

Below is the weekly report for the two weeks ending today, October 10, 2024.

Items for Newsletters:

1. **Hurricane Response:** In recognition of the extreme need for assistance restoring electricity following back-to-back gulf coast hurricanes, four City of Newark electric line workers have joined four line workers from New Castle Municipal Services Commission, also a DEMEC member community, and headed to Orlando Florida to assist this public power utility restore power for their community. Milford and Seaford have put together a joint team of four and are awaiting dispatch currently. The real-world experience they will gain in Florida will also help us be better prepared when we are faced with an emergency on this scale in the future. If you would like to track their progress, you can do that on the City's (<https://www.facebook.com/CityOfNewarkDelaware>) and DEMEC's (<https://www.facebook.com/DEMECINC>) social media pages. Many thanks to these dedicated public servants for leaving their families to help those in need.



2. **New Permitting and Licensing Software Platform:** The City's new permitting and licensing software went live on October 1. The new software package is a considerable improvement over our old software and should significantly improve the user experience, for both external and internal users. Staff have been working on this project for over a year and we are happy with how it is gone so far.
3. **City newsletter:** To sign up for the City's email newsletter, [click here](#).

Public Works and Water Resources

1. **Street Improvement Program –Rose St, Ray St., Lynn Drive, Winfield Drive, Scotch Pine:** The concrete crew has finished up curb work on Rose and Ray Streets on 10/1. The concrete

crew mobilized to Scotch Pine Road on October 9, instead of Lynn Drive and Winfield Drive in Fairfield Crest due to the paving crew's arrival on or near October 14. Scotch Pine Road will be the first location to be milled once the crew mobilize back to Newark.

2. **DelDOT Road Work Detour (Route 4/Christina Parkway):** Ongoing repairs to Christina Parkway will require the full closure of the westbound lane overnight, with a detour planned to take vehicles north to East Main Street and South Main Street. The work is tentatively scheduled for Friday October 11 beginning at 8pm until 6am Saturday October 12. All emergency services have been notified and proper notification to motorists will be provided by DelDOT.
3. **DelDOT Road Work Detour (Route 4/Christina Parkway):** Ongoing repairs to Christina Parkway will require the full closure of the westbound lane overnight, with a detour planned to take vehicles north to East Main Street and South Main Street. The work is tentatively scheduled for Friday October 11 beginning at 8pm until 6am Saturday October 12. All emergency services have been notified and proper notification to motorists will be provided by DelDOT.
4. **Leaf Collection Begins October 14:** Citywide leaf collection will begin on October 14. Crews will likely collect leaves around the entire city for the first few weeks, with collections reduced to once every few weeks during the heaviest of leaf fall. Collection will continue until late December to make sure all leaves are picked up. Residents are encouraged to keep their leaves on the yard by mowing or mulching them which helps feed the lawn nutrients and provide beneficial insects with winter habitat. Small piles may also be put in Yard Waste carts and placed out for collection on regular yard waste collection days.
5. **Water Main Replacement – Lark Drive and Briar Lane underway, Tanglewood starting soon:** Lark Drive and Briar Lane are progressing well with individual services being connected over the next 2 weeks. Once Briar Lane is complete, the crew will move to Tanglewood Lane. Notices have been issued to all customers that will be impacted by the planned improvements.
6. **Sanitary Sewer Cleaning and Inspection:** Our contractor will continue cleaning sewer mains near Southgate Apartments and Chemours (STAR Campus) over the next week. We have coordinated this work with UD/STAR and no disruptions are expected.
7. **Annual Newark Reservoir Inspection:** Staff will join our Dam Engineer, Schnabel Engineering, and the state Dam Safety Engineer for an inspection of the Newark Reservoir on October 11. This inspection will generate a list of recommended maintenance or repairs needed. The most common observances are small animal burrows (groundhogs and moles) that are repaired by in house crews. Users may see small flags that we will use to delineate the areas in need of repair.
8. **Street Improvement Program – Lynn Drive, Winfield Drive, Scotch Pine:** The concrete crew mobilized to Scotch Pine Road on October 9, instead of Lynn Drive and Winfield Drive in Fairfield Crest due to the paving crew's arrival on or near October 14. Scotch Pine Road will be the first location to be milled once the crew mobilize back to Newark.

