

Trustees of the New Castle Common
Meeting Minutes
March 2, 2010

Present: Messrs. Wilson, Alfree, Appleby, Castagno, DeAscanis, Gallagher, Meek, Peden, Viola, Yacucci; Ms. Fiske, Mr. Taylor, Esq., and Ms. MacDonough, Executive Secretary. Also, Mrs. Mimi Carpenter of the *New Castle Weekly*. Absent: Mr. Gambacorta, Ms. Ross.

The monthly meeting of the Trustees was held on Tuesday, March 2, 2010 at 7:00 p.m. in the Trustees Room of the Old Town Hall. Mr. Wilson called the meeting to order, followed by a moment of silence.

Calendar Additions: March 19, New Library Ribbon-Cutting Party; March 20 is the Grand Opening. Open Space Committee will meet March 25 at 9 a.m.

Minutes:

The minutes of the February 2 meeting and the February 17 special meeting were approved as submitted.

Executive Secretary's Report:

Scholarship students' checks for the second semester are going out, along with applications for the 2010-11 academic year. A notice will be placed in the *Weekly* to encourage high school seniors to apply. The final draft of the fiscal 2009 financial audit has been received for review.

Treasurer's Report: Mr. Appleby.

The Treasurer's Report was approved as submitted.

Business from the Floor: None.

PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE REPORT - Mr. Alfree reporting.

Family Foundations Academy Expansion – FFA school has submitted a concept plan for an additional school building on the vacant Basin Road parcel. Committee's response is very positive and believes that a mutually acceptable arrangement can be reached, and that this is a good use of that site.

Burger King – Mr. Taylor and Odyssey Foods' attorneys are very near completion of the new lease.

Castle Dealership Site – Lease expires April 30, 2010. We will contract for an environmental inspection of the property and also arrange for removal of tenant signage, changing locks, etc. We continue to field inquiries about the site. Ms. MacDonough will send a letter to SMO/Wills, operator of the Shell station, to see if they have any interest. Mr. Appleby will sound out P. Gerald White, realtor, to see if he would be willing to represent the Trust in marketing the property. Mr. Alfree advised Richard Stat that we would continue to entertain proposals from him. The Committee recommends that the building remain in place at this time (lease allows requiring tenant to remove it). Building will be added to our insurance policy.

Penn Mart/Interstate Management – Mr. Alfree informed the tenant that we would not entertain an 80-year lease extension. The market rent of this site will increase dramatically at the end of their current lease term in 2015, and the tenant has been reminded of this on numerous occasions.

Amazon Lease – Signed amendment for 2007-12 lease term has now been received from McConnell.

The Committee recommended that the Open Space Committee look into acquisition of three properties: the State-owned land in the Basin Road highway cloverleaf behind Checkered Flag; the Hermitage site; and the auto shop property at the corner of Sixth and Chestnut. Mr. Alfree then requested an Executive Session to discuss lease negotiations regarding a Trust property.

OUTREACH COMMITTEE REPORT – Mr. Gallagher reporting.

Committee has not met since the 2/17 special meeting reviewing grant proposals.

PROPERTY MAINTENANCE COMMITTEE/PENN FARM – Mr. DeAscanis reporting.

Mr. DeAscanis said he contacted Mrs. Deemer and Mr. Scully regarding the Hermitage property, and it is currently for sale at \$150,000.

Penn Farm: Mr. Castagno said that the Quigley auction to be conducted by Wilson’s Auctions scheduled for March 6 has been delayed due to weather. Ephraim Lapp has done an excellent job refurbishing the exterior of the barn. Delaware Greenways will be presenting a plan for a perimeter greenway trail around the Farm by next month.

FINANCE COMMITTEE – Mr. Appleby reporting.

The proposed 2010-11 budget was distributed. Mr. Appleby said that, contingent on various assumptions about tenants, interest rates, etc., the year should culminate in a moderately positive position. The Board then moved through the draft budget and voted on it by section (Administration, Contributions, Maintenance, Building Repairs, Battery Park, City Appropriation, and Capital). All sections were passed with a show of hands except for the City Appropriations page.

