

Town of Newport  
Special Meeting of the Mayor and Commissioners  
June 4, 2024

Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Stephanie Banks 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 Stephanie Banks, Vice Mayor Michele MacDonald, Commissioner Michael Capriglione, Commissioner Tim Chatburn, Commissioner Lisa Spencer, Town Manager Wendy King.

The meeting was being held to discuss Senate Bill 298 in relation to the Charter amendment removing the absentee voting provision. SB 298 was heard on May 22, 2024, and Town Manager King was in attendance via Zoom.

There were questions as to why we wanted to take it out, so it was expressed to the Senate that the provision was never exercised and that during Covid, we held an in-person election with a better turnout than the 2024 election where 35 ballots were processed. Senator Lochman said that other administrations may want to take advantage of absentee balloting and that it was convenient for her to vote while pregnant. She appreciated our efforts to get people registered to vote. Overall, the sentiment was it was preferable to leave it in our Charter as it presently reads.

Commissioner Capriglione believes absentee ballots should be allowed and there was so much information and potential for error as far as our process was concerned – who would tabulate? There was discussion about the process of allowing absentee voting and how would a person get it. The town manager starts preparing for the election in January of that election year, so council would need to make a motion to allow absentee voting at the January meeting so ballots can be ordered. The Department of Elections is available to answer our questions. There was more discussion about the mechanics of how to allow it and while valid, there is plenty of time to figure out the process, but the purpose of the meeting is to vote to keep the provision in the Charter.

Commissioner Capriglione made a motion to withdraw our amendment request to remove the absentee voting provision in our proposed Charter amendment and keep it in the Charter as it presently reads. Vice Mayor MacDonald seconded. Kevin Haigh, resident, had a question about the handling of military personnel. The person has to sign it and attach a copy of their ID to confirm identity. Susan Janvier, resident, asked how the Charter amendment came to be. There was a series of meetings and the absentee voting had never been utilized so council thought it should be removed. When our amendments were being presented to the Senate, the response was not favorable and it was suggested we reconsider. They meet again on June 11, but we do not meet again until June 20 and that is why we needed a special meeting.

Roll call vote – All Ayes. Motion carried unanimously.

Vice Mayor MacDonald made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Chatburn seconded. All Ayes.

Meeting adjourned at 7:15 pm.