

Town of Newport
Regular Meeting of the Mayor and Commissioners
December 18, 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 Tanner Jameson.

Minutes from the November 20, 2025 meeting, were approved by motion from Vice Mayor Chatburn and seconded by Commissioner MacDonald.

Town Manager's Report – Second Reading/Public Hearing/Adoption of Proposed FY2026 budget with Ordinance 2025-003 – An Ordinance to Establish a Property Tax Rate upon Total Reassessment. It is noted that the proposed increase that will bring in an additional \$158,000 to the budget will only balance the budget. The 2024 Comprehensive Plan was submitted to the Office of State Planning and a copy was provided to council in their packets. There will be an Introduction and First Reading of an Ordinance to Adopt the 2024 Comprehensive Plan. Remington & Vernick engineers were out of Ayre Street inspecting the work that the contractor did. There were areas that needed repair – the asphalt was thin in some areas and washed away with the heavy rain we received right after the overlay was poured. There were grading issues and curbing that should have been replaced. The contractor was sent photographs so those items can be addressed. The state extended the reporting deadline until February so these things can be addressed and payments can be made. The maintenance department did a wonderful job clearing our roads after the first snow and we received complimentary phone calls. A company called Ampion contacted the town to see if there would be interest in a community solar program. Holiday break schedule.

Commissioner Capriglione said that the contractor did a terrible job on E. Ayre Street. There are potholes opening up on the right side and where it was seamed, water is already going through. He asked if our maintenance department was there overseeing the job to be sure it was as specified but a Remington person was onsite each working day. He said there was barely a $\frac{1}{4}$ of asphalt in some places. It comes down to the fact that we had no idea what was going on underneath the surface and neither did the contractor. We did not realize it would nearly double the contract because of the concrete encasements. There was conversation around what will need to happen in the future, the amount of time before a full-out reconstruction takes place and the amount of money it will cost to rehabilitate E. Ayre Street.

Police Chief's Report – Monthly department statistics for November, 2025. The part-time officer has requested to come back full-time but it does not address the 7th officer.

Alderman's Report - \$19,076 court fines collected in November, 2025.

Maintenance Reports – Submitted with no questions or comments.

Code Enforcement report submitted with no questions or comments.

Solicitor's Report – Nothing to report.

Commissioners – No comments.

Mayor – No comments.

Public Comment – Jordan Seemans, Harvey Hanna & Associates, thanked the town manager and Remington Vernick for their support in getting the comprehensive plan to the State Planning office and is looking forward to the state's feedback. He also thanked the town manager for her quick response to the company's questions regarding the tax rate. There are new signs that the company placed around town at the corner of James and Justis and the other in the empty lot across from the James Street Tavern. The message of those signs show the company's commitment to the town and that things are getting closer. Commissioner Capriglione and his son liked the wording on the sign. The company is really excited about what's to come.

Town Manager King asked council if anyone had questions about the community solar program and partnering with Ampion. Commissioner MacDonald was not clear on some of wording about no cost versus operational costs. It sounds too good to be true. Vice Mayor Chatburn said it was a marketing ploy and he had no interest in that.

Old Business – FY2026 General Operating Budget and Ordinance 2025-003 An Ordinance to Establish a Property Tax Rate upon Total Reassessment. There was one adjustment made to the Transfer Tax line – the \$20,000 originally removed was put back in on the Income side and added to the Police Salary line on the Expense side making the total income and expenses to equal \$1,730,500. Town Manager King emphasized again that while the budget is balanced, that additional money is not "buying" us anything. The \$158,000 is replacing the income that did not come in Other Income, court income, and the Permits line item because the prepayment commitment from Harvey Hanna will not continue in 2026. The surcharge for trash removal was not discussed by council to consider adding it to this budget. A worksheet was presented that showed what adding additional cents to the increase and what that would net. Commissioner Capriglione said he thought the \$.07 was what we were going with. Commissioner MacDonald said it was a thought. She said she doesn't necessarily want to further increase taxes but what we were doing here was balancing the budget. Town Manager King said there is no opportunity to save anything or to pay the salary of a 7th officer. She pointed out that the town's budget has not supported the purchase of a police vehicle in several years and that the vehicles purchased have been with task force money. She said if council was not looking to add an additional \$.01, \$.02 or \$.03 cents to the increase, the budget can be passed as written. Commissioner Capriglione said that it would not make a difference while waiting for redevelopment to occur and he was comfortable having a balanced budget. There was discussion about the change and the fact that the \$.07 was agreed to last month and nothing else was considered. Chief Wohner said that it came about because after last month's budget introduction, the 7th officer was not considered after the prior month receiving verbal support from council so he and Town Manager King added those figures. The pretext was last year, the police department agreed to work at 6 officers to give them some relief against the salary disparities between us and other agencies. His concern is that the officer who is in the military will most likely be deployed for an extended period of time. Commissioner Capriglione asked if he gets paid for his military leave and he does not but there is no one to fill the spot and what happens when the officer on leave returns? Commissioner Spencer asked if the \$.03 was given, could someone do it part-time? It could be looked at, but finding someone may be somewhat a challenge unless it was a retired person. It's difficult even finding a full-time person. Commissioner Capriglione said he feels comfortable with the budget the way it is and he suggested starting on the budget in September so

there will be more time to have these discussions. Commissioner MacDonald asked if the additional cents could be considered midway through year but the charter does not allow that. The trash removal is contracted for the next two years but an assessment can be added and it should be an equal assessment for everyone. People who are exempt for tax payments should be included if an assessment were to happen. Commissioner Capriglione said he thought the 7th officer was included in the final budget number and it was clarified that if income was not removed from last year (Other, Permits) than the increase would have covered it. Since those items were lowered, the increase simply replaces what was lost. Mayor Banks opened the public hearing for questions or comments. There were no questions or comments so the public hearing was closed. Commissioner Capriglione made a motion to adopt FY2026 General Operating budget. Vice Mayor Chatburn seconded the motion. All Ayes.

New Business – Introduction and First Reading of 2025-004 An Ordinance to Adopt the 2024 Newport Comprehensive Plan. Town Manager King said the Comprehensive Plan was submitted to PLUS in the spring and State agencies responded with comments that needed to be addressed. The comments were addressed and resubmitted to the Office of State Planning. There was an ordinance done but because of the many comments, a new ordinance needed to be passed. A copy of the plan and the letter from Remington Vernick addressing the comments were included in the commissioner packets.

Commissioner Capriglione and Vice Mayor Chatburn are on the committee so they are familiar with the context of the changes and it gives the rest of council a month to review the plan. Commissioner Capriglione thanked Mr. Lower, Mr. Seemans and Harvey Hanna and Associates for their assistance in the process because it is overwhelming for small towns because of the requirements that have to be met. Jordan Seemans from Harvey Hanna and Associates said he has seen other plans and DNREC's questions or requirements are not unique to Newport – they ask the same questions and expect towns to recognize their natural resources. There were general comments made about the expectations from the state because we don't have resident experts on most things they are asking for. Commissioner Spencer asked if the town's history could be put in the newsletter because it was interesting. The plan goes on the website so the history is there. Commissioner Capriglione said he sent the town manager pictures of the old train station in town. He knows someone who collects train memorabilia and the pictures were Christmas cards.

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

Meeting adjourned at 7:50 pm.