Under that section, funding for the Tree Commission was discussed at length. The original request was for \$25,000. Various questions were raised about mission, purpose, coverage and rationale for the Commission. Ultimately, Mr. Castagno moved to allocate \$5000 to the City for “general greenscape management” in lieu of funding the Tree Commission. Mr. Meek seconded. After discussion, a roll call vote was taken resulting in a vote of 6 Yea (Wilson, DeAscanis, Yacucci, Gallagher, Castagno, Alfree); 4 Nay (Fiske, Viola, Meek Appleby). (Mr. Peden had left the meeting prior to the vote.)

Comments on the vote:

- Mr. Wilson – Tree Commission function should be a part of the City operations
- Mr. Gallagher – same reason as Mr. Wilson; should not be separate 3rd party with overlapping functions
- Mr. Castagno – Outreach Committee has vetted the situation; this motion supports green infrastructure
- Ms. Fiske – need to study such a move more carefully; Commission has been doing a good job
- Mr. Viola – this decrease is too abrupt and could be construed poorly by the community
- Mr. Meek – not certain City has capability, manpower or planning to implement what needs to be done
- Mr. Appleby – Tree Commission provides a general public benefit similar to Battery Park maintenance

Mr. Alfree then moved to approve the City Appropriation section as amended by the above roll call vote. Motion carried.

ELECTION COMMITTEE – No update.

LIBRARY COMMITTEE – Mr. Viola reporting.

Library staff and volunteers have been working very hard toward the impending grand opening. County Executive Coons and administrative staff toured the project and were extremely impressed. Mr. Viola recapped the historic role of the Trust in supporting library services, particularly from 1955 when the subscription-based New Castle Library Company was dissolved and its assets absorbed by the Trustees, along with the imputed responsibility to provide library services to the City. With the current renovation and expansion, as owners of the building, the Trust’s capital assets will increase by over \$4 million due to the proceeds to the capital campaign from outside foundations and other sources. Mr. Castagno said that the large commitment to this project demonstrates the high priority the Trust places on ensuring the existence of library services for the City. Mr. Viola pointed out that the Old Library on Third Street had to last 72 years; and the original New Library lasted 47 years – we only do this once a century.

OPEN SPACE – Mr. Yacucci reporting.

Ms. Fiske said there will be a meeting on the 25th to plan signage for the low-mowing field areas and to discuss potential property acquisitions.

BY-LAW COMMITTEE – Mr. Gallagher reporting.

Mr. Gallagher said that we are finalizing the updated document incorporating recently approved changes, and then will post the Bylaws online. The Committee will also review possible changes needed to address points raised in the recent audit report.

BATTERY PARK COMMITTEE – Mr. Castagno reporting.

Maintenance funds for upcoming year have been incorporated in the budget. New “Friends” group has offered to raise funds and otherwise help in maintaining tennis courts.

OTHER COMMITTEES

Per the Nominating Committee recommendation, Mr. Alfree moved that the officers for April 1, 2010 through March 31, 2011 be as follows:

President:	Thomas H. Wilson, Jr.
Vice President:	Francis J. DeAscanis
Secretary:	Michael J. Alfree, Sr.
Assistant Secretary:	Gregory T. Yacucci
Treasurer:	Richard M. Appleby, Jr.
Assistant Treasurer:	Henry F. Gambacorta

Mr. Castagno moved to approve the slate as presented. Motion carried. Mr. Alfree then moved that the committee assignments for the upcoming year be approved per the list distributed and dated 2/1/10, with the addition of James Meek to the Library Committee. Motion carried. Mr. Wilson volunteered to be liaison to the Good Will Fire Company. Mr. Alfree noted that all committees should meet and appoint a new chair.

COMMUNICATIONS

- Thank you letter for annual grant to Arasapha Garden Club.
- Notices from New Castle County regarding various land use hearings for properties adjacent to Trust parcels (variance, rezoning, etc.)
- Letter from DNREC asking permission to come on Trust wetland property to review suitability for bog turtle habitat. Mr. Wilson, Mr. Taylor and Ms. MacDonough will work on reply.

Mr. Alfree then made a motion to move into Executive Session to discuss matters of real estate and lease negotiations. After the Board reconvened in regular session, Mr. Wilson announced that 2010 marks the 50th anniversary of the Cooch and Taylor law firm and congratulated Mr. Taylor.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathleen MacDonough
Executive Secretary