Finance and IT

1. **2025 Budget:** Staff is working on submitting a balanced budget to advertise and discuss at the upcoming Budget Hearing on November 4. City Manager Coleman and Director Del Grande are presenting the proposed capital improvement program to the Planning Commission on October 15. All budget information can be found on Budget Central: [Budget Central 2025 | Newark, DE - Official Website \(newarkde.gov\)](#)
2. **SilverBlaze Go Live:** We are thrilled to announce the launch of our new utility customer portal, SilverBlaze, coming this Tuesday, October 15, 2024! This innovative portal is designed to empower our customers with easy access to essential account information and tools. With SilverBlaze, you can:
 - a. View your bill, transaction, and usage history effortlessly
 - b. Manage your virtual wallet for seamless payments
 - c. Make one-time payments quickly and easily
 - d. Sign up for AutoPay and Budget Billing for convenience
 - e. Access real-time smart meter information and compare usage to previous bills or year-over-year data
 - f. Set up usage thresholds and high usage alerts for water to stay informed
 - g. Allow guest access to your account, making it ideal for landlords

Emails have already gone out to our customers, with another one coming out on October 15th. We will also be working on a targeted reach-out to our residents who may be email/technologically challenged, offering them the opportunity to come to the office so we can help them set up their new accounts.

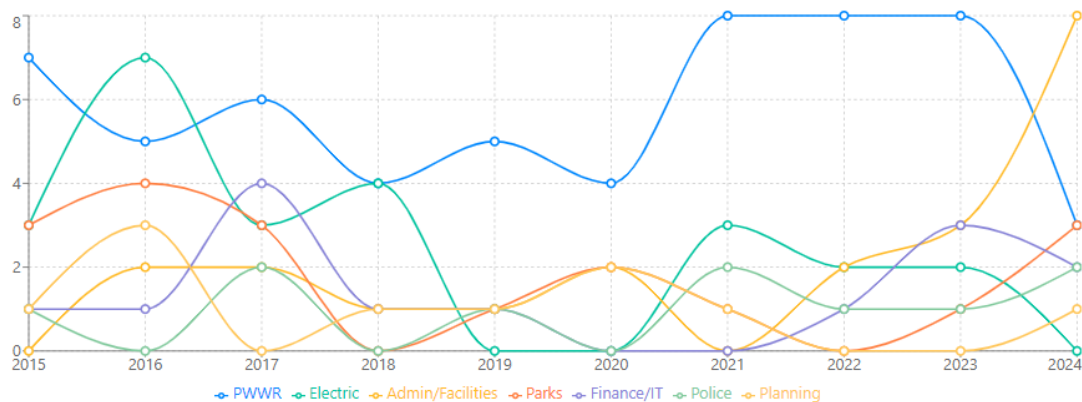
Here's a link to the user guide video we put together: [SilverBlaze_Portal_User_Guide \(3\).mp4](#)

Purchasing/Facilities/Records:

