

Below is the weekly report for the week ending today, December 6, 2024. Please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Items for Newsletters:

- 1. 2025 Reassessment** – Accounting staff have been receiving numerous calls and fielding questions about the County reassessment. We have been referring all calls to New Castle County's Assessment office if they are not satisfied with the answers we have been providing, which is: The information remitted by the County indicates that the average parcel in New Castle County increased by 511%, before adjustments which could lower this percentage. If the amount of your increase was less than 511%, it is likely that your **County** tax bill will be less than what you are paying now. What we don't know at this moment is the average increase for Christina School District and the City of Newark. If the same holds true for all three tranches, then your tax bill for the County, School and City will all go down. If you believe your valuations for your properties are not accurate, you can call Tyler Technologies, who is managing the reassessment for New Castle County at 855-670-2658 to schedule an appeal.
- 2. Lead Service Line Identification Mailings:** All Newark water customers will likely receive a letter requesting the customer identify the material of their water service line. This exercise is part of the federal mandate to identify all service line materials and remove any lead service lines found within the system. The letter contains information about lead in water, however, we have not identified any lead service lines in our system. The letter is only requesting the resident fill out the simple survey at the QR code link, which includes taking a photo of the service line. The process should take no more than 15 minutes and they can contact Public Works if they have any questions.
- 3. Leaf Collection runs through December:** Collection will continue until late December to make sure all leaves are picked up. Crews are currently making a round of the City nearly every week. 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.
- 4. City newsletter:** To sign up for the City's email newsletter, [click here](#).

Public Works and Water Resources

- 1. Water Main Breaks:** Crews have repaired 6 water main breaks this week. With the first wave of very cold weather, it is not unexpected with the colder treated water from our surface water treatment plant running through the slightly warmer pipes in the ground. Any outages or notices will be given directly to affected residents and we do our best to make sure everyone is kept informed while the repair is made safely and efficiently. Residents are encouraged to report any water coming out of the ground or running in the street that is out of the ordinary.

2. **Water Main Replacement – Lark Drive and Tanglewood – Moving to Ridge Ave 12/9:** Lark Drive is progressing well with individual services being connected over the next week. Tanglewood Lane is moving along and the contractor will complete all restoration before moving to the next location in case the weather turns. The next location will be Ridge Ave outside City limits, but within our service territory. Notices have been issued to all customers that will be impacted by the planned improvements.
3. **Statewide Drought Watch (Newark water supply remains stable):** The state remains in a drought watch. Newark's water supply remains stable, and we continue to monitor the creek and well levels. Due to strategic operational modifications, we have been able to add 2.5 feet of water to the Reservoir since the drought watch was issued.
4. **Snow and Ice Season:** Snow and ice are starting to pop up in the long-range forecasts. Over the past few weeks crews have been preparing the equipment, calibrating salt spreaders, and reviewing plow routes in order to be prepared for the first event.
5. **Various Sewer and Stormwater Repairs:**
 - a. **Deer Run (Eleanor's Way) Stormwater Basin Repairs:** Merit Construction will be performing a point repair of the stormwater basin behind 10 Eleanor's Way. The project should be complete within one week.
 - b. **Sanitary Sewer Improvements (Washington Street):** Reybold will continue mobilizing equipment to Washington Street with plans to begin the repairs on the manhole on Friday Dec 6.
 - c. **Cool Run Sanitary Sewer Cleaning and Inspection (Route 4 near Bloom):** Reybold will be performing cleaning and inspection of the sanitary sewer near Route 4 by the Bloom Energy Campus.

Police

1. On Wednesday, the Community Engagement Unit participated in a toy delivery with UDPD at Al DuPont Children's Hospital. Later in the day, Newark PD, along with Sergeant Santa, delivered toys and holiday cheer to the Exceptional Care for Children facility.
2. On Thursday, Mr. Eric Harrington will start as Newark PD's first Mental Health Case Manager. Through a partnership with Christiana Care, Mr. Harrington will provide follow up for all mental health related calls for service to help ensure individuals are connected with proper mental health services.
3. On Thursday, Mayor Clifton and City Manager Coleman joined Chief Farrall and members of the department as they celebrated the graduation of recruits, James Ozturk and Xavier Glanzel from the New Castle County Police Academy. Officers Ozturk and Glanzel will now begin the next phase of their training, a three-month field training program.

4. On Friday, members of the Department will assist with the Special Olympics Reindeer Run and City of Newark Winterfest event on Academy Street. The Newark PAL trailer will be on hand with youth games and activities.

