

Town of Newport
Regular Meeting of the Mayor and Commissioners
May 15, 2025

Pledge of Allegiance.

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

Attendance: Vice Mayor Tim Chatburn, Commissioner Michele MacDonald, Commissioner Lisa Spencer, Town Manager Wendy King, Police Chief Mark Wohner, Solicitor Lisa Hatfield. Mayor Stephanie Banks, Commissioner Michael Capriglione and Solicitor Max Walton were absent.

Minutes from Reorganization Meeting and the Regular Meeting of April 17, 2025, were accepted via motion from Commissioner MacDonald and seconded by Commissioner Spencer. All Ayes.

Town Manager's Report – Payroll budget lines are overbudget because there were three pays in April. ARPA annual report was submitted, and the remaining funds were obligated to the bridge lighting and some smaller expenses. Attended the New Castle County Chamber of Commerce dinner as the guest of Harvey Hanna and Associates. There are 19 parcels in town that are appealing their assessments and have until mid-June to submit independent assessments to New Castle County. According to County Executive Henry's budget address, the tax rates will be 0.2412 per \$100 of assessed value for commercial property and 0.1596 per \$100 of assessed value for residential property. Those rates have not been voted on yet. Delaware Association of Professional Engineers wanted to be sure that the town is making sure building plans submitted to the town are from engineers who are registered with them. The requested extension for the comprehensive plan update was granted so the new due date will be December 18, 2025. A Delaware Code Editor sent over some technical corrections to our amended charter. Those corrections were not content-related but rather grammatical in nature. Ayre Street construction start date is pending and will be reaching out to Masonic Hall to ask about parking. Newport Monitoring Committee meeting will be held on June 12, from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm. Dill Dinkers ribbon cutting ceremony was well-attended. There was some charter amendments of other towns included in the commissioner packets – New Castle City wants to amend their charter to allow taxes to be billed at a different rate for commercial properties; Milford want to amend their charter so that any councilperson owing more than two months of fees to the town then they can be removed from office.

Police Chief's Report – Monthly department statistics for April, 2025. Chief Wohner provided copies of two bills that may impact the town. HB58 got voted out of committee. He was in attendance to oppose the bill. It will inhibit the abilities of the police techniques to identify someone. It will disallow asking for social security numbers, or about a person's immigration status. Asking for someone's social security number can be used when someone is trying to pass themselves off as another person, like a sibling, and confirming social security number can be proof positive. It will no longer be allowed to be used as an investigative tool. Solicitor Hatfield said there were sections, particularly #2, that were muddy and asked if it was part of the representatives' conversation. Sections 7/8 were of concern. A lot of the issue appears to be trust and an officer should be trusted to do the right things and not be legislated into a corner with things they cannot do. Chief Wohner brought the issue to the table because it was his intention to write a letter to our legislators, and he wanted to be sure the council was aware and were in support of that. The sponsor of the bill said it was not against law enforcement. It would make more sense as a representative or senator that if there was a concern, to contact the law

enforcement agency in their district to get a dialogue going between the community and police department. When bills like this are introduced and passed, it furthers the people's thoughts that the police are doing something wrong. Vice Mayor Chatburn thought the bill was a complete overreaction from those that think there is a big push on illegal immigrants and that all police departments will become bounty hunters.

Alderman's Report – Court collections – \$21,928 for April, 2025.

HB132 got voted out of committee yesterday and deals with fees. This bill will eliminate Court Security, Victims' Rights and Video Phone. Those fees would be absorbed by the state's general fund. Solicitor Hatfield said that she has been discussing this as the Alderman for Court 40. The bill says, "all state courts" and she wanted to know what our code said. Chief Wohner said that we adopted Title 21 in its entirety. She said we could write an ordinance that establishes a court security fee for Newport. HB133 deals with fines and fees. If a defendant appears before a judge, their fine could be waived if declared indigent by a judge. The charge still appears on their record, but they won't have to pay the fine. They are anticipating losing 60% of fines collected in previous years. There was some discussion of what the interest of justice would be.

Maintenance Reports – Submitted with separate code enforcement report.

Town Solicitor's Report – No report.

Commissioners – Commissioner MacDonald complimented the flowers outside the Old Town Hall.

Public Comment – Jordan Seemans, Harvey Hanna and Associates, had some exciting redevelopment updates. An architectural firm/urban planner, Barton Partners, has been hired and will be putting together an initial site plan analysis. The intent is for them to come to a meeting, possibly in September. This redevelopment is important to the company, and they discuss it weekly. There are other important components like bringing back the rail stop. The delays in the studies are probably due to the change in administration but they are doing everything they can to keep DTC focused on the studies and getting Amtrak and Septa onboard. Another goal is making Newport a Downtown Development District. There was discussion about the process. Commissioner MacDonald asked if Rick Ferrell's narrative for our DDD application was still viable because we would be the ones to submit the application if/when the process opens. Vice Mayor Chatburn asked if Harvey Hanna was familiar with Barton Partners and if they had done anything in Delaware. They did the redevelopment on 202, The Concord, where Taverna is located.

There was no New Business.

There was no Old Business.

Chief Wohner mentioned that he took two members of the PAC committee to the accreditation presentation. It gave them an opportunity to view how the process works.

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

Meeting adjourned at 7:38 pm.

