

**CITY OF NEWARK  
DELAWARE  
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**

**MAY 12, 2025**

Those present at 7:00 p.m.:

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| Presiding:     | Mayor Travis McDermott<br>District 1, John Suchanec<br>Deputy Mayor, District 2, Corinth Ford<br>District 3, Jay Bancroft<br>District 4, Dwendolyn Creecy<br>District 5, Jason Lawhorn<br>District 6, Vacant                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Staff Members: | City Manager Tom Coleman<br>City Secretary Tara Schiano<br>City Solicitor Paul Bilodeau<br>Deputy City Secretary Diana Reed<br>Parks & Recreation Director Paula Ennis ( <i>Virtual</i> )<br>Planning & Development Director Renee Bensley<br>Public Works & Water Resources Director Tim Filasky<br>Public Works & Water Resources Deputy Director Ethan Robinson<br>Chief of Community Engagement Officer Jayme Gravell ( <i>Virtual</i> )<br>Assistant City Manager – Operations Jeff Martindale<br>Finance Director Jill Hollander<br>Parking Manager Marvin Howard ( <i>Virtual</i> )<br>Parking Supervisor Courtney Mulvanity ( <i>Virtual</i> )<br>Senior Planner Michael Fortner ( <i>Virtual</i> )<br>Community Planner I Lauren Dykes ( <i>Virtual</i> )<br>Administrative Professional II Alexis Van Campen |

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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. When 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 Council member 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 comment. Public comments were limited to 5 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. When there were Council members attending remotely, he would call on them at the appropriate time for their vote. All votes were required to be audible and no visible voting would be accepted. 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 their 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. 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.

MOTION BY MR. LAWHORN, SECONDED BY MR. SUCHANEC: TO REMOVE ITEM 10A FROM THE AGENDA.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE 6 TO 0.

Aye – McDermott, Suchanec, Ford, Bancroft, Creecy, Lawhorn.  
Nay – 0.  
Absent – 0.

MOTION BY MR. LAWHORN, SECONDED BY MR. SUCHANEC: TO MOVE ITEM 6A TO COME AFTER ITEM 8B.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE 5 TO 1.

Aye – McDermott, Suchanec, Bancroft, Creecy, Lawhorn.  
Nay – Ford.  
Absent – 0.

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

3. 1. **PUBLIC PRESENTATION: (15-minute limit):** None

4. 2. **ITEMS NOT ON PUBLISHED AGENDA**

A. Elected Officials who represent City of Newark residents or utility customers (2 minutes): None

5. 2-B. **UNIVERSITY**

(1) Administration (5 minutes per speaker) (10 minutes):

**4:15**

Mr. McDermott noted Caitlin Olsen, University of Delaware (UD) Administration, emailed her comments to Council prior to the meeting to preserve time for public comment.

Mr. Suchanec appreciated Ms. Olsen's comments being submitted in writing and encouraged this to be done moving forward in addition to the verbal report.

6. 2-B-2. **STUDENT BODY REPRESENTATIVE(S) (5 minutes per speaker) (2 minutes):** None

7. 2-C. **CITY MANAGER (10 minutes):** None

8. 2-D. **COUNCIL MEMBERS (5 minutes):**

**5:15**

**Dr. Bancroft:**

- Appreciated Ms. Olsen summarizing UD's current activities to preserve Council's time.
- Asked for clarification about the vote taken at the beginning of this meeting regarding Item 6A. It was clarified the vote was to move this discussion to the end of the agenda.

**Ms. Ford:**

- Noted she and Mr. Suchanec recently visited the site of a Georgetown pallet site pilot project that has been successful in sheltering people experiencing homelessness.

**Mr. Suchanec:**

- No comment.

**Ms. Creecy:**

- No comment.

**Mr. Lawhorn:**

- No comment.

**Mr. McDermott:**

- The City's Memorial Day parade will be held Sunday, May 18<sup>th</sup> on Main Street.

**9. 2-E. PUBLIC COMMENT (5 minutes per speaker) (10 minutes): None**

**6:47**

Sasha Aber, District 5 resident and member of the Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) Commission, appreciated the City's dedication to diversity, belonging, and inclusion. She noted the D&I Commission has discussed holiday decorations and religious pluralism for several years. They recently approved and submitted two recommendations to Council, appearing on tonight's consent agenda. She explained the first recommendation is for Council to instruct staff to include a menorah in the holiday display on the Academy Lawn while also adopting a policy to include additional displays when requested by other groups, according to the Third Circuit Court rulings. The second recommendation is for Council to authorize up to \$600 in funding from the Winterfest budget or another applicable budget line to fund the purchase of a 6-foot menorah. She noted she has privately raised almost the full amount needed for the menorah in her discussions with various community organizations. She explained the second recommendation was made because the 2025 budget is already set, and instead of requesting Council to allocate money for 2026, she would like to push to have this initiative completed this year. She added the City Solicitor has reviewed the legality of this ruling and affirmed the Supreme Court ruling allowing menorahs to be included as part of the public secular seasonal holiday display. She wished for Council to act on both recommendations, including purchasing the menorah with the pledged funds, and making up the difference. In addition, the City will need to store and display the menorah annually. She thanked Council for listening to its citizens and commissions, and their commitment to Newark's diverse community.

Mr. Lawhorn asked when Council could discuss the holiday festivities and if this is an upcoming agenda item. He noted there have been conversations with TNP about what Winterfest will look like.

Mr. Coleman was unsure when a discussion regarding holiday festivities would occur.

Ms. Aber noted TNP has contributed funding towards this menorah.

Mr. Lawhorn expressed his preference for a formal discussion about the holiday festivities, noting good progress has been made.

Mr. McDermott stated he would work with the City Secretary to add this discussion item to a future agenda, as that discussion should occur soon.

**10. 3. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA: (1 minute)**

- A.** Approval of the April 17, 2025 Council Meeting Minutes
- B.** Approval of the April 21, 2025 Council meeting Minutes
- C.** Receipt of the March 25, 2025 Diversity and Inclusion Commission Meeting Minutes
- D.** Receipt of the Diversity and Inclusion Commission Recommendation to Include a Menorah in the City's Holiday Display on the Academy Lawn
- E.** Receipt of the Diversity and Inclusion Commission Recommendation for Funding Authorization for the Purchase of a Menorah for the Holiday Display
- F.** Resignation of Gil Nichols from the District 2 Position on the Parking Advisory Committee

**10:22**

Ms. Schiano read the consent agenda into the record.

MOTION BY MS. FORD, SECONDED BY MR. LAWHORN: TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA AS PRESENTED.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE 6 TO 0.

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

Nay – 0.

Absent – 0.

**11. 4. APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS, COMMITTEES AND COMMISSIONS:**

- A.** Reappointment of Gene Niland to the At-Large Position on the Board of Ethics for a Term to Expire February 15, 2030

**11:25**

Mr. McDermott noted this is his at-large reappointment. Mr. Niland is a member of Aetna Hose, Hook and Ladder Co., and has served on this board for a significant amount of time. He encouraged Council to reappoint him to the Board of Ethics.

There were no Council or public comments.