Parks and Recreation

1. Capital Projects:

- a. Dickey Park improvement – pre-construction meeting was held, construction will begin 12/2, heard back from Thorn Flats and they are not interested in having part of the trail on their property, discussed redesign of that section of the trail with JMT to remain on City parkland. They are contacting the contractor, Merit Construction to discuss changes.
- b. Devon Park – scheduled reopening event for December 10 at 2 p.m. – weather could be a concern, will make final decision on 12/9.
- c. George Read Park improvements – construction delayed until February/March 2025
- d. Old Papermill Road Park – purchase order completed and approved

2. Maintenance/Operations:

- a. Decorated holiday tree on Academy Lawn, set up lights at Olan Thomas Park and the floating tree at Hillside Park
- b. Continued changing equipment from summer to winter accessories
- c. Preparing for Winterfest and Snack with Santa
- d. Checking the Reindeer Run course and cleaning off as needed
- e. Winterized both pools for the season
- f. Scheduling replacement of barrier gates for Rittenhouse and Folk Park with contractor
- g. Pre-bid meeting held for tree contract, determination made to re-send out the tree work ITB after updating several items in the document to answer questions from meeting

3. Events:

- a. Planning the 2025 event schedule
- b. Turkey Trot was held on 11/23
- c. Thanksgiving Day Breakfast was held at the George Wilson Center on 11/28
 - i. We had many sponsors from around town that offered up supplies, food, and other items to make the breakfast a success. Approximately 115 people attended the event, and about 27 volunteers came to assist
- d. Preparations are ongoing for upcoming events
 - i. Winterfest – 12/6
 - ii. Santa's Secret Shoppe at GWC – 12/7
 - iii. Gift collection has begun for Presents with Police – 12/13

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. George Wilson Center
 - i. For the week of 11/18, we had 13 long-term rentals, 4 short term rentals, as well as 8 of our city classes.
 - ii. For the week of 11/25, we had 6 long-term rentals and 2 short term rentals.
 - iii. Turkey Time School's Out program was held Nov. 25-26
 - iv. Preparations are underway for the dance program recital scheduled for 12/13/24
 - v. Plans have been made to replace the flooring in the kitchen and to have a projector screen installed on the main floor in late December.
- c. Youth basketball leagues have begun with team practices starting 12/2
- d. New York City Holiday Trip has filled 104 of 112 spots for 12/7/24 and is committed to two buses. Both buses have City of Newark staff as volunteer leaders. Parking is at City Hall
- e. Our Recreation Supervisor of Events job opening has been posted and applications are being accepted until 12/20
- f. George Wilson Community Center Attendant job opening applications are being reviewed and interviews will be scheduled soon.

5. Volunteers

- a. Adopt a Park
 - i. Kells Park: Andrew Bradley spent a total of 3 hours cleaning up litter and picking up fallen branches on Saturday, 11/30
 - ii. Margaret Allen: Mary Smedley spent a total of 1.75 hours cleaning up trash

Finance and Information Technology

- 1. **Personnel** – We have been working with HR to fill our vacant positions. The IT Applications Analyst position starts on Monday, December 9. The IT Desktop Support position interviews will be held on December 18 and December 20. Our part time Finance Assistant position is currently actively seeking candidates, and our goal is to fill this position in January. In addition, we have a vacant customer service representative position that we are looking to fill as well (also in January).
- 2. **2024 Master Lease** - Staff are working on Round 2 of the Master Lease Agreement with Banc of America. There are 15 pieces of equipment totaling just under \$2.3 million included in this round. Three of the vehicles are refuse trucks, which were over \$285,000 each. Tentative closing date is the end of December. All the items included in this financing have been previously approved by Council.

3. **SilverBlaze/Autopay** - In our efforts to increase the number of utility customers registered with autopay, staff sent out an email to over 7000 customers who are not currently enrolled in the program. Within 24 hours, 69% of the emails were opened, and 150 new people signed up bringing the total to 3177. Before we moved customer service platforms, we had just under 4000 customers signed up for autopay. We are confident that this number will keep growing as we push this service. Attached is the letter that was emailed to our customers. To date, we have over 7,200 customers signed up in SilverBlaze.

Electric

1. Outage Report:

- a. On December 4th, at 7:33 AM, a squirrel caused a 34-minute power outage on Valley Road, affecting 45 customers. Later that day, at 4:56 PM, another squirrel caused a 55-minute power outage on Madison Drive, impacting 31 customers.

2. CIP and L&G Plan Reviews:

- a. We met with the development team for 141 E. Main Street to review the electric infrastructure for the project. Our primary focus was to identify an appropriate location for the pad-mounted transformer.