

**CITY OF NEWARK
DELAWARE
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**

JUNE 16, 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 5, Jason Lawhorn District 6, Emile Brown (<i>after swearing-in</i>)
Staff Members:	Planning & Development Director Renee Bensley Deputy City Secretary Diana Reed City Solicitor Paul Bilodeau City Manager Tom Coleman (<i>virtual</i>) Parks & Recreation Director Paula Ennis (<i>virtual</i>) Planning & Development Deputy Director Jessica Ramos-Velasquez (<i>virtual</i>) Public Works & Water Resources Director Tim Filasky Public Works & Water Resources Deputy Director Ethan Robinson (<i>virtual</i>) Chief of Community Engagement Jayme Gravell (<i>virtual</i>) Administrative Professional II Alexis Van Campen Administrative Professional I Jordan Herring

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 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. RECEIPT OF CERTIFICATION BY ELECTION BOARD AND OATH OF OFFICE:

A. Receipt of Certification by Election Board for Council Member – District 6

2:39

MOTION BY MS. FORD, SECONDED BY MR. LAWHORN: TO ACCEPT THE CERTIFICATION OF THE ELECTION BOARD.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE: 6 to 0.

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

Nay – 0.

Absent – 0.

4. B. SWEARING-IN OF DISTRICT 6 COUNCIL MEMBER ELECT EMILE ATWELL BROWN

3:12

Ms. Reed administered the Oath of Office and swore in District 6 Councilperson-elect Emile Atwell Brown.

5. PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS (15-MINUTE LIMIT):

A. General Assembly Update – James DeChene, Lobbyist

5:10

James DeChene, Blue Hen Strategies, shared the Delaware Economic and Financial Advisory Council (DEFAC) shared their final revenue and expense forecast for FY2025 at today's meeting. The General Assembly will use the numbers in this forecast to finalize their budget. He noted there was no substantive change from the previous two meetings aside from an additional \$1.3 million in revenue. This is a relatively small amount compared to just over \$7 billion available for spending. The budget crafted by the Joint Finance Committee (JFC) currently stands at \$6.58 billion. The next JFC meeting will take place on Wednesday, June 18th. He expected the JFC to add \$2.5 million to reinstitute the Hospital Cost Control Board, which will equal approximately \$6.6 billion. The remainder will be allocated to a combination of Bond Bill and Grant-In-Aid funding.

He noted that the City of Newark has multiple Bond Bill projects that it has submitted for funding; he would notify the City of how much is expected from the Bond Bill. This would be about \$400,000 if no money were allocated to Grant-In-Aid. In 2024, the State spent \$100 million on Grant-In-Aid; he did not expect the same for this year. He hoped the City's discussions with their State Representatives and Senators on the Bond Bill Committee would prove fruitful in leading to multiple of Newark's projects being funded. These officials do not predict any issues in doing so.

Mr. DeChene stated there has not been significant movement on any bills affecting Newark. The accessory dwelling unit (ADU) bill has not yet approached the Senate floor for a vote. The bill requiring public bodies to record their executive session has not yet moved in the House of Representatives. The governor's legislative staff expects HB-34, the University of Delaware (UD) tax bill, to be signed within the next month. He had shared with staff the City's desired timeline to craft an ordinance for first and second reading so it can be presented to UD in time for their fall billing. Legislative staff are working to help the City meet the desired timeline, as the governor is amenable to signing this bill. He has had multiple conversations about Main Street safety with Rep. Cyndie Romer, who is now directing her policy staff to develop ideas for crafting legislation for the upcoming January session.

The Mayor opened the table to Council comments.

Mr. Suchanec inquired if there is funding for grants.

Mr. DeChene stated he was working towards this initiative.

Ms. Ford shared Rep. Ed Osienski is currently working on a bill with the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) to deploy speed cameras in areas with heavy pedestrian traffic. She asked if Mr. DeChene was aware of this bill's status.

Mr. DeChene did not believe this bill had been introduced but stated he would follow up with Rep. Osienski.

Ms. Ford asked for the status of HB-84, which requires residency for school board members.

Mr. DeChene stated this bill has been introduced. He noted that there are three ongoing factors related to this bill: the ongoing court case, the bill itself, and the board member involved in this matter, who has just announced his resignation from the Christina School Board. With these three factors in mind, he was uncertain whether there was still a need to pass this bill. He would follow up with Rep. Romer to see if she plans to continue pushing for this bill's passage based on other actions taking place.

Dr. Bancroft thanked Mr. DeChene for his work on the UD tax bill. He believed the General Assembly updates are proving to be helpful to Council. He believed SB-159 is a good bill for Newark as it promotes fair electric generation across the state.

Mr. McDermott thanked Mr. DeChene for his work. He noted the City received funding from the Higher Education Public Safety Fund, which equated to around \$1.5 million, in addition to the \$400,000 that Newark typically receives.

Mr. DeChene stated this would have been \$2 million if Newark were to receive that funding through the Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) program.

Mr. McDermott asked if there was any indication of whether Newark would receive funding from the Higher Education Public Safety Fund this year.

Mr. DeChene was uncertain about this but would follow up. This topic will be included in the conversation regarding the City's bond bill projects.

Mr. McDermott hoped they would continue to receive this funding and would appreciate all Mr. DeChene's work in ensuring this.

Ms. Creecy requested an update on the ADU bill.

Mr. DeChene reiterated there are no further updates regarding the ADU bill; it has come out of the Senate committee and is currently waiting for their vote.

There was no public comment.

6. B. THE NEWARK PARTNERSHIP – ALI DEANGELIS

13:26

Ali DeAngelis, Interim Executive Director of The Newark Partnership (TNP), shared a presentation outlining TNP's most recent updates and initiatives.

(Presentation: [Attached here](#). The presentation spanned from 13:55 to 19:20.)

The Mayor opened the table to Council comments.

Dr. Bancroft thanked TNP for keeping the momentum on their activity.

Ms. Ford asked if the grant-writing workshop is open to anyone on a non-profit board.

Ms. DeAngelis responded it is a knowledge-level workshop so that anyone can join. The cost is \$25 for TNP members.

Mr. Suchanec asked if Winterfest 2025 will last one day or one week.

Ms. DeAngelis stated the first Winterfest planning meeting will take place tomorrow, June 17th. It will consist of both a recap of Winterfest 2024 and prospective ideas for Winterfest 2025. She would have more information to share in her next presentation to City Council.

Ms. Creecy asked if the unveiling of the New London Road veteran banners would be on Juneteenth.

