

**CITY OF NEWARK
DELAWARE
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**

JUNE 9, 2025

Those present at 7:00 p.m.:

Presiding:	Deputy Mayor, District 2, Corinth Ford District 1, John Suchanec District 3, Jay Bancroft (<i>Virtual</i>) District 4, Dwendolyn Creecy District 6, Vacant
Absent:	Mayor Travis McDermott District 5, Jason Lawhorn
Staff Members:	Assistant City Manager – Personnel Devan Hardin City Secretary Tara Schiano City Solicitor Paul Bilodeau Deputy City Secretary Diana Reed Parks & Recreation Director Paula Ennis (<i>Virtual</i>) Planning & Development Deputy Director Jessica Ramos-Velasquez (<i>Virtual</i>) Chief of Community Engagement Jayme Gravell (<i>Virtual</i>) Assistant City Manager – Operations Jeff Martindale (<i>Virtual</i>) Administrative Professional II Alexis Van Campen IT Desktop Support I Jacqueline Etzweiler

1. Ms. Ford called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. **SILENT MEDITATION & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

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

Ms. Ford 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, she would call on each Council member on the dais for comment. Following, she 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, she will seek comments from members of the public that are either present or remote before calling upon each Councilmember for their comments. She 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. She asked all Councilmembers using Teams at the dais to turn off their speakers and microphones to prevent feedback. She 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. She 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.

Ms. Ford noted the item regarding Main Street Safety Improvements will be discussed at the City Council meeting on June 16, 2025. However, if there are attendees who are unable to participate in that meeting, they are welcome to share their comments this evening.

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

Ms. Ford asked when the new student body representatives will be chosen.

Caitlin Olsen, University of Delaware (UD) Administration, stated they are selected in the fall.

7. 2-C. **CITY MANAGER (10 minutes):**

5:06

Devan Hardin, Assistant City Manager – Personnel, shared the Recommendations for Main Street Safety Improvements have been posted online. In addition, they will be included in the June 16th meeting agenda packet.

Ms. Ford asked if this information would be included in the publicized agenda in The Newark Post.

Ms. Hardin responded in the affirmative.

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

5:43

Mr. Suchanec:

- No comment.

Ms. Creecy:

- No comment.

Dr. Bancroft:

- Suggested the City and Council remain calm despite the current disorder in the national news.

Ms. Ford:

- Noted she distributed metal straws to City Council, staff, and some members of the audience present as part of the “Metal Straw Movement.” Metal straws are a reusable alternative to disposable plastic straws. While this may not directly reverse climate change, the straw serves as a reminder of how someone can support a significant cause in a small way. She noted the City is about to update the Comprehensive Development Plan and believes it needs to further address climate change. She noted the Conservation Advisory Commission (CAC) has requested that the Planning Commission include them in the process of reviewing land-use projects. She believed it was vital for the CAC to provide Council with advice of this nature.
- Explained her previous CAC representative, Mike Cambron, moved to another district and was reappointed to the CAC as an at-large representative by former Mayor Jerry Clifton. However, this transition has vacated the District 2 seat on the commission. She believed UD Climate Hub, Associate Professor, Ms. A.R. Siders, to be a very qualified candidate for the position. However, while she works within District 2, she does not live in District 2. She noted the requirement for residence within a district has been waived for the Parking Advisory Committee. She asked Council to consider waiving this rule for the CAC, as well, to allow the appointment of incredibly qualified candidates who do not meet this specific criterion. Alternatively, they can consider changing the requirement to align with that of the Parking Advisory Committee.

Ms. Creecy asked if this change could be made at this meeting.

Mr. Bilodeau believed this would be best addressed through a Code amendment. He did not expect writing this ordinance to be a difficult task. He would quickly work to craft an ordinance to put on an upcoming agenda.

Ms. Creecy supported this change, noting her own involvement with conservation through the Dickey Park community garden.

Mr. Suchanec noted the existing CAC members shared many accolades regarding Ms. Siders. While he believed her to be highly qualified, the CAC members are concerned about representing the entire community by ensuring each member is from the district they represent. He did not support changing the method of how a Councilmember nominates an appointee within the Code, but would support allowing exceptions to this requirement for exceptionally qualified individuals.

