

Newport Town Council
Meeting Minutes
November 16, 2017

Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Spencer announced that the meeting was in compliance with the Delaware Open Meeting Act.

Attendance: Mayor Michael Spencer, Vice Mayor John Joswick, Town Manager Wendy King, Commissioner Timothy Chatburn, Commissioner Florence Czerwinski, Commissioner Kathy Joseph, Police Chief Michael Capriglione and Solicitor Chris Griffiths.

Minutes from the meeting of October 19, 2017, were approved via motion by Commissioner Joswick and seconded by Commissioner Chatburn. All ayes.

Public Comment: Tracey Abbott, 206 E. Highland Avenue, addressed the commission regarding the fire that destroyed the Stanton-Newport Little League's concession building. She was asking for any kind of assistance that could be provided. The fire marshal was still investigating the fire, so it was uncertain if the insurance policy would cover any damage or rebuild. She said she was not sure what was needed at this time because no one was allowed on site, but it was estimated that the building sustained approximately \$50,000 in damage. The town already gave a donation of \$500 to this cause and Mayor Spencer committed \$500 of his \$1,000 received from the Delaware Kids Fund to the league. Commissioner Chatburn suggested that the town manager put out a newsletter to the residents and businesses to put the word out and hopefully the league will get donations that way. Mrs. Abbott will forward her information to the town manager to make that happen.

Resident Victoria Wollaston of Christian Street, had a question regarding business licensing. She did not believe it was fair to charge a landscaper \$250 if he was only cutting her grass every other week at \$30 each time. It was explained that if the landscaper could show that less than \$50,000 was made in a calendar year through tax records, the fee would only be \$75. She also questioned what was charged for the apartment building she purchased. The former owner was being charged a certain rate and she was being charged the correct amount. Town Manager King explained that she was charging the former owner of the property the lesser amount because of her individual circumstances and that she would be happy to keep Ms. Wollaston at that rate this year. Ms. Wollaston was concerned that some residents were complaining to her about the fire siren in the middle of the night. Mayor Spencer advised that the town did not regulate the fire house operations and any issues with them would need to be addressed with them. Fire Chief Joseph Dierolf indicated that no one has approached him nor have any messages been forwarded to him about this. Ms. Wollaston asked about the renderings that Harvey Hanna & Associates had on display some months ago about potential development on Market Street and was concerned that nothing had happened yet. Commissioner Chatburn advised that it was approved in the Comprehensive Plan that if a developer wanted to put something similar there, they would be able to. Ms. Wollaston mentioned that some of the properties were listed on the National Historical Registry and now are just vacant lots and wondered if the recent purchase of the former GM plant was a result in nothing happening in Newport. Commissioner Chatburn believed that their purchase of the Boxwood plant would go hand in hand with what they have planned for Newport.

Correspondence - Mayor Spencer received an email from the Civic Association leader of Belvedere. Chief Capriglione was advised by the Mayor that the email claimed that Newport officers were stalking African-American males and sitting at Belvedere Fire Company looking to apprehend these individuals. She stated that these officers planted drugs and guns on one individual and followed him from Kirkwood Highway. Mayor Spencer commended the chief on how he handled the matter. Vice Mayor Joswick was complimentary of the police department and was shocked when he heard the allegations and thanked the police department for their dedication to Newport.

Town Manager's Report - It is necessary to update the comprehensive plan if the zoning district will change for GFP Cement. Solicitor Griffiths will prepare the application and represent the town. Operation Warm Newport to provide 1100 coats for children attending Richey Elementary, Richardson Park Elementary and Richardson Park Learning Center. Pearl Harbor Day ceremony happening at the memorial park. Lydia Massey has provided Solicitor Griffiths with names of potential candidates for Alderman who have been through the vetting process. Harvey Hanna announced at a dinner hosted at Minquas Fire Hall that they were in the process of purchasing the former GM plant at Boxwood Road. 102 E. Ayre Street has been sold.

Police Chief's Report - Chief Capriglione presented monthly departmental statistics.

Alderman's Report - \$55,146 fines collected for October.

Maintenance Report - Presented with no questions.

Code Enforcement - 100% compliance on what was outstanding. Reported on 102 E. Ayre.

Solicitor's Report - Solicitor Griffiths met with Chief Capriglione regarding issues that were brought up by Mr. Burroughs in the previous meeting and advised the chief that he would handle the matter. He met with Town Manager King regarding some open town matters. He attended the PLUS meeting on behalf of the town regarding our request to amend our comprehensive plan to accommodate a zoning change request. It was preliminarily approved and a written decision will be forwarded in 20 days. A workshop will be held by the property owner. Report was submitted by Mr. Bond regarding 102 E. Ayre. He met with Lydia Massey regarding the alderman search. Police reports were reviewed regarding an informal FOIA request.

Commissioners - Vice Mayor Joswick suggested that the commissioners consider donating their portion of the DE Kids Fund monies to Stanton-Newport Little League. Commissioner Chatburn said he would consider it. Mayor Spencer already committed half of his to the league.

Mayor Spencer will attend a meeting with the Governor next week regarding the Septa stop. The budget for current year is looking pretty good. Looking for typical drop in revenue the next two months, but may end up slightly ahead or slightly under.

New Business - Ordinance 2017-002 - An act to amend the comprehensive plan to allow for the rezoning of a commercial property. 101 S. Mary Street from R2 to General Business. 2nd Reading next month. Commissioner Chatburn asked why they needed to change the zoning since they are operating in a non-conforming use. Town Manager King replied that the property owners intended to build on the parcel, but in order to do so, they needed to be conforming. Mayor Spencer made a motion to accept the first reading. Vice Mayor Joswick seconded. Public Comment - Someone asked a question regarding the intention of the property owner. That was not up for discussion. Next month, the property owner will be doing a presentation of his intention. Public comment was closed. All ayes.

FY2018 General Operating Budget - A balanced budget was presented to the commissioners with no tax increase. Town Manager King believes that it should be discussed if not for this year, for the immediate future because the town goes too long without an increase and the impact on the property owners is larger than it would be if consistent increases were made with a smaller impact to the property owners. Not many changes were made to the general income and expenditure line items. The US Department of Justice line item will see more funding which will be used to show funds seized and returned to town. The Police Pension reimbursement debt to the state has been satisfied and that has freed some money. Money received twice a year from the state from insurance premiums still needs to be used to offset the town's pension debt. Most expense items have stayed the same or have been slightly adjusted to current performance. There is a proposed 3% increase for each employee. For 2018, the profit and loss report will be shown without police grants/aid as those funds are "money in, money out" with the blessing of our auditor. There were no questions for the town manager. Mayor Spencer made a motion to accept the first reading; Commissioner Joseph seconded. Roll call vote - all ayes.

Mayor Spencer made a motion to adjourn for an executive session to discuss litigation at 7:49 pm.

Commission returned to regular session at 7:57 pm.

Mayor Spencer made a motion to adjourn; Vice Mayor Joswick seconded.

Meeting adjourned at 7:57 pm.