Ms. DeAngelis clarified the design's reveal will be on Juneteenth.

Ms. Creecy asked how soon after this unveiling the banners will be hung.

Ms. DeAngelis did not anticipate that these banners would be hung during the summer. TNP aims for them to be installed by Veterans Day 2025.

Dr. Freeman Williams, member of the Friends of School Hill Association (FOSHA) and President of the Newark Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), explained TNP and FOSHA believed it was essential to showcase the designs first. They have worked hard to ensure this is an inclusive process, as there may still be qualified individuals who would be interested in applying. He hoped the Juneteenth event on the 21st would be a catalyst to get people excited about the project and encourage them to join in. While they initially expected the project would be completed earlier, they are committed to ensuring it is completed at the highest level. They have spent a tremendous amount of time working with experts in this field who can provide important insight and recommendations. He believed the public would be pleased with the final product. He believed the unveiling on June 21st would help share information about the project with the public while also providing an opportunity for them to offer feedback. He noted that there will be an eventual kickoff event for the project to share its historical significance and the stories of these men and women who have served. He invited Council, elected officials, and others to attend the event when it is scheduled.

Mr. McDermott believed Veterans Day would be an appropriate day to install the banners.

Mr. Brown asked if this project's meetings are open to anyone wishing to participate.

Ms. DeAngelis stated anyone interested in being involved in these committee meetings can send her an email to express their interest.

Ms. Creecy noted James Roy, a descendant of George Wilson, previously spoke at a Council meeting requesting that minorities be acknowledged in the citywide veteran flag display. She asked if he could be included in future conversations about this project, as he had certain expectations with this request that had not been met. She also asked to be included in correspondence about the project.

Ms. DeAngelis stated that the next project committee meeting is scheduled for tomorrow, June 17th.

James Roy, non-resident, stated he previously lived in the Cleveland Avenue School Hill community. He noted that Elwood Roy Avenue was named after his father, a World War II veteran. He attended a previous Council meeting where it was stated that no African American soldiers were included in the Main Street project because none met the project's criteria of being killed in action. He understood this fact, being grateful that no one in his community had fallen in battle. He wrote an article in November concerning facts about the New London Road project, including that it would be completed in the spring. However, having heard the information presented this evening, he would wait until further notice.

There was no public comment.

Paula Ennis, Parks & Recreation Director, explained Winterfest 2025 will be on Friday, December 5th, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. The Holiday Artisan Market is only a portion of that event, and she would share more information with Council about the event following her next meeting with Ms. DeAngelis.

7. PUBLIC COMMENT (3 MINUTES PER SPEAKER):

29:00

Carla Grygiel, Executive Director of the Newark Senior Center, has been in her position since 2006, making her the fourth executive director since the center's founding in 1967. She stated that the Newark Senior Center is still the first and only nationally accredited senior center in the entire State of Delaware and is an integral part of the community, serving as a true community hub. The center provides resources, services, and opportunities for individuals exceeding 50. The staff are very proud of and grateful for their partnership with the City of Newark. The City has provided in-kind support to the senior center, and the center has collaborated with the city to offer a venue for various programs, services, and public meetings. Such meetings include multiple candidate forums, enabling community members to stay involved and informed in the City's electoral process. Ms. Grygiel stated that since her time with the center, through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), the center has administered over \$700,000 worth of assistance to seniors with home and weatherization repairs, allowing them to continue living

independently and maintain property values. The City has also supported the Meals on Wheels program. Since 2006, the center, along with numerous volunteers and staff members, has delivered over 220,000 meals to the homebound in this community. She explained these meals meet the nutritional needs of recipients while also ensuring their safety through providing daily check-ins. Center staff is additionally available to help individuals and caregivers by connecting them to other resources within the community. The center is also home to the Meetings of Minds program; a guided group experience designed for individuals in the early stages of memory loss. This program has served more than 350 families in the greater Newark area since its creation in 2006.

Ms. Grygiel expressed that the senior center is grateful for the relationship it has built with the City over the years, as well as to the Councilmembers who have served on its Board of Directors. These individuals have become advocates for the center, helping to serve their community through their familiarity with the resources and opportunities it provides. She announced that she will be retiring in September, to be succeeded by Program Director Katie Rivera. Ms. Grygiel noted that Ms. Rivera possesses an incredible knowledge of the center, its history, and community partnerships. She believed the center would continue to flourish and thrive under Ms. Rivera's leadership.

Mr. McDermott thanked Ms. Grygiel for her work with the senior center.

Ms. Creecy noted she is employed in the field of senior care. She thanked Ms. Grygiel for her work and for inviting her to multiple programs at the senior center.

Ms. Grygiel stated that she was honored to serve as the executive director of the Newark Senior Center. She encouraged all Councilmembers to visit the center at any time.

Dr. Helga Huntley, District 1 resident and Chair of the Conservation Advisory Commission (CAC), explained there have been multiple recommendations forwarded to Council through the consent agenda but have not yet been discussed: an August 2024 recommendation to recognize the role of climate change in impacting health, which has been requested for discussion by two Councilmembers; a December 2024 recommendation to direct staff to work with the CAC on determining the cost of improving the efficiency of the lighting at Phillips Park; a March 2025 recommendation to allow the CAC to be involved in the proposal process for major park projects; and finally, an April 2025 recommendation to include on the Planning & Development Department's task list an item to work with the CAC on making the Zoning Code more sustainable, which she understood has been delayed due to waiting for a full Council before setting their priority list. She encouraged Council to schedule these topics for a complete discussion. She or another commission member would be pleased to attend and provide insight during these discussions.

Mr. McDermott thanked Dr. Huntley for her comments. He noted there was a Council vote to bring one of their recommendations back for future discussion and would follow up to see when that would occur.

Ms. Ford stated she supported allowing the CAC to provide input on land use projects, park use, and park plans. She assured this item would be placed on a future agenda. She stated she will meet with District 2 Planning Commissioner Will Hurd to discuss this initiative.

Dr. Freeman Williams, FOSHA & Newark NAACP President, congratulated Mr. Brown on behalf of FOSHA and the Newark NAACP, as they have known him for multiple years. He stated that he was previously Mr. Brown's teacher at the George Wilson Center (GWC) and had learned how to interact with young people, in part, from him. He greatly respects Mr. Brown, believing his decision to stay in the Newark area shows his commitment to the city. He officially invited Council and the public to the June 21st Juneteenth celebration, which is free for all attendees. This event features a diverse group of volunteers from the area who have collaborated to create a program that highlights the historical significance of Juneteenth. He believed it was essential to share history in its entirety, rather than cherry-picking what is discussed or recognized. He communicated that FOSHA and the NAACP are excited about the veteran flag project and are excited to invite both Ms. Creecy and Mr. Roy to be part of the process. He looked forward to seeing those who plan to attend the Juneteenth event on June 21st.

