

THOMAS P. GORDON
County Executive



DAVID A. GRIMALDI
Chief Administrative Officer

EXECUTIVE OFFICE

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Contacts: **ANTONIO M. PRADO**, Director of Communications
(302) 395-5108, (302) 545-1462 AMPrado@nccde.org
MELODY A. KITCHEN, Executive Assistant
(302) 395-5117, MAKitchen@nccde.org

NEWS RELEASE

New Castle County to Provide Seed Money for Port along with City, State

WILMINGTON, Del. - County Executive Thomas P. Gordon's proposal to spend \$150,000 to fund an environmental study related to the expansion of port facilities in New Castle County was approved unanimously by New Castle County Council Tuesday night.

The ordinance was sponsored by Council President Christopher A. Bullock, Council President Pro Tempore Penrose Hollins, and Councilman Jea Street.

"These councilmen did an excellent job of floor managing this legislation and stressing to their colleagues the importance of spending this money in order to get the \$400 million to \$600 million needed from private investors to expand the Port," County Executive Gordon said. "Once the Port is expanded to the shores of the Delaware River there will be several jobs created. The taxpayers of New Castle County will see the benefit through the proliferation jobs and an improved quality of life."

The ordinance passed by Council moved \$150,000 in tax stabilization reserves to a line item for the Office of Economic Development, headed by Economic Development and Policy Director Marcus Henry. This money will be combined with \$150,000 committed by the City of Wilmington and \$200,000 set aside by the State of Delaware.

On behalf of County Executive Gordon, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer Samuel L. Guy, Esq. said the ordinance would essentially provide seed money needed for information vital to the project – namely an environmental study on or about the Riveredge Industrial Park south of the Delaware Memorial Bridge.

"New Castle County is part of a group of people that is trying to provide leadership [for this project]," Deputy CAO Guy said. "We all agreed that – the administration and Council – that we were going to get into the economic development business. ...Sometimes, you've got to put up seed money, but it's good if you have partners. The City of Wilmington – Mayor Dennis Williams and Council President Theo Gregory – said they were going to put up \$150,000. State Representative Charles Potter and State Senator Margaret Rose Henry said they had \$200,000. The County Executive said he would try to get County Council to be part of this team so that nobody has all of the risk."

The Deputy CAO added that, after discussions with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, he was reassured that the Port of Wilmington was blessed to be in one of the best geographic positions for the increased commerce anticipated to come with the expansion of the Panama Canal as well as ships that prefer to the east coast in order to avoid recent west coast labor disputes. This includes ships avoiding tolls associated with cruising past the Delaware Memorial Bridge.

"We're right, smack dab in the middle and if we use that General Motors site as the distribution center, we'd kill everybody on distribution," he said. "That's why County Executive Gordon supports the vision of the longshoremen."

County Council passed this ordinance 13-0 before a standing room only crowd composed largely of union members, including International Longshoremen Association Vice President and ILA Local 1694 President William Ashe, ILA Local 1883 Business Agent Ronald "Kimoko" Harris, and Delaware Building Trades District Council President and Delaware AFL-CIO Vice President Jim Maravelias, also business manager for the Laborers Local 199.

Mr. Ashe and Mr. Harris had testified earlier to Council during the Executive Committee meeting about the vital importance of passing this legislation to create good jobs and Mr. Maravelias expressed the unequivocal support of the Building Trades, the AFL-CIO, and the Laborers Local 199, 55, and 1029 for ILA's Port of Wilmington expansion proposal. This dispelled the false rumors that had been circulating to the contrary.