MOTION BY MR. LAWHORN, SECONDED BY DR. BANCROFT: THAT COUNCIL REAPPOINT GENE NILAND TO THE AT-LARGE POSITION ON THE BOARD OF ETHICS FOR A TERM TO EXPIRE FEBRUARY 15, 2030.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE 6 TO 0.

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

Nay – 0.

Absent – 0.

**12. 4-B. REAPPOINTMENT OF C. MICHAEL LUCK TO THE DISTRICT 5 POSITION ON THE BOARD OF ETHICS FOR A TERM TO EXPIRE FEBRUARY 15, 2030**

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**13:03**

Mr. Lawhorn noted that this is a reappointment of C. Michael Luck, a licensed broker and financial advisor who takes ethics training and is ethically bound by his employment. He is a Newark Morning Rotary Club member and an involved citizen who participates in many community activities. He believed Mr. Luck to be worthy of reappointment to the board.

There were no Council or public comments.

MOTION BY MR. LAWHORN, SECONDED BY MR. SUCHANEC: TO REAPPOINT MICHAEL LUCK TO THE DISTRICT 5 POSITION ON THE BOARD OF ETHICS FOR A TERM TO EXPIRE FEBRUARY 15, 2030.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE 6 TO 0.

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

Nay – 0.

Absent – 0.

**13. 4-C. REAPPOINTMENT OF JAMES CLOONAN TO THE AT-LARGE, CIVIL ENGINEER POSITION ON THE BOARD OF BUILDING, FIRE, PROPERTY MAINTENANCE AND SIDEWALK APPEALS FOR A TERM TO EXPIRE ON AUGUST 31, 2029**

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**14:35**

Mr. McDermott noted this is another at-large reappointment. This is an important position, and James Cloonan has been employed as an engineer with construction-related services for over 40 years. He believed Mr. Cloonan has served on this board for a significant amount of time and encouraged Council to move forward with his reappointment.

There was no Council or public comment.

MOTION BY MR. LAWHORN, SECONDED BY MR. SUCHANEC: TO REAPPOINT JAMES CLOONAN TO THE AT-LARGE CIVIL ENGINEER POSITION ON THE BOARD OF BUILDING, FIRE, PROPERTY MAINTENANCE AND SIDEWALK APPEALS FOR A TERM TO EXPIRE ON AUGUST 31, 2029.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE 6 TO 0.

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

Nay – 0.

Absent – 0.

**14. 4-D. REAPPOINTMENT OF REBECCA STEWART TO THE AT-LARGE POSITION ON THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT/REVENUE SHARING ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR A TERM TO EXPIRE MARCH 15, 2028**

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**15:45**

Mr. McDermott expressed his appreciation for Ms. Stewart's work on this committee and her willingness to continue.

Rebecca Stewart, District 1, stated she was happy to continue serving in this role.

There were no Council or public comments.

MOTION BY MR. SUCHANEC, SECONDED BY MR. LAWHORN: TO REAPPOINT REBECCA STEWART TO THE AT-LARGE POSITION ON THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT/REVENUE SHARING ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR A TERM TO EXPIRE MARCH 15, 2028.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE 6 TO 0.

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

Nay – 0.

Absent – 0.

15. 5. **ITEMS NOT FINISHED AT PREVIOUS MEETING:** None

16. 7. **FINANCIAL STATEMENT: (Ending December 31, 2024)** (15 minutes)

17:00

Jill Hollander, Finance Director, explained that overall revenues at year-end were \$1.6 million higher than budgeted. Operating expenditures and debt service were \$6 million less than budgeted, resulting in an overall positive variance of \$7.6 million for the year. There was a positive \$1.8 million variance in Personnel Services. The variance resulted from salary savings of \$820,000 and \$975,000 in avoided healthcare costs. Debt service reflected a positive variance of \$1.7 million. She noted that project delays can cause difficulty when forecasting the budget. \$730,000 of this value was from the substation, and then \$722,000 was from equipment that was ordered but not yet received. Contractual services showed a \$1.6 million variance with a budget of just over \$11 million. There was a remaining balance of \$1.6 million at the end of December. Remaining variances: \$235,000 across the utility divisions, \$583,000 in Police, \$183,000 in Legislative, and \$143,000 in self-insurance.

She explained all revenue, non-utility, and utility reflected a \$1.6 million positive variance when compared to the budget. This was divided between a \$299,000 variance in utilities and a variance of \$1.9 million for non-utility revenue sources. Utilities performed close to budget with a 0.2% variance from the \$81.5 million budgeted, coming in just shy of \$81.3 million. The \$1.9 million variance in non-utility results from several increases in the budget in lodging taxes, Parks & Recreation fees, and interest earnings. However, these were offset by revenues, which were under budget in real estate transfer taxes (RTT), parking revenue, and fines. The most significant revenue attributed to the positive variance was the increase in grant-in-aid funding received from the State, which the City received \$2 million in 2024, versus \$450,000 in 2023. Overall, the City finished with a positive variance to the budget due to extra revenues and lower expenses.

The Mayor opened the table to Council comment.

Ms. Creecy stated she was pleased with this report and the positive variance.

Mr. Suchanec noted tax revenue was down in all categories except lodging tax, which staff may want to pay special attention to moving forward. He noted lodging tax is the second largest contributor to the City's revenue.

Ms. Hollander noted RTT is hard to predict as it is based on property sales. This is the tax budget line that went down the most.

Mr. Suchanec noted property tax was also below budget.

Mr. Lawhorn noted the electrical revenue surplus was already factored into the City's revenue stabilization adjustment (RSA) discussion. The positive variance in Personnel Services is due to extended personnel vacancies. The City was still reasonably low in RTT. He noted when big apartment buildings and shopping centers were selling in previous years, they had significant overruns but would still budget a reasonable amount to be anticipated from normal house sales. He asked if this was accurate.

Mr. Coleman believed the City used \$1.65 million last year.

Ms. Hollander could not recall the specific number used.

Mr. Coleman stated the budget number is set as the baseline, and this is the first year the City has not met it.

Ms. Ford asked for clarification that some of the budget surplus is due to deferred delivery of equipment that will be paid for later.

Ms. Hollander stated she was referring to Debt Service, where the City did not have to begin paying down the debt as they had not yet received the equipment. The amortization schedule has not yet started, and the City has not made any principal payments.

Ms. Ford asked for clarification that this is a temporary delay.

Ms. Hollander confirmed, noting staff will re-budget for it next year.

Mr. Coleman noted the state revolving loan fund deferred interest-only payments on the water side. Due to a change in state policy, the City does not need to make interest-only payments as previously planned.

Dr. Bancroft and Mr. McDermott thanked Ms. Hollander for the report.

There was no public comment, and the Mayor proceeded to the following item on the agenda.