Mr. Brown thanked all who attended his swearing-in. He noted Dr. Williams was a mentor to his younger self and has been a figure many members of the community have looked up to. He stated that he would do his best as a Councilman to follow the legacy paved by Dr. Williams and many other educators, thanking him for his comments.

8. 1. FINANCIAL STATEMENT: None

9. 2. **APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA (1 minute):**
 - A. Receipt of the April 22, 2025 Diversity & Inclusion Commission Meeting Minutes
 - B. Receipt of the Diversity & Inclusion Commission Recommendation for Outreach Budget Allocation
 - C. Resignation of Sasha Aber from the At-Large Position on the Diversity & Inclusion Commission
 - D. Receipt of the May 6, 2025 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes
 - E. Receipt of the April 3, 2025 Parking Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
 - F. ***First Reading – Bill 25-16 – An Ordinance Amending the Comprehensive Development Plan by Changing the Designation of Property Located at 160 South Main Street – **Second Reading – July 28, 2025*****
 - G. ***First Reading – Bill 25-17 – An Ordinance Amending the Zoning Map of the City of Newark, Delaware, By Rezoning from BN (Neighborhood Shopping) to BB (Central Business District) 0.73 +/- Acres Located at 160 South Main Street – **Second Reading – July 28, 2025*****

43:30

Ms. Reed read the consent agenda into the record.

MOTION BY DR. BANCROFT, SECONDED BY MR. LAWHORN: TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA AS PRESENTED.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE: 7 to 0.

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

Nay – 0.

Absent – 0.

10. 3. **RECOMMENDATIONS ON CONTRACTS & BIDS OVER CONSENT AGENDA LIMIT:** None

11. 4. **SPECIAL DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS:**

- A. Ambulance Fee Discussion – City Manager (30 minutes)

45:00

Mr. Bilodeau explained that Council passed a \$10 ambulance fee in 2020, which would be included in fines paid to Alderman’s Court. The idea was that \$10 would be collected for each violation, equating to a fair amount of money to be allocated to Aetna. While this ordinance was passed in December 2020, many state officials contacted the City in early 2021. They convened a meeting with themselves, staff, Deputy Attorney Generals, and members of the State Fire Commission. This meeting indicated to the City that they could not collect the money and directly give it to Aetna; instead, it would need to be sent to the State, which would divide the money and distribute it among all fire agencies. This effectively meant that Aetna would only get a small portion of that money. Currently, the State collects an ambulance fee in court that partially trickles down to Aetna. Because Council or Aetna did not envision this outcome, the City elected not to collect the fee at all in 2021. However, after further discussions with Aetna, their officials are in favor of the City’s Alderman’s Court beginning to collect that money and send it to the state. Hopefully, it will increase the allocation of funding to Aetna and the other fire halls across the state. Tonight, City staff are seeking a motion from Council to implement this fee. He reminded Aetna would still receive a portion of the funding collected by this fee, and not the entire amount.

The Mayor opened the table to Council comment.

Ms. Ford reminded that she chairs the Aetna Committee for Sustainable Funding, which met on Friday and is in favor of collecting this fee. While the fee will be allocated to a state “pot,” it will not be distributed equally; instead, it will be assigned based on the level of service provided by each fire and emergency service in receipt. She believed this would be an equitable distribution, as all the State’s fire and emergency services need some form of help. She urged Council to approve the collection of the fee.

Dr. Bancroft asked for clarification on this process. He noted the State currently divides the collected funding between the fire and emergency services around Delaware and asked if this new fee would infringe on their accounting process.

Mr. McDermott explained the State already collects this fee from other municipalities and would not have an issue including Newark’s fee into their distribution system. He noted there is at least one other Alderman’s Court collecting this fee. He did not expect this to have any adverse effect on the State’s accounting process.

Dr. Bancroft believed that, in principle, it made sense to collect this funding.

Mr. Lawhorn supported the idea, as Council had previously discussed how to generate money for their fire service. However, he noted that many fees are added to tickets. He recalled that a family member of his recently got into a car accident and received a ticket for inattentive driving. While the ticket alone was \$100, the total cost was around \$190 due to additional fees. While this ambulance fee is only \$10, he wondered if the City should investigate and consider revisiting these fees. He asked if Mr. Bilodeau knew what specific fees were added to these tickets.

Mr. Bilodeau did not have the entire list; however, one item is a security fee because the State does not provide the City with money to pay for their bailiffs in Alderman's Court. The City keeps the entire amount collected for that reason. He believed there were a few smaller fees, but none of them exceeded \$10.

Mr. Lawhorn would support voting on this proposal but asked if Mr. Bilodeau could provide a list of those fees for the future.

Mr. Bilodeau responded in the affirmative.

Mr. Suchanec believed it was crucial to support this proposal but believed some questions should be answered: how many ambulance services are in the state, how many would be receiving a portion of this funding, how many municipalities are charging a fee to be divided among the fire services, and how much money would Aetna receive. While he believed it to be a noble effort to contribute a portion of funding to this "pie," if the amount Aetna ultimately receives is small, it may be worth asking the State to reevaluate and restructure this program to apply to the different emergency services uniformly. He believed the program would be more equitable overall if every municipality contributed to this fund. While he would support this proposal, he was unsure what the return on investment would be and hoped the City could either make corrections or ask questions about the State's program.

Mr. McDermott explained if a municipality has a police department, but not an Alderman's Court, they write on State tickets. Every citation written on a State ticket goes to the State court. Those municipalities would be charged, and the fee would be assessed on those tickets regardless.

Mr. Suchanec asked how many Delaware municipalities have an Alderman's Court.

Mr. Bilodeau believed there were five at maximum, including Newark. However, they are not all criminal courts.

Ms. Creedy asked why the City cannot create an ordinance for the Alderman's Court to collect this fee separate from the State. She believed such a process would make it easier for Aetna to receive that funding directly. Additionally, the current process could prevent a consistent monetary flow for Aetna due to the time it takes for money to trickle down from the State.

Mr. Bilodeau stated the City attempted to implement this in 2020. However, at a meeting with Aetna, State officials, and deputy attorney generals, following its adoption, it was made clear to them that significant changes in State code would be necessary for the City to do so. At that point, the City decided not to implement those changes. If the State decides to change its code, however, the City could try to pursue the bill again. He noted under the State current language; the City is required to share the collected fees with the State. It will only return to the City in the form of an allocation.

