

Below is the weekly report for the week ending today, October 25, 2024.

Items for Newsletters:

1. **Leaf Collection Began October 14:** Citywide leaf collection is now underway. Crews were able to complete collection around the whole City this week. The dry conditions have helped streamline pickup and creates less wear on the collection trucks. As the season progresses, collections will be likely 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.**

2. **Statewide Drought Watch:** The following news brief from Delaware.gov was issued October 25, 2024: *Governor John Carney on Friday issued a statewide drought watch after receiving guidance from the Delaware [Water Supply Coordinating Council \(WSCC\)](#). Delawareans are asked to voluntarily reduce outdoor uses of water during the drought watch. This decision follows an assessment of conditions by the WSCC on October 25. The drought watch will remain in effect until further notice.*

City water supply update: The City's current supply of water is stable. While there is a difference between the drought indicators used to determine drought conditions and the available supply of water, the two are linked and water conservation is always encouraged when appropriate. As of this writing, the City is still able to withdraw from the White Clay Creek and supplements with withdraws from the Newark Reservoir as needed. Our South Well Field Water Treatment Plant continues to supplement the overall needs of the City and we are confident in our ability to serve the drinking water needs of the residents and customers. Past and present iterations of City Council have supported redundancy and resiliency initiatives in our Water Utility which are bearing fruit during these dry conditions. We will continue to monitor the conditions and adjust operations as necessary.

3. **Halloween Parade:** The annual Halloween Parade is this Sunday from 3:00 to 5:00. More information can be found here: <https://newarkde.gov/Calendar.aspx?EID=5036>. Parking downtown will be complimentary all day on Sunday, October 27 for the Halloween Parade and Trick or Treat Main Street. Main Street and Academy Street from Main Street to Delaware Avenue will be closed for the parade.
4. **Affordable Housing Workshops:** The two final affordable housing workshops have been scheduled as follows:
 - a. November 6 from 7-8:30 at the Newark Charter Junior High School cafetorium
 - b. November 7 from 7-8:30 at the Downes Elementary School cafeteriaOnce these workshops are completed, staff will bring the collective feedback to Planning Commission and Council to determine next steps in the process.

5. **City newsletter:** To sign up for the City's email newsletter, [click here](#).

City Manager

1. **PILOT Study Group:** The PILOT study group held its final meeting this week and made a slate of recommendations. Unfortunately, since New Castle and Sussex Counties have not finished their reassessment but Kent and Dover have, the group was unable to make any recommendations on changes to the PILOT formula or Newark's inclusion. Instead, they have made a recommendation to revisit the topic in 2025 once we have new assessment data for all three counties available. All recommendations were approved unanimously, which was nice. The full list of approved recommendations are below. The recommendation that is relevant to Newark is item "f" and recommended that the legislature provide the \$2 million we received this year again next year.
- a. Request the 153rd General Assembly extend the discussions of the PILOT Study Group for another year so recommendations can be based on the most recent assessed value of the relevant properties.
 - b. 29 Del. C. § 8318(a) should be amended to say that all three county seats should use the county's assessed values, not their own process.
 - c. 29 Del. C. § 8318(a) should also be amended to explicitly state that school district and charter school properties are excluded from the calculation. Other sections of Code clarify that these properties are owned by the school district, not by the State, but it would be easier if that was also stated in 29 Del. C. § 8318(a). Here are a few references in Code stating that these properties are owned by the district/charter, not the State: 14 Del. C. § 504A(3), 14 Del. C. § 1056(b), 14 Del. C. § 2102, and 14 Del. C. § 2301(5).