- 17. 8. RECOMMENDATIONS ON CONTRACTS & BIDS OVER CONSENT AGENDA LIMIT:**
- A.** Recommendation to Amend the Approved 2025-2029 Capital Budget for CIP K2202 for Dickey Park Site Improvements (Contract Stemming from ITB 24-11) and CIP K2305 for George Read Park (Contract Stemming from ITB 24-10) – Parks and Recreation Director (15 minutes)

**23:38**

Jeff Martindale, Assistant City Manager – Operations, noted this request consists of two budget amendments for the Dickey Park and George Read Park projects. There are no changes to the plans for either park. However, the Outdoor Recreation, Parks and Trails (ORPT) grant from the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) cannot be used now due to a new Department of Labor determination regarding prevailing wage requirements for park projects statewide, making the use of ORPT funds infeasible for the City's projects. It is estimated that receiving the \$80,000 from ORPT would cost the City an excess of \$150,000 in additional labor costs. Staff consider this additional cost to be fiscally irresponsible for both the City and the ORPT program. Staff will continue to pursue channels to overturn this determination or better understand this decision from the Department of Labor. Staff propose the City use funding from the Cash in Lieu of Parkland account to cover this gap.

The Mayor opened the table to Council comment.

Dr. Bancroft appreciated staff's effort.

Ms. Ford asked for clarification if it would cost the City more to accept this funding.

Mr. Martindale responded in the affirmative. The prevailing wage requirement would apply to the entire project and not just the \$80,000 received from ORPT.

Ms. Ford asked if there was any appeal process for this determination.

Mr. Martindale noted staff are currently discussing how to do so.

Mr. Suchanec believed this to be a wise decision.

Ms. Creecy asked how long it would take for this to be rectified.

Mr. Martindale explained this would go into effect immediately. The ORPT grant administrators are working with the City to allow us to return the money. He expected this to be through reimbursement.

Mr. McDermott asked if DNREC would still be willing to give the City the grant money to cover its expenditures should their appeal be successful.

Mr. Coleman noted the Department of Labor has indicated there is no appeal process for their administrative decisions. He explained the Department of Labor initially determined that building a new

construction pavilion within an existing park is considered new construction and would be subject to the \$500,000 threshold before it triggered prevailing wage. Two days later, the City received an amended decision that, because the park previously existed, any changes are considered a renovation of an existing facility. This makes the project subject to the \$45,000 prevailing wage threshold. The City has two park projects, both approaching \$500,000, and each project would be subject to prevailing wage provisions.

Mr. McDermott asked if any improvements to any named park, even if no amenities existed, would be subject to this determination.

Mr. Coleman believed this to be a shortcoming in the Department of Labor's position.

Mr. Martindale hoped this determination would only pertain to parks.

There was no public comment.

MOTION BY MS. CREECY, SECONDED BY MR. SUCHANEC: THAT COUNCIL AMEND THE APPROVED 2025-2029 CAPITAL BUDGET FOR CIPS K2202 AND K2305 AS OUTLINED IN THE STAFF MEMO DATED APRIL 23, 2025 UTILIZING CASH IN LIEU OF PARKLAND/OPEN SPACE FUNDING IN THE AMOUNT OF \$80,000 IN PLACE OF THE PREVIOUSLY ALLOCATED ORPT GRANT FUNDS.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE 6 TO 0.

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

Nay – 0.

Absent – 0.

**18. 8-B. REQUEST OF NEWARK HOUSING AUTHORITY TO WAIVE PARKING SPACE FEES IN RELATION TO CONSTRUCTION AT GEORGE READ VILLAGE – PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR (10 MINUTES)**

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**28:58**

Renee Bensley, Planning & Development Director, explained the new affordable housing development at George Read Village requires the closure of two on-street parking spaces at the construction site entrance for the duration of construction. The City would typically charge \$25 per parking space per day. However, this project anticipates those spaces would need to be closed for two years, totaling a cost of \$36,500. Staff request Council to consider waiving this fee for the 24-month project duration to provide support for affordable housing.

The Mayor opened the table to Council comment.

Mr. Lawhorn suggested notifying the community of how much money the City contributes to affordable housing efforts. He asked for the total amount of funding that has been waived so far.

Ms. Bensley stated \$120,223.20 has already been waived in subdivision fees and anticipated temporary certificate of occupancy fees for this project.

Mr. Coleman stated the City received \$500,000 from the State through the bond bill to contribute to the project. While this funding was not provided by the City, they were the conduit.

Mr. Lawhorn asked if \$120,223.20 was waived before tonight's proposal.

Ms. Bensley responded in the affirmative.

Mr. Lawhorn asked how many units are expected from this project.

Ms. Bensley stated 72 units are expected.

Mr. Lawhorn stated affordable housing is being discussed by both Council and the State. He believed it was critical that the community pay attention and understand the City's contributions, efforts, and costs toward providing affordable housing efforts.

There was no public comment.

MOTION BY MS. FORD, SECONDED BY MR. LAWHORN: THAT COUNCIL AGREE TO WAIVE THE FIRST \$36,500 IN PARKING SPACE FEES FOR THE GEORGE READ VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT FOR THE MIXED-USE BUILDING AND GARDEN APARTMENTS TO BE LOCATED AT 313 EAST MAIN STREET.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE 6 TO 0.

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

Nay – 0.

Absent – 0.

19. 6. **SPECIAL DEPARTMENT REPORTS:**

A. Main Street Safety Improvements – City Manager (50 minutes)

**33:15**

Mr. Coleman acknowledged the heartbreaking loss of Marina Vasconcelos, a promising young member of Newark's community whose life was tragically cut short by a criminal's reckless actions. He extended the City's condolences to her family, friends, and fellow students still reeling from the devastating incident. He noted this is the second time in recent months that a student has lost their life due to a criminal fleeing from law enforcement on City streets; two tragic reminders of the potential consequences when people act in their self-interest without regard for others' safety. He added under different circumstances; it could have been the family of any person in this room grieving a loss. He believed the City must have urgency and resolve in discussing potential changes to City roadways. He felt the City owed it to those lost and every pedestrian to make its streets safer. He stressed that decisions made should be based on facts and data. While it is imperative to move quickly, the City must be thoughtful in balancing the advantages and disadvantages of each potential choice. He noted that every situation is a trade-off, and the City must be honest about what they are willing to sacrifice to balance increasing safety on Main Street and remember the potential to reduce safety elsewhere, either by shifting traffic to other streets or impacting emergency vehicle response times.

He began by updating the action items in the correlating memo and reviewing the speed study results for two completed locations. He noted the City has activated the "Your Speed" radar signs on Main Street at Center Street. Data was collected with the "Your Speed" signage turned off, and when the study is complete, it will be turned on. The Public Works & Water Resources (PWWR) and Parks & Recreation Departments have worked to identify greenery in need of trimming to improve street sign visibility.

Mr. Coleman reported UD is working to schedule a public forum later this month, and they have also begun to identify ideas used in other college towns for ways to improve downtown safety. The Police and Parks & Recreation Departments have checked streetlights to confirm all are working correctly, especially near crosswalks. PWWR identified 8 – 10 parking spaces which are at crosswalks that the City should potentially eliminate to highlight those crosswalks and pedestrians waiting to cross. The Code Enforcement Division met earlier in the day and would collaborate with restaurants to remove items near crosswalks that could obscure the view of a pedestrian crossing.

