

Newport Town Council  
Meeting Minutes  
January 16, 2020

Pledge of Allegiance.

Meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by Mayor Michael Spencer and he announced that the meeting was in compliance with the Delaware Open Meeting Act.

Attendance: Mayor Michael Spencer, Town Manager Wendy King, Police Chief Mark Wohner, Vice Mayor John Joswick, Commissioner CarolAnn Gretz, Commissioner Flo Czerwinski and Solicitor Chris Griffiths.  
Commissioner Michele MacDonald was absent.

Minutes from the meeting of December 19, 2019, were approved via motion by Vice Mayor Joswick and seconded by Mayor Spencer.

Correspondence: None

Public Comment: Victoria Wollaston, resident, asked Mayor Spencer why she was not appointed to the Board of Adjustment and that she was told that he would interview the candidates. Mayor Spencer thanked her for her interest and advised that he appointed two residents who live in Stonehurst because that part of town is under-represented on council or other committees. He advised Ms. Wollaston that there was an opening on the Election Board and asked if she would be interested in serving. There were some questions about the registration process and working people not being able to get to the municipal building, so it was suggested that the town hold an evening registration at least once before the registration deadline. The question was asked about election hours (12pm to 8pm). Mr. Francis Tusi, business owner, asked if anyone filed (no). Ms. Wollaston asked about the item on New Business that would intend to limit public comment to three minutes per person. Mayor Spencer explained that the intention is to get more in line with how other towns handle public comment. Public comment would also be placed at the end of the meeting after the reports are read so there would be an opportunity for the audience to ask questions about anything that was discussed in a report. He reminded all that during action items, there is public comment so anyone would still be able to ask questions about that action item. He further explained that he nor any other mayor would be burdened with determining what is deemed appropriate. Each person would be allotted three minutes to speak on anything they so choose. There would be guidelines that would prevent the use of foul language, etc., but having this structure in place would remove arbitrary commenting throughout the meeting. Joe Stagliano, resident, thanked the town for the speedbumps - the children are much safer. He asked if there is a "Jake Brake" ordinance in town. (Jake Braking is a mechanism that when activated, opens exhaust valves in the cylinders after the compression stroke, releasing the compressed gas trapped in the cylinders, and slowing the vehicle.) There is no ordinance.

No correspondence.

Town Manager's Report - FOIA request from November, 2019, was fulfilled January 6, 2020. A new FOIA request requesting all employee start dates and starting salaries was received January 13 2020.

Acknowledgement and response is pending, Meeting with Dave Carpenter from NCC Emergency Management regarding their All Hazards Mitigation ordinance update. Two people have registered to vote in town since putting out two newsletters advising of deadlines.

Mayor Spencer asked if there was any chance that town elections could be held on a Saturday to accommodate working residents. Vice Mayor Joswick suggested waiting until after this year's election to pursue a change.

Jeff Sanders, resident, asked about the flea markets held at Peniel Methodist Church. He spoke to a member who confirmed they held a business license but there were taxes involved. Town Manager King confirmed that was not true and explained that the church preferred to pay per event instead of getting an annual license and as a result, discontinued the flea markets.

Mr. Tusi questioned the tax increase and why so much. Mayor Spencer explained that it would cost the residents an average of \$60 or so per household and if the taxes were not increased, the town could not continue to have Waste Management pick up trash and recycling. It was explained that WM is charging more than double what it had been and it made more sense to raise taxes than to have every resident secure their own means of trash removal at around \$380 a year. Mr. Tusi did not agree as the town does not cover trash removal for businesses and wanted to know what he was getting for his money. There was additional discussion on both sides.

Police Chief's Report - December, 2019, statistics and annual statistics were provided.

Mr. Frank Walker, code enforcement/resident, asked about borrowing a traffic counter to move to different locations to determine volume for better disbursement of the officers. Mayor Spencer said he would contact Gene Donaldson. Chief Wohnner states that traffic volume was only one aspect of deployment and that complaints will also determine where people are sent.

Alderman's Report - \$31, 261 in fines collected in December.

Maintenance Report - The cannon was painted free of charge by Mike Cassidy, the chairs at the meeting table are being repaired. OSHA training was attended by both Bob and Joe, flagger certification is upcoming.

Code Enforcement - 110 S. Mary is for sale and needs to be accessible so businesses were notified they were not able to park in middle of the street. The contractor who was staging equipment across from the Old Town Hall was contacted to remove the equipment and fix the damage. There were signs that belong to DelDOT that need to be removed by them. There was discussion about the house at 309 Justis and the vacant house next door that belongs to Harvey Hanna.

Solicitor's Report - FOIA request, employment issue, legal memorandum, two resolutions regarding gift giving, and public comment guidelines, FOIA from ACLU regarding procedures dealing with ICE, board of adjustment training.

Commissioners - nothing

Mayor Spencer commented that he often gets requests to be refugee town or assist ICE and have gotten a request from Erin Goldner that would establish Newport as a rehab headquarters. While causes and intentions are good, the town prefers to stay neutral. If he thinks it warrants merit, he will bring it to the board.

New Business - Mayor Spencer would like to table the public comment and gifts resolutions.

Old Business - Ordinance 2019-003 - to increase the tax rate and adopt the operating budget. Tax rate raised from \$1.071 to \$1.231 per \$100 of assessed value. Commissioner Gretz asked where prominent places were in

town that the budget was posted. The town has three places in which items are posted - online, at the municipal building and the bulletin board at the old town hall. Public comment was opened and closed as there were no questions. Mayor Spencer made a motion to adopt; Vice Mayor Joswick seconded. Roll call vote - all ayes.

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

Meeting adjourned at 7:57 pm.