29 Del. C. § 8318 (a) The county seat in each county shall appraise and assess real property taxes on all property owned by the State excluding properties owned by the Delaware Housing Authority, Delaware Solid Waste Authority, Delaware State University, ~~or~~ the University of Delaware, ~~or school districts and charter schools~~, lying within their respective city limits. Each county seat shall annually submit statements of these appraisals and assessments unto the Secretary of the Department of Finance, said assessments and appraisals to be in accordance with ~~their respective~~ the procedures for appraising and assessing real property ~~as set by their respective county~~.
 - d. Ensure that each county seat is held harmless and receives no less than what they have previously received in PILOT funds.
 - e. Consider recommending that half of the corporate recording fees received by the counties be directed to Dover and Georgetown. Wilmington already receives half of New Castle County's recording fees. This would provide approximately \$600,000 - \$750,00 in additional funding to Dover and approximately \$125,000 - \$170,000 in additional funding to Georgetown. This is more than they received in PILOT funding

currently. This comes at no cost to the State as these fees are collected by the Division of Corporations and transferred directly to the counties.

- f. Recommend to the Joint Finance Committee (JFC) that the Higher Education Public Safety Fund be continued in support of the City of Dover and the City of Newark. The Higher Education Public Safety Fund would require that an eligible municipality provide an annual report to the JFC Co-Chairs and the Controller General no later than April 1st that includes the municipality's anticipated expenditures associated with fire and police expenditures relating to higher education campuses within the municipality and the amount of financial support requested for the next fiscal year.

Public Works and Water Resources

1. **Water Main Replacement – Lark Drive and Tanglewood:** Lark Drive is progressing well with individual services being connected over the next week. The crew has moved to Tanglewood Lane and has begun preliminary work ahead of the main replacement. Notices have been issued to all customers that will be impacted by the planned improvements.
2. **Street Improvement Program – Country Club Drive, and Scotch Pine:** Asphalt milling and paving continues on Scotch Pine Road and Country Club Drive, with completion expected by November 1. The concrete crew has begun work at Lynn Drive, Winfield Drive, and the shared driveway in Fairfield Crest.
3. **Roadway Management Conference – Rehoboth, DE:** Several of our Public Works and Water Resources inspectors, engineers, and equipment operators traveled to Rehoboth this week to attend the annual Roadway Management Conference held by the Delaware T2/LTAP (Transportation and Technical Assistance/Local Technical Assistance Program). The conference showcases practical knowledge in sessions geared for the field and management staff alike. Our Field Operations Superintendent Jason Winterling, along with Fleet Mechanic Phil Zebley showed off one of our 'Build A Better Mousetrap' projects, which converted our old street sweeper into a gravity fed brine application vehicle. Many of the attendees could not believe how simple the design was for how well it worked. Director Filasky also led a session on public outreach to get the word out about the important work we do.

Planning and Development

1. Land Use

- a. The Planning Commission met on October 15 where they reviewed the 2025-2029 Capital Improvement Program and had a presentation and discussion on student housing with representatives from the UD Office of Student Life.
- b. The Board of Adjustment met on October 17 and approved an application for a rear yard variance by a vote of 4-0 for 113 Briar Lane. The application for variances

related to a sign for First Presbyterian Church has been postponed to the November 21 Board of Adjustment meeting.

- c. Planning staff held an Affordable Housing workshop at the Alder Creek Community Room on October 22 from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Two final workshops have been scheduled as follows:
 - i. November 6 from 7-8:30 at the Newark Charter Junior High School cafetorium
 - ii. November 7 from 7-8:30 at the Downes Elementary School cafeteriaOnce these workshops are completed, staff will be bringing the collective feedback to Planning Commission and Council to determine next steps in the process.
- d. The Community Development/Revenue Sharing Advisory Committee held its final meeting for the grant year on October 24. Their recommendations for the 51st Year CDBG Program and the 2025 Revenue Sharing Program will be forwarded to Council for consideration in November.
- e. Staff received the following plan submissions:
 - i. Comprehensive Development Plan amendment, rezoning and major subdivision to construct a four-story apartment building with ground floor parking and 30 three bedroom apartments on the second through fourth floors located at [24-30 North Chapel Street](#)
 - ii. Rezoning and major subdivision by site plan approval to construct a seven-story apartment building with parking on the first two floors and 54 two-bedroom and 92 four-bedroom apartments for a total of 146 apartments on the third through seventh floors located at [87 South Chapel Street](#)
- f. Staff issued a Subdivision Advisory Committee comment letter for the minor subdivision to subdivide parcels and construct a new single family house located at [261 and 263 South Main Street](#)