Mr. Coleman noted he would provide pedestrian safety statistics to ensure an understanding of the correlation between vehicle speed and crash outcomes for those hit by a vehicle. He shared a graphic from a 2017 National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) publication. The chance of a pedestrian's survival from being hit by a car drastically diminishes as speed increases. Senior citizens are much more likely to die being struck by a similar speed than someone younger.

- An individual hit by a car going 20 mph has a 95% chance of survival.
- At 30 mph, the survivability drops to 55%,
- At 40 mph, the number drops to 15%.

He added an individual has a better chance of survival from being shot than from being hit by a car going 40 mph. He proceeded to explain multiple terms being utilized for this presentation:

- **Posted speed limit:** The maximum speed a driver can reach before risking a ticket from an officer.
- **50<sup>th</sup> percentile speed:** The median speed for vehicles on the road, where half will be going slower and half will be going faster. This figure gives equal weight to the vehicle and is not the average speed.
- **85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed:** The speed that would not be exceeded by 85% of all drivers, even if there were no traffic, stop signs, or slowing measures. This is the speed the driver would feel comfortable driving down the road with no obstructions. The 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed should be within 5 mph of the posted speed limit. If it varies too much from the posted

speed, it becomes difficult to accurately predict how long it will take for an approaching vehicle to reach an individual should they step into a crosswalk or pull out in a vehicle from a side street into the travel lane. In rural settings and on highways, if the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed is more than 5 mph above of the posted speed, it would be considered to raise the posted speed limit or change the road design through traffic calming to encourage drivers to drive slower.

He explained that increasing the speed limit is not much of an option in urban settings due to pedestrians. The City's only options are the "Three E's:" engineering, education, and enforcement. From an engineering perspective, the City has only three types of traffic calming options. The first is to reduce lane widths and increase side friction, such as implementing on-street parking to make the roadway appear smaller or to add pinch points. When narrowing the lane, you narrow the feel of the road, which slows vehicles down. The second is vertical speed control elements like speed humps (not bumps), speed tables, and speed cushions, which are typically used on public streets. Congestion is also considered a traffic calming tool. While it is very effective at slowing traffic, clearly most do not prefer it, and it has drawbacks.

Mr. Coleman detailed an option for reducing lane widths and increasing side friction. The City utilized this option as part of the 2019 Main Street Improvement project. He explained that gateways are crosswalk bump-outs, which help slow down the traffic. The street becomes narrower but enhances crosswalk safety by shifting the waiting pedestrians closer to the edge of the travel lane making pedestrians more visible to approaching vehicles. This also shortens the crossing distance and moves pedestrians off the street faster. Pinch points are like gateways or bump-outs, but do not have a crosswalk installed mid-block. The City also utilized this feature on Main Street in 2019. Pinch points can be combined with a speed table for a crosswalk. He noted most are familiar with speed humps, as they are utilized in many residential neighborhoods. Speed humps are not as abrupt as a speed bump and can be designed with different speeds in mind. He noted 15 mph and 20 mph speed humps are most common. The listed speed is the speed at which a vehicle will feel comfortable when driving over the hump. The City conducted a pilot program in the Summer of 2024 on both Country Club Drive and Madison Drive using 15 mph speed humps. While the 15-mph speed hump worked well on Madison Drive, the study concluded they were slightly aggressive on Country Club Drive. However, it was effective in reducing speeds. Mr. Coleman added that speed humps are tough on emergency vehicles.

He explained a speed table is designed off a pinch point, and often have crosswalks located on top of the speed table. They can also be designed for different speeds. They can be designed to slow vehicles aggressively and are utilized at Philadelphia Airport. They can be either very tall and aggressive or barely noticeable. He explained that a speed cushion is a speed bump designed for emergency routes, where they are wide enough that a car cannot miss them, but firetrucks and some ambulances can straddle them. Speed cushions provide the advantage of a speed hump or table without some of the disadvantages for larger emergency vehicles and buses. Further information will need to be gathered to determine how close together the wheels are for smaller vehicles like ambulances. Mr. Coleman added this option may not be as promising as he initially hoped, as he learned some ambulances are designed on a chassis resembling a large SUV and would still hit these cushions. The City needs more information for this to be a more viable option. It can also be challenging to install alongside parallel parking spaces, because if no vehicle is parked in the space, drivers may be inclined to swerve around the speed cushion on the side. To be effective, they would need to be installed at pinch points or also put one on each parallel parking spot.

Mr. Coleman shared a quick overview of Main Street's crash history. The Newark Police Department (NPD) researched all crash data available through the State's criminal justice data sources as far back as 2010. The only pedestrian fatalities within that period were the two from this school year. Beyond that data, several officers who have been with the NPD for 30+ years cannot recall another fatality. Staff are confident there has not been a pedestrian fatality on Main Street, aside from the two referenced, going as far back as 1995. Regarding personal injury crashes, since 2010, the City has had 131 personal injury crashes in the last 15 years. More recently, the City has averaged fewer than one accident monthly, with a total of seven in 2024. Of the 131 personal injury crashes documented, 11 were on West Main Street, from South College Avenue to Deer Park Tavern, while 120 were on East Main Street between Library Avenue and South College Avenue. He added that 92% of the crashes occurred on East Main Street. The official records also include what is referred to as the first harmful event or the first point of crash that happened in a sequence. Of the 131 total personal injury crashes, nine are reported and documented

to involve bicyclists, and seven involved pedestrians. The combined 18 account for 12% of all personal injury crashes; 51 of the 131 crashes involved driver inattention, driving carelessly or recklessly, or impaired driving, equating to 39% of crashes. There were zero listed with speed as a primary contributing factor, but excessive speed was likely captured under the “driving carelessly or recklessly charge” in those instances.

Mr. Coleman explained when looking at speed, staff considered Main Street as three distinct zones: Library Avenue to Chapel Street, Chapel Street to the crosswalk at The Green just west of Grotto’s Pizza, and from Grotto’s Pizza crosswalk to the Deer Park Tavern. The City has completed speed studies at Tyre Avenue and Center Street and are currently collecting data at the Trabant crosswalk. He shared the summary data for Main Street east of Tyre Avenue. The average speed was 23.9 mph, the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile was slightly higher at 24.5 mph, and the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile was 30.7 mph. However, the City detected one vehicle going 82 mph on that section of the roadway. In sharing a chart of the traffic volume by hour, he noted the total number of speeders per hour is consistent except for early morning hours, where almost all are speeding. The City’s speed studies are conducted for one week at a single location, and when completed, the City will move to another location to collect data for another week. The vehicle counts span over 7 days. The data by hour shows a different picture, highlighting the hidden data when looking at averages and medians. This chart shows traffic volumes are low in the early morning, increase and become consistent until 6 p.m. – 7 p.m., with volumes decreasing in the later evening hours. In one week, at 5 a.m., the fastest vehicle detected between 5 a.m. – 6 a.m. was 59 mph. The median speed is generally in line with the speed limit, and the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile is not considerably over the speed limit. However, it should be noted that there are outlier speeders who occasionally excessively speed down Main Street, consistently, each hour of the day. Mr. Coleman reported that while he expected to see higher speeds overnight, he was surprised at how fast the overnight speed was. He was also surprised to find at least one person going 40 mph or more in all but one hour of the day. He reminded that an individual hit by a car going 40 mph has a 15% survival rate.

