

CITY OF NEWARK
DELAWARE

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

APRIL 21, 2025

Those present at 7:00 p.m:

Presiding:	Mayor Travis McDermott District 1, John Suchanec Deputy Mayor, District 2, Corinth Ford District 4, Dwendolyn Creecy District 5, Jason Lawhorn District 6, Vacant
Absent:	District 3, Jay Bancroft
Staff Members:	City Manager Tom Coleman City Secretary Tara Schiano City Solicitor Paul Bilodeau Deputy City Secretary Diana Reed Assistant City Manager – Operations Jeff Martindale Parks & Recreation Director Paula Ennis Public Works & Water Resources Director Tim Filasky (<i>virtual</i>) Chief of Community Engagement Officer Jayme Gravell (<i>virtual</i>) IT Desktop Support I Jacqueline Etzweiler

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1. Mr. McDermott called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.
 2. **SILENT MEDITATION & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Mr. McDermott explained the procedures for the hybrid Microsoft Teams Meeting Platform. When beginning each item, the chair would call on the related staff member to present. Other than for land use applications, when their presentation was complete, he would call on each Council member on the dais for comment. Following, he would call on all members of the public who are present, and then those remote, to offer their comments. If a Council member had additional questions or comments, they should ask the chair to be recognized again after all members had the opportunity to speak. With land use applications, following presentations from both staff and applicant, he will seek comments from members of the public that are either present or remote before calling upon each Councilmember for their comments. He instructed in-person attendees to sign up on the sign-in sheet near the entrance of the Council Chamber if they wished to provide public comment. At the appropriate time, the chair would call on them to speak. Although all public comment is welcome and appreciated, Council requests that during meetings with higher attendance, that public commenters be mindful of others wishing to speak and condense their own comments to the best of their ability. If virtual attendees wished to comment, they should use the hand-raising function in Microsoft Teams to signal the meeting organizer that they would like to speak. The Microsoft Teams chat would be disabled during the meeting. All lines would be muted until individuals were called on to speak, at which point the speaker’s mic would be enabled and they could unmute themselves to give comment. Public comments were limited to 3 minutes per person, and no time will be ceded. All speakers needed to identify themselves prior to speaking with their name and district or street address. He asked all Councilmembers using Teams at the dais to turn off their speakers and microphones to prevent feedback. He asked all attendees to keep cameras off until called on to speak. Public comments must be related to City business or affairs, or to the particular agenda item. All members of the public that violate this rule will first be warned. If the violation persists, the offender may be removed from the premises or have their microphone disabled for the remainder of the meeting. He stated the City of Newark will have zero tolerance for any hate speech or vulgar language, as such in no way relates to City business or to any agenda item. If this occurs, there will be no warning given. The consequences for such behavior include being immediately removed from the premises or having the offender’s microphone disabled for the remainder of the meeting.

Mr. McDermott noted there are two changes to make to the agenda. The first is to add the oath of office for District 4 Councilmember Dwendolyn Creecy to the agenda.

MOTION BY MR. LAWHORN, SECONDED BY MR. SUCHANEC: TO ADD THE OATH OF OFFICE OF DISTRICT 4 COUNCILMEMBER DWENDOLYN CREECY TO THE AGENDA.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE: 5 to 0.

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

Nay – 0.

Absent – Bancroft.

Mr. McDermott noted the second change would be to remove item 4A from the agenda. He explained in talking with staff, there was a concern that item 4A provides direction to staff for some items essential to the city and due to the limited number of council members present at this meeting, it would be counterproductive if three members voted to provide direction at this meeting, staff to put in the significant effort required to draft an ordinance based on that direction, only for it to come back to council and be voted down by four members in the future when the full council is present. Therefore, he felt it best to remove this item from the agenda until the full council can be available to discuss it.

MOTION BY MS. FORD, SECONDED BY MR. LAWHORN: TO REMOVE 4A FROM THE AGENDA.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE: 5 to 0.

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

Nay – 0.

Absent – Bancroft.