Ms. Creedy supported any efforts to allocate funding to Aetna. However, she did not believe the City should be required to share this money with the State, as not all the fire agencies serve the Newark community.

Mr. McDermott supported this initiative. He agreed with Mr. Lawhorn that many of the fees are State-mandated. He gave an example of how the police officer's fee is collected on all tickets, then redistributed to different police departments throughout the State. He believed this fee was consistent with those in other municipalities and did not see an issue with it.

The Mayor opened the floor to public comments.

Dan Seador, Aetna Hose, Hook & Ladder Company President, agreed with most of Council's comments. He would appreciate a process like what was proposed in 2020, where all the money collected from moving violations in Newark is allocated towards its fire company. However, it was not worded in

this fashion when the bill's language was crafted. He recalled former Rep. Paul Baumbach stating, “Just because that is the law now, does not mean we cannot change it.” He appreciated the efforts of the City to bring their 2020 proposal to fruition. He noted that the City and Aetna received significant pushbacks on that proposal, including from the State Fire Commission. He noted he had asked Mr. Coleman to pursue reinstating this fee, as he believed there is money out there that is not being collected. He explained that many municipalities could be collecting this fee but never implemented the structure to do so when it was first enacted in 2014. He believed there could be more money coming into this large funding pot. He understood Council’s concern about collecting this fee for Aetna, only to be allocated to a pot that is disseminated to every emergency service in the state, but he clarified that, due to the amount of work they conduct, Aetna would likely receive around 10% - 12%. Former Finance Director David Del Grande estimated Aetna would collect around \$80,000 from a \$10 fee. Although this fee is diluted, it will still ultimately benefit Aetna. He appreciated Ms. Ford’s advocacy and support for Aetna in their efforts to secure additional funding. He commented that he would love to see the State legislation for this process to be revisited.

He continued by noting that many small fees are added to these tickets. He noted that in the previous legislative session, there was significant pushback from multiple special interest groups against carving out these fees, which were tacked onto moving violations. Aetna believes strongly, however, that if they are going to remove some of these fees, one reason is that there is a direct nexus between moving violations. This is how the fees came about, which made sense to him.

Mr. Bilodeau inquired whether the fee would also be included in the fine for speed cameras when they are implemented.

Mr. Seador explained Rep. Ed Osienski is introducing legislation to allow moving violation fees to be attached to speed cameras. He noted there are different types of speed cameras for various areas and zones. He believed work zone speed cameras were already collecting those fees.

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

Dr. Bancroft was concerned that beach municipalities would get a “free ride” from this fee, as they would receive a portion of the money collected by the city. He preferred to see a sunset of this policy if the state determines an equitable, fair way to charge these fees and allocate the collected funding.

Mr. Seador stated that areas all over the state have been charging this fee for some time. However, there is much money to be collected within Newark’s city limits.

Dr. Bancroft believed this seemed reasonable.

Ms. Ford believed this vote was a step in the right direction as it provided Aetna with additional funding. Additionally, other municipalities might follow suit with the same process. She urged Council to approve the collection of this fee.

Mr. McDermott noted other fire agencies sometimes need to come from outside city limits to assist Aetna in major emergencies. He believed this was important to consider when evaluating the approval of this fee.

The Mayor opened the floor to public comments.

Ellen Pollack, District 2, attempted to provide public comment, but was unsuccessful due to technical difficulties.

MOTION BY MS. FORD, SECONDED BY MR. LAWHORN: THAT COUNCIL DIRECT STAFF TO IMPLEMENT THE AMBULANCE FEE AS OUTLINED IN THE STAFF MEMO DATED MAY 13, 2025.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE: 7 to 0.

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

Nay – 0.

Absent – 0.

12. 4-B. MAIN STREET SAFETY DISCUSSION – CITY MANAGER (45 MINUTES)

1:08:20

Tim Filasky, Public Works & Water Resources Director, explained that on May 12th, Council directed staff to form a stakeholder group consisting of City state, the Newark Police Department (NPD), DelDOT officials, Aetna representatives, and UD officials along with the UD Police Department (UDPD). Council additionally requested that staff bring back a list of recommendations to improve safety for all Main Street users. He thanked all of those who participated in the stakeholder group and commended them for their collective brainstorming and vetting of possible short-term solutions in hopes of implementation by late August. He reminded that Mr. Coleman mentioned the “Three E’s” in his previous presentation: engineering, enforcement, and education. Practitioners of each of these pillars were present on the committee as reflected in the recommendations. The City is heavy on the engineering front, as they are tasked to fix problems with facts and data both tested and proven in similar scenarios. He gave an example of how Ms. Ford mentioned the usage of bollards in Nashville; the City extensively researched these to see how they would fit in Newark. Every idea or suggestion received a fair assessment before being added to the City’s list of recommendations – however, not every idea was agreed upon, and every idea has its own trade-offs. He noted that some of these ideas can be temporarily installed for analysis and would only be permanent if the data indicates they are effective. He added the City is also trying not to focus on preventing the next criminal act with these ideas, but instead ensuring pedestrians feel safe and comfortable on Main Street. This presentation does not include an update on the bail reform or stiffer penalties for those evading the police on Main Street. He reiterated Rep. Romer has agreed to bring that initiative to next year’s legislative session.

Regarding a previous question about speed cameras on Main Street, he explained it is language Rep. Osienski has added to this year’s bond bill. Once it passes, that legislation will take effect. This would need to be updated annually, unless it is incorporated into next year’s legislation. He proceeded to introduce Brad Herb of Johnson, Mirmiran & Thompson (JMT), a licensed transportation engineer and the senior vice president of JMT’s Highway Department. He has managed the design of numerous roadway improvements across New Castle County, focusing on providing multimodal facilities for pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users, as well as incorporating traffic calming measures. His team completed several projects in Newark, including the reconstruction of South Main Street, Elkton Road, and the Delaware Avenue separated bikeway, which added several miles of dedicated bike and pedestrian infrastructure to the city. Ongoing or planned projects include improvements to the Christina Parkway, the SR-472 intersection, and the South College Avenue Gateway project. These initiatives aim to enhance, expand, or introduce new multimodal facilities. All these projects have required close coordination and collaboration with City personnel, playing a significant role in their success. He stated the goal for this discussion is to approve some of the measures presented this evening, as there will be another stakeholder meeting tomorrow. This meeting will review what Council approves tonight to be put into effect by the start of the next school year.