Mr. Coleman noted that his presentation detailed how many vehicles were going at a certain speed for an hour. At 5 a.m., one person went 56 – 60 mph. He noted 45,491 cars were detected during this study, and of that vehicle count, 7,941 vehicles exceeded 30 mph. This equated to 17.5% of all cars in the survey, or one in six. Additionally, 305 vehicles, or 0.7%, of all vehicles exceeded 40 mph. Most vehicles were captured going from 21 – 30 m.p.h., but some were caught considerably over the speed limit. It was reported that on Center Street, the average speed was 14.1 mph, the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile speed was 13.9 mph, and the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed was 19.2 mph. There is also an outlier speeding issue at this location. One vehicle was detected traveling 47 mph, but significantly less when compared to further east at Tyre Avenue. He explained this was a good example of how congestion helps control speed, as speed drops rapidly as vehicle volume increases. The 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed is at or below the posted speed limit for most of the day, beginning around 7 a.m. and continuing through last call. Pedestrian volumes on Main Street in this area tend to follow a similar pattern with traffic volumes: they pick up in the morning, peak around lunch, and then stay high late into the evening. The maximum speeds recorded in this area are significantly lower than further east on Main Street, but still higher than expected during the day. He noted he was surprised to see the maximum speed increase around 9 p.m. before a significant drop in congestion. The vehicle volumes start to trend downward, but not as much as expected, based on the speed, which increased from 31 mph to 43 mph.

He noted that the data shows significantly fewer outlier speeders in the Center Street area than at Tyre Avenue. A few vehicles were speeding, but there were fewer overall. He reminded that the study at Tyre Avenue captured almost 8,000 cars exceeding 30 mph. The number drops to 507 vehicles at Center Street, although 9,000 more vehicles were measured in the week at Center Street compared to Tyre Avenue. This means 17.5% of the cars at Tyre Avenue are going over 30 mph, while less than 1% were doing so at Center Street. At Tyre Avenue, staff measured 305 vehicles exceeding 40 mph, but only 30 vehicles exceeded 40 mph at Center Street. This shows much less of an issue with outliers in this area. Most vehicles in this location exceed the speed limit in the 6 – 20 mph range, with a few outliers, but significantly fewer than in the vicinity of Tyre Avenue. He summarized that the city has had two fatal crashes this year, but these were the only incidents in 30 years. He reminded that this speed data is incomplete, as only 2 of the 3 locations have been measured. He suspected the data of the area by the Trabant Center would show increased speeds over the Center Street area, but lower than Tyre Avenue. However, he reminded that staff do not yet have that data. The speed varies over the corridor, and speeding is a more serious issue at the east end of Main Street, especially overnight. Vehicle speeds are

often an issue during the late evening and overnight, but not so much during the day. He reminded all three serious injury crashes this school year were caused by a criminal fleeing from police.

Mr. Coleman requested, in light of the incomplete data and the need to act quickly, Council direct staff to work with DelDOT, Aetna Hose, Hook and Ladder, Co., and UD to develop recommendations for Council consideration. Additionally, the City would solicit feedback from the community and targeted student groups and report back to Council as soon as possible, to allow for the implementation of any recommendations before students return for the fall semester, as it will become more challenging to conduct downtown construction projects after classes resume. He asked Council for support to amend the City's bond bill request to allow the funding to be spent on any Main Street safety improvements that are identified. He asked Council to consider requesting assistance from the City's State legislators to discuss increasing penalties for individuals who flee from the police in a vehicle. He believed there to be a fundamental difference between fleeing on foot and fleeing in a vehicle due to the significant damage that can be caused by a vehicle. He also suggested Council request the State law be amended to authorize speed cameras in mixed-use areas like Main Street, especially along the eastern end. Currently, the law references residential districts, and the difference between residential and commercial districts in the state code is unclear. He believed it would be challenging to include Main Street in this category when staff refer to it as the City's central business district. He believed a more definitive definition could allow Main Street to be considered. However, the downside is that the state law limits citations to vehicles exceeding the speed limit by 11+ mph, which is quite different on I-95, compared to downtown Newark. He preferred to see this threshold lower, perhaps to 4 – 5 mph over the speed limit.

Additionally, he requested Council consider updating the City's COVID-era temporary patio expansion permits to allow restaurants to transition to permanent outdoor patio options. He added some tables, and other items will need to be removed from crosswalk areas that have been present since the pandemic. The City has a formal process that was not strictly enforced because the City approved requests quickly to assist the businesses during COVID. City staff would like to conduct a formal ADA review, so all businesses will have to follow the rules. He recommended Council request that DelDOT create a long-term project to analyze larger-scale safety improvements that exceed what the City can complete this summer. He noted while the City has had three incidents on Main Street, they have had multiple incidents on Cleveland Avenue. St. John Church was hit twice in the fall by fleeing vehicles; another vehicle fled from Fairfield Shopping Center recently and struck a vehicle on Casho Mill Road, while another vehicle fled down South College Avenue. While currently discussing Main Street, he believed it was also critical to be mindful of other areas not yet considered. In closing, he reiterated the City has not had a fatality on Main Street in 30 years. He did not want this same circumstance to occur at another location because the City did not review policies in advance and identify anything that could be problematic.

The Mayor opened the table to Council comment.

Ms. Ford believed it was irrelevant that these types of accidents have not occurred on Main Street in 30 years. She did not believe the streets were safe for the residents, as the population has changed significantly in that time. She did not believe any other municipality currently has the same one-mile population density as Newark. She noted the City of Nashville lined the streets with bollards. She suggested considering the same for Main Street to prevent vehicles from running up onto the curb and sidewalk. She did not believe speed bumps would deter individuals like the offender on April 29<sup>th</sup>. She believed this could be a quick, affordable method of protecting pedestrians on Main Street.

Mr. Coleman noted bollards are on the City's list of potential options. He believed on-street parking to be one of the best safety precautions for pedestrians on Main Street during most hours of the day. However, it is not as common further east which staff are investigating. A challenge to adding bollards will be the heavy presence of underground utilities. He, Public Works & Water Resources (PWWR) Director Tim Filasky, and PWWR Deputy Director Ethan Robinson have already begun discussing available options, expected results, and what locations would be appropriate.

Ms. Ford believed bollards would be a good solution. While some individuals suggested large planters, she noted they obstruct the view of oncoming traffic and require continuous maintenance. She also did not believe speed cushions would be effective. While she understood Aetna's concerns, she believed staff should consider speed bumps on Main Street. She believed speed cameras should be allowed on Main Street and not just in residential zones. She noted the current legislation states an individual needs to exceed the speed limit by 11 mph to be ticketed by a speed camera. However, she did not believe this provision was appropriate for a location like Main Street. She noted Rep. Ed Osienski is willing to amend the legislation for this purpose. She reminded speed cameras are still unavailable on Capitol Trail because of issues concerning DelDOT, and believed DelDOT needs to be pushed to resolve them. She noted there have already been 10 pedestrian fatalities in Delaware in 2025, exceeding those in

2024. She did not believe “individuals who disobey the law will continue to do so” to be a valid excuse to not take action. She believed any efforts to slow traffic, such as speed cameras, would discourage these individuals. She agreed that penalties should be increased.