Dr. Bancroft concurred with Mr. Suchanec and agreed that Ms. Siders is qualified. He believes it to be vital to fill the vacant seats on the CAC.

9. 2-E. PUBLIC COMMENT (5 minutes per speaker) (10 minutes):

14:22

Mike Cambron, an at-large member of the CAC, noted he has not met Ms. Siders but believes her resume to be more than impressive. He believes the CAC needs her talents, stating he would be willing to resign from the CAC if that were the only way Ms. Siders could serve on the commission. He believed her voice would be helpful during the City's update of the Comprehensive Development Plan. He hoped Council would consider appointing Ms. Siders to the CAC.

Desmond Kahn, District 1, noted he is the Vice President of the Coalition for Natural Stream Valleys, who would like to see a portable restroom facility added to Curtis Mill Park. He was informed by the Parks & Recreation Department that this park does not qualify for one. However, a restroom facility was installed across the street at the reservoir, and he wondered why this park did not qualify for one as well. He noted Don Sharpe has received feedback from many individuals who expressed a desire to have a facility added to this location. He asked Council to support adding a portable restroom facility to Curtis Mill Park.

Donald "Don" Sharpe, District 6, thanked the City for supporting the \$10 million allocation to open space funding and the \$10 million allocation for farmland preservation funding. He hoped Council would support the \$10,000 allocation to rebuild Newark's old cider mill. He thanked the City for purchasing the property behind White Clay Drive along the Pomeroy Trail and for planting holly trees along the Pomeroy Trail, but hoped a barrier would be installed to prevent deer from eating the bottom foliage. He noted he asked 64 people if they would support adding a portable restroom in Curtis Mill Park, as many families and fishermen visit this location. He explained visitors must drive across the road to the reservoir to use the restroom, which is difficult for elderly individuals such as himself. He stated all 64 individuals surveyed responded they would favor a restroom facility in Curtis Mill Park, and he hoped the Council would consider adding one. He also noted there to be a utility road which goes up to the second dam and reported there to be a large hole in the wall.

Paula Ennis, Parks & Recreation Director, explained Curtis Mill Park is a "transient" park – many visitors will park their vehicles at the location, but then walk or bike to other nearby destinations. However, there are still people who go to the park to fish or use the trail. She noted that Preston's Playground has its own permanent restroom facility and is located within a quarter of a mile of Curtis Mill Park. She explained the City typically installs portable restroom facilities in parks with multiple amenities in one location but would encourage Council to provide direction if they would be interested in adding a portable toilet to Curtis Mill Park.

Shannon Portman, District 5, noted an incident in Fairfield Crest on June 8th where a black pickup truck totaled two parked cars, hit a resident's porch, and nearly hit the rest of the house after speeding from New London Road to Fremont Road. No residents were hurt, but a police investigation is currently ongoing. She noted this is not the first instance of speeding in this neighborhood and many people come in and out of the neighborhood because of the nearby trailhead. Additionally, many neighbors walk or bike along the sidewalk in this location, and many of them have pets. A neighbor recently lost their dog after a hit-and-run accident involving a speeding vehicle from New London Road. She believed all Fairfield Crest residents would support adding speed bumps. She requested information on how to make this possible before a more serious tragedy occurs.

Ms. Ford believed speeding in residential neighborhoods to be a critical issue that is important to all members of Council. At the June 16th City Council meeting, staff will share recommendations for safety improvements along Main Street that may be applicable to other areas. Additionally, the Council favored allowing speed cameras to be placed in the city's residential neighborhoods to address this problem. She encouraged the public to urge the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) to resolve the software issues which are preventing the City from deploying this technology to discourage such behavior.

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

- A.** Receipt of the March 11, 2025 Conservation Advisory Commission Minutes
- B.** Receipt of the April 15, 2025 Conservation Advisory Commission Minutes
- C.** Receipt of the Planning Commission 2025 Work Plan Quarterly Update for January – March 2025
- D.** Receipt of the April 2025 Alderman's Report
- E.** Approval of the May 12, 2025 Council Meeting Minutes
- F.** Approval of the May 19, 2025 Council Meeting Minutes
- G.** Recommendation to Approve a Change Order to Contract 24-11, Dickey Park Improvements, for Merit Construction

29:08

Ms. Schiano read the consent agenda into the record.

