

**CITY OF NEWARK
DELAWARE
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**

MAY 19, 2025

Those present at 7:00 p.m.:

Presiding:	Mayor Travis McDermott District 1, John Suchanec Deputy Mayor, District 2, Corinth Ford District 3, Jay Bancroft District 4, Dwendolyn Creecy District 6, Vacant
Absent:	District 5, Jason Lawhorn
Staff Members:	City Manager Tom Coleman Deputy City Secretary Diana Reed City Solicitor Paul Bilodeau Assistant City Manager – Operations Jeff Martindale (<i>Virtual</i>) Electric Director Bhadresh Patel Parks & Recreation Director Paula Ennis Planning & Development Director Renee Bensley Chief of Community Engagement Officer Jayme Gravell (<i>Virtual</i>) Chief of Police Mark Farrall Deputy Chief of Police Kevin Feeney PSAP & Police Records Manager Brian Cannon Parking Supervisor Courtney Mulvanity (<i>Virtual</i>) Administrative Professional I Jordan Herring Administrative Professional II Alexis Van Campen IT Desktop Support I Jackie Etzweiler

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

3. PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS (15-MINUTE LIMIT):

A. General Assembly Update – James DeChene, Lobbyist (15+ minutes)

2:43

James DeChene, Blue Hen Strategies, shared the ADU bill has recently made it out of committee, but has not yet been scheduled for vote on the Senate floor. He continues to monitor the bill and has discussed Newark's concerns with the bill's sponsor and the bill remains unchanged at this time. HB-34, the UD per capita tax bill, was quickly released from committee. He thanked Rep. Cyndie Romer and Mr. Coleman for being ready to speak at that meeting. He believed it to be a positive sign that the bill received no questions and was released without much deliberation. Additionally, Rep. Romer's motorized scooter bill made it out of committee and will be ready for a vote whenever she brings it to the floor.

The Delaware Economic & Financial Advisory Council (DEFAC) met in May and released its revenue forecast ahead of their June meeting, where the budget will be set. The May meeting serves as a precursor for what the budget may look like in June, barring any catastrophic events in the interim. He believed this verifies the public perception that the market is incredibly soft and the uncertainty in how the markets are performing. Revenues are coming in lower than what had been expected in June 2024. The State is still \$900 million above what was estimated at that time. While \$1 billion in revenue has been added over the year, this is still lower than what was anticipated. While DEFAC may state they do not believe a recession is imminent, there have been five consecutive months of low consumer confidence, similar to the pandemic. There are concerns that if consumer confidence remains low, and the market continues to soften, it will impact State revenues. He noted there is a predicted 7% increase in budget growth with a 2% growth in revenue year over year. He stated a 5% delta needs to be resolved, through actions such as increases to revenue packages or reduce the budget, which is about \$500 - \$600 million worth of revenue set aside. The governor has indicated he would use that money to close the budget gap if necessary. Mr. DeChene stated he will continue to monitor this activity over the next month to see what revenues look like. If there is less money in the operating budget, that would mean less money for the Bond Bill and grant-in-aide, both of which Newark receives a portion of. He would monitor these initiatives to ensure as much money as possible goes into the Bond Bill and grant-in-aide so Newark's requests are fulfilled.

Mr. DeChene stated he was looking for Council direction on many bills. The first is HB-78, pertaining to recordings of a public body's meetings. While the bill is created around school boards, how it is drafted impacts other public bodies such as the City of Newark. He explained the bill includes a requirement to record and digitize all meetings, post them on a website, and then archive them for at least a year so they are available for individuals to go back and listen to. However, this bill also requires recording, but not posting, executive sessions. Any matters discussed within executive sessions would no longer be privileged, and they would also be subject to posting on a website by the public body. He did not believe the City would want to take on this responsibility both from the standpoints of recording and storage space. The City would be placed in a position of determining when something is no longer privileged, keeping a running tally of what was discussed within the previous six months, and ensuring it can then be posted after a review of the minutes. The League of Local Governments is also closely monitoring this bill.