Mr. McDermott asked if the City Manager would like to comment on each action item from each Councilmember.

Mr. Coleman agreed. He stated Aetna Hose, Hook and Ladder, Co., Chief John Guzzo had mentioned New Castle County is working with the State to procure a mobile speed camera. Since Main Street is a DeIDOT road, the City could potentially convince the State to deploy a speed camera on Main Street if the City cannot get one from their vendor.

Ms. Ford supported deploying speed cameras with any technology available to the City.

Mr. Coleman stated the vendor is the reason behind this delay, however, there has recently been some slight improvement in the process.

Mr. McDermott asked if Ms. Ford supported amending the bond bill to fund this initiative.

Ms. Ford responded in the affirmative.

Mr. McDermott noted the City is currently considering a short-term project to create a solution before the upcoming school year. He asked if Ms. Ford is interested in pursuing a long-term plan.

Ms. Ford agreed. She believed it would be beneficial to also consider altering Cleveland Avenue to discourage a surplus of traffic.

Dr. Bancroft was interested in hearing more solutions to this issue. He supported the previously mentioned ideas, agreeing that 11 mph above the speed limit is too much for Main Street. He believed the speed cushions to be a good idea as bikes could easily avoid them. He believed long-term pressure on these initiatives is important as DeIDOT has been slow to act with their own speed cameras. He believed communicating their reasons for considering these long-term solutions, conducting an analysis, and selecting the most effective use of their money would be the best way to proceed.

Mr. McDermott asked if Dr. Bancroft supported Council's request that State legislators increase the punishments for offenders fleeing the police.

Dr. Bancroft agreed.

Mr. Lawhorn felt it was difficult to discuss minor Main Street improvements following the tragedy. As the father of a 20-year-old and a 17-year-old, he sent his condolences to the victim's family. He understood the concerns of parents who expressed worry about their children attending UD in the future because of this tragedy. He hoped this process would raise parents' confidence that the City and Council take the safety of their residents and students seriously. He noted this is not a reactive discussion only because of the prior incident, as Council continually examines the safety of the entire city. He noted his 20-year-old son works in Colorado, and he repeatedly checks in on him to ensure he is safe. He noted he is supportive of some, but not all, of the previously mentioned ideas in this discussion. He noted this conversation aims to make the city as safe as possible. He thanked the City Manager, District Attorney, DeIDOT, their State officials, and all who reacted extremely quickly to schedule this discussion.

He expressed support of the bond bill changes, adding a speed camera on Main Street, and increasing penalties for fleeing from the police. However, he did not believe increasing penalties was within the scope of this conversation. He believed it was critical to analyze the root cause of this incident, which was due to people fleeing from police. He believed there to be a good chance the offender in this tragedy should not have been on the street to begin with. He was concerned there was a lack of communication between the states where the offender had been in custody and where he should have been transferred. He hoped the Attorney General and State legislators could determine the right solution to ensure repeat violent offenders stay where they belong. He supported second chances when young people make mistakes, and did not want to see the lives of young people ruined over one incident. However, he believed violent offenders who continuously break the law should not be out on the street. He believed a more effective system would prevent this type of incident from occurring. He noted he relies heavily on the City Manager, DeIDOT, and civil engineers to provide him with their roadway expertise. However, as an expert in change management, root cause analysis, and problem solving, he advised ensuring new problems would not be created when these changes are evaluated and executed.

He advised the City to be mindful of what else could be impacted when these speeding issues are resolved. He did not want to create a situation where speeding problems are fixed, but other issues are generated.

Mr. Lawhorn encouraged Council to support Mr. Coleman's request and direct staff to work with Aetna, DelDOT, UD, and their state legislators to create a plan to present to Council. He hoped this plan would include both short-term solutions to implement before the beginning of the school year and options to consider for the mid- or long-term. He supported considering a vision for what Main Street will look like in 10-15 years. He suggested investigating a long-term plan for major thoroughways in Newark. He supported Mr. Coleman's suggestions and noted different areas of Main Street have their own specific speeding issues and will consequently need their own solutions.

He mentioned the previous discussions on preserving Main Street's vitality and businesses. He believed customers' confidence in their own safety is the most important factor for any Main Street business. He advised to be mindful of how traffic patterns and safety measures impact downtown businesses. He noted he has done extensive research on this topic, which included many of the presented ideas. He believed the City has already implemented pinch points to a degree. He learned many towns do not use speed bumps, as small, isolated speed bumps, while effective at slowing speed, have been observed to generate more issues and safety concerns. This is different from speed tables, which still impact and reduce speed but are longer and have a smaller impact on emergency vehicles. They create positive congestion that helps to slow speed. He noted when Tower Hill School experienced speeding issues in their school pick-up area, they implemented cobblestone roads due to the discomfort it creates when a vehicle drives fast. While that solution may not work for Main Street, he believed they could find creative solutions to this problem.

Ms. Creecy thanked every person who contributed to this effort. She supported the City collaborating with DelDOT, State representatives, and UD officials to create a comprehensive plan. She did not believe the City would find issues in procuring funding for these solutions. She agreed with updating the speed camera legislation to allow them on Main Street and that the 11+ mph provision should be changed to 5+ mph. She agreed removing any obstructions by pushing any items towards the businesses and farther from the street would be beneficial. She reminded staff to focus on creating solutions in the area near St. John Church. She recalled speed bumps to be effective on Madison Drive, and the neighborhood experienced significant issues when they were removed. She suggested investigating ideas such as rubber strips and fiber-enforced concrete, which she believes would cause less damage to emergency vehicles. She agreed with investigating gateways, but advised being considerate of ensuring speed bumps or fiber-enforced concrete do not extend into bike lanes. She shared this tragedy emotionally affected her as a parent of a UD graduate student and extended her condolences to the victim's loved ones.

Mr. Suchanec wanted to ensure that any plan implemented would produce Council's desired results. He noted when he first heard about the incident, he checked in on his three grandchildren who work on Main Street to ensure they were safe. He believed this problem was critical for the City to address properly. He agreed with all of Mr. Coleman's suggestions. He encouraged staff to bring their recommendations to Council and use the bond bill money for Main Street safety improvements. He believed the City's state legislators needed to continue their support. He believed speed cameras would be a solution for Main Street and supported whatever legislation would allow them to do so. He noted that he had discussed with the Chief of Police the possibility of the City having the authority to set fines for speeding within its limits. He suggested considering treating Main Street similar to school zones, which have elevated fines for violating the speed limit. He believed this would help to deter speeding. However, there will still be a percentage of people who will continue to violate the law, and Council must aim to keep everyone as safe as possible. He believed it is often dangerous to get out of a car parked on Main Street.