Mr. McDermott asked for a moment of silence and the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. OATH OF OFFICE GIVEN TO COUNCIL MEMBERS (CHARTER – SECTION 310) – DWENDOLYN CREECY – DISTRICT 4:

4:34

Ms. Schiano administered the Oath of Office to Councilmember Creecy.

4. PUBLIC PRESENTATION (15-minute limit):

A. The Newark Partnership – Ali DeAngelis

6:44

Ali DeAngelis, the Newark Partnership (TNP) Program Director, presented to Council with updates related to TNP.

(Presentation: [Attached here](#). The presentation spanned from 6:44 to 10:05.)

Ms. DeAngelis discussed TNP’s sponsorship of the Christina School Board candidate forum and introduced Ms. Susan Mitchell, League of Women Voters, who announced the candidate forum for the District “A” Christina school board election at the Newark Senior Center on April 29th from 7 to 8 p.m.

Ms. Creecy apologized to Ms. DeAngelis for missing their previously scheduled meeting.

Ms. DeAngelis noted a progress update on the Library Avenue/CSX mural project stating they have scheduled a meeting with a mural specialist out of Philadelphia as an advisor for the project.

Mr. Suchanec noted Council was previously told the project faced an obstacle in moving forward when CSX placed a significant price on granting access to the railroad. He asked if this had been resolved.

Mr. McDermott stated CSX wanted to charge the City \$140,000 to access the railroad. The City decided to work with the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) on the replacing the murals on abutments and address the bridge walls later. The City is going to work with its federal partners to try and eliminate this price. The mural on the bridge will remain the same until this is resolved, but the City will work on the abutments in the meantime.

Mr. Suchanec believed this price was excessive. He asked why a consultant from Philadelphia was being used instead of someone from Newark.

Ms. DeAngelis stated the Newark Art Alliance recommended working with this consultant, who specializes in urban art and has the expertise needed for this project.

Mr. Suchanec asked if anyone around Newark was equally qualified for this job, as several businesses in the area have expressed interest in participating in this project.

Ms. Ford explained the mural and wall's current condition requires a specific type of expertise to ensure it does not deteriorate like the current one has, which is challenging to find. This consultant also has experience painting panels and mounting them on the wall rather than painting the wall directly on it.

Ms. DeAngelis added this consultant is being used for the technical aspects of the project rather than artistic design.

Mr. Lawhorn asked if the school board candidate forum would use the same format as the Newark council election candidate forums.

Ms. Mitchell confirmed they would be formatted the same.

Mr. Lawhorn stated this is an important school board election due to the recent state of the Christina school board. He noted he has received many complaints from individuals who are unhappy with the Christina school district, which is further exacerbated by the low voter turnout and split vote in electing the new superintendent. He stressed the importance of sharing information about this election with the public. He thanked the League of Women Voters for their efforts in this initiative.

Ms. Mitchell agreed this was a crucial election for everyone within the community. She stated that individuals have a right to find out who is running and to go to the polls, whether or not they have children in the district. The only restrictions on voting are that a voter has to be 18, a citizen, and living within the boundaries of the Christina School District. An individual does not need to be registered to vote in this election.

5. 1. **FINANCIAL STATEMENT:** None

6. 2. **APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA (1 minute):**

- A. Approval of the March 17, 2025 Council Meeting Minutes
- B. Approval of the March 24, 2025 Council Meeting Minutes
- C. Receipt of the November 21, 2024 Board of Adjustment Meeting Minutes
- D. Receipt of the February 25, 2025 Diversity & Inclusion Commission Meeting Minutes
- E. Receipt of the Planning Commission Meeting Minutes March 4, 2025
- F. 2025 Parks and Recreation Budget Amendment for the Purchase of a Replacement Trailer

19:40

Ms. Schiano read the consent agenda into the record.

MOTION BY MR. LAWHORN, SECONDED BY MR. SUCHANEC: TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE: 5 to 0.

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

Nay – 0.

Absent – Bancroft.

