

**CITY OF NEWARK
DELAWARE**

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

June 21, 2014

Those present at 8:00 a.m.:

Presiding: Mayor Polly Sierer
District 1, Mark Morehead
District 2, Todd Ruckle
District 3, Rob Gifford
District 4, Margrit Hadden
District 5, Luke Chapman
District 6, A. Stuart Markham

Staff Members: City Manager Carol Houck
City Secretary Renee Bensley
Clerk of the Court Barbara Wilkers
Code Enforcement Supervisor Steve Wilson
Community Affairs Officer Dana Johnston
Deputy City Manager Andrew Haines
Deputy Finance Director Wilma Garriz
Deputy Public Works & Water Resources Director Tim Filasky
Development Supervisor Michael Fortner
Electric Director Rick Vitelli
Finance Director Lou Vitola
IT Manager Josh Brechbuehl
Parking Administrator Marvin Howard
Parks & Recreation Director Charlie Emerson
Planner Ricky Nietubicz
Planning & Development Director Maureen Feeney Roser
Police Chief Paul Tiernan
Public Works & Water Resources Director Tom Coleman
Recreation Superintendent Joe Spadafino
Water Operations Superintendent Mark Neimeister

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1. The special Council meeting began at 8:00 a.m. at the Newark Country Club.
 2. Ms. Sierer introduced Dave Woglom, Associate Director of the Lafayette College Meyner Center, who gave a PowerPoint presentation regarding challenges of managing in the public sector, goals of municipalities, the analogy of municipalities as a business, teamwork in government, leadership in a municipality and effective communication.

Mr. Woglom then reviewed his observations regarding the City of Newark, which included the following:

- Communications are not thorough;
- Trust and confidence are not what they could or should be;
- An “us versus them” belief;
- Players on the team are frustrated;
- The team is not functioning as it should be; and
- A feeling that the glass is half empty when it is half full and rising.

Mr. Woglom opened the floor to discussion between Council members. Council discussion during the first half of the meeting included the following topics:

- Feeling a lack of respect;
- Frustration of Council members and staff due to stagnating progress of projects due to changing or unclear Council direction to staff;

- Setting clear expectations and deadlines for both Council members and staff;
- Inclusiveness of the public in City processes;
- Communication with the public;
- Communication between Council members;
- Communication between Council and staff;
- Advance preparation by members of Council in reviewing meeting materials, including asking questions on agenda items prior to the Council meeting;
- Receiving additional information on agenda items;
- Receiving agenda items at an earlier deadline;
- Follow through with and updates on Council requests;
- The relationship of the City Secretary position to Council and staff in relationship to constituent service requests;
- The relationship of the City Manager position to Council;
- Better outreach mechanisms for Council to the public;
- Creating a more public-centered culture within the City; and
- Better communication from the State to the City regarding State projects within Newark.

3. Direction from Council to staff during the first half of the meeting included the following:

- Include additional information for Council consideration in agenda packet items;
- Enforce timely submission of agenda packet items from both Council members and staff;
- Reinstigate follow up lists of Council requests after staff meetings; and
- Create a way to centralize information regarding the status of Council and constituent requests.

4. Council took a break at 9:50 a.m. and resumed at 10:06 a.m.

5. Mr. Woglom reopened the session with a discussion on teamwork and the relationship between Council and staff. Mr. Haines, Mr. Coleman, Mr. Vitola and Ms. Bensley brought forward staff issues in the discussion. Issues raised by staff included:

- A lack of consensus and direction from Council regarding which direction staff should go in pursuing a policy resolution to an issue;
- A feeling of demeaning or ridiculing of staff work by Council and the public during Council floor presentations;
- A feeling that public comment has become public inquisition for staff members;
- Clarification on what Council members want in the weekly report in both content and format;
- Finding a balance between prioritizing and fulfilling Council requests and balancing operational priorities;
- Negative reaction to a single issue turning into negativity toward all staff work product;
- Frustration with a lack of open communication between staff and members of the public; and
- Difficulties caused by side discussions of Council, staff and the public during the meeting.

