



CITY OF NEWARK DELAWARE

Below is the weekly report for the week ending today, March 14, 2025.

Items for Newsletters:

1. **County Property Tax Reassessment Appeals:** The deadline to file a formal appeal of your property reassessment has officially been extended to March 31st. For more information on formal appeals, visit www.newcastlede.gov/ReassessmentAppeals
2. **House Bill 33:** This bill would allow the City of Newark to prosecute criminal marijuana cases and underage civil marijuana cases in both the Court of Common Pleas or our Alderman's Court. Currently, these cases can only be heard in the CCP. HB 33 was released from committee this week and should be scheduled for consideration in the House of Representatives sometime in the next couple of weeks.
3. **House Bill 34:** This bill would allow the City to levy a tax on the University of Delaware of up to \$50 per spring and fall semester for each enrolled student. HB 34 was released from committee this week and should be scheduled for consideration in the House of Representatives sometime in the next couple of weeks.
4. **Drought Update:** The Delaware State Climatologist's office released an update on the current drought conditions in Delaware. For those unaware, this past fall was the driest in the 130-year observational period of record, including the driest October when we received only 0.03" of rain. As a result, we finished 2024 nearly 9" below normal. Soil moisture levels in lower Delaware were the lowest ever measured (measurement began in 1980). The current drought has continued throughout the winter, with January 2025 being the fourth driest January on record and the sixth consecutive month with below normal precipitation. With prolonged drought comes the increased risk of brush and grass fires, which we already experienced last fall. This will be of critical concern to the agricultural community as winter grain fields will be especially susceptible to fire, as well as the state's forested areas.

While we have seen some rain recently, full recovery from the drought will take several months of above average precipitation. When we discuss droughts, many Newark residents will immediately think back to the drought in 2001-2002 which resulted in the construction of the Newark Reservoir and expansion of our South Well Field water treatment plant. Believe it or not, the current drought has been more intense and resulted in a larger impact to water availability than the drought of 01-02. Fortunately, the State took many steps like the Newark Reservoir which helped avoid the worst of the impacts like what we experienced 23 years ago.

The above said, the water level in our reservoir is currently about 7' below full, and we are working to refill it as soon as possible. We can only pump water from the White Clay Creek when stream levels are high enough to pump but not cloudy from recent precipitation. Groundwater levels, and by extension stream baseflow, will begin to decrease again as plants and trees leaf out later in the spring. This means it will take some time to fill, even with more consistent rainfall. Fortunately, our new PFAS treatment removal system at the South Well Field (SWF) Water Treatment Plant allows us to potentially reactivate one of our highest productivity wells which will increase production at SWF by around 25%. This will take pressure off the Reservoir and White Clay Creek as we move into spring and summer. While we aren't in an emergency situation yet, residents should take care to be mindful of fire risks.

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

Public Works and Water Resources

1. **American Public Works Association Reporter Article:** The article at the link below was written by Matt Carter, the Delaware T2/Center for Transportation Engineering Circuit Rider and frequent training leader for many of our staff. It highlights some of the efforts Newark and other municipalities employ to get the word out about what we do. It stemmed from a presentation by Director Filasky at a recent Roadway Management Conference in Rehoboth.
<https://apwa.partica.online/reporter/march-2025/regulars/local-community-outreach-appealing-to-hearts-and-minds>
2. **Yard Waste Collection (Began March 5):** Regular, weekly collection of yard waste began this week on Wednesday. The service will continue each week that does not contain a City Holiday until early December. Residents are reminded that only yard waste can go in the carts for collection: no trash, recycling, or food waste. All yard waste must be contained in the cart and there are no special collections for yard waste. If you do not have a separate yard waste cart, please call Public Works to request a cart.
3. **BikeNewark Collaboration:** Staff typically meets with BikeNewark to collaborate in several ways. Regular monthly meetings are held with the full membership and several times a year the Engineering Committee meets to review current biking issues, ongoing projects, and new initiatives. Many of Newark's bicycle facilities started as discussions in these meetings, including the Delaware Avenue two-way bike lanes, Cleveland Avenue Lane Diet and Bike Lane additions, and citywide Sharrow installations. We will be kicking off the 2025 meetings this week. We encourage participation in BikeNewark to continue the advocacy needed to move toward better multimodal transportation in and around Newark. Learn more at: <https://bikenewark.org/>
4. **DeIDOT Utility Summit:** DeIDOT holds a summit each year, gathering many of the utilities doing business in Delaware to discuss the state of the industry, lessons learned over the past year, and how we can work together to protect our assets. With so much construction going on in and around Newark, it is vital that we have the connections and the ability to protect our assets and make adjustments when needed to accommodate progress on our street networks. Director Filasky presented on Newark's behalf to give a municipal perspective of how these projects affect us and how we work with the project team to identify and fix issues throughout the process.
5. **'Construction Season' is around the corner:** With warmer weather peppering in the forecast, we are gearing up to get started on some permanent restorations, pothole repair, and general construction projects with both in-house crews and outside contractors. As projects are scheduled, any notification needed will be sent to residents potentially affected by the work.