He stated that he expected staff to return to the Council with good recommendations. He was concerned that the current traffic-calming practices on Main Street were not effective. He believed speed tables combined with crosswalks would solve many problems without causing significant issues for emergency response vehicles. He understood Aetna's concerns due to the statistics regarding how quickly a fire can double in size. He was concerned that any measures which could delay Aetna's response to emergencies would only cause the City more issues. He did not believe speed cushions would be effective, as people could potentially try to bypass them by swerving into nearby parking spaces. He believed this is a complex issue that would require Council an extensive amount of time in vetting possible solutions. He appreciated the urgency to find solutions, but he was concerned they could cause significant issues in return. He wanted to ensure Council would take the necessary time to determine the most effective solutions to this problem.

Mr. Suchanec did not believe it suited Main Street to ticket exceeding the speed limit by 11 mph. He did not think Main Street and residential roads should be considered in the same manner as I-95. He believed speeding on residential streets creates a greater risk for injuries or fatalities than on I-95. He believed decreasing the 11+ mph provision would be a quick solution to this issue while also addressing speeding in residential areas.

Mr. Coleman noted his presentation did not address all possible solutions. He thanked UD, DelDOT, and Aetna for their willingness and dedication toward finding a solution. UD is currently working on an education, engineering, and enforcement initiative to provide more information to students about situational awareness. Sasha Aber submitted a suggestion for prompts to alert pedestrians of safety precautions when crossing the street. He stated staff will also discuss signal coordination as part of this initiative, as some intersections on Main Street have signals while others do not. This discussion will focus on determining if there is value in making all crosswalks signalized, if phasing calls should be in the same order at every intersection, how to make the different crosswalks easier for pedestrians to understand, and if left turns on Main Street are necessary as they extend crossing distances. It is critical for DelDOT to be involved in these discussions, as their collaboration is necessary for many of these solutions.

Mr. Suchanec noted a lack of clarification within Code has historically confused who has the right-of-way at crosswalks. The Code states that pedestrians have the right-of-way if they are already in the roadway, but most pedestrians will not step into the road to do so as cars speed towards them. He believed removing obstructions and extending the safe part of crosswalks to open line of sight would greatly contribute to the City's pedestrian safety .

Mr. McDermott is concerned for his own children's safety when traveling to Main Street as he has observed the same speed issues mentioned by other Councilmembers. He believed this is an enforcement issue, and 99% of speeders would likely refrain from doing so if an officer or speed camera were present to ticket offenders. He was concerned the City's officers are apprehensive about conducting enforcement as they do not want to repeat this situation, which puts them in a challenging position. Officers want to stop speeders but do not want to risk another person fleeing or causing a similar incident to April 29<sup>th</sup>. He believed just as many people walk along Cleveland Avenue as they do Main Street, and their sidewalks would not be protected if another situation occurs. He was unsure how to prevent that 1% from committing egregious acts if a car goes off the road. This can happen at any location where a vehicle is stopped.

He believed speed cameras could solve the speeding issues, but not the issue of fleeing from police. He believed nothing would deter an offender from fleeing from the police, as they would take any measures to attempt to get away. He noted it often takes him a significant amount of time to drive Cleveland Avenue, similar to being caught in rush hour traffic. He could not envision how this would be manageable if Main Street were closed to vehicles, and how Cleveland Avenue could absorb Main Street's traffic.

Mr. McDermott believed the City needed to concentrate on enforcement and potential ideas such as speed tables as a short-term solution. The City needs to collaborate with UD and their State legislators to determine a short-term solution before the next school year begins. He was unsure what was causing the delay in implementing speed cameras and believed the problem needed to be resolved immediately. He did not believe it should take this long to deploy the cameras and would favor acquiring a new vendor should the current vendor not be able to work out the issues. He noted other states use either equivalent or superior technology for this purpose.

He believed the City should lobby with their State elected officials for enhanced penalties, as this is a statewide issue he has encountered many times throughout his career in law enforcement. He believed there is always the potential for these situations to end in tragedy and believed the State needs to implement mandatory penalties and bail guidelines for fleeing from the police. He did not understand how an individual charged with disregarding an officer's signal and driving recklessly could be released on unsecured bond. He agreed the City should eliminate the COVID-era informal patio approval processes on Main Street if they impede crosswalks and obstruct the line of sight. He also agreed the bond bill should be amended to accomplish these initiatives.

Mr. McDermott thanked Aetna, the Police Department, and all first responders for their response to the tragedy on April 29<sup>th</sup> and understood the difficulty of addressing such situations. Additionally, he acknowledged all the emails sent to him and assured the public that while it would take him an extensive amount of time to answer all of them, he did read every single email that was sent. He thanked everyone who submitted responses.

The Mayor opened the floor to public comment.

Peter Koroceck, District 5, appreciated the response by UD, DeIDOT, and Council to develop recommendations. However, he did not recall anyone mentioning the lack of police presence on Main Street. He believed police presence alone would deter and affect drivers' behavior. He also believed police presence is about keeping residents in line, noting the danger promoted by jaywalkers on Main Street. He believed it was time something was done because it is about pedestrian safety in addition to speeding. He did not believe a driver should go through a lifetime of counseling because of a pedestrian's mistake. He appreciated the City's intent to act quickly but urged them not to rush to an overly prescriptive or expensive solution for residents that would cause traffic to divert from Main Street onto other streets. He also believed the City has not acted quick enough despite vocalizing their interest. He believed the traffic safety sign located on Main Street should be changed to reflect the speed limit. He noted parking spaces blocking the crosswalks also obstruct line of sight. He was concerned the City had done nothing to address this problem despite being aware of it and believed this was the time for Council to make changes.

Max Bobbin, District 3 & UD Graduate Student Government (GSG) President, expressed the GSG's support for the proposed safety changes. He commended Mr. Coleman's letter and noted students regularly walk, bike, and commute along Main Street with the rest of Newark's residents and hoped the safety could be improved. The GSG supports the idea of speed tables. He believed the City owes it to its residents to attempt to stop the 1% of offenders despite the challenges in doing so. However, blocking 99% and not the 1% is still very good. The GSG recognizes that thoughtful planning takes time, and he believed the City Manager's comments about how the City must act quickly summarized the issue. He felt Main Street is not the easiest place to be a pedestrian, as it can be challenging to cross traffic, visibility is difficult for cars and pedestrians, and the sidewalks are thin. He believed there were many quick, easy solutions the City could implement. He hoped the City would remain consistent and thoughtful as they move through the process to make significant changes over the summer. He was concerned that the student population would be upset if they were to return after summer vacation to find no changes had been made. He appreciated the work done by the City and expressed GSG's support for these initiatives.

John Guzzo, Aetna Hose, Hook and Ladder Co. Fire Chief, stated Noelia Gomez and Marina Vasconcelos are the two young ladies who tragically lost their lives on Main Street. Their loss prompted the focus on preventing similar problems in the future. He appreciated the community's support and collaboration in resolving this problem. He noted another injured young lady's family stopped by the fire department on Saturday with many well wishes. Aetna, with the assistance of the Newark Police Department (NPD) and New Castle County EMS saved this young woman's life. He noted how seconds count, and a few extra seconds could make the difference between life and death in any emergency. He stated the previously mentioned young lady is alive because of extra seconds. He thanked Mr. Coleman for his work and noted Aetna is eager to work with the City, NPD, and DeIDOT to determine a solution.

