

**CITY OF NEWARK
DELAWARE
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**

APRIL 17, 2025

Those present at 6:00 p.m:

Presiding:	Mayor Jerry Clifton <i>(before swearing-in)</i> Mayor Travis McDermott <i>(after swearing-in)</i> District 1, John Suchanec Deputy Mayor, District 2, Corinth Ford <i>(after swearing in)</i> District 5, Jason Lawhorn Deputy Mayor, District 6, Travis McDermott <i>(before swearing-in)</i> District 6, Vacant
Absent:	District 3, Jay Bancroft District 4, Dwendolyn Creecy
Staff Members:	City Manager Tom Coleman City Secretary Tara Schiano City Solicitor Paul Bilodeau Deputy City Secretary Diana Reed

1. Mr. Clifton called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. 1. **RECEIPT OF CERTIFICATION BY ELECTION BOARD OF COUNCIL MEMBERS**

00:16

The following letters, dated April 10, 2025, were submitted by the Election Board:

Honorable Mayor and Members of City Council:

We, the Election Board of the City of Newark, hereby certify that on April 8, 2025, the following was elected for the office of Mayor for a term to end in April of 2028.

Travis J. McDermott, Mayor

Honorable Mayor and Members of City Council:

We, the Election Board of the City of Newark, hereby certify that on April 8, 2025, the following was elected for the office of Councilmember District 1 for a term to end in April of 2027.

John Suchanec, Councilmember, District 1

MOTION BY MR. LAWHORN, SECONDED BY MR. MCDERMOTT: TO ACCEPT THE ELECTION RESULTS.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE: 5 to 0.

Aye – Clifton, McDermott, Suchanec, Ford, Lawhorn.

Nay – 0.

Absent – Bancroft, Creecy.

3. 2. **OATH OF OFFICE GIVEN TO COUNCIL MEMBERS (CHARTER – SECTION 310):**

00:46

Mr. Clifton administered the Oath of Office to Councilmembers Suchanec and Ford.

Mr. Clifton administered the Oath of Office to Mayor-Elect McDermott. Mr. Clifton expressed his belief that Mr. McDermott would do a fantastic job as Mayor and elevate Council to the next level. He noted his appreciation to Mr. McDermott for his work and the wisdom he brought to the City and was confident Mr. McDermott would continue to do so as Mayor. He presented Mr. McDermott with a personalized gavel.

4. 3. **ELECTION OF DEPUTY MAYOR:**
6:55

Mr. Suchanec nominated Ms. Ford as Deputy Mayor, stating he believed she would be a good fit due to her commitment to the City.

MOTION BY MR. SUCHANEC, SECONDED BY MR. LAWHORN: TO APPOINT COUNCILMEMBER CORINTH FORD AS DEPUTY MAYOR.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE: 4 to 0.

Aye – McDermott, Suchanec, Ford, Lawhorn.

Nay – 0.

Absent – Bancroft, Creecy.

5. 4. **ELECTION OF OFFICERS:**
7:52
City Treasurer (One-Year Term) – By Election (Charter – Section 702.2) – Tara A. Schiano

MOTION BY MS. FORD, SECONDED BY MR. SUCHANEC: TO APPOINT TARA A. SCHIANO AS CITY TREASURER FOR A ONE-YEAR TERM.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE: 4 to 0.

Aye – McDermott, Suchanec, Ford, Lawhorn.

Nay – 0.

Absent – Bancroft, Creecy.

6. 5. **RULES OF PROCEDURE (CHARTER – SECTION 311):**
Resolution No. 25-_: Rules of Procedure for the 2025-2026 Council Year (Presented)
Resolution 25-

8:31
Mr. McDermott noted there were two suggested changes to the rules of procedure. The first pertained to the organizational meeting date, which Ms. Ford had suggested to be scheduled on the first Monday of the month following the election.

Ms. Schiano noted that the Code binds the organizational meeting date, which must take place seven days after the certification of the election results. She noted that the results are certified on the Thursday following the election, with the regular election always taking place on the first Tuesday in April.

Mr. McDermott suggested changing the time allowed for public comment from 5 minutes to 3 minutes if more than five individuals signed up for public comment. He explained his recommendation is to prevent meetings lasting beyond the time allotted by Council. He added that the State allows 2 minutes per speaker, and New Castle County allows 3 minutes per speaker.

