council Meeting at Town Hall
201 Delaware Street – New Castle
Tuesday, July 9, 2019– 7:00 p.m.

Call to order: 7:00 pm

Roll Call

Councilperson Suzanne M. Souder
Councilperson Russell P. Smith
Council President Linda Ratchford
Councilperson Michael M. Platt
Councilperson Valarie W. Leary

Also present:

Michael Quaranta, Mayor
Janet Carlin, City Treasurer
William Barthel, City Administrator
Richard McCabe, Chief of Police
Daniel Losco, City Solicitor
Jeff Bergstrom, Building Official

Treasurer's Report

The unaudited Treasurer's report was presented by Janet Carlin, City Treasurer, as of June 30, 2019:

The unaudited Treasurer's report was presented by Janet Carlin, City Treasurer; as of June 30, 2019, \$2,877,876.83 in unrestricted finds, and \$2,464,940.71 in restricted funds, for a total of \$ 5,342,817.57 total cash in accounts.

Councilperson Platt commented on the huge hit in the money market account.

Bills are still coming in from fiscal year 2019.

After a motion and second, the unaudited Treasurer's report as of June 30, 2019, was approved as presented, unanimously.

Reports from the City Administrator & Staff

City Administrator William Barthel presented the following:

- Construction has started on the Delaware Street sewer line project, from Second to The Strand. The project will take from three to six weeks.
- AECOM is expected to get the bids out next week on the other major Delaware Street project. Bids will be due back by August 23. Bids received will be based on the project as discussed at previous Council meetings, and will be brought to the September 2019 City Council meeting for further discussion.

- MSC approved their \$10,000 part of the cost of a feasibility study to look into combining facilities with the city of New Castle. Mr. Barthel will be meeting with Pam Patone, to move that process along.
- Mr. Barthel and Mayor Quaranta will be working with CGI Communications on some promotional videos for the city, to be put on the city website. This is free to the city. CGI will look for sponsorships from local businesses.

Police Chief McCabe presented the following:

- The Police Department will be sponsoring another back-to-school backpack program this year, as last year's was very successful. Information will be posted to their Facebook page.
- An extensive drug investigation led to a search warrant and arrest in the Penn Valley area.
- Regarding the increase in thefts, the Department is looking into a pattern related to motor vehicle thefts in the Airport Plaza area. In the rest of the city, there does not appear to be a pattern.
- Full time bike patrols have started. They are awaiting uniforms.
- The Department is looking into participating in National Night Out.
- The increase compared to last year, in traffic arrests and traffic warnings, is due in part to grants, as well as increased concentration by Officers.

Council Communications

Councilperson Platt spoke on complaints received about vacant properties, and the perception that the city is doing nothing about it. He asked whether fines related to this can be published in the weekly, so that the city's efforts are visible to the community.

Mr. Platt also expressed concern about security at city meetings and buildings, and wondered whether meetings should take place elsewhere. Police Chief McCabe acknowledged potential issues and concerns on the topic.

Mr. Platt also mentioned that MSC has installed three street lights on Baldt Avenue. The project is expected to take about three years, and will be an asset to the residents of Van Dyke and Baldt Avenue, having the neighborhood lit up.

Business From the Mayor

Mayor Quaranta met with some of the tenants at Centerpoint Industrial Park, along with other city officials. They met with the management at Amazon. The Mayor expects to meet with them again in the future, as well as with Twin Spans.

The Mayor brought up the security camera program that he had suggested at a previous Council meeting, where residents could receive small rebates for purchasing and installing security cameras that meet certain criteria. Police Chief McCabe highlighted some past cases in which

availability of security cameras would have been helpful, as well as cases in which existing security cameras helped. Councilperson Smith also shared a case in which security camera footage assisted.

Council President Ratchford encouraged the Police Chief to write an article for the website or the newspaper, on this topic.

The Mayor reported on a meeting from a couple of weeks prior regarding better organizing and sharing calendars between different civic groups, associations, clubs, schools and businesses, to increase awareness and help cross-promote events and activities. More information on this effort will be forthcoming.