Planning and Development

1. **Land Use**
 - a. Staff have been working to get several administrative subdivisions through the review and approval process as follows:
 - i. 401 Phillips Avenue – obtaining final signatures for recordation; waiting for new property descriptions to create new deeds
 - ii. 47-53 West Delaware Avenue – public notification period completed and moving forward with final approval for recordation

- iii. 502 South College Avenue – final staff review in progress; will move to public notification period next week
 - iv. 603 Leahy Drive – final staff review in progress; will move to public notification period next week
- b. The affordable housing public workshop feedback item previously scheduled for the March 17 Council meeting has been postponed in order to be able to incorporate the state's Affordable Housing Task Force recommendations, which are expected to be complete before Council's return from the election break.
- c. Staff issued a Subdivision Advisory Committee comment letter to 124 East Main Street on March 13 in advance of preparing for the April 1 Planning Commission agenda.

2. Code Enforcement

- a. Property Maintenance performed a canvassing of East Park Place, Choate Street, Courtney Street, Center Street, and North Chapel Street with UD and Newark PD where they spoke with residents about the City's rental program and common code violations.
- b. Property Maintenance and Fire Protection have coordinated with Newark PD on the upcoming St. Patrick's Day holiday. They will be attending NPD roll call and patrolling during the day.
- c. Property Maintenance staff have been working with the residents of 345 New London Road when it was discovered they were renting without a license. An inspection has been performed and the residents have been given 30 days to bring the property into compliance.

3. Parking

- a. The kickoff meeting for the Parking Advisory Committee has been scheduled for Thursday, April 3 at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chamber. The PAC is back down to four members of seven as the District 2 member has resigned. However, there are other interested applicants expected for at least two of the vacant seats, which will hopefully be filled before the Council break and the first meeting.
- b. Staff worked on the follow-up ordinance requested with the extended free parking for weekends during the summer off-season, which will be introduced for first reading at the March 24 Council meeting.
- c. Staff have been working with ParkingLogix to determine the cause of issues with the countdown sign for Lot #1. While the sign is counting down when cars enter the site, it has not been registering when people leave, which means that the sign often says FULL when there are spots available. It has been determined that the bi-directional sensors that are on the ground that let the sign know when vehicles are entering/leaving the lot have gone bad and need to be replaced. That work will be completed in the upcoming months and the sign has been set to say OPEN until the sensors are fixed.

Parks and Recreation

1. Capital Projects:

- a. Dickey Park improvement – construction is on-going, progress meetings held monthly (approximately 60% project completion).
- b. George Read Park improvements – pre-construction meeting held, construction will begin in late March/early April, notification has been sent to surrounding neighborhood
- c. Old Papermill Road Park – pre-construction meeting held, notification sent to surrounding neighborhood, SHPO area fencing has been installed
- d. Olan Thomas/Kershaw Trail – meeting set up with Electric to discuss tree line area that needs to be cut back in preparation for the start of the project
- e. Folk Park potential dog park - staff held meeting on 3/12 at the park to answer questions and collect feedback, compiled information will be sent to the Council in April for decision/direction.

2. Maintenance/Operations:

- a. Presented Heritage Tree Program information to the Conservation Advisory Commission and received \$4,000 in funding to start this new program recognizing large, notable, old, historic, or rare trees in the parks and on private property.
- b. Presented information for the Spring Tree Giveaway program and received funding from the CAC to cover both the spring and fall tree giveaway programs. Spring Tree Giveaway will be held May 10.
- c. Working on request for funding from the CAC for the boots on the ground tree inventory to get started.
- d. Inspections continue for trees down or tree work needing attention along trails. Working with contractor and staff to complete necessary work.
- e. Received response from the property owner for the removal of 3 trees from 262 S. College after Council approved landscape waiver. Owner has proposed a new third option. Working on clarification of new proposal.
- f. Attended pre-construction meeting regarding Elkton Road Landscaping project scheduled to start in April.

3. Upcoming Events:

- a. April 12 – Annual Egg Hunt at Newark High School. Currently soliciting and accepting donations.
- b. April 12 – Spring Community Clean Up, over 100 volunteers registered so far
- c. Memorial Day Parade – May 18. First committee meeting was held March 10. Ceremony is set for 1:30 p.m. and parade at 2 p.m.
- d. Parks on Draft Beer Gardens are scheduled the second Friday of each month, May – September at Handloff Park
- e. We are accepting and reviewing performers for the spring concert series which will be held May 1 – June 5 on the Academy Building Lawn.

4. Recreation Programming:

- a. Deputy Director presented briefly at the West Park PTA meeting on 3/5 to talk about upcoming programs, camp and events.
- b. Community Garden season has started and we have just a few plots open
- c. The Adult Volleyball Wednesday B League crowned All Sets Are Off champions last week. The Thursday A/BB League semifinals and finals are on Thurs., March 13.
- d. George Wilson Community Center
 - i. For the week of 3/3, we had 9 long-term rentals, and 4 short term rentals. We also hosted Stay fit, and yoga classes. Pottery classes, and GoJu will start the week of 3/10.
 - ii. No School Day of Play scheduled 3/14 and 3/31