

City of New Castle Delaware
City Council and Municipal Services Commission
Combined Special Meeting
Meeting to be held electronically via Zoom
Monday, August 17, 2020
6:30 p.m.

Call to Order: 7:00 PM

Roll Call

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

Also present: William Barthel, City Administrator
Daniel Losco, Esquire, City Solicitor
Dr. Roy J. Sippel, MSC President
Daniel F. Knox, MSC Commissioner
Dr. Allen R. Hansen, MSC Commissioner
Pam Patone, MSC General Manager
Brian Whittaker, City Clerk

Council President Ratchford called the August 17, 2020, Combined City Council and Municipal Services Commission (MSC) to order and introduced the Council and attendees.

Mr. Barthel introduced Morgan Helfrich, Vice President and Senior Project Architect and Director of Architecture, Charles O'Donnell, Senior Vice President and Senior Project Director, and Cheri Hochstedler, Designer, from GMB to present the Municipal Complex Feasibility Study Report.

Council President Ratchford stated the presentation will address various operational efficiencies and benefits to the City.

Mr. O'Donnell stated two Concepts would be presented that will create proximity between the existing Police Department building, the proposed new MSC/City Administration building, and the existing and proposed MSC storage buildings in a complex off Wilmington Road. Mr. O'Donnell added that it is expected the proposed Complex will provide increases in efficiency and productivity by creating new MSC and City Administration office functions and a shared Council Chambers. Mr. O'Donnell gave an overview of the current site layout.

Ms. Helfrich explained the design development of functional areas, and how interviews with MSC and City staff were used to create the Functional Area Comparison to determine the appropriate square footage of the new Administrative office building. Two options for the

Council Chambers were presented, one with nine council seats and 129 total seats and one with seven council seats and 135 total seats.

Council President Ratchford noted that the current Council Chambers are inadequate relative to safety and technology and emphasized the importance of both. Ms. Helfrich explained that safety was captured in the Report and noted that with regard to technology, the building would be a Category 3 Essential Facility that would be a complete upgrade for all municipal buildings. Councilperson Smith added that the existing facility is also lacking in security. Ms. Helfrich stated that new Codes for an assembly-type building housing new construction require several exits for security depending on the number of occupants.

Ms. Helfrich presented Concepts A and B, including architecture, aesthetics, materials and finishes, ingress and egress, number of parking spaces, maneuverability within the complex, and landscaping. Both Concepts have a shared central entry/lobby area and shared common areas. Ms. Hockstedler explained additional site components of both concepts, including existing and proposed buildings, as well as buildings proposed to be demolished. Conceptual stormwater management areas will require further investigation during the design development portion of the project.

Concept A Highlights

- Concept A offers an efficient wayfinding for patrons.
- Concept A provides 137 parking spaces.
- The aesthetics of the Administrative building in Concept A mimic a Georgian style that compliments the Police Department building.
- Concept A was unable to accommodate the MSC project materials storage and a 50' turning radius for the larger MSC vehicle in the exterior storage area.
- The total estimated cost of Concept A is 10.2M.

Concept B Highlights

- Concept B offers a somewhat less efficient wayfinding for patrons.
- Concept B provides 137 parking spaces.
- The aesthetics of the Administrative building in Concept B mirror the Police Department exactly.
- Concept B was unable to accommodate the MSC project materials storage and a 50' turning radius for the larger MSC vehicle in the exterior storage area.
- Concept B provides separate parking areas for the Police Department and MSC/City Administrative Offices.
- Concept B provides a rear access drive at the end of Municipal Boulevard.
- The total estimated cost of Concept B is 10.6M.

Ms. Helfrich noted that the orientation of the MSC/City Administrative offices is different in the two Concepts. Concept B shows a 10' separation between the Administrative building and the

Police Department building; however, this may require fire separation which will limit the ability to place windows and doors on the side of the new building unless they are fire rated.

Councilperson Smith noted that both concepts seem to have very little opportunity for future expansion. Ms. Helfrich noted that the area is small; however, the new building is quite large compared to the space MSC and the City currently occupy. In addition, the added storage features do allow for future growth. The square footage of office space in the new building was increased from the required square footage standard, and the common area factor was added as well. Ms. Helfrich opined that despite the tight appearance of the site, the building footprint is well provided for the future.

Councilperson Platt asked if the Council Chambers are multi-use rooms. Ms. Helfrich explained there is an opportunity for the Chambers to be used separately while the rest of the building is locked down. The Chambers will be used by both MSC and the City. Councilperson Platt also asked if the Chambers were too large for the City's purposes. Ms. Helfrich stated in the next step of the process when floorplans are reviewed a determination of the best size for the proposed Council Chambers could be made. She added that there is also an opportunity to use dividers to make the Chambers more functionally flexible. Councilperson Smith added that the City is always looking for adequate space for public meetings.

Councilperson Platt asked if the location of prisoner drop-off will change at the Police Department, and Ms. Helfrich stated the location of the sally port will not change. She added that neither Concept has made any changes to the Police Department building or the sally port area.

Council President Ratchford stated that if the City goes forward, they must be confident that the proposed improvements will meet the City and constituents' needs. With regard to a phased program for improvements Ms. Helfrich opined the City could probably move forward with any aspect of the Plan and noted that it would behoove the City to look at the proposal as a master planning effort to see what else can go on the site and where it would be located. Ms. Helfrich stated they would like to look at the site effort holistically so the City is not impacted by other site requirements later.

Councilperson Platt noted that at previous meetings the sale of other City properties to generate revenue was discussed and asked if that was discussed for either Concept. Ms. Helfrich stated that was not considered. The two Concepts were solely looking at the land available now for use by MSC and the City.

Mr. Barthel stated that the City is looking at the plan in a holistic way and many good questions were raised by Council. He added this is a good first step in a long process.

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Council President Ratchford expressed her appreciation for the hard work that went into the Study and stated Council, MSC and the City need to look at the Study closely and probe further for issues that need to be addressed.

Councilperson Souder asked if the Study included any estimate of cost savings by combining various functions that could be shared by MSC and the City such as IT, phone lines, etc. Ms. Helfrich stated that the Functional Area Comparison includes shared spaces, including the percentage total of each department. She added that shared space is approximately 30%.

Ms. Patone stated that MSC has outgrown the building they are in for administration and not being in close proximity to City offices has been a disadvantage for the public. She opined that both Concepts provide advantages to the public as well as for inter-departmental communications. She added that having shared Council Chambers will better facilitate MSC, City, and public meetings. Ms. Patone noted there are a few areas of concern with the operations area, equipment storage and the radius turn; but said that she hoped some of those things could be fixed. MSC is eager to move to the next steps.

There being no further comments or questions, Council President Ratchford called for a Motion to adjourn.

A Motion to adjourn was made by Councilperson Platt and seconded by Councilperson Souder. On vote, the Motion was unanimously approved and the meeting adjourned at 7:43 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Weirich
Stenographer

Next Regular Meeting Date: September 8, 2020
Posted: 08/04/2020