

Town of Newport
Regular Meeting of the Mayor and Commissioners
June 19, 2025

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 Tim Chatburn, Commissioner Michael Capriglione, Commissioner Michele MacDonald, Commissioner Lisa Spencer, Town Manager Wendy King, Police Chief Mark Wohner, Solicitor Lisa Hatfield. Solicitor Max Walton was absent.

Minutes from the Regular Meeting of May 15, 2025, were accepted via motion from Commissioner MacDonald and seconded by Commissioner Spencer. All Ayes.

Town Manager's Report – Letter to John Sisson, Delaware Transit Corporation, from our elected officials in support of a rail stop, open letter from Delaware Association of Chiefs of Police that describe the legislation that Chief Wohner discussed at last month's meeting and to reaffirm that the work of HB205 and HB206, and reaction from Delaware League of Local Government regarding home rule challenges and importance of leaving local zoning decisions to municipalities were contained in the commissioners' packets. Ordinance 2025-002 will be introduced to establish a court security fee for Court 42. Residents may park in the Masonic Hall parking lot for the duration of the project. E. Ayre Street construction will begin after the July 4 holiday. The tree stump removal at the DeRose residence was priced too high by the contractor and a private landscaper will be looked into. The contractor also wanted to run a camera underground but the engineers thought the change order was too expensive. It would be reconsidered on an "as needed" basis. DelDOT states that new service needs to be applied for regarding the bridge lights. Mumford and Miller will be completing the connection between the utility meter and junction box and Badger Electric will order and install the poles. Remington Vernick addressed the comments made regarding the Comprehensive Plan and will be distributed to the working group when they are reviewed. Newport Monitoring Committee public workshop was held on 6/12/2025. There were not many updates and a few items were yet to be addressed. Our scheduled recess will take place in July and August. Commissioner MacDonald wanted to be sure the building would be open for tax payments during the town manager's vacation.

Police Chief's Report - Monthly department statistics for May, 2025. There was a robbery at 7-11. It occurred on a Monday and an apprehension was made the following Saturday. As a result, more research was done on the cost of license plate readers and what grant could be used to pay for it because this was the third incident where the suspect entered the 141 on-ramp. That would be the best place for us to put a license plate reader to assist the department.

Alderman's Report - \$22,565 in court fines collected in May, 2025.

Solicitor's Report - Solicitor Hatfield wanted to talk about the ordinance for tonight and that it is the hope that it protects the court security fee. As the bill is written, it is for state courts only but should the legislation change or make amendments, we may need to revisit that.

Maintenance - Mayor Banks asked if the bathtub was still on Augustine Street. It was removed a while ago.

Commissioners - Commissioner MacDonald commented that the budget line item over 500% was reimbursed. Vice Mayor Chatburn asked if there was any possibility that the lights on the bridge be solar or be included in the solar package for the municipal building. Chief Wohner said that it

would need to be approved by DelDOT and that he had not seen a solar light on a state roadway. Mayor Banks brought up the fallen tarp that was put up to give privacy to the residents. They also put up motion sensor lights on the building and brightly shining in everyone's windows. She wanted to know if they could be angled a different way. Chief Wohner said it could be brought to his attention. Mayor Banks said it was noticeably quiet but there is still a woman driving a company vehicle speeding and talking on her phone. Commissioner MacDonald commented that it was nice of the Masonic Hall to allow the residents to park in their lot. She wanted to know if all went through to have them considered exempt from property taxes and the exemption is in place. Packets will be delivered to the commissioners during the recess.

No Public Comment.

New Business - Introduction and First Reading of Ordinance 2025-002 - An Ordinance Establishing a Court Security Fee for Alderman Court 42 in the Town of Newport to Ensure Sustainable Operation of the Court and the Preservation of Security Services. Commissioner Capriglione asked why this was necessary since a court security fee was established long ago. Solicitor Hatfield said that it is in place since we follow the state code and the state is seeking to eliminate it. The town does not have its own separate ordinance. The way the bill reads currently is that this will only affect state courts but they decide to amend it to include all courts. Commissioner Capriglione said we have a charter and should be able to run the town as we see fit. Solicitor Hatfield said there may not be a need to do a second reading if nothing happens at the state level but the fine structure could also be looked at. Commissioner Capriglione believed that violations should have consequences. Solicitor Hatfield said that these bills were looking at indigency. It was appropriate to have a first reading since we will be in recess the next two months and the legislature needs to act prior to June 30 one way or another. Even if it does not happen this session, it may come up next year so we will be poised to do our second reading in September upon council's return. There was discussion about the rationale of no consequences. The state will lose 60% of its court revenue in fines they won't collect. The court spends too much time chasing money not paid but there must be a hearing to determine indigency so it will not alleviate the time spent by the court. Criteria would be anyone collecting any form of assistance. There were multiple conversations occurring at the same time. It all began years ago with no longer flagging driver's licenses for suspension because of people's lack of ability to pay. You can still get a flag for failure to appear, but not failure to pay. Commissioner Capriglione made a motion to accept the introduction and first reading of Ordinance 2025-002 by title. Commissioner MacDonald seconded. All Ayes.

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

Meeting was adjourned at 7:22 pm.