

Regular Meeting of the Mayor and Commissioners
Town of Newport
April 21, 2022

Pledge of Allegiance.

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

Attendance: Mayor Michele MacDonald, Vice Mayor Michael Spencer, Commissioner Stephanie Banks, Commissioner John Joswick. Commissioner Michael Capriglione was absent. Also in attendance were Chief Mark Wohner, Solicitor N. Christopher Griffiths, Town Manager Wendy King.

Minutes from the regular meeting of March 17, 2022, will remain in draft form as there was no majority of commissioners in attendance and two additional commissioners were not re-elected.

Town Manager's Report – First reading of the civil marijuana cases being heard in Court 42 will be tabled upon recommendation from Chief Wohner. Our engineer toured the proposed swale locations and will forward her recommendations to us. Annual MS4 Stormwater report was prepared to be submitted by May 15, 2022. The first annual ARPA treasury report is due April 30, 2022. Fee schedule discussion with the building inspector. Safety meeting with Strategic Insurance Partners. Worker's Compensation premium rebate in the amount of \$13,290 will be used to offset annual premium. Healthcare premiums will be increased July 1. Thank you to the pollworkers and Election Board members for a successful election. Mayor MacDonald asked if there was anything they needed to know regarding the safety meeting. It was just a standard meeting to review things that could assist in making procedures and processes safer and SIP shared many online resources available to the town free of charge to help establish procedures if none currently exist.

Police Chief's Report – Departmental statistics for March, 2022. Every officer but one was qualified on their new patrol rifles. The rifles, in addition to lockboxes in every SUV to secure the weapons, were acquired through a grant. Another grant was received through EIDE to install a 75-inch monitor/computer system in the conference room to do briefings or town-held meetings with presentations. With that grant, they will get four pistol shields to protect you from an armed assailant. Once acquired, he will reach out to probably Newark PD for a course in proper use. State accreditation certificate is hanging in the lobby of the municipal building.

Alderman's Report - \$33,132 in fines/costs for March, 2022.

Maintenance Report – No questions.

Solicitor's Report – He took a few calls regarding the town's election. FOIA issue. One outstanding litigation.

Commissioners: Vice Mayor Spencer suggested to the commissioners to begin reviewing the charter with any revisions so we can be ready by January, 2023. There are about eight to ten items that for certain need to be updated. The state is still in budget so it gives commissioners a good amount of time to review. Commissioner Joswick would like to see community events being brought back like Trunk or Treat and something for Christmas. Mayor MacDonald

agrees as she has some ideas about some events and utilizing the newsletter for people who don't actually come to meetings. She remembers the Easter egg hunts, and Santa being at the Old Town Hall and it was neat because you got to meet people you may not have met before. Christmas lights contest and putting flags out at Memorial Day. Reestablishing the Community Fund. Commissioner Banks wanted to know if there were any grants out there that could help spruce up Ella Johnson Park for the kids between the broken equipment and rocks. Town Manager King explained that it was not intended to be a playground for children, but a walking park/passive exercise for adults. Some of the bolts on that equipment were just re-soldered. The town was not interested in establishing a playground for children because of the liability and the insurance premiums being increased for having it. Commissioner Banks said that the track is in need of fixing. Vice Mayor Spencer said that Senator Mantzavinos was dedicated to assisting the town and Senator Walsh, also, since that is in his area. Mayor MacDonald advised that Senator Mantzavinos applied for \$30,000 in the bond bill for the boat ramp and to get electrical work done. She went down there with Bob Harvey and she saw how flooded it was. While it is not a guarantee we will get that money, it would be helpful.

Chief Wohner advised that Saturday, April 30, 2022, was DEA Takeback Day for drugs at the police station. He said hours were from 12-4 and that it would be advertised on their Facebook page and posted on the door. "Sharps" will also be collected. Chief Wohner said that next year, it will probably take place at the Old Town Hall because it is easily accessible and people may not even be aware of it happening.

Mayor MacDonald said that the Delaware League of Local Government dinner is coming up on April 28, 2022 at Maple Dale Country Club from 5:30 to 8:00 pm. Lt. Bethany Hall-Long is speaking. Any commissioner can go. It's the 4th Thursday of every month. There is an upcoming meeting for the Future Trails of Northern Delaware Coalition. Mayor MacDonald was glad to see the topics about community involvement come up because that is what is important to her as well. There were only 49 voters and she would like to see more involvement. Her plan is to visit local businesses to get an understanding of what they do and get out in residential area to see what the residents want or is everything ok? One question she has in her head is asking if the community felt that yard waste was important enough for the added expense to them as the town could not cover that cost. Vice Mayor Spencer said it was looked into four years ago in the maintenance yard and it was not feasible. He said Waste Management was amenable to it. Town Manager King said they still were willing to consider it, but yard waste haul is not something they even offer to their regular residential customers. They would probably charge a premium. There is nothing preventing us from obtaining cost estimates from other haulers. Vice Mayor Spencer noted that during the election, Commissioner Banks walked the community quite a bit and it would not a bad idea to have two commissioners walking together because there is a fracture and part of our community does not feel like part of the community and if it is a matter of knocking on the door and asking what it is they need. He has been doing this 27 years and knows that he cannot make everyone happy. Mayor MacDonald commented that they need to know what people want because if no one comes to meetings and only 49 people vote, we don't know what people want.

Public Comment: George Czerwinski, husband of late Commissioner Florence Czerwinski. He said how proud she was to be a commissioner and she would be proud of the current commissioners. He thanked Chief Wohner for escorting her body from the church and for putting the flag down at our building. Bill Lower, Harvey Hanna & Associates, congratulated the new commissioners and thanked Town Manager King for coordinating the election. He wanted contact information for them so Harvey Hanna could reach out to the commissioners for different events occurring.

Kevin Haigh, Augustine Street, said that the community fund monies were mainly spent on community assistance – rent, utility bills. They were involved with the Community Action Program in Richardson Park to ensure that recipients were not going to multiple sources for funding. They did the Easter Egg Hunt at Richey School, Christmas at the Old Town Hall and assisting individual students at the school. He spoke on the liability insurance and said that the company at the time did not charge anything extra for equipment because kids jumping off the gun-mount was just as dangerous as a kid playing on playground equipment. He gave some background on Ella Johnson Park. People don't utilize that park maybe as much as the town initially thought. There is still some funding in the community fund. He again offered that the community fund was basically established for community assistance and he had received a few requests over the years that did not fit that criteria and that the community fund is separate from the town. Town Manager King asked who decided how the funds were used and there were committee members deciding. She said since it is a separate entity from the town, who was going to sit on the committee. Mr. Haigh said the town appointed members and that it was an official 501c. Both Vice Mayor Spencer and Town Manager King said it was never a 501c. Mr. Haigh said that a lawyer was paid money each year to do that and because it was not done, could no longer raise money as those who donated could not write off their donations.

Mayor MacDonald commented on the Richey playground and how nice it was. What else can we do and she is open to ideas. There was a book written about Newport and wouldn't it be neat to maybe put some of the content in a newsletter.

Motion to adjourn was made by Vice Mayor Spencer and seconded by Commissioner Joswick.

Meeting adjourned at 7:30 pm.