He explained SB-104 is a trauma kit bill, requiring certain entities (including the City of Newark Municipal Building) to have at least six trauma kits on hand at any given time, with specifications on what must be contained in them. The entity would also be required to place these kits in a public space with associated signage. He was unsure what led to the creation of this bill, as there had not been any known events prior to its introduction. He noted there are concerns about fines for noncompliance that increase each time there is a violation. Additionally, a trauma kit's materials expire after a specific time, meaning there would be recurring costs to the City to replace or replenish them. This cost would exceed \$600 per building on a rotating basis.

Mr. DeChene noted SB-89 is a credit card fee bill that is drafted in a way that may only achieve the opposite of its goal. This bill limits how much of a surcharge an entity can implement on credit card fee transactions. An entity would not be able to impose a credit card surcharge greater than the credit card company's percentage processing fee for transactions of \$1,500 or less, and would not be able to refuse accepting payment by credit card or impose any credit card surcharge for transactions exceeding \$1,500. He believed precluding an entity from assessing a surcharge to a credit card transaction over \$1,500 seems to be the opposite of what this bill is trying to achieve; credit card fees only increase with the amount that is being charged. He anticipated Council would not support this bill.

He noted a new version of HB-48 has been introduced, which is a substitute bill about Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible parking spaces. While the bill appears simple, it becomes more complex depending on the parking location. The bill requires that within five years of its passage, all parking lots across the state need to become ADA compliant regardless of whether the grade of the facility, size of the parking lot, or location of the parking lot are already grandfathered under the current ADA standards. Locations would also face significant issues in becoming ADA compliant. If an owner has a grade in their parking lot greater than 2%, the lot cannot become ADA compliant. This is the bill's latest iteration, and there are no substantial changes from prior bills. He believed it would be best to remove the requirements for municipalities to monitor this because of the staff time and resources required to ensure the compliance of all parking spaces. He believed it also shifts this responsibility to other permitting agencies, such as the County. There are multiple administrative requirements that the City would need to undertake in addition to many of these spots being unable to comply. He noted there are 12 – 13 days remaining in the current legislative session.

The Mayor opened the table to Council comment.

Ms. Creedy asked what remained unchanged in the ADU bill.

Mr. DeChene clarified the bill's language has not been amended since his last presentation to Council. It has passed the Senate committee and Senate housing and now only awaits a Senate floor vote. However, should the bill pass through the Senate, it will still need to go through the same process in the House of Representatives. He will continue to provide updates to Council.

Ms. Creedy stated she supported HB-78, specifically regarding the recording of school board meetings. She asked for clarification on what aspects of the bill were thought to be problematic.

Mr. DeChene explained the bill is problematic due to the provision of the bill requiring Newark to include and record executive session proceedings. While it is directed towards school boards, it impacts all public bodies. He sought Council direction on whether they would support deleting the provision or clarifying in the bill that it should only pertain to school boards.

Ms. Creedy believed this bill would create a conflict of interest as a public body holds an executive session to discuss topics that should not be publicized. She understood the need to go back and find stipulations, rules, or ordinances in previous sessions, but did not see how this provision would benefit the City.

Mr. Coleman explained he is on the Legislative Action Committee for the Delaware League of Local Governments. Legal Counsel Max Walton discussed this bill with the League at length. He noted on Line 26 of the bill, it states, "Except for portions of a recording regarding an executive session that may be withheld under this section, the public body has to post [the digital recording]..." He noted the bill then references back to when that recording would become public, "Any public records regarding executive session conducted under this section may be withheld from public disclosure so long as public disclosure would defeat the lawful purpose for the executive session, but no longer." He believed this would make it difficult to have a candid conversation about sensitive topics in an executive session if Council were aware the conversation would be recorded and eventually released verbatim. The City currently writes their minutes in summaries, so a reader would still know what occurred at the meeting. Those minutes eventually become public when the legal purpose of the executive session is no longer relevant.

Mr. Bilodeau concurred.

Ms. Creedy noted she has worked in the medical field for over 35 years, and, at the mention of SB-104, was concerned that many people in the municipal building are not trained to properly use a trauma kit in an emergency. While she supported protection for the citizens, she was concerned it would weigh upon untrained staff to use these kits without proper knowledge. She was also concerned this may cause potential legal problems, as staff would become liable by using the kits when they are not trained to do so. She asked for clarification on whether a credit card surcharge would lower after \$1,500 in SB-89.