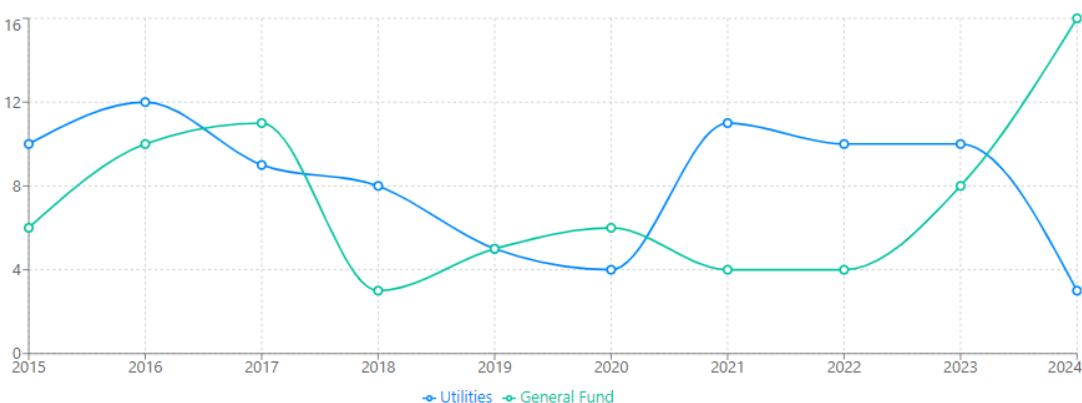
1. **Train Station Restoration:** CPPO Jeff Martindale met with the Newark Historical Society this week to review the 85% complete restoration plans for the historic Newark Passenger Railroad Station. Assuming no delays, this should be out to bid by the end of October.
2. **Tree Canopy Assessment:** The City signed an agreement this week with the University of Vermont to complete a LiDAR and satellite imagery tree canopy assessment. Goal 4.3 of the Newark Sustainability Plan is to increase the City tree canopy to 34% by 2025 and 36% by 2030; this assessment will establish the baseline for the current canopy upon which we can grow, if needed. The assessment should take 6 months to complete.
3. **Emergency Management Consultant Services RFP:** Staff completed the review of the 9 proposals received associated with this RFP. 4 vendors are scheduled to come in for a presentation/Q&A session later this month. Staff aims to bring an award recommendation to Council in November.

4. **ARPA Spending Overview:** As we enter the fourth quarter of 2024, which is the last year for encumbering ARPA funds, Purchasing analyzed data on formal bid opportunities put out by each department. To see how this year compares to previous years, a ten year look back was applied (2015-2024). For the first time since the pandemic began, General Fund departments have completed more formal bid processes than Utilities. This is likely due to the distributed nature of ARPA funding amongst numerous departments, which is reflected most among General Fund departments (e.g., Parks had its most bid opportunities since 2017 this year; Admin/Facilities had the most opportunities this year of the 10-year period). Public Works will have at least two more bid packages this year, so the numbers will be slightly different by the end of December. Staff will continue to track these trends into 2025; if similar trends continue, a discussion on formal bid thresholds for Council approval may need to be rediscussed (modifying these thresholds was voted down by Council in 2023 (3 yes, 1 no)) as each formal bid opportunity comes at the expense of other departmental work processes.

Department Trends Over Time



Utilities vs General Fund Trends



5. **Police Department Generator Repair:** The temporary generator supporting the PD generator will hopefully be removed next week after load testing is complete. Once this is done, staff will begin the process of replacing the underground diesel tank for the generators with a secured above ground system.

6. **Historic Train Station Renovations:** The design for train station renovations is almost complete. CPPO Jeff Martindale will meet with the Newark Historical Society next week to review the plans. Staff hope to have this out to bid by November.
7. **Climate Action Plan Grant Application:** CPPO Martindale submitted a \$76,000 grant to the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) this week. If approved, staff will use this funding for technical assistance in developing a Climate Action Plan (CAP).