Mr. Lawhorn recalled Council previously changing the public comment period from 3 minutes to 5 minutes, which he had opposed. He could not remember when a public speaker could not get their point across within 3 minutes. He favored shortening the public comment period to 3 minutes as the general standard for every speaker, regardless of meeting attendance. He noted the City also allows public comment for every agenda item and a generalized public comment section, which is not typical throughout the state.

Mr. Suchanec noted he has received feedback from constituents wondering why public comment is only allowed on the second and fourth Mondays of the month, rather than at every meeting each month. He suggested allowing public comment at all meetings.

Mr. McDermott believed this provision was implemented as the meetings on the third Monday are scheduled to end at 9 p.m., while the meetings on the second and fourth Mondays are scheduled to end at 10 p.m.

Mr. Lawhorn noted that initially Council had two monthly meetings but then decided to move to four. As some Councilmembers believed this was unnecessary, they then compromised to allow three meetings a month. During this period, Council decided that some meetings would retain the approved

agenda format, while other meetings could be scheduled as workshops with one topic on the agenda. The intent of this format was designed to focus on the subject on the agenda rather than typical City business.

Mr. Suchanec noted five categories of public comment and supported allowing non-categorized public comment at every meeting.

Ms. Ford concurred.

Mr. McDermott reiterated that all attendees wishing to provide public comment should be permitted 3 minutes, regardless of the item, provided they are permitted to provide comments at every meeting.

Ms. Ford noted that developers can speak as long as they wish on their proposals, but she expressed frustration that the public is still limited in the amount of time they have to speak.

Mr. McDermott believed the public could convey their approval or disapproval of a project within 3 minutes. He expressed concern that members of Council are debating important items at a later hour than is advisable. He clarified that the suggestion was to limit all public comments to 3 minutes and then allow public comments at every meeting.

Mr. Coleman noted public comment is still allowed at the third Monday meetings, but only on specific topics.

Mr. Lawhorn noted that even though the public is limited in how long they can speak at a meeting, they can still speak directly to their Councilmember or City Manager to express their opinion.

Mr. Suchanec noted that many individuals often speak on the same topic, and ahead of time, they can parse out what each person is saying to get their complete message across.

Ms. Ford suggested allowing community organizations to give presentations on their opinions of land use projects during their hearings, which could include incorporating public comments about the project.

Mr. McDermott believed this would be counterproductive to what Council is trying to accomplish.

Ms. Ford believed the current process favors developers in land use presentations, as they have the ability to provide presentations utilizing the technology available in Council Chambers, but the public does not. She suggested allowing civic associations to make presentations or submit a request to Council to make a presentation in place of multiple public comments.

Mr. McDermott did not believe that allowing these associations to speak instead of making public comment would be legally possible. He noted that the public has multiple avenues to comment on land use projects.

Mr. Bilodeau believed that deciding which organizations are permitted to make presentations could be interpreted as questionable from a legal perspective.

Mr. Lawhorn asked if there is a set calendar of City Council meetings and when it is typically sent out.

Ms. Schiano stated she sends out this schedule quarterly but can send it further in advance if desired. There are meetings on the second, third, and fourth Mondays of every month.

Mr. Coleman stated that the City only deviates from this schedule in the event of holidays or budget hearings.

Ms. Schiano stated that additional workshop meetings can typically be scheduled. However, on the rare occasions that meetings are canceled, it is due to a lack of business or a lack of quorum. She added There is never a meeting on the fifth Monday of the month, if a fifth Monday does occur.

MOTION BY MR. SUCHANEC, SECONDED BY MS. FORD: TO AMEND THE AGENDA TO SAY PUBLIC COMMENT WILL BE PERMITTED ON AGENDA ITEMS AND NON-AGENDA ITEMS AT ALL MEETINGS, AND ALL SPEAKERS WILL BE LIMITED BOTH FOR NON-AGENDA AND AGENDA ITEMS TO THREE MINUTES EACH.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE: 4 to 0.

Aye – McDermott, Suchanec, Ford, Lawhorn.

Nay – 0.

Absent – Bancroft, Creecy.

Resolution 25-G

7. 5. ADJOURNMENT OF ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING

Meeting adjourned at 6:27 p.m.

Tara Schiano
Director of Legislative Services
City Secretary

/jh