Mr. DeChene clarified the City would not be able to charge a surcharge for any transactions over \$1,500.

Mr. Coleman added the City would also be unable to refuse credit card payments, prohibit larger customers from using credit cards, or charge them for doing so.

Ms. Creecy believed it would be problematic if the City prohibited the majority of customers from using credit cards while allowing specific entities to use them.

Mr. Coleman agreed as the City would need to stop accepting credit cards altogether.

Ms. Creecy stressed she did not support SB-89. She asked if SB-48 states that there needs to be a certain amount of handicap spacing or rails.

Mr. DeChene explained if the current bill were to pass, the owner of a parking lot would have 5 years to comply with current ADA regulations, even if they were an entity that was built and grandfathered in regarding the number, size, and type of handicap parking spaces required. With some lots, based on square footage, where the entity would need to have one handicap-accessible spot, this bill would also require it to be van accessible. It would require taking away a non-handicap parking space to make the handicapped space wide enough. Still, the lot would now be out of compliance with the area's zoning regulations, rather than having a ratio of handicap to non-handicap parking spaces that is required. This would also be in addition to situations where parking spaces or lots are located on hills and the ground has a grade of more than 2%. An entity would be subject to a situation where they would install a more expansive parking space on a parking lot that cannot be ADA compliant due to its grade, and it was not required to comply with ADA during initial construction.

Ms. Creecy asked who would reassess these situations should the bill pass.

Mr. Coleman stated that it would be the City's responsibility to do so. This bill requires the City to create a local ordinance and permitting process and then conduct the inspections to ensure compliance. However, this bill does not come with any funding for these practices. It also states that entities would need to not only meet, but exceed, current ADA standards, meaning every lot in the City would be noncompliant, considering the van space ratio is different under this bill. A handicap space cannot be placed wherever on the property; it must be closest to the entrance, with an accessible route with a grade of less than 2%. Under the bill, it would need to be corrected whenever the parking lot is restriped or within five years, whichever comes first. He did not believe this to be realistic, as the owners would lose parking spaces and need to approach the Board of Adjustment for a variance unless the lot was in the BB zoning district. This could potentially pose a problem for every lot within the city.

Dr. Bancroft noted a current revenue trend in which the demand for essentials remains steady, but there is a correlation between scarcity and inflation. He estimated the average tariff alone is approximately \$1,200 and asked Mr. DeChene if this was accurate.

Mr. DeChene stated this would be outside his purview to provide an answer.

Dr. Bancroft did not believe these costs were realistic for most Americans, which is why luxury goods may be "soft" in the market. He believed all the bills listed by Mr. DeChene needed more craft writing. He understood each bill's goals but believed it would be in the City's best interest for them to be fixed. He hoped there would be legislation regarding scooters and powered skateboards to see if they could potentially be allowed on bike paths. He believed the bill regarding meeting recordings made sense if it was handled professionally. He did not believe the bill regarding trauma kits was in the City's best interest, as it incurs a continuous cost without a specific target audience. He did not believe having a kit in every building made sense. He believed the City needs a way to recoup credit card fees, especially for larger transactions. He believed legacy grandfathering should be allowable in the ADA parking space bill. He believed the City may have to deal with these issues beyond the next five years, regardless. He hoped the bill would be rewritten in a way that does not implement any unfunded mandates on the City. Additionally, he noted that he was following 8–10 ongoing energy bills and their substitutes, to which he believed the City does not have a position. He noted that the State encourages energy generation but also foresees grid reliability issues in the future. He did not believe the City should take a strong position on these bills, but they should ensure that Delaware is stepping forward and the counties are doing their due diligence to support the grid as they transition to lower greenhouse gas emissions.

Mr. Suchanec asked if the notion that the ADU bill has been unchanged means that State legislators are not currently working on it.