6. Council discussion during the second half of the meeting include the following topics:

- Promotion of respect between Council, staff and the public;
- Council needing to respond to questions from staff in a timely manner;
- Treatment of Council members versus members of the public;
- Promoting better, more professional conduct at the meeting;
- Professional and courteous presentation of information from the public to Council;
- Promotion of effective communication between Council and staff;
- Consideration of an ending time for Council meetings;

- Inherent skepticism and distrust of staff and management and a culture of a single misstep breeding an unhealthy environment of taking shots and undermining productivity;
- Informing all Council members on issues or projects being worked on by individual Council members with staff; and
- Better communication with the public.

7. Direction from Council to staff during the second half of the meeting included the following:

- Include either a chart or a centralized location in the weekly report where projects and requested updates from departments can be found;
- More information in the weekly report is better than less information;
- Include more visuals in materials presented to Council to aid in understanding;
- Keep Council informed so there is no surprise information from other sources;
- Give timely and direct feedback from staff and the administration to Council regarding treatment and prioritization;
- Provide education to Council on the procedures and policies for dealing with certain operational issues in order to give Council information and set expectations;
- Improve the effort to “close the loop” in communication between staff, Council and the public to ensure everyone gets information;
- Look into hosting classes for the public on using the website tools to better communicate with the City;
- Let Council members know if staff members have tried to communicate with members of the public and have been rebuffed;
- Identify individuals writing the weekly report sections;
- Standardize the weekly report formats; and
- Consider how the City approaches press releases prior to decisions being made by Council.

8. Mr. Woglom summarized the direction of Council, including having Ms. Houck create a readable, standardized format for the departmental weekly reports and continually working on improving communication between Council, staff and the public. Mr. Woglom also suggested Newark consider preparing a strategic plan for the city that would be periodically revisited. Mr. Woglom then opened the floor to public comment.

9. Brett Zingarelli, District 4, expressed his unhappiness with changes in the City over the years, his feelings that the City generally ignores the feelings of the public and his views on the length of meetings.

10. Nancy Boyer, Newark, would like good government, a sense of community, mutual respect, better communication and clearer notifications to be goals of the City.

11. Martin Nicholson, Newark, expressed his thoughts on leadership, facing adversity and his dissatisfaction with the changes in the City.

12. Anne Maring, Newark, stated her satisfaction with lower level City staff, but disappointment with management and Council and a need for change and transparency. Ms. Maring also discussed ways project management and technology could improve communication and inclusiveness, including in the comprehensive plan process.

13. Tom Uffner, Newark, commented on a culture of divisiveness in the City, a desire not to sacrifice good government for the sake of efficiency, sharing information, the role of staff, the role of government and following meeting rules.

14. Natasha Ortega, District 5, thanked everyone for participating, expressed a need for communication, accountability and respect, her feeling that all Council members represent all residents and that all Council members should have all information and her agreement with the idea of having a strategic plan for the City.

15. Jen Wallace, District 3, challenged Council and staff to do a better job in engaging and communicating with the public, suggested a workshop on civic engagement and gave several ideas of technologies that could be used to improve communication.
16. Carol McKelvey, District 4, thought the meeting was useful, warned of entities in State government bullying the City and encouraged the group to stick together.
17. Amy Roe, District 4, stated her displeasure with the meeting and its notice, the state of the City, the lack of inclusiveness, the attitude of staff and the view of residents as customers, not citizens.
18. Brian Dunigan, Newark, gave ideas for streamlining Council meetings.
19. Tom Uffner, Newark, gave ideas for streamlining Council meetings and wondered why more staff members do not live in the City.
20. Martin Nicholson, Newark, agreed with Mrs. McKelvey and wanted to stand up for Newark to the State government.
21. Brett Zingarelli, District 4, commented on qualities that make a good leader, including communication and not being a hypocrite.
22. Anne Maring, Newark, commented on the three minute time limit for public comment and potential technology improvements for following up on questions.
23. **Meeting adjourned at 12:28 p.m.**

Renee K. Bensley
Director of Legislative Services
City Secretary