Brad Herb, Johnson, Mirmiran & Thompson (JMT), gave a presentation to Council regarding potential short-term, mid-term, and long-term improvements to Main Street.

(Presentation: [Attached here](#). The presentation spanned from 1:14:31 to 1:47:56.)

Mr. Filasky reiterated the City is specifically looking for directions on the short-term initiatives listed. If Council reaches a consensus to implement all of them, staff will need to extensively work on them and prioritize them in their upcoming meetings. Then, they will follow up with a memo to Council via the weekly report or semi-weekly administrative report. Staff will construct a plan to complete everything within the desired timeframe. He noted staff are looking at the east end of Main Street for many of these safety measures as they want to communicate that drivers entering Main Street should slow down. He communicated that the measures Aetna has disapproved, such as speed cushions and bumps, are mainly being proposed at the east end of Main Street, which has less firetruck or ambulance runs. He noted many of these improvements are only temporary until made permanent, and staff want to focus on the short-term first to create a reasonable path forward by the end of the week.

Mr. McDermott advised Council to remain focused on specifically outlining their wishes to provide staff with proper direction.

Mr. Filasky stated he would track Council’s comments, eliminating the need to vote on each one. He added Mr. Herb is not privy to the conversations with the current speed camera vendor. DelDOT will not sign the memorandum of understanding (MOU) required to implement the speed cameras until the vendor has resolved the significant issues with the software. Once this is resolved, the City will sign the MOU and implement it. It is not currently a short-term solution but could become one if the issues are resolved swiftly.

The Mayor opened the table to Council comment.

Mr. Lawhorn supported the reboundable crosswalk signs, believing this is an easy but effective method. He supported the implementation of a 4-way stop sign at Tyre Avenue. He believed the data from the City's speed studies indicated that the front end of Main Street has high speeds at virtually all times. He believed it to be a brilliant idea. While he first questioned the thought of replacing a traffic light with a stop sign, he came to understand that it changes the perception of what Main Street is: a high pedestrian area. He believed this change would cause a mental change for motorists when entering Main Street and believed it would be the most effective idea of all ideas listed. He believed an all-way stop sign at Haines Street also made sense. While he had reservations about having a line of stop signs going down Main Street, he understood they could be removed at any time and believed they were worth trying. He believed it to be critical to create a timeline for observation and evaluation as he wanted Council to be able to hold staff accountable for completing this initiative. He understood this initiative would be ongoing and critical for future councils to address through observation and evaluation.

Mr. Herb noted these stop-light conversions are typically monitored for a year.

Mr. Lawhorn wanted to ensure there would be checks and balances in the plan that will eventually be brought forward to Council.

Mr. Filasky stated DelDOT requires that the City monitors an all-way stop for a year after conversion from a stoplight. This would be included in the upcoming process.

Mr. Lawhorn believed all these changes – not just stop signs – should be observed for a period to see if they are effective. He was concerned about adding stop signs to non-signalized crossings due to the number of stop signs that would be added to Main Street. He was unsure if he would support adding stop signs down Main Street. He believed implementing one at the beginning of Main Street is critical. He wanted to see the results of the stop sign at Haines Street before deciding future or long-term solutions.

Mr. Herb stated the stakeholder group agrees with this approach.

Mr. Lawhorn stated he initially did not favor the implementation of rumble strips but now believed it to be a good idea to implement at the beginning of Main Street. Regarding pedestrian signage upgrades, he remarked he does not typically favor signs as solutions. While he was aware DelDOT uses many signs in their own operations, he recalled an engineer stating, "If you need a sign, it is a bad design," which he agreed with. He believed some signs are effective and would be supportive of changing yellow signs to high-visibility green signs. However, he thought that if the City needs to put up a sign, they should probably revisit the road's engineering to see what went wrong to the point where it necessitated a sign.

He believed speed radar signs are effective in spurts. He stated the speed radar sign coming down New London Road was significantly effective. However, he also noted their effectiveness fades over time if they are in a single location for an extended period. He would support moving the signs on occasion and then reimplementing them to ensure their effectiveness. While he believed speed cushions would be effective if paired with other solutions, he did not support them. He believed they were highly controversial, and there would be just as many people in opposition to them as there would be in support of them. He would suggest incorporating these as part of the discussion of a long-term plan but would not be supportive of them at the short-term stage. He held the same opinion regarding the modular curb and asked if it would be specifically located near the McDonald's at the beginning of Main Street.

Mr. Herb stated this would be one location for consideration. This would only be used to reduce the width of the travel lane temporarily and would be paired with modular speed cushions so cars cannot avoid them.

Mr. Lawhorn stated that while he liked the idea, as it is more for lane restriction, he still opposed the implementation of speed cushions. However, he believed lane restrictions would be another method of changing motorists' mindsets when driving onto Main Street.

Mr. Filasky stated there are two different sections of this area and believed Mr. Lawhorn was referring to the slip lane, which will have striping only. The modular curb would be located on the Main Street side of the roadway, in conjunction with the speed cushion.

Mr. Lawhorn believed a physical barrier would be more effective than painted lines on the road. While he considered that lines would help to guide the flow of traffic, he believed a false curb would be

more effective. However, if this were only implemented in pair with speed cushions, then he believed it would be more suitable for a later plan. He did not believe the removal of parking would be a short-term solution. However, removing parking spots near the crosswalks is being referred to as a short-term solution, and he asked if this had already been implemented.

Mr. Herb responded in the affirmative, as the short-term iteration of this solution would be the striping that has been placed.

Mr. Lawhorn was supportive of this idea. He believed the removal of obstructions was a “no-brainer” solution and supported it. He believed the City would need to have another conversation about the vitality of Main Street and other business-related items. While he believed most residents loved the option to dine outdoors, he was concerned it would be a significant problem if they are blocking a crosswalk. He believed this, along with widening the sidewalks, would be effective as part of a long-term solution. He stated his long-term vision would be to widen sidewalks, bury electrical lines to reduce a “messy” appearance of Main Street, and remove parking, the latter of which would require one or two parking garages.

Mr. Herb stated these solutions were part of the discussion at the first stakeholder meeting. However, building a parking garage is a heavy lift, which would be expected to take more than five years.