Mr. DeChene stated that legislators are still working on the bill, but they are also taking his feedback into consideration. The bill was released from committee, and he expected it to be voted on. However, he was unsure of what the vote's outcome would be.

Mr. Suchanec noted the majority of Council do not support ADUs. He was amenable to the tax and motor scooter bills. However, regarding the recordation of public meetings, he noted executive sessions are permitted for specific reasons. He did not favor this bill as he believed recording and releasing executive sessions defeats their purpose. He believed many of the bills listed were ill-defined and needed to be reworked. He agreed with Ms. Creecy's stance regarding the trauma kit bill; while the kits may be available, the user may not be qualified, and the City may become subject to a lawsuit. He believed this should be the responsibility of the individuals qualified to do so. He would not support the bill regarding surcharges on credit cards as currently written. He agreed with Dr. Bancroft that parking lots should be grandfathered into the ADA parking bill, and the bill should only apply to new parking lot construction.

Ms. Ford did not support HB-78. She explained that Rep. Cyndie Romer introduced HB-82, which institutes a new residency requirement for school board members. Ms. Ford supported this bill and encouraged Council to do the same. Rep. Romer also introduced HB-64, stating that school boards must provide public access to their meetings virtually. While she believed credit card fees need to be addressed, she did not think the corresponding bill properly does so. She disagreed with the bill regarding trauma kits as she believed they may not be helpful, or could potentially be harmful, in the hands of an untrained individual. She felt there are positive aspects of HB-48, such as increasing fines for unauthorized individuals parking in handicapped spaces. She thought it should be communicated that this part of the bill be salvaged. However, she believed retroactively applying these regulations to existing parking lots would be unfair. She noted Rep. Romer's scooter bill has been amended only to allow low-speed scooters, and the speed limit has decreased from 19 to 15 mph.

Mr. DeChene stated this limit was deliberated in committee, until they reached an agreement to limit it to 15 mph for areas such as Newark and the beach.

Ms. Ford believed it was critical to remove scooters from Newark's sidewalks by allowing them in the bike lanes. In the fall, the City will need to designate a day of enforcement to remove both bikes and scooters before a resident is hurt. She expressed her support for HB-119, a "freedom to read" bill that states that reading material will not be excluded from a library due to an author's origin or religious viewpoint.

Mr. McDermott agreed while these bills seem well-intended, the long-term consequences of enacting them have not been thoroughly considered. He agreed that executive sessions are not recorded for specific reasons. Additionally, he did not believe a regular employee would be well-equipped to address the type of emergencies for which trauma kits are designed. He agreed with other Councilmembers regarding the credit card surcharge bill. He also believed the State should consider the cost to the business owner if they need to redo their entire parking lot to comply with the ADA parking bill.

There was no public comment.

Mr. Coleman noted that the City sets its own handicap parking fine rates, which are already high. The fine amount in this bill only applies to the Delaware State Police (DSP). He added that bikes are allowed on sidewalks except for Main Street or streets with on-street bike facilities as per City Code.

Ms. Ford clarified she spoke about Main Street in her comments regarding biking on sidewalks.

4. B. THE NEWARK PARTNERSHIP – ALI DEANGELIS

37:38

Ali DeAngelis, The Newark Partnership (TNP) Program Director, updated Council on TNP's recent initiatives. She noted she would serve as the interim Executive Director due to the resignation of Mark Arehart, the former Executive Director, to pursue another opportunity with the Delaware Community Foundation.

(Presentation: [Attached here](#). The presentation spanned from 37:38 to 42:32.)

The Mayor opened the table to Council comment.

Dr. Bancroft thanked Ms. DeAngelis for her work on the candidate forum, mural project, veteran flags project, and community outreach efforts. He stated TNP demonstrates the scope of their involvement in the community through various collaborations, which Council greatly appreciates.

Ms. Creecy believed Ms. DeAngelis deserved to step into the Executive Director role and asked who would fill the Program Director role in the interim.

Ms. DeAngelis stated this decision will be made by the Board of Directors, to which she was unsure when that would be done.

Ms. Creecy explained she has observed that many of the current veteran banners have pictures that appear to be retouched, and asked why they cannot do that to the New London Road banners so they have the same quality. She also hoped there could be a mix of the banners on both Main Street and New London Road.

