

Below is the weekly report for the week ending today, March 1, 2024.

Items for Newsletters:

1. **AETNA Fundraiser:** We are working with Fusion Racing to organize the Big Red Truck Pull to benefit AHHL on Sunday, April 28. In addition to the firetruck pull, there will be a chili cook-off between local restaurants and fire houses as well as a beer garden supported by Standard Distributing. 100% of alcohol and chili sales will be donated to the fire station. To date, three teams have registered to compete, and a handful of restaurants have committed to the cook-off. The event has been advertised in newsletters, on social media, on several websites, and via door-to-door outreach.
 - o More info: <https://www.adventuresignup.com/Race/DE/Newark/BigRedTruckPull>
2. **Senior Tax Exemptions:** The deadline for eligible seniors to apply for property tax exemptions is April 30th. Please click on this link for more information. New Castle County manages the exemption programs, which the City of Newark mirrors: [Tax Exemptions | New Castle County, DE - Official Website \(newcastlede.gov\)](#)
3. **CSX Crossing Improvements (Road Closures) Beginning Monday March 3:** 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 have been attached for your reference. We have been coordinating with the University regarding the impact to 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 pedestrian that are reluctant to follow the detour and chance crossing the tracks in other locations along the rail.

We are working with the University to implement creative measures that will avoid this kind of risky pedestrian crossing to the maximum extent practicable.

4. **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.
5. **Yard Waste Collection – Regular Weekly Collection Resumes March 6:** Spring is just around the corner and regular weekly collection of yard waste will resume on Wednesday March 6. Collection will occur during weeks without a City Holiday. Remember to fill the cart with only yard waste such as leaves, clippings, and small sticks to avoid contamination and damage to the equipment.
6. **Library Ave and Wyoming Road Intersection Crashes:** This intersection continues to experience a high rate of crashes, most recently involving a city vehicle. The City will continue to push DelDOT for an accelerated timeframe for the upgrades that are scheduled at this intersection to address safety concerns.
7. **City newsletter:** To sign up for the City's email newsletter, [click here](#).

Police

1. **Recruitment and Retention:** On Monday, February 26th, 2024, Newark PD welcomed seven new police recruits to the department. The seven recruits will spend the next two weeks administratively preparing for the Delaware State Police Academy which will begin on March 17, 2024. The recruits will spend the next six months at the academy and upon successful completion will then begin a three-month field training program.
2. **Patrol Update:** Newark PD have begun increased high visibility patrols in the central business district as this time of year typically results in an uptick in calls for service during the evening hours at the area restaurant and bars. Increased patrols will continue through the spring months.

Planning and Development

1. Land Use

- a. The Planning and Development Department is scheduling additional public meetings to discuss affordable housing and Inclusionary Zoning for the month of March. The following meetings have been finalized:
 - i. Friday, March 15 at 10:00 a.m. – Virtual public workshop targeted to graduate students at the University of Delaware
 - ii. Tuesday, March 19 at 7:00 p.m. – In-person and virtual public workshop in the City of Newark Council Chamber

- iii. Wednesday, March 27 at 7:00 p.m. – In-person public workshop at the Newark Free Library
- b. Staff received five development submissions on February 26 and 27. Two were administratively incomplete and are waiting for additional information to be distributed. The three plans that have been entered into the review queue are:
 - i. Comp Plan Amendment, Rezoning, and Major Subdivision by Site Plan Approval to construct a new mixed-use building and a residential addition onto the existing mixed-use building at [136 and 160 South Main Street](#) (second submission) submitted on February 26.
 - ii. Minor Subdivision by Site Plan Approval to construct a garden apartment building at [73 West Delaware Avenue](#) (first submission) submitted on February 27.
 - iii. Administrative Subdivision at [174 East Main Street – Astra Plaza](#) to adjust property lines (first submission) submitted on February 27.
- c. Staff completed and posted the [March 5 Planning Commission agenda](#) and packet, which includes an amendment to the BB and BC zones to permit hospitals, a presentation on electric capacity in relation to EV charging stations, and a preliminary discussion on proposed changes to the site plan approval process geared toward redevelopment projects.
- d. The Planning Division has posted the [vacant Planner I position](#) with a closing date of March 8.

2. Code Enforcement

- a. The condemnation of the Red Roof Inn has been lifted for units not identified on the engineer's report as being structurally compromised. Red Roof management is working with a contractor to obtain permits and begin repairs on the areas identified as structurally compromised.
- b. The property maintenance team began sending nuisance property citations with the revised citation form which replaced the criminal summons process used previously. Seven properties will be cited in this round.
- c. The property maintenance team is seeing a gradual increase in the number of violations during the weekend patrols which correlates with the warming weather.
- d. Property maintenance was contacted by Animal Control for assistance regarding concerns over animal abuse. The visit resulted in several notices of violation as well as the fire team issuing a notice for open burning.
- e. Significant permits issued over the last week are:
 - i. 94 East Main Street – Hotel and 48 apartments - Certificate of Completion and 49 Certificates of Occupancy
 - ii. 301 Louviers Drive – Tenant fit-out - First State Urgent Vet – Certificate of Completion
 - iii. 53 West Delaware Avenue – Demolish existing single-family dwelling

3. Parking

- a. Passport, the City's Parking App, will increase the customer service convenience fee March 15, 2024 from 25 to 35 cents. The national average is 42 cents per transaction for parking apps, so the City is still below average in pricing with this increase.

- b. With the new Parking Coordinator on staff, the Parking office customer service window will now be open until 8:00 p.m. on Wednesday to Friday starting this week.
- c. The third License Plate Reader vehicle has been repaired, so all three vehicles are back on the road and in service.
- d. The Parking 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.

Finance

1. **GFOA Award:** The Accounting office was awarded the “Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting” by the Government Officers Association (GFOA) for the 2022 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report. This is a significant accomplishment, and I would like to thank Deputy Director Hollander for her team’s work and diligence.
2. **Recruitment:** The job posting for our Accountant II vacancy (due to retirement) closed last week. We will be interviewing six candidates for the position the week of March 4th.
3. **Revenue Stabilization Adjustment:** Accounting staff worked on the Electric tariff’s “Revenue Stabilization Adjustment.” Staff is proposed a revised RSA that will reduce the electric bill by 2.4% for residential customers who use 1000 kWh. This proposal will be discussed at the March 11th Council meeting.
4. **Electric Rate Study:** Staff were informed by our electric consultant that the electric rate study is in its final stages, and we should have a draft copy within the next couple of weeks to review.
5. **Wilmington Citizen’s Advisory Board:** Director Del Grande attended the City of Wilmington’s Utility Citizen’s Advisory Board. This is a board seat that belongs to New Castle County.
6. **Pension and OPEB Fund:** We have completed all paperwork necessary to transfer the City’s pension and OPEB funds from Vanguard to Charles Schwab. The transfer should be completed by the end of next week (March 9th).