MOTION BY MS. CREECY, SECONDED BY DR. BANCROFT: TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA AS PRESENTED.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE 4 TO 0.

Aye – Suchanec, Ford, Bancroft, Creecy.

Nay – 0.

Absent – McDermott, Lawhorn.

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

- A.** Appointment of Kira Bell to the District 3 Position on the Board of Ethics for a Term to Expire February 15, 2027

30:35

Dr. Bancroft noted staff have been attempting to convene the Board of Ethics for a meeting but would prefer a full Board with no vacancies. He believes Kira Bell to be a good candidate for this position, as she is a probation officer with extensive experience in handling ethical issues in her community.

Kira Bell, 40 Minquil Drive, noted this opportunity was suggested to her by Dr. Bancroft and other members of her community. She expressed her interest in serving on the Board of Ethics.

The Mayor opened the table to Council comment.

Ms. Creecy thanked Ms. Bell for her interest in joining the Board.

There was no public comment.

MOTION BY DR. BANCROFT, SECONDED BY MS. CREECY: THAT COUNCIL APPOINT KIRA BELL TO THE DISTRICT 3 POSITION ON THE BOARD OF ETHICS FOR A TERM TO EXPIRE FEBRUARY 15, 2027

MOTION PASSED. VOTE 4 TO 0.

Aye – Suchanec, Ford, Bancroft, Creecy.

Nay – 0.

Absent – McDermott, Lawhorn.

12. 5. ITEMS NOT FINISHED AT PREVIOUS MEETING: None

13. 6. SPECIAL DEPARTMENT REPORTS: None

14. 7. FINANCIAL STATEMENT: None

15. 8. RECOMMENDATIONS ON CONTRACTS & BIDS OVER CONSENT AGENDA LIMIT: None

16. 9. ORDINANCES FOR SECOND READING & PUBLIC HEARING: None

17. 10. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE PLANNING COMMISSION AND/OR PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT: None

Mr. Suchanec asked if Council was interested in requesting staff to complete a study in Curtis Mill Park to determine whether there is a need for a portable restroom facility. While he understood the current regulations and guidelines explained by Ms. Ennis, he believed there may be some exceptions which warrant a facility, such as extensive foot traffic.

Ms. Creecy noted this topic was previously discussed by former State Representative Paul Baumbach and believed this matter needed to be investigated further.

Dr. Bancroft supported moving ahead, believing that adding a portable restroom facility would not be a significant issue in this case. He believed Mr. Sharpe's data was a fair indicator of the need for it.

Ms. Ennis did not believe the City would be able to designate a staff member to stay at the park for an entire day to complete a survey. However, staff could send a survey to the residents of the park's district or the whole city. They will determine the most effective way to gather feedback regarding this topic.

Ms. Ford noted the nearest restroom facility is a quarter of a mile away from the park. She asked if this facility is across the street and only accessible by car.

Ms. Ennis explained that visitors can walk across the street via the crosswalk to reach the facility if they prefer not to travel by car. However, the facility cannot be accessed without crossing the street in some manner.

Ms. Ford asked if the Parks & Recreation Department could disseminate a survey on this matter.

Ms. Ennis responded in the affirmative. However, she did not believe it would be beneficial to limit this survey to only residents of this district, as the park is utilized by residents all over the city. She will speak with Chief of Community Engagement Jayme Gravell to determine how to send a survey about this location and concern. Once feedback has been received, staff will provide the results to Council.

Desmond Khan disagreed with Ms. Ennis' comment that many people who visit the park aim to go somewhere else. He noted many individuals visit the park to fish, use the trail, or birdwatch.

Ms. Ford reiterated the Parks & Recreation Department will disseminate a survey surrounding this topic.

18. **Meeting adjourned at 7:38 p.m.**

Tara Schiano
Director of Legislative Services
City Secretary

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