2. Code Enforcement

- a. Property Maintenance and Fire Protection staff have completed fire safety inspections for all of the fraternity and sorority houses in Newark.
- b. Property Maintenance, in coordination with the University of Delaware, did a canvassing of Chambers Street, South Chapel Street, Lovett Avenue, and Benny Street talking to student residents about the rental program, bulk pick-up, and how to avoid violations.
- c. Code Enforcement vacancies in process include the following:
 - i. The vacant Property Maintenance Inspector position was reposted on October 4 and is [open for applications](#) until November 1.
 - ii. Interviews were held with six candidates for the vacant part time Administrative Professional I position on October 17. References have been contacted and an offer is anticipated to be made early next week.

3. Parking

- a. Parking downtown will be complimentary all day on Sunday, October 27 for the Halloween Parade and Trick or Treat Main Street. Main Street and Academy Street from Main Street to Delaware Avenue will be closed for the parade.
- b. Staff met with the assigned trainer from Axon to prepare for the body worn camera rollout for the City's Parking Ambassadors. On site training is scheduled for November 20.

- c. The additional repeater required to get the new Parking radio system online has shipped and is anticipated to be received by early November. Once received, installation and programming of the radio units will be scheduled.
- d. Parking vacancies currently in process include the following:
 - i. The vacant evening Parking Ambassador position closed on October 18. 32 applications were received and six applicants were submitted to HR to schedule interviews which will be held on October 31.
 - ii. Staff has interviewed five candidates for the vacant [part-time Parking Ambassador](#) positions on October 24 with a sixth scheduled for October 28. Once interviews are complete, staff will move to references on the candidates moving forward in the process. This position posting remains open until filled.

Finance and IT

1. **2025 Budget:** The 2025 budget is in a draft form, as City Manager Coleman and Director Del Grande will be presenting it to Council on November 18th. All budget information can be found on Budget Central: [Budget Central 2025 | Newark, DE - Official Website](#)
2. **SilverBlaze:** The new utility portal, SilverBlaze, has entered its second week of implementation. At the end of week one, we had over 1/3 of our account holders sign up. Staff have been spending much of their time walking customers through the process, helping them set up autopay, and getting them comfortable with the new system. A video for SilverBlaze can be found here: [SilverBlaze Portal User Guide - YouTube](#) (1200 views so far).
3. **New Castle County Local Service Credit:** The Finance Department received notification that New Castle County accepted our FY2026 Local Service Application, which means that City residents and businesses will continue to not be charged for any duplicate services by the County through June of 2026. This is an annual application process that ensures taxpayers aren't billed twice for the same service likes parks and police. Copy of the list of credits are attached.

Purchasing, Facilities, Records, and Communications

1. **Communications Update:** CPPO Jeff Martindale is filling in for Jayme Gravell while she is out of office; communications items should be routed to him.
2. **City Hall Exterior Lighting:** Next week, construction will begin to replace the four remaining parking lot/sidewalk lights at the Municipal Center that were not included in the parking lot reconstruction last year. Half of the visitor parking lot will be closed off during construction.
3. **Digital Records:** Records has begun to receive help scanning Court files from the bailiff staff when they are available; this will assist in tackling the backlog of Court files to be digitized, which goes back about 15 years.