He advised Council to remain cautious in determining a solution despite the hope of finding one quickly. The fire company believes speed bumps, speed humps, and speed tables all delay emergency response times and damage emergency vehicles. While the City collected speed data over one week, he believed it would be beneficial to collect data over a multi-week period. He believed the issue is most often not speeding even though the City has speeding issues which need to be addressed. He believed enforcement is the primary solution to this issue and noted while speed bumps were effective on Madison Drive, there was resistance on Country Club Drive after they were proven ineffective and were removed as a result. He believed speed bumps, speed humps, and speed tables should be avoided, as become ramps or launching pads for an emergency vehicle. While the speed cushions would be effective for large fire apparatus, it would not be the same for an ambulance.

He continued by stating the fire department supports the idea of speed cameras. He agreed that Main Street should not be treated the same as I-95 with the 11+ mph provision. He noted Aetna President Dan Seador suggested dropping Main Street's speed limit to 20 mph, so the 11+ mph provision would not cause a significant problem in the interim before the law is changed. He believed adding bollards would be an outstanding solution. He believed public awareness is a considerable problem and appreciated UD taking measures to educate its students. He believed a significant issue is pedestrians walking in crosswalks while distracted. Additionally, some cyclists avoid following traffic laws. He believed these changes, speed cameras, and increased police presence & enforcement could resolve these issues. He remarked this to be a great tragedy that the City cannot allow to happen again. However, Aetna also responds to over 10 alcohol or drug overdose calls a week, which could also lead to tragedies, which he would like to address with Council in the future. He thanked Council for their time.

Michael Smith, Vice-Chair of BikeNewark and New Castle County Representative of the Delaware Pedestrian Council, proposed the idea of safe ways, which revolves around coordinating signals on the

east part of Main Street. He noted there are often long lines of cars that travel along Main Street with no breaks because of multiple successive green lights in a row. He believed while it sometimes helps congestion; it leads to speeding opportunities where individuals progressively increase their speed to make multiple green lights in a row. He believed Main Street is great because it is a “stroad” (a type of road that combines features of both a street and a road.) He encouraged the City to investigate coordinating these signals on East Main Street, such as, by increasing the frequency of going through green, red, and yellow lights. He believed this would potentially reduce speeding opportunities as individuals would not rush through green lights. He expected that simply changing the light’s software would be inexpensive to the City. He did not believe this would affect any priority signalized vehicles and believed this would be a “win-win” for both DelDOT and the City but it should not be done on only Main Street. He believed Main Street should not be the only focus of these solutions as a cyclist was killed on Delaware Avenue in 2023. He believed ensuring a network approach where signals are coordinated across the entire City or County network could promote safety and reduce speeding opportunities.

Rebecca Stewart, District 1, asked for the dates of the traffic studies which had been collected so far on Main Street. She believed if data were collected directly after the accident, the number of speeding cars may be inaccurate.

Mr. Coleman explained the study near Tyre Avenue was conducted in November 2024, the study near Center Street was conducted from May 2<sup>nd</sup> to May 9<sup>th</sup> of this year, and the study near the Trabant Center began on May 2<sup>nd</sup> and will conclude on May 16<sup>th</sup>.

Ms. Stewart noted the study on Tyre Avenue was the only study completed before the accident. She believed the Police Department should consider booting a vehicle that has either been stolen or committed multiple offenses.

Tiffany Matthews, District 5, offered her condolences to the victim’s family and the young lady injured in the accident. She thanked the City Manager for his presentation and the Councilmembers’ attention. She noted New London Road was not mentioned in this discussion and shared that there was an accident on the previous Saturday night, and she was aware of at least two fatalities occurring where someone had gotten their vehicle stuck on the railroad tracks. She suggested completing a traffic analysis on New London Road as it has not already been done. She echoed the statements made by other residents regarding potentially increasing traffic on Cleveland Avenue. She concurred with Mr. Lawhorn in not creating additional issues for areas outside Main Street. She noted that she has seen many near-accidents on New London Road, and is concerned about her son's safety.

Mr. McDermott informed that Mr. Lawhorn would follow up with her.

Sam Van Horne, District 6, was pleased the City is attempting to address Main Street’s critical design issues. He expressed his desire for the City to be bolder in promoting pedestrian and cyclist safety. He believed he had heard more about what the City can do to vehicles rather than what they can do for pedestrians, or to reimagine a Main Street community centered around people rather than vehicles. He noted he was invested in downtown safety as he commutes downtown via bicycle. He stated cyclists and pedestrians know what will best protect them from speeding vehicles. He believed roadside protection against out-of-control cars would make it safer for people in the future. While he was pleased bollards may be part of the solution, he believed these suggestions to be “band-aids” for the greater problem of a community designed around vehicles. He believed the solution should focus on the needs of citizens rather than first responders. He disagreed with the notion of avoiding changes to roads and sidewalks for pedestrian safety, so paramedics can save victims of vehicle crashes. He asked the City to consider converting part of the downtown area into a pedestrian mall. He noted a 2017 study showing proximity to universities was a significant factor in the success of pedestrian malls. He believed downtown Newark offers the amenities a pedestrian mall needs to thrive and believed converting even a portion of this area to a pedestrian mall could remove what invites bad behavior. He believed there is a lot to enjoy downtown, such as the new Newark Free Library, restaurants, and small businesses, and people should feel comfortable visiting downtown to spend time with their loved ones. He encouraged the City to research how to convert a section of Main Street to a pedestrian mall, believing it would contribute to a safer and more vibrant downtown community.

Jacqueline Fajardo, District 3, was concerned about the safety of pedestrians on a shared roadway that serves residents and commercial businesses alike. She stated this is a bustling residential area, despite the many businesses present. She implored Council to offer support and guidance, including appropriate safety studies, implementing progress reports, and conducting an ongoing assessment. She urged Council to support substantive infrastructure changes and improvements to minimize current safety deficiencies strategically. She asked Council to pursue appropriate channels for long-term capital planning and

budgeting. She appreciated this discussion encouraged dialogue between Aetna, DeIDOT, UD, and community members. She was grateful for the first responders from Aetna, UDPD, and the EMS teams.

Ms. Schiano proceeded to read three letters into the record.

*(Secretary’s Note: The following letters were received from:*

- [Carol McKelvey.](#)
- [Elizabeth Tymkiw.](#)
- [Brian Baldwin, Nottingham Green.\)](#)

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

Ms. Ford believed there was agreement among Council for a joint effort and meetings with DeIDOT. She asked when Council could expect staff to report back with information.

Mr. Coleman stated staff will likely return to Council in June to approve and implement changes over the summer before election break in the beginning of July.

20. 9. ORDINANCES FOR SECOND READING & PUBLIC HEARING: None
21. 10. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE PLANNING COMMISSION AND/OR PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT: None
22. Meeting adjourned at 9:12 p.m.

Tara Schiano  
Director of Legislative Services  
City Secretary

/jh