Mr. Lawhorn agreed but stated this is why plans are created and executed. However, this would need to be one of the first things included as part of a long-term solution. He stated he supported most of the mid-term solutions except for the lowering of the speed limit. He believed it would be safer to ensure that motorists are abiding by the current speed limit. He believed it would be unnecessary to reduce the speed limit if it is more visible to motorists. He noted many people favor completely closing Main Street to vehicles. He did not believe this would be feasible as Main Street is a major thoroughfare. He supported raised crosswalks, but he did not support speed bumps. He wanted to see data on the community safety zone, because he was unsure if fining people more money would make them slow down. He supported the inclusion of bollards, pavement markings, and increased enforcement. He believed the current situation with speed cameras was a mess. While he and the rest of Council supported them, he believed the State needs to find new vendors if they are to make any progress due to the slow pace this initiative has taken. He believed the City should encourage the State to find new vendors to implement what has already been approved.

Ms. Creecy concurred with Mr. Lawhorn except for the mention of fluorescent signs. She believed they are effective, especially for nighttime drivers. She supported the inclusion of rumble strips on Main Street. She believed they would be a reasonable compromise if the fire department or other emergency carriers did not support speed cushions. She agreed with improving lighting along Main Street for the daytime, evening, and seniors in the surrounding area.

Mr. Brown agreed with the first suggestion but disagreed with the removal of the signal at Tyre Avenue. He was concerned that, if the signal is removed but ineffective at reducing speeds, it would be costly to implement it again.

Mr. Filasky explained DelDOT does not allow the City to completely remove a signal until it is proven the stop sign is more effective. When the stop sign is implemented, the signal will go on flash mode, and the City will proceed to run a test for a year. If the data indicates positive results, only then will DelDOT remove the signal.

Mr. Herb further explained DelDOT has nine criteria to determine whether a signal should be in an area. After an analysis of that intersection, it was determined that it did not meet any of the nine warrants for a signal. He believed this to be one of the main reasons why DelDOT is allowing it to be converted to an all-way stop.

Mr. Brown supported pavement markings, increased enforcement, removal of parking spaces, and removal of obstructions. While he was concerned with reducing the width of the road, he believed it may benefit Main Street. He disagreed with the implementation of speed cushions. He noted that he did not see mention of stoplights to be included above signage at crosswalks, and he has seen pedestrians at the crossing near Herman’s Meat Market choose to jaywalk instead of pressing the button and waiting for the light to turn. He was concerned about this occurring in relatively busy areas like Cleveland Avenue.

Mr. Herb stated there is a rapid flashing beacon at that crossing, which is a medium-term improvement being considered for Main Street.

Mr. Brown understood but noted some pedestrians would not bother even to press the button before crossing. He supported rumble strips and non-signalized crossings.

Dr. Bancroft requested staff to use the solutions based on evidence to determine which ones are the easiest to implement. He preferred those causing the least greenhouse gas emissions. He approved of the speed bumps and speed cushions. He believed discussing the possibility of a parking garage was out of the scope of this item's discussion.

Mr. McDermott asked for further clarity on the recommendations Dr. Bancroft favored.

Dr. Bancroft supported the rumble strips, circles, and 4-way stops on Main Street. However, he believed they would cause "gridlock" across Main Street and its adjacent roadways if all were implemented simultaneously. He suggested thinking carefully about how much extra time staff are spending on people crossing town and the additional emissions that it causes.

Mr. Filasky asked for Dr. Bancroft's opinion of the all-way stop conversion at the intersection of Main Street and Tyre Avenue.

Dr. Bancroft supported this recommendation.

Ms. Ford approved all the short-term improvements except for removing the traffic signal at Tyre Avenue. She acknowledged the mention of how students are afraid to cross the street and noted the senior population feels the same. She noted a 72-unit building will be constructed on Tyre Avenue, where many of its elderly residents will have mobility issues and require the necessary equipment. She did not believe a stop sign would be beneficial in this area, as an elderly woman was recently killed when using a crosswalk. Additionally, she noted traffic lights are safer for bicyclists than all-way stop signs. She suggested installing a sharrow in the chute near McDonald's, as motorists need to be advised that bicyclists are present on the road. She believed a sharrow is necessary in that area if the lane size is reduced as bicyclists will sometimes be honked at by motorists coming into town. She urged the City not to remove the traffic light at Tyre Avenue.

Mr. Suchanec supported the reboundable crosswalk signs but did not support removing the traffic light at Tyre Avenue. He asked which left turn would specifically be eliminated at that intersection.

Mr. Herb explained there is a left turn from Main Street onto Tyre Avenue next to the through lanes. If the intersection were to be converted to an all-way stop control, that left turn lane would be eliminated, and all left turns would be made from the left through lane.

Mr. Suchanec did not support the all-way stop control at the intersection of Haines Street as he did not believe it would be practical and effective. He explained all-way stops are usually where intersections are well defined, and all cars stopped are visible. The stop sign would be placed halfway up the Main Street route in front of Helen's Sausage House, which is a long way from Haines Street. Additionally, this is a two-lane road, and the stop sign will be far back into the lane. It will need to be pushed back to allow for the pedestrian sidewalk to be installed across. He was concerned there would be many potential accidents at this intersection. He noted with stop signs on two roads; one car will be stopped and another will not. There is already an issue at the Main Street crosswalks, where one lane of traffic stops for pedestrians and the other does not. This puts the pedestrians in a situation where they walk through the crosswalk, believing the second lane of traffic will stop for them, only to have it speed on through. He was concerned that the same issue would occur at this intersection with this change. However, he supported the installation of stop signs at non-signalized crossings and rumble strips, expressing pleasure that the latter would be added between Library Avenue and Tyre Avenue. However, he believed they should also be placed before every crosswalk. He believed that the sound of cars driving over the rumble strips would help pedestrians recognize when cars are approaching crosswalks and would provide them with safety. He agreed with Mr. Lawhorn regarding the implementation of too many signs, stating he was a "maybe" on that recommendation.

Mr. Herb clarified this was a replacement of the existing yellow signs with highly visible fluorescent green signs instead of adding more signs.

Mr. Suchanec asked if this method had been proven to be effective through an analysis.

Mr. Herb responded in the affirmative.

Mr. Suchanec stated that this would bring more attention to the crosswalk; he initially thought the changes would be more substantial but supported the change if it would only modify the color of the signs. He stated that he was not in favor of speed radar signs, as he was concerned that motorists would purposely speed to trigger the sign's anti-speeding functions. He did not believe they would be effective. He believed a solution would be to concentrate on speed cameras and ticketing. He did not favor speed cushions and felt the same effect would be accomplished by slightly raising the crosswalks. He was in favor of reducing the lane size but asked what would be done with the four extra feet in the roadway. He wondered if staff were considering filling that space in with bike lanes, as he believed cars and bicycles sharing the same lanes to be problematic. He believed there needs to be a well-defined path on Main Street, especially with the upcoming addition of scooters.

