

Below is the weekly report for the week ending today, February 23, 2024.

Items for Newsletters:

1. **CSX Crossing Improvements (Road Closures):** **The City will post this information and detour plans through the City's website and official social media accounts**
CSX, DelDOT, and Public Works have been working to coordinate planned track improvement in the city that will result in multi-day road closures of North College Avenue, New London Road, and West Main Street. The work involves tie replacements at these three railroad crossings including paving improvements at the New London Ave/West Main Street railroad crossings adjacent to Deer Park. Historically, the tracks near Deer Park Tavern have been a site of incidents where vehicles have errantly turned on to the tracks and become trapped due to the abrupt grade change between the tracks and travel lanes. The planned work includes filling the area adjacent to the track with asphalt at New London Road and West Main Street, which will decrease the likelihood of a vehicle being trapped on the tracks requiring the assistance of Newark Police or AETNA to avoid a collision with an oncoming train. This is an improvement that has been long awaited and will significantly improve safety at this location. CSX will be running trains during the closures to maintain a required level of service, but the exact schedule is currently unknown. The referenced closures are weather dependent and are tentatively scheduled as follows:

North College Avenue – 3/3/2024 (3-4 day duration)

New London Road and West Main Street – 3/11/2024 (3-4 day duration)

This work will not be without some disruption to traffic due to the road closures and required pedestrian detours. The approved detour plans are attached for your reference. We have been coordinating with the University regarding the impact on students during the North College Avenue closure specifically. Pedestrians will not be allowed to use the N. College Avenue crossing during the closure. It should be noted that there may be some pedestrians who are reluctant to follow the detour and instead take their chances crossing the tracks in other locations along the rail line. We are working with the University to implement creative measures to dissuade this kind of risky pedestrian crossing to the extent practicable.

2. **Free Water for a Year initiative:** There are 2 more chances to win \$1000 worth of free water for anyone who completes a survey before June 2024. Newark Water customers are encouraged to complete the online survey at this link: <https://newarkde.gov/lead> to enter a sweepstakes for free water for a year, up to \$1000 value! The data we collect will help complete a required inventory of service lines and reduce operating costs for the water utility.

3. **Yard Waste Collection – Winter Schedule ending March 6:** City-wide Yard Waste Collection is currently available by appointment only with regular weekly collection resuming on March 6. Residents may call Public Works to schedule a yard waste collection until March 6. Pickups will be scheduled for Wednesdays during weeks without a City Holiday.
4. **City newsletter:** To sign up for the City's email newsletter, [click here](#).

Public Works

1. **Water Tank Painting:** The City will have a contractor in town to paint three of our water storage tanks beginning in March. The tanks include New London Tank, Arbour Park Tank, and Louviers Tank. We do not anticipate any traffic disruptions and notifications will be posted to any residents that may be affected. The work will start at New London Tank, which will last until early June. A revised schedule will be provided as New London gets closer to completion. Lead is present at the Arbour Park Tank and a special permit through DNREC has been issued and requires additional sampling, monitoring, and notifications as we remove the lead and repaint the tank in a lead-free coating.

Police

1. **Black History Month:** On Sunday, February 18, 2024, at the invitation of Dr. Freeman Williams, Chief Farrall attended a concert at the Newark United Methodist Church in recognition of Black History Month. The concert, sponsored by the Newark NAACP and the Newark Partnership, celebrated the music of Florence Price (1887-1953), the first African American woman composer to have her symphony performed by a major American orchestra. The event was extremely well attended.
2. **Public Outreach:** On Thursday, February 22, 2024, Chief Farrall was invited to conduct a "meet and greet" with residents at The Vero, senior living facility. Chief Farrall enjoyed a nice discussion about policing and the Newark Police Department with the attendees. Also, on Sunday, February 25, 2024, Sgt. Conover will attend the Arbour Park Civic Association meeting.
3. **St. Patrick's Day:** The department is in the final stages of preparation for the upcoming St. Patrick's Day weekend. This weekend typically sees a large increase in calls for service related to order maintenance issues. Additional police resources as well as Code Enforcement, Fire Protection and DATE will be on hand that weekend.
4. **Police Promotional Testing:** NPD has finalized the upcoming police promotional testing. Eligible applicants will test for Master Corporal and Sergeant on April 20, 2024.

Parks and Recreation

1. **Recreation:** Staff are preparing for the Before School/After School Care State License renewal inspection that will be taking place at our West Park and Downes Elementary School programs. We are also in the process of organizing our Summer Camp Guide that will include all our summer camps and activities. The Camp Guide will be delivered to our email list of over 15,000 on Monday, March 18.
2. **Maintenance:** Parks maintenance staff continue to work on the baseball and softball fields preparing them for the season that begins on Monday. They also continue to clear fallen trees from the Redd Park and Christina Valley Stream Conservation area trails.
3. **Capital Projects:** Director Spadafino met with JMT Engineering in reference to the design work for Dickey Park, George Read Park Walking and Jogging trail and Old Paper Mill Road Park projects.

