CITY OF MILFORD
COUNCIL WORKSHOP MINUTES
August 23, 2021

The City Council of the City of Milford convened in a Workshop Session in the Joseph Ronnie Rogers Council Chambers at Milford City Hall, 201 South Walnut Street, on Monday, August 23, 2021 beginning at 6:33 p.m.

PRESIDING: Mayor Archie Campbell

IN ATTENDANCE: Councilmembers Daniel Marabello, Mike Boyle, Andrew Fulton, Todd Culotta,
                           Brian Baer, Douglas Morrow, Jason James Sr. and Katrina Wilson

STAFF: City Manager Mark Whitfield, Police Chief Kenneth Brown and
                           Acting Secretary Carlene Wilson

COUNSEL: Solicitor David Rutt, Esquire

Per the Limited Public Health Emergency Declaration issued by Governor John Carney on March 1, 2022, and the virtual meeting provisions provided in Senate Bill 94, Milford City Council and participants met in a hybrid format.

WIIN Presentation

Parks & Recreation Director Brad Dennehy introduced Danielle Swallow who will provide an update on the WIIN Coalition. Jennifer Egan is a member of the Task Force and is also on line.

Ms. Swallow reminded Council she is with Delaware Sea Grant based at the University of Delaware where a federally funded program through NOAA. She is like an extension agent that works with communities to help them assess their risks to storm and climate hazards and try to prepare and build resiliency to those hazards.

She talked about Project WIIN which is a project they are doing with Milford and Slaughter Beach. She noted that Mr. Dennehy is Milford's day-to-day representative.

She shared that Milford and Slaughter Beach both reside in the Mispillion and Cedar Creek watersheds. We are in the area in one of the largest relatively intact undisturbed natural resource areas in Delaware. It is an area rich in bio diversity, a lot of animals and plants, and it has its international flyway for migrating birds and that becomes a draw for tourists and is also a major hub in the whole world for horseshoe crabs.

Milford has made tremendous strides over the years by bringing its citizens closer to the environment through the riverwalk, for example, Slaughter beach very, very tied to their resources. But there is not a lot known about these resources. There is a desire to maintain these resources, but also find ways to bring an economic opportunity to both communities.

They thought about projects that would improve access and recreation to these resources thereby generating economic opportunities and sustain and improve the resilience of the overall community. That is how Project WIIN (waterways, infrastructure and investment network) came about.

She talked about one of WIIN's partners called Rascal (resilient and sustainable communities league) which is a network of state agencies, NGOs and university partners that work to build resiliency in Delaware communities. She also talked about the other partners including the PEW charitable trust and the University of Maryland Environmental Finance Center.

Jennifer Egan is the principal author of an economic study that she will refer to.

She also talked about funding including $110,000 that was raised to put toward match. That made them competitive, and they competed with other communities around the country, including San Diego and Boston. They secured a national fish and wildlife federation grant for national resilience. The total is $220,000 that includes their match.

The components of the study are the economic valuation in phase one and phase two. That is an appraisal of area's natural resources and a vulnerability assessment all culminating in a nature-based investment strategy.

The phase one economic study was just released and funded through the PEW charitable trust and was carried out by Jennifer Egan with the University of Maryland Environmental Finance Center. She is a University of Delaware grad who lives in Delaware.

The study basically answers the question of which resources and natural assets are important to the way of life in these communities.

This this field of economics is looking to figure out what those values are across a range of services. Phase one study looked at direct and indirect use values. Phase two study, that is just beginning, is going to examine secondary values such as the value of the future generations in both communities being able to use.

During her interviews, Abbotts Mill Nature Center, Mispillion Riverway Greenway, and the Vinyard Shipyard are among those assets that the community most values in the urban, river, park, and inland category. Based on visitation data, Abbotts Mill data indicates general recreation values between $313,000 and $6.3 million.

She also looked at the Riverwalk Greenway Park, which is relying on previously published studies and was able to identify values of $465,000 for picnicking activities and up to $1.2 million for sightseeing activities.

Under marsh, river, and wetlands, the Marvel Saltmarsh Preserve Boardwalk came up often for shorebird viewing and was more recently built. The value of animal birding trips in 2020 was estimated at $428,000. She also looked at the saltmarsh played in terms of flood reduction. Wetlands are nature's version of a sponge, and they basically absorb excess water. That's what are their primary benefits and purposes and can also mitigate wave action. Wetlands can reduce damage to storms by 10%. Though the intensity of storms can increase by 10 to 15%. Using flood insurance claims, a sensitivity analysis between 10 and 50% marsh storm protection saves between $7,800 and $125,200 per event.

In the marine harbor in Slaughter Beach category, the Mispillion Harbo Reserve and DuPont Nature Center and Slaughter Beach support wildlife, shorebird, and horseshoe crab viewing, bay beach recreation, recreational and commercial boating and commercial shipping. Annual nature center and harbor shorebird viewing generate between $574,000 and $1.15 million. The annual Slaughter Beach recreational accessed value is estimated to be $458,000.

All values are based on one person in a vehicle, so the values are most likely higher.

Phase 2 is beginning and will involve engaging with outdoor community refuge, local community and recreation groups and businesses. Data will continue to be collected to estimate benefits and costs of the different ecotourism options and investments.

The vulnerability assessment is being done by the Partnership for Delaware Estuary. Knowing that our communities are subject to different storms and changing climate patterns. Delaware has twice the global rate of sea level rise, which is increasing the height of your of our tides. Over time, more roadways are being inundated with these storms.

This assessment will be looking at those vulnerabilities to come up with a priority set of locations that might need some attention to help brainstorm investments.

The economic study, together with the vulnerability assessment and with extensive stakeholder engagement, will provide input into a nature-based investment strategy. They will look at win-win strategies where visitation and ecotourism can be increased. Also, the protection and preservation of these resources for future generations will be considered.

She reminded Council this is a two-year process and are still in year one.

The ultimate hope is that through these efforts, they will help establish a brand for this region and an initial marketing strategy. They have partnered with Southern Delaware Tourism as part of this coalition.

When questioned about the economic impact and values related to the Vinyard Shipyard, Jennifer Egan spoke about the ship building in the Milford area is important, but economists have very little studies on that type of activity. She found info on the Hudson River that had similar characteristics where children were educated on the Hudson River history and shipbuilding and the oyster business. That study estimated the yearly value of education for children was around $.5 million a year. She believes we have similar values here.

There being no further business, the Workshop Session of City Council concluded at 7:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Terri K. Hudson, MMC
City Clerk/Recorder