Ms. DeAngelis clarified that she was not involved in acquiring the pictures as part of the current Main Street Banner Project. The Friends of School Hill Association (FOSHA) are responsible for acquiring the images for the New London Road banner project, and are working to obtain higher-quality photos.

Ms. Creecy wondered if the banners' design vendor could include photo retouching as part of their work.

Ms. DeAngelis did not believe this was in the vendor's purview of the project.

Ms. Ford believed Ms. DeAngelis was deserving of her promotion. She asked for clarification on where the Knowing Newark event will take place.

Ms. DeAngelis stated this event will be held at the same time and place as the Newark Farmer's Market at the Newark Shopping Center. The Farmer's Market has allotted eight spaces for TNP to fill with nonprofits who want to share their history with Newark residents.

Ms. Ford noted she emailed Ms. DeAngelis with her availability for the next mural committee meeting.

Mr. Suchanec congratulated Ms. DeAngelis and commended her for a job well done with TNP. He asked if she could identify which nonprofits would be featured at the Knowing Newark event.

Ms. DeAngelis stated the current list of nonprofits includes the Chapel Street Players, Friends of the Newark Free Library, Tristate Bird Rescue, FOSHA, and TNP. There are still three spaces available.

Mr. Suchanec explained he would feature an article on the subject in his newsletter if Ms. DeAngelis were to provide information.

Ms. DeAngelis stated she would send information for Council to share.

Mr. Suchanec explained he and his wife lived on the corner of Corbit Street and New London Road when they were first married, and he supported the projects to celebrate that community. He believed they could pursue a mixed approach that combines the Main Street banner project with the New London Road banner project without focusing on specific community aspects in the future.

Mr. McDermott thanked Ms. DeAngelis for her work at the Memorial Day Parade. He also thanked those who attended and participated, remarking the turnout has improved since the last two years' events. He thanked Ms. DeAngelis for her work on the Stars & Strides event and encouraged the rest of Council to attend. He asked for clarification on the plan and timeline for Winterfest 2025.

Ms. DeAngelis explained the Parks & Recreation Department and TNP collaborate to host Winterfest every year. TNP also added the Holiday Artisan Market as both an extension of Winterfest and its own program in 2024. Last year, both entities agreed that more time was needed to notify the public of the event, aiming to increase turnout for both vendors and attendees. TNP and the Parks & Recreation Department are collaborating on a "Christmas in July" marketing promotion. She noted Winterfest is always the first Friday in December, which will be December 5th in 2025.

Ms. Creecy briefly apologized for not attending the Memorial Day parade due to a family health emergency.

5. **PUBLIC COMMENT (3 MINUTES PER SPEAKER):** None

6. 1. **FINANCIAL STATEMENT:** None

7. 2. **APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA (1 minute):**
- A. Approval of the April 28, 2025 Council Meeting Minutes
 - B. Receipt of the April 1, 2025 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes
 - C. ***First Reading – Bill 25-15*** – An Ordinance Amending Chapter 22, Police Offenses, Article XVIII, Marijuana, Code of the City of Newark, Delaware, To Codify the Jurisdiction of Newark’s Alderman’s Court (Court 40) to Prosecute Certain Marijuana Violations Pursuant to the State of Delaware’s Enactment of House Bill 33, As Amended By House Amendment No. 1. – ***Second Reading – June 23, 2025***
 - D. ***First Reading – Bill 25-15*** – An Ordinance Amending Chapter 32, Zoning, Code of the City of Newark, Delaware, to Create Sign Regulations for Parkland Zoning Properties – ***Second Reading – June 23, 2025***

50:13

Ms. Reed read the consent agenda into the record.

MOTION BY FORD, SECONDED BY CREECY: TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA AS PRESENTED.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE: 5 to 0.

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

Nay – 0.

Absent – Lawhorn.

