

CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMISSION
MINUTES

May 13, 2025

MEETING CONVENED: 7:00 p.m. Council Chambers

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mike Cambron, Helga Huntley, George Irvine, Andrew O'Donnell, John Mateyko,

STAFF: Jordan Herring, Administrative Professional I
Jeff Martindale, Assistant City Manager – Operations
Katya Raskin, Planner I

Dr. Huntley called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM MEETINGS HELD ON MARCH 11, 2025 & APRIL 15, 2025:

MOTION BY DR. HUNTLEY, SECONDED BY DR. IRVINE: THAT THE CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMISSION (CAC) APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE MARCH 11, 2025 MEETING.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE: 5 TO 0.

AYE: CAMBRON, HUNTLEY, IRVINE, O'DONNELL, MATEYKO.

NAY: 0.

ABSTAIN: 0.

ABSENT: SMITH.

MOTION BY DR. HUNTLEY, SECONDED BY DR. IRVINE: THAT THE CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMISSION (CAC) APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE APRIL 15, 2025 MEETING.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE: 5 TO 0.

AYE: CAMBRON, HUNTLEY, IRVINE, O'DONNELL, MATEYKO.

NAY: 0.

ABSTAIN: 0.

ABSENT: SMITH.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT:

There was no public comment.

3. POSSIBLE CONCEPTS FOR FOLK PARK – PAULA ENNIS (20 MINUTES)

- Paula Ennis, Parks & Recreation Director, shared the Wills Group contacted staff regarding their Reimagining Outdoor Spaces Program grant with the proposal for a dog park at Folk Memorial Park. However, after receiving negative community feedback, the City's Parks & Recreation Department issued a survey to obtain public ideas on how to use the grant, specifically by ranking options presented. Two high-level ideas from the Wills Group were a

native food forest and a wildflower path. A constituent also submitted an idea for a disc golf course, which the Wills Group did not believe would fit within the program's parameters. Ms. Ennis explained that she would share the Wills Group's final proposal with the CAC and collect their feedback to include in a future memo to City Council. The CAC agreed with this process, providing feedback to improve outreach efforts for future surveys, as only a few of their members were aware of the survey.

- Ms. Ennis noted the City held the spring tree giveaway this past weekend; they handed out tree surveys to the participating individuals, and offered digital surveys through Survey Monkey. 367 surveys were sent out, and 59 have been received back. Dr. Huntley suggested mentioning to recipients that they have been included because they participated in any of the City's previous program, not necessarily the most recent one. Additionally, she and Dr. Irvine noted there is a technological issue where residents who input their addresses in a certain format are rejected as the system does not register them as citizens of Newark.

4. UPDATE FROM THE CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE & 2025 BUDGET – JEFF MARTINDALE (20 MINUTES)

- Mr. Martindale shared he has not heard back from either organization regarding the Energy Efficiency Community Block Grant (EECBG) and the Charging & Fueling Infrastructure (CFI) Grant. He believed the City should not assume it would receive this funding and should proceed with moving forward on the climate action plan. Dr. Huntley asked if the current ongoing federal lawsuits would affect this, to which Mr. Martindale responded he was unsure. Additionally, Parks & Recreation Marketing Specialist Michael Summerfield is formatting the finalized Sustainability Plan, which will then be forwarded to Council for their approval. There have also been meetings between the Parks & Recreation and Public Works & Water Resources (PWWR) Departments regarding the boots-on-the-ground tree inventory. The City is still on track to receive the data from the separate LIDAR tree inventory from the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC). In the last six months of 2025, the City will work with the University of Vermont to bring this study to fruition. Dr. Huntley suggested inviting UD students to participate in the boots-on-the-ground tree inventory, which Ms. Ennis agreed could be beneficial.
- Mr. Martindale explained Council approved a budget amendment to return \$80,000 of Outdoor Recreation, Parks and Trails (ORPT) grant funding, initially allocated to the George Read Park and Dickey Park projects, due to a determination from the Department of Labor regarding prevailing wages and how any changes to a pre-existing park is considered renovation. However, the projects will continue with their original plans. Dr. Irvine asked if the City had spoken with its state representatives about this determination, to which Mr. Martindale responded in the affirmative.