Mr. Herb explained the City has limited space to implement bike lanes at this location because the minimum acceptable bike lane width is four feet. He did not recommend shifting the lanes over to one side to provide that necessary four feet.

Mr. Suchanec noted there are two feet on each side of the roadway and suggested shifting the lanes to allow four feet for a bike lane.

Mr. Herb stated the stakeholder group could discuss this idea further.

Mr. Suchanec believed it was currently dangerous for pedestrians to even exit their cars on Main Street due to the traffic. They need to ensure they are safe to exit by looking in their rearview mirrors. Even with buffer lanes, there is still a risk of bikes and scooters coming by, and they may be more difficult to notice in a rearview mirror than a car.

Mr. Herb did not believe officials from Aetna would favor shifting the lanes to one side because there would only be a 10-foot-wide travel lane with no buffer for fire trucks. He believed that having a two-foot buffer is more beneficial for Aetna, as it allows their trucks to drive in either lane. He believed it is more advantageous for bikes to ride in the through lane in this area due to the risk of dooring, where a motorist opens the door without looking and the motorcycle runs into it. He suggested sticking with what has been proposed as the best alternative for both Aetna's emergency access and cyclists.

Mr. Suchanec stated he did not realize a firetruck was that wide, and 8 feet would be problematic for them.

Mr. Herb stated there would still be stripes, and the fire trucks would still have 12 feet available, like current. This is why the need to have increased enforcement for parking to ensure they are parked within the parking aisle was discussed at the stakeholder meeting.

Mr. Suchanec asked for clarification that the vehicles will be "whizzing" by parked cars.

Mr. Herb stated that this is currently done and will not change with these revisions.

Mr. Suchanec believed that more parking spaces need to be eliminated. He suggested taking one more in each location as a temporary stopgap with yellow paint. He supported eliminating obstructions. He wanted to see a combined force of the NPD and UDPD doing enforcement on Main Street. He supported pavement marking awareness.

Mr. McDermott agreed with Mr. Lawhorn and Ms. Creecy, except for the reduction of travel lanes. He believed reducing the travel lanes would cause more problems than it would solve. While the Parking Ambassadors would be directed to enforce more, they issue tickets but do not tow vehicles. He believed there would be more problems caused, such as firetrucks being unable to access the street due to the parked cars. He believed narrowing the lanes would work in the long term, but not as a short-term solution. He believed this would only add to the City's already existing parking issues. However, if this is implemented, the City can always take measures to reverse it. He understood Mr. Suchanec's concerns regarding the stop sign at Haines Street. However, he was amenable to trying this solution, and if it proves to be ineffective, the stop signs can be removed. He believed the City must take measures to slow down traffic. He did not want to implement all these solutions, as he still wanted to encourage individuals to come to Main Street. If motorists stopped every 10 minutes, it might discourage them from returning. He believed this discussion concerns reducing speeding issues but will not change the tragedies that have already occurred. This discussion does not address the lawlessness occurring with offenders fleeing from police. He believed the City needs to ensure this issue is resolved reasonably and measurably, so Main Street is still inviting to the public. He agreed with the approach proposed by Mr. Lawhorn and Ms. Creecy. He was concerned about the removal of the turn lane on Tyre Avenue.

Mr. Herb clarified motorists would still be able to make a left turn from the left-hand lane onto Tyre Avenue.

The Mayor opened the floor to public comments.

Dan Seador, Aetna, Hose, Hook & Ladder, Co., thanked the stakeholder group and City leadership for allowing Aetna to provide their input on this initiative. He believed the vendor had done a great job of proposing many solutions quickly. However, Aetna still holds concerns with the vertical traffic calming measures, such as speed cushions and raised crosswalks. He believed Mr. Suchanec made good points regarding vision obstructions on Main Street, such as the lack of a sight line from Haines Street onto Main Street without removing additional parking. He believed there would be give-and-take and trial-and-error with finding the most optimal solutions. He believed it was critical that Aetna remain involved in these discussions, so their concerns are presented and heard. He noted the mention of education and stated the City is trying to act proactively in certain areas but is reactive in most others. He believed that a significant educational component should be incorporated into UD's orientation for its students. He believed it may be beneficial to deputize the City's Parking Ambassadors to write tickets for abuse or not using the crosswalks.

Heather Suchanec-Cooper, Winslow Road, explained she works at Willard Hall next to Deer Park Tavern, using that crosswalk every day to get home. She was concerned that the study is ending at South College Avenue, as that crosswalk is usually busy with student activity. She stated that when she uses that crosswalk, often one lane of traffic stops for her, but another will not. While she is aware of stopping at the crosswalk as vehicles in the second lane pass, she has witnessed this happening to others, both as a pedestrian and as a motorist. She has also seen students begin to walk along the crosswalk next to the Claymont Steak Shop as cars fly through. She wished the study would include South Main Street, as she has a college-age student who will be living in the units above the Buffalo Wild Wings in the following year. She was aware of the catapult effect of motorists coming from East to South Main Street, where there is still a heavy amount of student foot traffic. She was concerned cars would not be mindful of those pedestrians such as the students and herself. Additionally, she noted the crosswalk next to the Starbucks that crosses Main Street and suggested removing it. There are two nearby crosswalks at Klondike Kate's, as well as Taverna, and the City could consider relocating the stop signs closer to Haines Street to eliminate the setback.

Mark Deshon, District 5 resident & BikeNewark representative, was concerned BikeNewark was omitted from the stakeholder group. As the bicycle advocacy group of Newark, they are concerned about two of the three objectives in this project: safety and bicycling. He noted he had not heard much mention of bicycles aside from Ms. Ford. He agreed with Mr. Suchanec that they should not have the rumble strips. He believed Mr. McDermott made a good point about leaving the lanes the way they are, because if buffers are implemented, bicyclists will likely choose to use them instead of staying in the middle of the lane, as they are supposed to. He reminded BikeNewark created a video to show how bicyclists and motorists should travel down Main Street with each other. He encouraged the City to use that video in their education to the public. While he agreed with some of the buffering ideas, he did not want to implement too many to the point where bicyclists are discouraged from using Main Street as that will cause them to use the sidewalks instead of the travel lanes. He noted he already sees this occur often. He wanted to see more enforcement of this offense, as the Code prohibits bicyclists from using the sidewalks between Tyre Avenue and South College Avenue. This is due to the dangers to pedestrians that this could potentially cause. He noted that BikeNewark had previously worked with JMT on the Delaware Avenue project and hoped they would be included in the same manner with this project.