8. 3. **RECOMMENDATIONS ON CONTRACTS & BIDS OVER CONSENT AGENDA LIMIT:**
- A. Recommendation to Award a Contract Stemming from Invitation to Bid No. 25-04 – Purchase of Various Transformers – Electric Director (5 minutes)

51:27

Bhadresh Patel, Electric Director, explained the Electric Department needs to purchase 11 transformers of varying capacities to support their upcoming development project. Staff carefully consider costs and lead times as part of their initial evaluation. He recommended awarding ITB No. 25-04 Items #1 and #4 to DECO Supply and United Utility, and Items #2 and #3 to WESCO/ANIXTER Transformers.

The Mayor opened the table to Council comment.

Mr. Suchanec asked if purchasing the transformers from different suppliers would cause any significant concerns.

Mr. Patel responded in the negative. All the transformers meet the City’s requirements, as the vendors supply transformers based on our specifications. There is no significant advantage to having all transformers supplied by a single company.

There were no further Councilmember comments.

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

MOTION BY MS. FORD, SECONDED BY DR. BANCROFT: THAT COUNCIL AWARD A CONTRACT STEMMING FROM INVITATION TO BID NO. 25-04 TO DECO SUPPLY DBA UNITED UTILITY SUPPLY IN THE AMOUNT OF \$127,311.00 FOR THE PURCHASE OF FIVE (5) 100 KVA PAD 12240 TRANSFORMERS, AND THREE (3) 3 PAD 12208 KVA TRANSFORMERS (ITEMS #1 AND #4); AND TO WESCO/ANIXTER IN THE AMOUNT OF \$90,744.00 FOR THE PURCHASE OF TWO (2) 3 PAD 12208 500 KVA TRANSFORMERS AND ONE (1) 3 PAD 12480 750 KVA TRANSFORMER (ITEMS #2 AND #3).

MOTION PASSED. VOTE: 5 to 0.

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

Nay – 0.

Absent – Lawhorn.

9. 4. **SPECIAL DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS:**
- A. Request for Administrative Professional I – Police Records (1 FTE) – Police Chief (15 minutes)

54:33

Brian Cannon, Newark Police Department (NPD) PSAP & Police Records Manager, explained NPD is requesting to replace a part-time Police Records position with a full-time position due to a recent and

unplanned resignation. The Police Records Division manages department case files, converts records to electronic formats, ensures report accuracy, and enters data into the records management system. He noted NPD processes approximately 12,000 reports annually, not including supplemental case and investigation materials. The Police Records Division also oversees the retention and disposal of police records, facilitates court discovery requests, conducts background checks, processes expungements, handles subpoenas, responds to Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests, and releases reports in compliance with State regulations.

He added that Police Records staff also manage the Public Records window and answer records-related phone inquiries Monday–Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The office also handles all public calls requiring translation services, except those directed to 911 or the non-emergency dispatch center number. The Police Records division is budgeted to have one full-time Administrative Professional II position and two part-time Secretary positions. However, following the resignation, the office now operates with only two staff members – one full-time and one part-time. He explained maintaining efficient operations and ensuring public access during business hours has become increasingly challenging due to the consistently high workload. The current full-time employee (FTE) also serves as a backup to the Chief of Police’s Administrative Professional position, taking on additional responsibilities such as payroll processing and department purchasing in their absence. Additionally, this position covers duties for other civilian staff during extended absences, further restricting the department’s records resources to maintain operational efficiency.

Mr. Cannon noted that staff believe replacing the vacant position with an FTE is the most effective solution to this issue. He stated this transition would have a minimal budgetary impact, as the existing vacant part-time position would partially fund the new full-time position. The remaining part-time position would be eliminated through attrition in the future, offsetting future costs associated with the full-time position. He added that NPD consistently experiences rolling vacancies, which also provides flexibility and funding within their department. NPD is concerned that delaying this change until the following budget cycle risks prolonged understaffing, potentially leading to service disruptions. Converting the part-time vacancy into a full-time position now ensures the continued effectiveness of the Police Records Division.