Planning and Development

1. **Land Use:**
 - a. The Planning and Development Department held two “Coffee Break” virtual public meetings to discuss affordable housing and Inclusionary Zoning with residents on February 13 and 15 with another scheduled for February 23. Approximately 35 unique non-staff attendees participated in the first two events. Staff are working to finalize an additional slate of events – both virtual and in-person – for the month of March.
 - b. Staff issued the Subdivision Advisory Committee comment letter for the administrative subdivision for the consolidation of three parcels into one for the Newark Free Library at [750 Library Avenue](#) on February 14.
 - c. Staff issued the Subdivision Advisory Committee comment letter for the Comprehensive Development Plan amendment, rezoning and minor subdivision with site plan approval for the proposed three five-bedroom townhouse-style apartments located at [55 Benny Street](#) on February 20. This project is tentatively scheduled for the March 5 Planning Commission agenda.
 - d. Staff participated in Tyler Enterprise Permitting and Licensing sessions on February 21 and 22 and a status call on February 23. The Department currently is exploring the possibility of expanding the number of processes that would be configured by Tyler instead of staff doing the configuration in order to free up staff bandwidth to work on additional Council priorities.
 - e. Staff attended the February 12 Council meeting where Council unanimously approved the Comprehensive Development Plan amendment, rezoning and major subdivision by site plan approval for the five-story mixed use building with 52 senior apartments and five four-unit garden apartment buildings for a total of 72 affordable housing units at the Newark Housing Authority property located at 313 East Main Street.
 - f. The Conservation Advisory Commission postponed their discussion on what role CAC wants in the development process from the February 13 meeting to the March 12 meeting. Director Bensley will be attending the meeting to provide information and feedback.
 - g. The Division has posted the [vacant Planner I position](#) with a closing date of March 8.

2. Code Enforcement:

- a. Staff received a revised engineer's report for the Red Roof Inn describing required structural repairs. Some repairs are required prior to re-occupancy of the damaged portion of the building. The owners will be pulling permits and completing these prior to the City lifting the condemnation on the affected units.
- b. Fire Protection Specialists have been working to complete business fire inspections that are past due and are finding significant deficiencies in numerous businesses due to the length of time since the previous inspections. Staff are working with the business owners to get necessary repairs completed to bring them up to Code and are tracking the number of businesses where deficiencies are found and corrected to have the data to provide to Council during the FY2025 budget process. Through these inspections, staff are also identifying unlicensed businesses and obtaining updated contact information for business license billing.
- c. Code Enforcement Officers began reviewing expired permits to see if work has been completed on unissued permits. Once determined, letters of expiration will be sent to work not completed and notices of violation will be issued for work performed without obtaining permits.
- d. Significant permits issued over the last two weeks are:
 - i. 141 East Main Street – Funtivity Arcade and Fun Center – Certificate of Occupancy
 - ii. 201-205 Leahy Drive – New Single-Family Dwellings – Temporary Certificate of Occupancy
 - iii. 140 East Main Street - Tenant Fit-out – Ugly Dumplings restaurant 125 Sandy Drive - Renovate building for new owner.
 - iv. 520 Grove Lane – Construct 3,344 sf building shell
 - v. 320 Research Boulevard – Renovate existing building and install premanufactured research lab PODS.
 - vi. 94 East Main Street – relocation of fire department connection completed with final certificate of occupancy for the building to be issued this week.
- e. Nichol Scheld has been hired as the new part-time Administrative Professional I in the Code Enforcement Division with a start date of March 4. This position was approved during the budget process to assist with the implementation of the Council-approved changes to the rental license program. The retirement notice previously submitted has been rescinded, so with the new hires, Code Enforcement will be at full staffing for the first time since February 2023 with 8 new hires (3 new positions, 5 existing positions) out of a staff of 14 since that time.

3. Parking:

- a. Staff have begun work on capital project V2403 to replace the Parking Division's radios. Equipment is anticipated to have a 90-day lead time for delivery once ordered.
- b. Two of the three license plate reader vehicles have been out of service due to electrical issues and a seatbelt recall. One is now back in service, and the other is waiting to be scheduled with the dealership's rotating repair staff.
- c. Parking Coordinator Angel Rodriguez started training on February 20.
- d. The Division has posted the [vacant FT Parking Ambassador position](#) with a closing date of March 8 and the [PT Parking Ambassador position](#) as open until filled.