Planning and Development

1. Land Use

- a. Staff completed and posted the agenda and packet for the [October 15](#) special Planning Commission meeting. The Commission will review the 2025-2029 Capital Improvement Program and will have a presentation and discussion on student housing with representatives from the UD Office of Student Life.
- b. Planning Commission met on October 1. Items reviewed included:
 - i. Election of officers – Chair Will Hurd, Vice Chair Alan Silverman and Secretary Karl Kadar were reelected for one year terms.
 - ii. Comprehensive Development Plan amendment and major subdivision by site plan approval for 711 Barksdale Road to create fee simple lots for the existing Sutton Place townhome development – The Commission recommended that Council approve this plan by a vote of 5-0.
 - iii. Amendments to Chapter 27 and Chapter 32 to increase subdivision and zoning fees by 10% and to add technology fees and re-review fees to Construction Improvement Plans and Lines and Grades Plans effective January 1, 2025 – The Commission recommended that Council approve these changes by a vote of 5-0.
 - iv. Planning Commission 2024 annual report – The Commission approved this by a vote of 5-0 to forward this to Council. It is scheduled for the 10/21 Council Consent Agenda.
 - v. Planning Commission 2025 work plan – The Commission proposed several amendments to the draft presented. A final draft will be circulated to the Commission, and if no requests to place it on a future agenda are received, it will be scheduled for presentation to Council.
- c. Planning staff hosted an in-person Affordable Housing workshop at the George Wilson Center on October 2. Approximately 10 people attended and provided feedback on a variety of planning ideas on how to address affordable housing in Newark. The next workshop is scheduled for October 22 from 4:00-6:00 p.m. at the Alder Creek Community Room,
- d. The Community Development/Revenue Sharing Advisory Committee held its first meetings of the new grant cycle on October 3 and 10. Staff reviewed the applications for the Committee and members in attendance discussed the applications. As a quorum was not present, no actions were taken. The next meeting will be held on October 24 in the Council Chamber at 7:00 p.m.
- e. Staff issued the following Subdivision Advisory Committee comment letters:

- i. Comprehensive Plan amendment, rezoning and major subdivision to construct a 5 story mixed use building and a two story addition on the existing building at [136 and 160 South Main Street](#) on October 2
- ii. Minor subdivision and special use permit to construct a convenience store at [1050 South College Avenue](#) on October 4

2. Code Enforcement

- a. After 15 months of work by the Planning and Code Enforcement team, Tyler Enterprise Permitting and Licensing software went live on October 1. Tyler Technologies implementation consultant was on site to help staff troubleshoot any issues and ensure a smooth transition. Thus far, outside customers have logged on successfully and payments have been accepted both online and in person with the new system. Staff continues to work with IT and Tyler to resolve any issues that are found. The Department would like to thank everyone who has been a part of the implementation process!
- b. Code Enforcement staff met with representatives of St. John African Methodist Church along with the architect and contractor to discuss the required repairs for the vehicle collision damage.
- c. Property Maintenance and Fire Protection staff have been performing occupancy checks of bars and restaurants on high-volume evenings to ensure compliance with allowed occupancy to ensure safety. Most businesses have been complying with their occupancy restrictions, which can lead to long lines outside of the structures.
- d. Property Maintenance and Fire Protection staff, in coordination with UD, met with the fraternities and sororities to discuss fire safety, fire extinguisher procedures and property maintenance items.
- e. Code Enforcement vacancies in process include the following:
 - i. The selected applicant for the vacant Property Maintenance Inspector position turned the job down due to not being able to meet salary expectations. The position was reposted on October 4 and will be [open for applications](#) until November 1.
 - ii. The vacant part time Administrative Professional I position closed on October 4. 70 applications were received and 10 candidates have been forwarded to HR for interviews to be scheduled on October 17.

3. Parking

- a. Training has been completed for the new evening Parking Coordinator, which has allowed for the previous evening Parking Coordinator to move to the daytime shift effective September 30. With the two Parking Coordinators in place that were approved with the FY2024 budget, Parking now has full weekend coverage. The Parking office will be open for the public from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday starting October 5 in addition to the current expanded hours until 8:00 p.m. Wednesday through Friday.
- b. Staff continues to work on the digitization of the special residential parking permits. Currently, the Division is working with ComSonics (LPR vendor) and T2 (permit vendor) regarding resolving LPR issues associated with the new process.
- c. Parking vacancies currently in process include the following:

- i. The vacant [evening Parking Ambassador](#) position is open for applications through October 18. Time has been reserved with HR for interviews on October 31.
- ii. Staff is reviewing the updated applicant pool for the two vacant [part-time Parking Ambassador](#) positions. Time for interviews has been scheduled with HR for October 24 and 25. This position posting remains open until filled.

