

Town of Newport
Regular Meeting of the Mayor and Commissioners
October 17, 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 Lisa Spencer, Town Manager Wendy King, and Police Chief Mark Wohner. Commissioner Tim Chatburn and Solicitor Max Walton were absent. Solicitor Lisa Hatfield was sitting in for Solicitor Walton.

Minutes from the September 19, 2024, meeting were approved via motion from Commissioner Spencer and seconded by Mayor Banks.

Town Manager's Report – Bid notice for the Ayre Street project was advertised in the News Journal on October 3 and October 9. The bid process is being handled by Remington Vernick Engineers. A non-mandatory pre-bid meeting was held. Fall cleanup is scheduled for October 19, 2024. County Councilman Brandon Toole sent an email about the resident at 217 N. Marshall Street who is having a problem with speeders and cars traveling the wrong way on a one-way and was requesting a speed bump be placed by DelDOT since the town was not going to. He was advised that the resident had not been in contact with me since May and that it was assumed that there was no longer an issue since school was out for the summer and there were no longer baseball games at Conrad's field behind Richey. Chief Wohner placed a traffic data collector at the location and that the data would be brought to council for reconsideration. We are still waiting for word on the energy grant as they extended the timeframe in which projects could be submitted. Mayor Banks provided a letter from Richey PTO requesting assistance in purchasing an adjustable basketball hoop for outside. Highland Elementary just purchased one and Principal Johnson was going to reach out to them asking for details. What they wanted was \$800 so we purchased it for them. Emily Graff has taken on additional duties since the part-time receptionist left. Her salary was increased by \$3.35 per hour and will need a motion by council to approve. The first reading of the FY2025 General Operating budget will be in November. Solicitor Walton confirmed that the zoning changes did not need a separate ordinance for the marijuana cultivation and retail sales and that the changes made with the comprehensive plan would suffice. The industrial park will be the only area in town to allow a marijuana business. There will be a meeting with DelDOT and Bill Lower about the James Street Bridge and some final details about that project. Mayor Banks mentioned how poor the lighting is there and that will be one of the things that will be discussed. Vice Mayor MacDonald asked about the bid period on the Ayre Street project and if it was 30 days. The bids are sealed and will be opened on October 28. Commissioner Capriglione asked about the basketball hoop at the school and if it was going to be replaced. What they wanted is an adjustable hoop for the little kids next to the playground. Vice Mayor MacDonald asked about the funding deadline and we have until June 30, 2025 to use the money. Commissioner Capriglione asked for clarification on Emily's pay increase. Instead of hiring a new person, Emily is doing those tasks since the receptionist left. For audit purposes, the increase should be approved by the commissioners. Commissioner Capriglione made a motion to approve Emily's salary increase by \$3.35 per hour. Vice Mayor MacDonald seconded. All Ayes.

Police Chief's Report – Monthly department statistics for September. Chief Wohner advised that he modified their Violent Crimes grant. He attended Richey School's first PTO meeting and they reward the children with PAWS rewards to purchase items from the PAWS cart that they push around at the end of the marking periods. PAWS rewards are given for good behavior. They wanted donations to fill the PAWS cart. He purchased fidget spinners, water bottles, stress balls, and pencils and have an officer push the cart around so they can interact with the children. The items will have the Newport Police logo on them. He has the information from the data collector regarding N. Marshall Street and reviewed it. One of the complaints was the cars traveling the wrong way down the one-way and there was no way to capture it from the placement of the collector. He would have to place it at the stop sign facing it. A speedbump would not resolve the issue of cars going the wrong way. The 85th percentile speed was 24 mph and the limit is 25 mph. Those cars going over 25 mph equaled 111, so between 9-13 a day. 183 vehicles travel that road per day. 93% of cars are going below the speed limit. Commissioner Capriglione said that what he's noticed as living right there are people going through the stop sign at Highland and Augustine. He does not really see people speeding in the area. The roads are marked as best as they can be. Some places needed to remove their speed bumps because there was not enough space between stop signs. He does not believe there needs to be one there. It could also create an issue for school buses. Chief Wohner applied for a \$15,000 grant for speed and distracted driver enforcement through OHS. He met with DelDOT about the sink hole at S. Walnut Street and a representative from DelDOT emailed him about why they think it's the town's issue citing an agreement when they widened Route 4 saying that they assume everything curb to curb but meaning pavement only. He said that when a catch basin breaks, we are not the ones fixing it; they are. If it gets clogged, DelDOT is going down the manhole. Salary study discussion. Lewes just got a new contract where the recruits start at \$75,000 and other things that are unrealistic. Commissioner Capriglione said that while we cannot compete with the state, we should be able to be somewhat competitive to towns our size but we have to figure out how to pay for it. There was more generalized discussion about retention. Chief Wohner explained how he arrived at the figures he put together and reinstating holiday pay. Vice Mayor MacDonald asked if we were on par as far as employee contributions to health care. We discussed trash and the possibility of eliminating that. No one wants to discuss taxes but the town is always on a shoestring budget and if one thing goes awry, we are in trouble. There are going to be some hard discussions. Chief Wohner included the marijuana application process in his packet in case anyone was curious. There will be a lottery on 10/24. Commissioner Capriglione asked if it was the same process as obtaining a liquor license and it is not. We determined that a marijuana business could locate in the industrial park.

Alderman's Report – Court collections – \$21,834 for September, 2024.

Maintenance Reports – Submitted with no questions. There was no code report.

Town Solicitor's Report – Solicitor Walton was working on the agreement with Harvey Hanna and the edits were completed. The agreement was for prepayment of permit fees in lieu of construction for this year and next year. Vice Mayor MacDonald asked if they agreed to it yet and said it was the right thing for them to do.

Commissioners – Commissioner Capriglione commented on the clothes bin at Richey School and seeing if it could possibly be moved to a place more visible.

Mayor's Report – She attended the Delaware Greenways event. They were talking about the bike path and everything is in the works for that.

Public Comment – Faye from Roberts Motors needed to know what was needed to locate at the Lindale Motors building and plan to only sell maybe five cars a year, one or two at a time. They need a zoning letter for the DMV.

There was a complaint made about 307 Stonehurst Drive and the amount of cars being parked outside and the suspicion of more than one family living there. The town does not really have a say about that, especially in this economy. Many cultures are multi-generational households.

Sam's Kids is having Operation Warm on 11/22/2024 starting at 5:30 at the lot across from the tavern. You can camp in person or online.

Commissioner Capriglione made a motion to go into Executive Session at 7:50 pm to discuss a personnel matter. Vice Mayor MacDonald seconded.

Mayor Banks made a motion to go back into Regular Session at 7:57 pm. Commissioner Capriglione seconded. There was nothing to vote on, just a discussion.

Vice Mayor MacDonald made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Spencer seconded.

Meeting adjourned at 7:58 pm.