4. **Bid Openings:** There are five bid openings over the next three weeks:
 - a. 10/29:
 - i. ITB 24-13: South College Interconnection Booster Station
 - ii. ITB 24-14: Old Paper Mill Road Park Improvements
 - iii. RFP 24-03: Provision of Audit Services
 - b. 11/19:
 - i. ITB 24-15: Curtis WTP Wasteway and Raceway Improvements
 - ii. RFP 24-04: Municipal Planning Services

Electric Department

1. **CIP E1810 – Lightning Arrestor Replacement:** We have made significant progress on the lightning arrestor project. So far, we have successfully replaced the lightning arrestors at 115 out of 450 locations.
2. **CIP E2306 – Transformer 76 Replacement:** The new transformer is scheduled to arrive on November 1, 2024. Additionally, the contractor is currently on-site to install a new concrete foundation for a 35kV breaker, which is expected to arrive by the end of November.
3. **CIP E1807 – Relay Replacement at Kershaw Substation:** Next week, we will take the T4 transformer offline to install the new relay panels. The transformer will be offline for a couple of weeks.
4. **Field Operations:**
 - a. Line crews replaced 200' of damaged underground primary cable in the Fairfield neighborhood
 - b. Electricians have begun our annual infrared scanning process. The crews scan electrical equipment with infrared cameras to find hot spots which are indicative of problems so we can repair or replace the identified components before they fail and cause an outage.

Parks and Recreation

1. **Capital Projects:**
 - a. Dickey Park improvement construction bids were received – construction looking to start mid-November, will be staking out the property line and trail for further discussions with Thorn Flats regarding the easement area
 - b. Devon Park – playground surfacing installed, waiting on clevises for swings to complete the project
 - c. George Read Park improvements – construction delayed until February/March 2025 due to changes of trail design

- d. Old Papermill Road Park – bid opening scheduled for 10/29

2. Maintenance/Operations:

- a. Completed installation of playground surfacing at Devon Park. Waiting on parts for the swings and it will then be completed.
- b. Placed additional safety surfacing at the Dickey Park Community Garden
- c. Completed 4 tree inspections
- d. Completed installation of rhododendrons at Lumbrook Park near tennis courts thanks to generous donation from Councilwoman Ford
- e. Met with Gary Kirk from the Wilmington Trail Club regarding the repair of a footbridge in the Christina Valley Stream
- f. Working with Newark American Little League regarding improvements to Leroy Hill field and installation of netting at the field by the VFW.
- g. Provided information on bat rehoming and will be purchasing two bat houses to place along the Christina Valley Stream

3. Events:

- a. Preparations are ongoing for upcoming events:
 - i. Halloween Party at the George Wilson Center – 10/24 - we have plenty of volunteers
 - ii. Halloween Parade and Trick or Treat Main St – 10/27 - currently have 52 groups/bands registered for parade and 10 groups for Trick or Treat Main Street along with businesses on Main Street
 - iii. Turkey Trot – 11/23
 - iv. Thanksgiving Day Breakfast – 11/28
 - v. Winterfest – 12/6
 - vi. Santa's Secret Shoppe at GWC – 12/7
 - vii. Processed five special event applications for runs in 2025. Received additional 7 applications to process.

4. Recreation Programming:

- a. Recreation Supervisors continue to make plans for 2025 Winter Spring programs. The program brochure will be available at the end of December
- b. Before and After School Care programs at Downes and West Park Elementary
 - i. Our annual visit from the Licensing Specialist occurred at West Park on 10/16. We have a few routine items to follow up on to renew the license. Downes inspection occurs in March.
 - ii. Continue interviewing, hiring and onboarding new staff
- c. George Wilson Center
 - i. For the week of 10/14, we had 13 long term rentals, and 2 short term rentals. We are continuing to add rentals to the calendar for 2025.
- d. Preparations are ongoing for the youth basketball leagues for grades 2-8 which are scheduled to begin in November
 - i. Recruiting volunteer coaches and basketball staff and referees

- e. Painting with a Twist workshop was held with 6 registrants.
- f. Community Garden Committee meeting was held on 10/22

5. Volunteers

- a. Program Assistance: Starting in September, Julie MacRae has assisted in the pottery studio with a total of 14 hours
- b. On 10/25, we will have a group of volunteers from Citibank planting trees along Pomeroy trail
- c. We are setting up a litter cleanup for La Aspira Academy for 10/29.