7. 3. **RECOMMENDATIONS ON CONTRACTS & BIDS OVER CONSENT AGENDA LIMIT:**

- A. Recommendation to Waive the Bid Process in Accordance with the Code of the City of Newark for Hard Surface Improvements for Court Maintenance and Repairs on the Competitively Solicited Contracts in Association with the National Cooperative Purchasing Alliance (NCPA) for CIP K1301 and Approve a Budget Amendment from the 2025 Parks and Recreation Operating Budget to CIP K1301 – Parks and Recreation Director

20:42

Paula Ennis, Parks & Recreation Director, explained this to be a recommendation to waive the bid process for hard surface improvements for CIP 1301.

The Mayor opened the table to Council comment.

Ms. Creecy asked if this project includes Dickey Park.

Ms. Ennis stated this project is related to Fairfield Crest. Dickey Park’s street hockey court is already on the books and scheduled to be renovated.

Mr. Suchanec asked how many courts are in this park.

Ms. Ennis stated there is one basketball court.

Mr. Lawhorn noted the courts in Fairfield Crest are heavily utilized by the community and are in need of repair. He encouraged Council to vote in favor of this project, as he believed it to be a good investment.

Ms. Creecy asked for a timeline for the construction in Dickey Park.

Ms. Ennis stated the project has already started, but the paving is scheduled to start at the end of April if the weather permits. The pavilion is tentatively scheduled to be installed in May and the renovation of the street hockey courts will not be completed until after the project is completed, which is estimated to be in June.

There was no public comment, and the Mayor returned the discussion to the table.

MOTION BY MR. LAWHORN, SECONDED BY MS. CREECY: THAT COUNCIL WAIVE THE BID PROCESS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CODE OF THE CITY OF NEWARK FOR COURT REPAIRS AND RESURFACING FROM THE NATIONAL COOPERATIVE PURCHASING ALLIANCE COMPETITIVELY BID CONTRACT FOR ATHLETIC COURT SURFACING AND ASPHALT MAINTENANCE FROM ATC CORP. IN THE TOTAL AMOUNT OF \$137,380, AND APPROVE A BUDGET AMENDMENT FOR THE APPROVED 2025 PARKS AND RECREATION OPERATING BUDGET AS PRESENTED IN THE STAFF MEMO DATED MARCH 19, 2025.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE: 5 to 0.

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

Nay – 0.

Absent – Bancroft.

8. 3-B. RECOMMENDATION TO APPROVE A CHANGE ORDER TO A CONTRACT STEMMING FROM CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECT (CIP) N2203 AND AMEND THE 2024-2029 CAPITAL BUDGET – ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER – OPERATIONS (10 MINUTES)

24:14

Jeff Martindale, Assistant City Manager—Operations, explained this is a change order to the City’s contract with Seiberlich Trane Energy Services. This will conclude the final project item on what the City has dubbed ESCO-2, the \$2.4 million grant project received from the State in 2024. The City would only provide 4% of the project's total cost, with the rest provided by the State.

There was no Council or public comment.

MOTION BY MS. FORD, SECONDED BY MS. CREECY: THAT CITY COUNCIL APPROVE A CHANGE ORDER TO A CONTRACT BETWEEN THE CITY OF NEWARK AND SEIBERLICH TRANE ENERGY SERVICES, NEWARK’S PREQUALIFIED ENERGY SAVINGS CONTRACTOR, ASSOCIATED WITH CIP N2203, AS WELL AS APPROVE A BUDGET AMENDMENT TO THE 2025-2029 CAPITAL BUDGET TO TRANSFER \$95,295.88 FROM CIP N2302 TO CIP N2203.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE: 5 to 0.

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

Nay – 0.

Absent – Bancroft.

9. 4. SPECIAL DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS: None

10. 5. ITEMS SUBMITTED FOR PUBLISHED AGENDA:
A. Council Members: None

11. 5-B. OTHERS: None

12. Meeting adjourned at 7:26 p.m.

Tara Schiano
Director of Legislative Services
City Secretary

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