

Town of Newport  
Regular Meeting of the Mayor and Commissioners  
November 20, 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: 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 Tanner Jameson.

Minutes from the October 16, 2025 meeting, were approved by motion by Commissioner Capriglione and seconded by Commissioner MacDonald. All Ayes.

Town Manager's Report – The Sam's Kids Campout for Coats was held on Saturday, November 1. It was well-attended. The pickleball event at Dill Dinkers was successful. Johnny Pickles, pickleball influencer, played single pickleball matches for 24 consecutive hours and raised over \$11,000 for the Food Bank of Delaware. The purchase order format was given to me by DNREC to begin drawing on the first half of the awarded energy grant to the solar project can begin. The introduction and first reading of the FY2026 General Operating Budget will be presented. The town's new property tax rate based on the county's new assessments has been calculated. The tax rolls provided by the county were from July, 2025, and do not include any stipulations to those businesses and residents who were appealing their assessment. The calculation to get to zero will be reviewed and discussed in addition to the possibility of adopting a split rate – different rates for residential and commercial properties. A brief Executive Session to discuss a personnel matter is on the agenda.

Police Chief's Report – Department statistics for October, 2025. They participated in Richey School's Trunk-or-Treat which was well-attended.

Alderman's Report – \$21,685 court fines collected for October, 2025.

Maintenance Reports – Reviewed with no questions. Vice Mayor Chatburn confirmed leaf collection would be through first snow or Christmas. Commissioner MacDonald asked what was done with the leaves upon collection. They are chopped up and mulched.

Solicitor's Report – No report.

Commissioners – No questions.

Mayor's Report – No report.

Public Comment – Jordan Seemans, Harvey Hanna & Associates, wanted to thank the commissioners who attended the October 20, 2025, rail study public workshop held at Minquas Fire Company. The next steering committee meeting will most likely be held in the first quarter of 2026. He met with the new community relations representative with Sun Chemical, Dana Thuresson. He was asking about the home on Sun's property – grants, funding, etc. Johnny Pickles played 24 consecutive hours of pickleball at Dill Dinkers to raise money for the Food Bank of Delaware. He raised over \$11,000 dollars. One of

the storage containers behind the old Issacs property was pulled out and donated it to Crestmoor Swim Club.

New Business – Introduction and First Reading of the FY2026 General Operating Budget and Ordinance 2025-003 that adopts a new tax calculation and the adoption of the FY2026 budget. There was an Excel spreadsheet from Chief Wohnner's laptop that was shown on both screens to council and the audience. First was the review of the calculation of a proposed tax rate to bring the new assessments down to a net zero, meaning the town would not be bringing in any additional tax money just from reassessments. Bringing the rate to zero for both residential and commercial property as a single rate is 0.314152935 per \$100 of assessed value. The calculation sheet will be entered into the record. Bringing the rate to zero by splitting the rate, meaning commercial and residential property taxes would be calculated using a different rate for commercial and a different rate for residential would be 0.36841525 per \$100 of assessed value for commercial and 0.19791535 per \$100 of assessed value for residential. The group worksheet was brought up and council and audience were invited to move in closer so they could see the elements of the worksheet. It was also noted that the group worksheet shows that bringing the rates to zero will show increases in tax amount for some properties and some properties will show a decreased tax amount. Solicitor Jameson asked how apartments were being considered. The two larger complexes we have were categorized as commercial. Resident Kevin Haigh asked if the income would be the same with the proposed rate. There were many side conversations while reviewing the Excel spreadsheet. After much discussion, council concluded that it would be beneficial to split the rate. Vice Mayor Chatburn made a motion to split the tax rate for commercial and residential properties for the purpose of bringing the rate to net zero. Mayor Banks seconded the motion. All Ayes. Commissioner Capriglione said that he believed the businesses could absorb what the residents could not and he wanted to make it clear that council would not vote to decrease residential tax burden.. The majority of the tax revenue the town receives comes from commercial properties. When you review the net zero amounts, the commercial properties do not increase. Additionally, the valuations from 1983 show overvalued commercial properties and undervalued residential properties. Chief Wohnner noted that if we have decided to stay at a single rate, all property owners would pay \$.31. Splitting it, commercial will be paying \$.37 and residential will be paying \$.20 and keeping the playing field as it should be. Commissioner Capriglione was saying he was somewhat uncomfortable having a split tax rate but understood the basis behind it in keeping the seniors at a rate that was still realistic for them. Commissioner Capriglione asked how many property owners were appealing their assessments and there were about 16 of them and no one had a resolution as yet. The worksheet was dated July, 2025. He said they are trying to negotiate with people but there are thousands of appeals to go through. Our exemption rate has to change will have to change as it was \$32,000 like the county's. New Castle County changed theirs to \$173,000 so we need to update ours to the same amount. Commissioner Capriglione believed that there should be a surcharge for trash and that people with tax exemptions should not be excluded from paying for trash if that were to ever be implemented. Commissioner MacDonald concurred and said that her current taxes barely cover trash removal. While she does not necessarily want to pay more in taxes, she does want to support the town by paying for police services, snow removal, etc. Vice Mayor Chatburn made a motion to match New Castle County's exemption amount at \$173,000 from \$32,000. Commissioner MacDonald seconded. All ayes.

Review of the Proposed FY2026 General Operating Budget. Proposed income was decreased because of few transfer taxes, prepayment of building permits will cease in 2026. There is a proposed tax increase of \$.27 for residential – the newly voted upon rate is \$.20 and \$.44 for commercial properties – the newly voted upon rate is \$.37. The total net expected is \$158,000. That amount will simply balance the budget – it will not buy us anything additional – no 7<sup>th</sup> officer, no opportunity to put anything away. Commissioner Capriglione asked what the percentage increase was but since rates are now split, we are

dealing in cents and not percentage. There was discussion on how to tell the residents if asked. Doing a calculation shows the increase to be 22.8% but in reality, the property owners are not seeing a 22.8% increase in what they paid versus what they will pay. Commissioner Capriglione said he did not have a problem with the budget. He did take issue with permits not coming in and things we are basing our future on are not happening and people in town have to understand that, too. He said he is keeping our building inspector busy and that it's the fourth permit this year and that he does not understand what is going on and feels once we start to grow, it won't be an issue. Town Manager King said that going forward, taxes cannot be raised by a percentage – it has to be equal. If residential is being raised \$.04 then commercial needs to be raised \$.04. That's how it stays fair. Commissioner Capriglione said the only way we will survive is by growth. It's been very difficult to keep costs down. There are things like the solar panel project happening in 2026 that will help with electricity costs for the municipal building and we have eliminated things like the rug service by buying our rugs and cleaning them ourselves. We bought two water coolers from Home Depot and cut out water delivery and are getting water bottles from True Value. The bottom line is we need growth. Resident Kevin Haigh asked if the county gave us everything on the worksheet or did we have to find it. The county did email the town manager the parcel list for only the town and are categorized by building class (industrial, commercial, residential, etc).

There was no Old Business.

There was a brief Executive Session to discuss a personnel matter. Regular session paused at 7:58 pm.

Regular session resumed at 8:05.

Commissioner MacDonald made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mayor Banks seconded. All Ayes.

Meeting adjourned at 8:05 pm.