



CITY OF NEWARK DELAWARE

Administrative Report

May 30, 2025

Items for Newsletters

1. **Main Street/Downtown Safety:** We held our third meeting to investigate and recommend changes to the downtown area to increase safety this Thursday. We expect to finalize the list of short-term efforts that we will recommend completing this summer shortly. These recommendations will go to Council for consideration at the June 16th Council meeting.

We have enlisted the help of one of our engineering consultants, JMT (<https://jmt.com/>), to assist with this effort. JMT is well qualified for this effort, and they have led several recent DelDOT projects in Newark, including but not limited to:

- The Delaware Avenue separated bikeway project
- The South Main Street/Elkton Road projects
- The South College Avenue Gateway project that is currently underway.

2. **HB 34 – Tax on Universities:** HB 34 (<https://legis.delaware.gov/BillDetail?LegislationId=1417590>), the City's requested charter amendment which would allow us to tax universities located within Newark based on enrollment, was unanimously approved by the State Senate on 5/22. It now moves to the Governor's desk for signature.

3. **Kirkwood Highway Water Main Replacement Weekend Work *Work will resume this weekend*:** Work will resume on Friday May 30th, weather depending. As mentioned in previous reports, this work will be 24/7 from Friday PM to Monday AM with delays expected and some lane closures needed. Detours will be in place for all closures and any service disruptions have been communicated to the area homes and businesses. Please reach out to Public Works if you have additional questions.

4. **UDon't Need It? Student Move Out Program:** The UDon't Need It? Student Move Out Program at the STAR Campus is wrapping up this weekend with a final sale on Saturday from 9am to 6pm. This successful program has helped keep thousands of tons of household goods from the landfill and provides a central location for collection during the busy student move out period. The sales provide a low-cost option for area residents and students to find quality household goods at a reasonable price.

5. **Coleman Park Closed Until Further Notice:** A recent park inspection identified significant safety concerns and hazardous conditions. The interior tree canopy near the entrance on Country Hills Drive is comprised primarily of black locust trees, many of which have been structurally compromised by fungal decay, posing a significant risk of falling. Additionally, the walking paths are eroded and surrounded by dense thickets of greenbrier, multiflora rose, and poison ivy—all of which are non-native, invasive, and in some cases, poisonous. These thorny species have overgrown the area and become entangled with large woody debris from fallen trees and limbs. Significant land clearing and tree removal must be completed before we can reopen the park. Unfortunately, we don't have sufficient funding in the approved 2025 budget to absorb these costs.

6. **Free Parking:** Downtown parking will be free on Saturdays and Sundays from June 21 through August 10.



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

Administration

1. **FEMA BRIC Grant Program Cancelled:** The City was notified this week that the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities grant program that we were planning to utilize for the new electric substation has been cancelled by the new presidential administration. While we weren't guaranteed to be successful with our application, we thought we had an attractive project that would have been attractive. This is a big loss as this grant would have covered a significant portion of the project cost. Our only funding options that remain will be debt financing, likely via DEMEC or locally issued general obligation or revenue bonds.
2. **City Hall Construction:** Work is underway to make repairs to the brick façade of City Hall. This is the final step in our building envelope work. Also, bids were opened this Tuesday for the Invitation to Bid for replacement of the police department's sallyport slab (ITB 25-03). Staff are reviewing the bid and will make a decision on how to proceed shortly.

Public Works and Water Resources

1. **Drought Update:** While we technically remain in a drought watch and are well below the median streamflow for this time of year, we have been able to adjust operations and have filled the Reservoir effectively to its capacity. We will continue to monitor the levels and adjust operations as needed.
2. **DNREC Fee Increases:** Staff have reviewed and commented on a proposed fee schedule revision for the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC). DNREC's fees provide the majority of their revenue and we understand the need to fund the work that they do, however, some of the fees would have a disproportionate effect on smaller municipalities and utilities. We will continue to follow the progress of this proposal and continue to discuss during our budget process.

Planning and Development

1. Land Use

- a. Congratulations to Planner II Josh Solge who passed his AICP exam! The American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) designation is a professional certification for urban planners in the United States. It signifies a planner's commitment to high standards of professional practice and mastery of planning principles and tools. To earn and maintain the AICP designation, planners must be current members of the American Planning Association, pass the exam, and meet education and experience requirements.
- b. Staff completed and posted the June 3 Planning Commission agenda packet, which will include the following items:
 - i. [Special use permit for a marijuana cultivation facility at 302 Markus Court.](#)
 - ii. [Amendment to Chapter 27, Subdivisions, to update development plan submission standards to reflect the new digital submission requirements.](#)
 - iii. [Discussion regarding the Plan for Planning for Comprehensive Development Plan VI to get initial Planning Commission ideas and feedback.](#)