He noted that the budgetary impact of converting the vacant part-time position into a full-time Administrative Professional I position is minimal due to strategic cost offsets. The former part-time employee would have earned approximately \$39,654 under the 2025 pay rate based on their authorized number of hours. The entry-level salary for a full-time Administrative Professional I position is \$49,001, effective July 1, 2025. The difference in salary alone between the former part-time position and the proposed full-time position is approximately \$9,347. This amount correlates to salary only and does not include the cost of benefits. The cost increase would be offset by eliminating the second part-time position through attrition, reducing future expenses. He reiterated the Police Department’s current vacancies provide financial flexibility and allow the department to fund the transition without requiring additional budget allocations for amendments. He requested the Council approve reclassifying the vacant part-time Secretary position in Police Records to a full-time Administrative Professional I position at a CWA Pay Grade 10. Additionally, with the second part-time Secretary position being eliminated through attrition, it will result in a final staffing level of two full-time employees.

The Mayor opened the table to Council comment.

Mr. Suchanec noted that the currently occupied part-time Secretary position will be eliminated through attrition and asked if the individual in the vacant part-time Secretary position, to be converted into a full-time Administrative Professional I position, left before this request was submitted.

Mr. Cannon responded in the affirmative.

With this recommendation, Mr. Suchanec asked if there are plans to eliminate the currently occupied part-time Secretary position.

Mr. Cannon clarified there are no plans to do so until that position is vacated by the employee.

Dr. Bancroft believed this to be a wise decision.

Mr. McDermott noted full-time employees always cost more than part-time employees due to benefits, vacation, and eventual sick leave payouts. He asked what this addition would look like as an overall increase to the Police Department during the next budget season.

Mr. Coleman stated the exact amount cannot be known until an individual is hired and onboarded, as they cannot predict which healthcare benefits package they would accept. Under the most recent CWA contract, the City has implemented spousal coordination, meaning if an individual is married and their spouse has coverage through their workplace, the City will not cover the spouse. The cost could range from \$18,000 to \$45,000, depending on the duration of continued occupancy of the other part-time position, at which point the costs would effectively wash. The City did not want to hire a part-time employee who would eventually be laid off when the other position retired, and this would create a potential endless cycle of having a position that was not ready to be eliminated.

Mr. McDermott requested clarification that delaying the change into the following budget cycle risks prolonged understaffing, as the City is unwilling to fill the other position and is attempting to avoid staffing issues.

Mr. Coleman responded in the affirmative. The City does not want to leave the position open for an unknown period of time, as it is difficult to predict when the other incumbent will leave.

There was no public comment.

MOTION BY MS. FORD, SECONDED BY MS. CREECY: THAT COUNCIL APPROVE RECLASSIFYING THE VACANT PART-TIME SECRETARY POSITION IN POLICE RECORDS TO A FULL-TIME ADMINISTRATIVE PROFESSIONAL I AT A CWA PAYGRADE 10. ADDITIONALLY, THE SECOND PART-TIME SECRETARY POSITION WILL BE ELIMINATED THROUGH ATTRITION, RESULTING IN THE STAFFING LEVEL OF 2 FTES.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE: 5 to 0.

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

Nay – 0.

Absent – Lawhorn.

10. 4-B. REQUEST FROM THE NEWARK MORNING ROTARY TO DONATE AND FUND THE INSTALLATION OF A PERMANENT CHAIR OF HONOR WITH PLAQUE AND STANCHIONS IN THE CITY MUNICIPAL PARKING LOT – PARKS AND RECREATION DIRECTOR (10 MINUTES)

1:02:35

Paula Ennis, Parks & Recreation Director, thanked Mr. McDermott for attending and being a wreath bearer at the City's 2025 Memorial Day parade. She thanked all who attended and concurred it was a fantastic event in excellent weather. She hoped Ms. DeAngelis would also be able to assist as the emcee of Newark's Halloween Parade.

She explained this request is from the Newark Morning Rotary Club who wish to fund the installation of a permanent chair of honor with plaque and stanchions in the City Municipal Building's parking lot. The Parks & Recreation Department purchased an indoor Chair of Honor several years ago, which is stationed in the hall near Alderman's Court and is displayed during the Memorial Day Ceremony. The Newark Morning Rotary Club requested to donate a permanent one to install outside. She encouraged Council to approve this request.