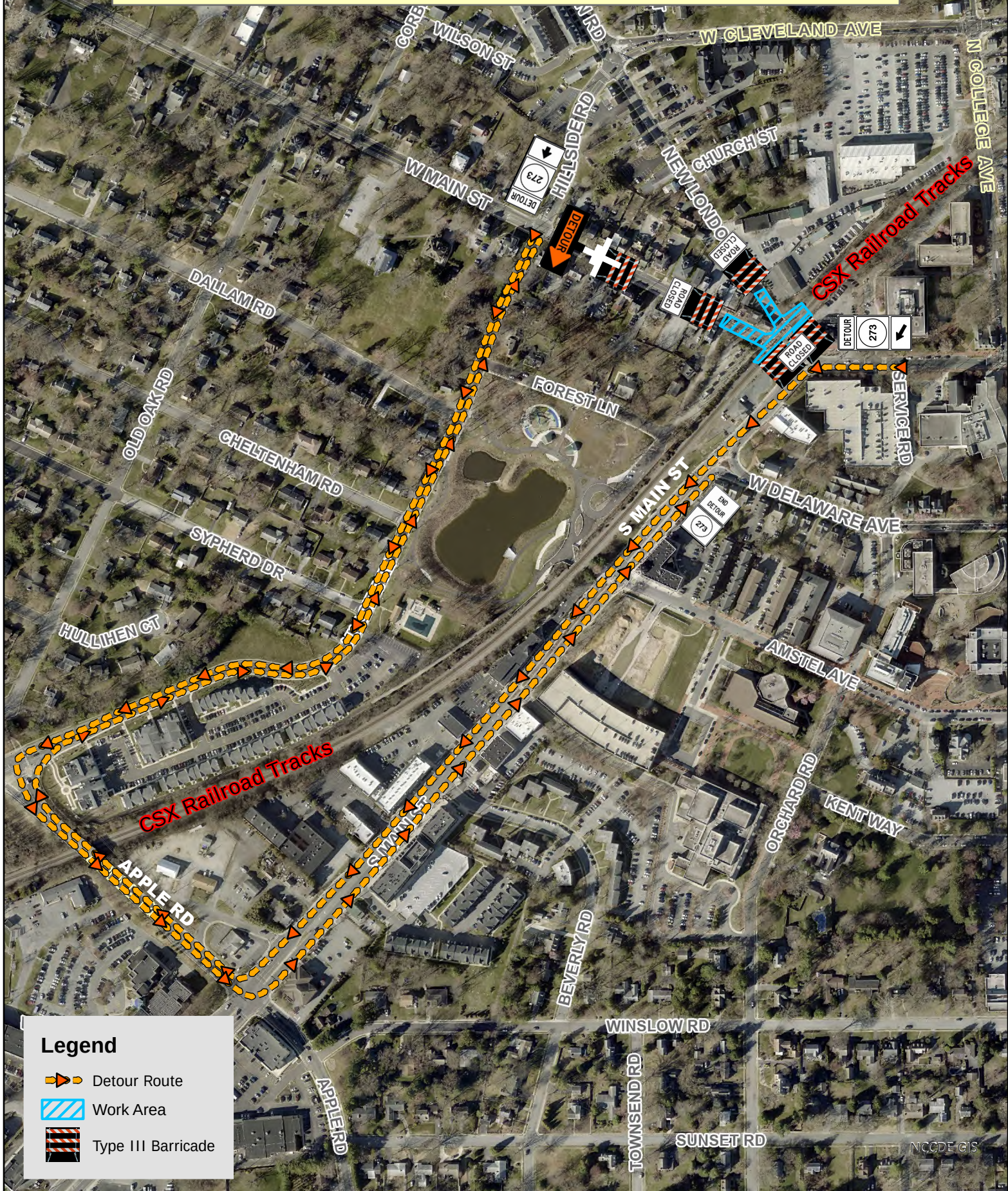
City Manager's Office

1. **Delaware League of Local Government:** Mr. Coleman attended this month's DLLG meeting where there were presentations from the state's new cybersecurity program designed to assist local governments via a grant program and DNREC Secretary Garvin who presented information on their proposed fee changes. Mr. Coleman provided a list of concerns regarding the proposed fee on water allocations which have been previously outlined to Council. \
2. **University of Delaware:** Mr. Coleman and Mayor Clifton attended meetings with UD President Assanis on Monday and EVP Long on Tuesday to discuss the City's requested charter change and other, related items. We are going to continue the dialogue to see if there are ways we can work together to identify and secure potential new revenue streams.

Electric

1. **Emergency Load Shedding:** In view of the upcoming NERC standards and the emergency declarations made by PJM during last year's winter storm Elliot, DEMEC has initiated the development of an Emergency Manual Load Reduction Procedure. As part of this process, DEMEC has asked us to furnish our load shed capabilities. In response, our staff are currently analyzing and identifying circuits that could be utilized for load shedding. The aim is to create a comprehensive plan that can be used in the event of a power shortage to ensure uninterrupted supply to critical facilities.
2. **Delaware Avenue DelDOT Fiber:** The electrical lines along Delaware Avenue are presently undergoing reconfiguration to accommodate the installation of a new fiber cable on utility poles by DelDOT. The line crew is currently working on this project to ensure the efficient and timely completion of the task.

SR 273 Vehicle Detour Plan (New London Road and West Main Street RxR Crossing)



SR 896 Vehicle Detour Plan (New London Road and West Main Street RxR Crossing)