Parks and Recreation

1. Capital Projects:

- a. Dickey Park improvement construction bids were received – pre-con meeting held with JMT and Merit Construction on 10/10
- b. Devon Park – playground surfacing continues to be installed, will be completed by Oct. 25
- c. George Read Park improvements – meeting with Mayor, Councilwoman Ford and resident Tina Jackson on 10/11 and agenda for 10/14 Council meeting for approval of change order
- d. Old Papermill Road Park – pre-bid meeting was held 10/7, Bid Opening scheduled for 10/29

2. Maintenance/Operations:

- a. Completed preparations for the tree planting along the Pomeroy Trail for the TEDI Grant. A volunteer group from Citibank will be assisting with the plantings on Oct. 25.
- b. Received trees for the tree giveaway and planting for the TEDI grant at the maintenance yard.
- c. Met with representatives from the developers for 6 Innovation Way to discuss the landscape plan.
- d. Received funding from the Conservation Advisory Committee to proceed with the Natural Newark Nooks (Cut Flower and Pollinator Conservation areas) at 4 parks for this year. Working with contractor to order seed and shrubs and install at Handloff Park, Folk Park, Lewis Park and along the Pomeroy Trail in Olan Thomas Park.
- e. Fall Tree Giveaway scheduled for October 12 at Hillside Park from 8 – 11 a.m.- 42 trees still available.
- f. Supporting NPD Faith and Blue event at Dickey Park with supplies and staff on Sunday, Oct. 13.

3. Events:

- a. Preparations are ongoing for upcoming events
 - i. Fall Community Clean-up - 10/12. Sites and supplies accounted for and ready to go. We have about 150 volunteers signed up.
 - ii. Halloween Party at the George Wilson Center – 10/24
 - iii. Halloween Parade and Trick or Treat Main St. - 10/27 – currently have 37 registered for the parade
 - iv. Turkey Trot – 11/23

v. Winterfest – 12/6

4. Recreation Programming:

- a. Recreation Supervisors are working to complete summer program statistics and analysis forms
- b. Recreation Supervisors are starting to make plans for 2025 Winter Spring programs
- c. Before and After School Care programs at Downes and West Park Elementary
 - i. West Park License renewal application completed and we are busy preparing for our visit from the Licensing Specialist
 - ii. Payment reminders sent out
 - iii. We continue to hire staff and held three interviews
 - iv. Staff CPR/First Aid was held on 10/6 at the Newark Senior Center
- d. George Wilson Center
 - i. Began taking 2025 rentals on 10/1
 - ii. Making preparations to have the kitchen floor repaired at the end of this year
 - iii. Tyler Technologies training held at GWC on 10/1
 - iv. City Planning Dept held an affordable housing event at GWC on 10/2
 - v. No School Day of Play program was held on 10/3 and 10/4
- e. Recently started or upcoming programs include Parent/Child Golf, Pickleball, Adult Volleyball Leagues at Newark Charter, Stay Fit, Yoga, Theater, Self Defense, Youth Basketball Leagues

Electric Department

- 1. **Outage Report:** On October 5th, 2024, a faulty lighting arrestor on unit 45 at West Main Sub caused a 12kV breaker to trip, resulting in a power outage that affected 1581 customers in the area for two hours.
- 2. **Capital Improvement Projects:**
 - a. CIP E1810 - Lighting Arrestor Replacement: We have made significant progress on the arrestor project. To date, we have replaced the lightning arrestors at 105 out of 450 locations.