David Bonk, Newark Morning Rotary Club, noted the club's motto is, "Service above self." He shared their primary focus in recent years has been to address the issues of military veterans, such as housing, employment, and reducing the suicide rate. Each fall, the Rotary Club honors the City's veterans and other heroes with a majestic display of 450+ American flags at the Newark Reservoir. Donations to that program have provided funds to help the Rotary Club serve veterans through various local organizations. He shared the Rotary Club hopes to have a prominent display of a Prisoner of War (POW)/Missing in Action (MIA) Chair of Honor outside City Hall. The display features a perpetually empty chair to remind people that, although our soldiers are not present, there is always a place for them. He explained that five stanchions would surround the chair, each topped with a symbol representing a different branch of the military, holding a chain to communicate that the chair is to remain empty. Photos of similar displays have been included as part of the proposal. A bronze plaque will be mounted in front of the chair explaining the purpose of the display and will include the words, "You are not forgotten." He noted hundreds of POW/MIA chairs of honor can be found in public spaces around the country, ranging from professional sports stadiums to city halls, the U.S. Capitol building, and everywhere in between. They honor the more than 92,000 American soldiers who are unaccounted for since World War I.

He shared approximately 1,000 individuals from the Vietnam War, 7,000 individuals in the Korean War, and over 70,000 individuals from World War II never returned. With the display, the Rotary Club also hopes to draw attention to the futility of war and the tremendous sacrifices made by those individuals, as well as their families. If approved, the Rotary Club will donate the chair, plaque, and all display components. They also pledge to maintain the display through regular cleaning and maintenance. He explained that the Rotary Club will plan a suitable unveiling ceremony and invite veteran groups, sponsors, City, County, and State officials, as well as any other interested parties. He expressed the Rotary Club's appreciation for the work of Ms. Ennis and Parks & Recreation staff, and for their support of both the proposal and in helping to identify the appropriate site. He thanked Council for considering this request and commended staff for collaborating with the Rotary Club.

The Mayor opened the table to Council comment.

Ms. Ford appreciated the significant effort from the Rotary Club and believed the suggested location was appropriate.

Ms. Creecy noted her grandfather, father, and uncle are all veterans. She supported this project and believed walking by this display would be an honor.

Dr. Bancroft appreciated the increased visibility and sensitivity to the ongoing maintenance costs of the chair.

Mr. McDermott concurred. He appreciated the Newark Morning Rotary Club's commitment to the community and thanked them for funding this project.

Ms. Reed read a statement from Mr. Lawhorn regarding this proposal:

"I strongly support the approval of the permanent chair of honor with plaque and stanchions in the city municipal parking lot. Newark Morning Rotary has demonstrated for decades their commitment to supporting the Newark community through volunteering, mentoring, funding, and directly working on projects to support our community. I have no doubt in their commitment and can testify that they have the infrastructure and long-term commitment within their organization to support this memorial for many years to come. I urge the council to support this proposal."

The Mayor opened the floor to public comment.

James Creque, 13 Madison Drive, stated he has lived in Newark for 12 years and believed the community's attitude towards veterans is much better than any other place he has visited.

There was no further public comment.

MOTION BY MS. FORD, SECONDED BY DR. BANCROFT: THAT COUNCIL APPROVE THE REQUEST FROM THE NEWARK MORNING ROTARY TO PURCHASE AND DONATE TO THE CITY A PERMANENT CHAIR OF HONOR, STANCHIONS, CHAINS AND PLAQUE; AND TO AUTHORIZE CITY STAFF TO INSTALL THESE ITEMS ON A CONCRETE PAD IN THE PARKING LOT AT THE CITY MUNICIPAL BUILDING AT THE PROPOSED LOCATION. THE NEWARK MORNING ROTARY WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR MAINTAINING THE SITE IN GOOD CONDITION.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE: 5 to 0.

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

Nay – 0.

Absent – Lawhorn.

11. 5. ITEMS SUBMITTED FOR PUBLISHED AGENDA:

A. Council Members: None

12. 4-B. OTHERS: None

13. Meeting adjourned at 8:11 p.m.

Tara Schiano
Director of Legislative Services
City Secretary

/jlh