The Mayor continues to work on the proposed task force on residential living in the community.

Senator Poore is working to secure funding for fire remediation at the courthouse.

Regarding a recent report on lead exposure which included zip code 19720, Pam Pantone at MSC has written a letter, affirming that the water supply is perfectly fine.

The Mayor would like to see an Arts Council created in the community, and will be approaching Council members about this.

Business from the Council President

The city has applied for a grant to look at the traffic coming off of the Markell Trail, and alternatives.

Council President Ratchford and City Administrator Barthel met with a student from the University of Delaware and a representative from DeIDOT, regarding potential popup projects.

The city continues to get information from the state regarding a new fishing pier in the Dobbinsville area. The city will work on a memorandum of understanding, regarding an easement, and there are additional details that need to be worked on, so that the state will provide the \$1.5 million to build a parking lot, lighting and a fishing pier.

Business from the Floor (concerning agenda items only)

Roderick Gillespie commented on the closing of 8th Street as part of the railroad crossing project, and asked whether it was DeIDOT who requested this. Council President Ratchford advised that there will be a presentation at tonight's meeting on this. Mr. Gillespie asked whether there is enough room for a car that goes down 8th Street, to the point where the pavement runs out, to turn around, or whether that car would have to go onto the St. Gabriel's Lodge property.

Mr. Gillespie provided a handout and clarified earlier information he had provided, related to how long attendees are allowed to speak at public meetings in Newark.

Tom Tritelli spoke on the topic of the closing of 8th Street. He was of the understanding, from what was said at the previous workshop, that the project would be happening in July of 2020, and that there would be additional workshops on it before it was to be voted on. He requested that the vote be postponed until there is another opportunity for a public workshop.

Old Business and New Business

John Hermes, with Century Engineering, spoke on the railroad project at Delaware and 8th Streets. Norfolk Southern and DelDOT have identified this crossing as having safety concerns. Proposed improvements include installing new flashing warning lights, including gates on either side, and coordinating communication between the traffic signal and the railroad signal. There is a problem with cars stopping on the railroad tracks. DelDOT and the railroad would like 8th Street closed. Also, the new equipment will extend into the roadway, as it is now. Mr. Hermes detailed the concerns and comments that citizens had expressed at the public workshop in March.

The project is planned for July of 2020. The road will be closed for three weeks at a time. The detour will be communicated better than in the past, and clear signage is planned for the project. In response to Mr. Gillespie's earlier question, Mr. Hermes stated that cars in that situation do have the option of a three-point turn, and clear signage is planned, to help keep traffic from going that far.

There was some discussion and responses to questions about the project, including:

- Regarding questions at the workshop about installing a traffic signal at 9th Street, DelDOT is going to wait until the project is completed, to determine whether or not such a signal is needed.
- There will be no increase nor decrease in the noise level of the bells.
- The new traffic signal at the intersection will be a decorative traffic signal.
- Sidewalk crossings will be added, across the railroad tracks.
- The installation of a railroad crossing at 8th Street is due to safety concerns, not due to vehicle volume.
- A new railroad crossing at Tremont St., if approved, would be considered private, and the city would have the responsibility to fund the installation and maintenance.
- Any changes that might result from the WILMAPCO study, which is still in progress, would likely take years to complete. The railroad considers this project a priority, due to safety concerns, and will not be waiting for the WILMAPCO study results.
- Emergency services agencies have not expressed concerns about access, due to this project, at this point.
- There will be traffic officers added during peak hours, during the project.

After a motion and second to discuss and consider **Resolution 2019-25**, A Resolution Approving the Closing of 8th Street at Delaware Street (Council President Ratchford – posted 07/01/2019), Council President Ratchford read the resolution into the record.

Resolution 2019-25 was passed unanimously.