5. STATUS UPDATE FROM THE CITY SECRETARY'S OFFICE REGARDING MARCH & APRIL CAC RECOMMENDATIONS ON VETTING MAJOR PARKS PROJECTS & COLLABORATION WITH THE PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT, RESPECTIVELY – JORDAN HERRING (5 MINUTES)

- Ms. Herring noted two previously passed CAC recommendations: the first, a recommendation that substantial parks projects are presented to the CAC before a City Council discussion (passed in March), and then the second, a recommendation requesting Council to include on the Planning & Development Department's priority list to collaborate with the CAC to identify areas in the

Code to improve the sustainability of development in the City (passed in April). She shared the first recommendation was received by City Council through the consent agenda on March 24th and was requested by Council to be discussed on a future agenda as an agenda item. City Council received the second recommendation on April 28th through the consent agenda, but she was not aware of any further progress. Katya Raskin, Planner I, added the second recommendation will not be discussed by City Council until after the District 6 special election on July 15th.

6. ENGLISH IVY REMOVAL – SHEILA SMITH (20 MINUTES)

- Postponed until next meeting due to Ms. Smith’s absence.

7. RECOMMENDATION TO REMOVE MOWING REQUIREMENT FROM CODE (20 MINUTES)

- Dr. Huntley shared New Castle County approved an exemption to their mowing code for pollinator meadows and rain gardens, but with many restrictive definitions of how these are defined and the maximum allowable size (unless the property owner has an exemption from the Delaware Nature Society). She proposed recommending that the City return to its own mowing code to specifically define what is considered a “weed.” She did not believe there would be much resistance from the City due to the existing New Castle County code.
- Katya Raskin, Planner I, reminded the CAC of the City’s backyard habitat program. She recommended creating an incentive for growing backyard habitats rather than proposing a Code modification. However, Dr. Irvine noted many individuals already want to grow backyard habitats without an incentive. Ms. Raskin stated she would bring the CAC’s proposal for a Code modification to the Planning & Development Department’s next meeting, then follow up with Dr. Huntley about the wording of a potential recommendation. Dr. Huntley agreed this would be the best path forward.

8. COMMUNITY DAY 2024 PUBLIC FEEDBACK SUMMARY – MIKE CAMBRON (10 MINUTES)

- Postponed until next meeting due to lack of correlating materials.

9. MONTHLY CONSERVATION ARTICLE WITH THE NEWARK POST

- Dr. Huntley noted the backlog of Conservation Corner articles that are currently pending for publication in The Newark Post. Dr. Irvine suggested writing an article on the City’s backyard habitat program if the CAC proposed a Code modification for such purposes.

10. OLD/NEW BUSINESS (5 MINUTES)

- ***Old business:***
 - None.
- ***New business:***
 - Main Street — *by Dr. Irvine*. Dr. Irvine suggested the CAC propose making Main Street a

pedestrian-only zone given the recent tragedy on April 29th. Mr. Martindale informed the CAC of City Manager Tom Coleman's presentation about Main Street safety improvements at Council's May 12th meeting. Ms. Herring added the physical and auditory presentations are available on the City's website.

- Energy Savings Performance Contract Project – *by Mr. Martindale*. Mr. Martindale noted the City is approaching budget season, and he is investigating another Energy Savings Performance Contract project. He believed there to be an opportunity within the Field Operations Complex warehouse expansion project to expand solar. The CAC has also discussed solar canopies in city parking lots in the past. He stated he would seek staff and Council's opinions, then return to the CAC should he receive positive feedback.
- Sophia Marianiello, District 1, favored the reduction of vehicle traffic, but was concerned about making Main Street a pedestrian mall due to its many bus routes. She did not believe rerouting them to Cleveland Avenue would be beneficial. She also suggested considering better bicycle infrastructure in this area, noting BikeNewark wants to be included in the discussion of reimagining Main Street. Mr. O'Donnell suggested transitioning one of the two parking lanes on Main Street into a protected bike lane. Dr. Huntley noted many European pedestrian malls have bollards blocking off the pedestrian zones that emergency services can lower at will.

11. NEXT MEETING – JUNE 10, 2025

The meeting was adjourned at 8:32 p.m.

Jordan Herring
Administrative Professional I

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