2. Code Enforcement

- a. Property Maintenance staff worked Saturday and Sunday during UD student move out talking to students and parents about UDon't Need It and scheduling several bulk pickups. Due to their efforts, there was a noticeable decrease in property maintenance complaints after move out.
- b. Code Enforcement staff met with the City Manager, Police and City Solicitor regarding violations of a special use permit for a restaurant with alcohol service. The City Solicitor will be drafting a letter to the business for a mandatory meeting with staff to review the issues with the property. Additional violations after that meeting will result in the business being referred to City Council for review of the special use permit.
- c. Code Enforcement staff continue to see a high level of permit and license applications with 150 permits and 262 business and rental licenses in May through the writing of this report. Staff continue to work to process these items in a timely manner, but has been slowed by volume and staff absences. Customers can track the progress of their applications by logging into their account through our [Citizen Self Service portal](#) which gives them real-time information regarding their application.

3. Parking

- a. Staff began Mobile Enforcement Application-License Plate Recognition connectivity testing in the field towards completion of digital residential permit testing. This will allow for the special residential parking district permits to be monitored via the City's LPRs and create efficiencies for staff in finding vehicles illegally parked in these areas.
- b. As part of the digitization of the special residential parking district permits, expiration emails have been able to be automated through the digital permit system. This has meant more proactive contact from residents to renew their permits and is expected to relieve some of the workload for administrative staff during the fall permitting period from August to October.
- c. Staff worked with the Communications team on publicity for the upcoming free parking on Saturdays and Sundays from June 21 through August 10. Social media publicity has begun with more information to be taken to Main Street businesses this upcoming week.

Parks and Recreation

1. Projects:

- a. Dickey Park improvement – progress meetings held monthly (approximately 91% project completion), pavilion, swing set and exercise equipment will be installed soon, barring additional weather delays
- b. George Read Park improvements – progress meetings held monthly (approximately 29%

project completion), trail and basketball court have been cut out, paving scheduled to begin soon barring additional weather delays

- c. Old Papermill Road Park – progress meetings held monthly (Approximately 36% project completion), completed curbing for parking lot, will subgrade parking lot and start on pickleball area next
- d. Olan Thomas/Kershaw Trail – scheduled DelDOT public meeting for June 5 at City Hall, notification sent out to Council, posted on website and social media
- e. Folk Park potential project- received final concept recommendation from the Wills Group and sent to the CAC for feedback prior to presenting to Council for decision/direction.

2. Maintenance/Operations:

- a. New play features for Rahway Park will be arriving next week, and installation will be scheduled.
- b. Completed the tree giveaway survey for CAC and sent results to them.
- c. CAC sponsored Newark Nature Nooks in five different parks are taking off with 5 different plant species starting to grow within them.
- d. Setting up meeting with Public Works and our contractor regarding the trimming of Main Street trees related to the safety improvement project.
- e. Preparing budget information in preparation for upcoming budget meetings.
- f. Preparing a sketch for additional handicap spot at Lumbrook Park parking lot.
- g. Finalizing work orders for the summer camps and pools in preparation for them starting on June 9.
- h. Reviewed demonstration of a park work order maintenance system.

3. Upcoming Events:

- a. Spring Concert Series - Continues every Thursday until June 5. Rained out last week. We are working to add a concert on 6/12
- b. Liberty Day and Fireworks – 7/4 at UD Athletic Complex. We are still taking vendors. Next meeting scheduled for June 3 with all agencies involved with set up.

4. Recreation Programming:

- a. Summer camp preparations are ongoing including hiring staff, ordering supplies, field trip reservations and planning staff training for 6/4.
- b. George Wilson Center
 - i. Air Conditioning Units have been repaired
 - ii. For the week of 5/19, we had 2 short-term rentals, and 4 long-term rentals. Additionally, we held yoga classes and the start of pottery open studio.
 - iii. We are working with Newark Library Staff to see if we can host some of their programs during the planned two-year construction of their new facility

5. Volunteers

- a. We are recruiting volunteers for upcoming opportunities including Liberty Day/Fireworks, National Day of Service (9/11), Community Day and Summer Camp Volunteers
- b. Finalizing details with a Cub Scout group for a clean up event at Lumbrook Park on 6/11
- c. Adopt a Park/Trail Program
 - i. Fruscella family cleaned up trash at Hidden Valley Park this week
 - ii. CVST/Mason Dixon Trail – Wilmington Trail Club volunteer cut back multiflora rose and other plants encroaching along the trail, also removed a small tree

Finance Department

- 1. **Audit:** Staff continues to work on the final fieldwork stage of the City's annual financial statement audit. Completion of Annual Comprehensive Financial Report by June 30, 2025 is our goal.

2. **Part Time Bookkeeper Vacancy:** An applicant was selected and is currently going through background checks. Anticipated start date is June 23, 2025.
3. **Assistant IT Manager Vacancy:** This position is scheduled to be advertised beginning next Friday.
4. **Budget:** Department Directors are currently working on their individual Operating and Capital budgets. Internal meetings to discuss the departmental budgets are scheduled for July.