Representatives of Event Allies provided a report and recap on Separation Day. The budget provided in the meeting packet is a working budget, and not yet final. This is the first year that Separation Day, the barbecue and the parade were all combined as one event. All of the funds were raised through the grant-in-aid, the Trustees and sponsorships. Roughly \$30,700 were raised. There is a meeting scheduled with city staff for Thursday 7/11/2019, at which all expense

details will be provided. Gate and alcohol sales combined totaled \$14,963. Any revenue that exceeds expenses would go toward next year's event.

Councilperson Souder spoke on the topic of a code of conduct. A handout was provided that is an updated version of the one provided in the packet. The purpose is to provide a code of conduct for the non-union city staff, City Council, and the various commissions of the city. The code of conduct would be aspirational; there would be no punitive consequences for not following it. There was general discussion about some items and wording in the draft.

Councilperson Souder also spoke on draft guidelines, also provided to Council, for public comments at City Council meetings and public hearings. Discussion of and questions about those draft guidelines followed.

After a motion and second to discuss and consider **Resolution 2019-26**, A Resolution Regarding Confusion among the General Public in Distinguishing between the City of New Castle and the New Castle Postal Address (Councilperson Russ Smith – posted 07/01/2019), Council President Ratchford read the resolution into the record.

Councilperson Smith spoke on his intentions behind the resolution being to maintain the good name of the City of New Castle. A specific example would be when something negative is reported to have occurred in New Castle that, in fact, happened outside of New Castle.

It was moved and seconded that the word “possibly” be added before the phrase “including pursuing,” in the final sentence of the resolution. The amendment to the resolution was approved unanimously.

Resolution 2019-26 was passed unanimously, as amended.

After a motion and second to consider, Council President Ratchford read **Ordinance 520 - An Ordinance to Amend Zoning Code §230.21.1 E (1)** to Permit Fence or Wall “Structures” by Special Exception on Properties Formerly Zoned Industrial (I) and Service Commercial (SC), but now Zoned Downtown Gateway (DG) (Council President Ratchford – posted 07/01/2019) into the record.

A public hearing on **Ordinance 520** will be scheduled.

After a motion and second to discuss and consider, Council President Ratchford read **Resolution 2019-27** A Resolution Approving an Encroachment located at 113 The Strand (Council President Ratchford – posted 07/01/2019) into the record.

The Building Official present stated that requests such as that in **Resolution 2019-27** are very common.

Resolution 2019-27 was passed unanimously.

Public Comments

Roderick Gillespie of 24 W. 4th Street spoke against the brick crosswalks planned to be built as part of the Delaware Street project. He expressed concern about the maintenance that will be required. He expressed that asphalt would be more historically correct than brick.

Andrea Lang proposed a Little Free Library be added to the community. This would be a free book exchange for children and adults. She provided an informational handout. She recommended the end of Delaware Street as the location, by the wharf. Ms. Lang offered to be the steward of the library. She referred to the handout in providing additional information. She was advised that a Council member would need to sponsor a resolution to make this happen, and was asked to leave her contact information with the Clerk.

Phil Gross of 301 Moore Avenue asked whether the details of the expense and revenue report related to Event Allies' report on Separation Day would be made public. He was advised that yes, the information will be public.

Mr. Gross expressed that the code of conduct that was discussed earlier in the meeting should apply only to the City Council.

Mr. Gross expressed that the City of New Castle having its own zip code would not help with the problem that Councilperson Smith expressed earlier, related to negative information being mistakenly attributed to the city.

Rod Miller of 124 E. 3rd Street asked whether there are any city ordinances that relate to a car being parked, and then left for months or years. Police Chief McCabe advised that this is not illegal, as long as the car is legally registered. Mr. Miller asked whether this could be discussed. It was mentioned that cars have to be moved at least eight times a year, due to street sweeping.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian Whitaker Clerk of the City of New Castle

After a motion and second, the meeting was adjourned. Council adjourned at 9:32 pm.

Next Regular Meeting Date: August 13, 2019

Posted: 07/01/2019