Ms. Ellen Pollack attempted to provide public comment but was unable to due to technical difficulties.

Ms. Reed proceeded to read two written public comments into the record.

(Secretary's Note: Please see the attached written public comments read into the record, submitted by:

- [Russ Morris.](#)
- [Kristina Jackson, 119 Tyre Avenue.\)](#)

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

Ms. Ford noted Ms. Pollack is her constituent, whose comments were going to be in opposite of the proposed removal of the traffic light at Tyre Avenue. She noted Ms. Pollack uses a walker and routinely crosses that intersection to reach her dialysis appointments.

Mr. Lawhorn appreciated the comment about South Main Street, as although this conversation is regarding East Main Street, South Main Street is considered an extension of Main Street and therefore part of its planning process. He believed South Main Street should be considered for mid-term and long-term plans.

Mr. Herb noted the stakeholder group discussed streets adjacent to Main Street. Their agreed-upon approach was to implement short-term measures on Main Street to determine what is effective before expanding it to the network and across the city.

Ms. Bensley noted Planning & Development Department staff have been investigating the amount of development coming to South Main Street. This area was renovated over a decade ago, resulting in increased development of residential units and higher pedestrian traffic. This area has evolved past the previous decisions on signage, the number of crosswalks, and other pedestrian safety measures. Staff are reviewing the updates required in accordance with the new developments that have been implemented, as well as identifying improvements that need to be made in collaboration with DelDOT.

Ms. Ford believed BikeNewark and at least one Councilmember should have been included in the stakeholder meeting. She believed it was appropriate for BikeNewark to be included in future discussions. She reiterated her opposition to removing the traffic light from Tyre Avenue, as many people in that area are elderly with mobility challenges. She did not believe traffic would stop for elderly pedestrians or bicyclists, as many motorists do not pay attention.

Mr. Suchanec noted many students come from out of state, where the rules are potentially different, and this could cause some confusion. He suggested considering the creation of a standard set of safety designs for all City crosswalks, so there is no disparity in which crosswalk a pedestrian is on and what its specific rules are. He believed marking them all the same would help with crosswalk safety across the city.

Mr. McDermott asked if Mr. Filasky had the proper direction needed to move forward with the working group.

Mr. Filasky acknowledged Mr. Suchanec's comment regarding crosswalks, as Chief of Police Mark Farrall has pointed out some intersections follow different rules than others. However, it has taken time to make the City what it is today, and these cannot be "painted with a broad brush." However, DelDOT requires the City to use the Delaware Manual and Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), which meant they are generally the same but with unique nuances. Additionally, he acknowledged Ms. Suchanec-Cooper's comment by informing her that the City has worked with DelDOT in the past on striping at the Deer Park Tavern intersection. It has been upgraded numerous times by the railroad, and DelDOT will provide the City with notice at least a week in advance that they are coming. This is also based on priority, considering the current situation and other ongoing matters with the railroads. The idea is to upgrade that intersection as well, with better crosswalks, striping, and other similar measures. Staff focused on railroad safety for a period to ensure they conducted extra paving, striping, and delineating to prevent motorists from stopping or turning onto the tracks. This pulled staff's attention to the tracks and therefore away from the pedestrian side of this area. However, it is still on the staff's radar to address. He noted the stakeholder group will meet tomorrow, and then likely this Friday, their comments will be included in the administrative report to provide a clear definition of the path forward.

13. 5. ITEMS SUBMITTED FOR PUBLISHED AGENDA:

A. Council Members:

- 1.** Discussion regarding establishing a "Pallet Village" in the City of Newark – Councilman Suchanec (30 minutes)

2:48:31

Mr. Suchanec explained he and Ms. Ford toured the Georgetown Pallet Village, which they felt to be a transformative experience. This is an approach that Georgetown has taken, which could serve as a potential model for how municipalities can shelter the homeless. He acknowledged that this Council is challenged in pursuing its charge to facilitate affordable housing; however, affordable housing is on a continuum, of which part is homelessness. A homeless individual can transition from shelters to transitional housing, to affordable rental housing, to affordable homeownership, and eventually to market ownership. This pallet village helps the homeless transition into homes, allowing them to feel safe and access services that enable them to move into affordable housing and become part of the community.

He had invited Springboard Delaware Co-Founder and Executive Director Judson Malone to give a presentation to Council about this initiative and provide an idea on how they achieved their accomplishments.

Judson Malone, Springboard Delaware, stated he and his partner, Jeff Ronald, are committed to impacting the homeless population. He explained that this is a goal-oriented program designed to provide shelter and assistance to the homeless, enabling them to transition to permanent housing and achieve self-independence. He explained that a low-barrier navigation center combines two concepts. Low barriers mean it is accessible to the most persistently unsheltered homeless because they are typically the most resistant to going into traditional shelters for a multitude of reasons: they do not feel safe, they cannot bring their partners, they cannot bring their pets, or they cannot safely store their possessions. Springboard Delaware provides these accommodations. While substance use is not permitted on the property, Springboard Delaware does not demand sobriety up front. Best practices have shown that when people are in a safe and accepting environment, they can begin addressing other issues in their lives. Springboard Delaware has a very high success rate of people who voluntarily choose to receive treatment. He stated that the aspect of low barriers is to invite those who do not like the other options offered to them, such as shelters.

He shared that before the Georgetown village was opened in January 2023, Springboard Delaware conducted outreach for three to four months. Within one week of its opening, the facility was 100% occupied. It has remained at full capacity for two and a half years, indicating the value people see in being there due to the help and support they receive. He explained that one of the core features of a low-barrier navigation center is its operational model. The navigation center is where staff work individually with every participant on a path towards self-sufficiency. Springboard Delaware will connect them with different partners offering medical, mental health, banking, and employment services. While Springboard Delaware does not provide the services itself, it facilitates access to them. At first, the third-party vendor services were hesitant; however, the discovery was that people who live in the woods do not want those services because getting high is their method for surviving a traumatic life.

Mr. Malone stated Springboard Delaware is not the first to come up with ideas of this nature. In their preparation for the project, they studied similar operations and interviewed their operators. This research consistently indicated that the most impactful thing their organization could provide is a lockable door with heat and air conditioning in a secure community, exactly what Springboard Delaware provides. This research revealed a change in occupants' demeanor within two weeks due to the trauma experienced while living in the woods. While Springboard Delaware has seen excellent outcomes in their program, it constantly measures and works to improve. One significant challenge they face is getting their occupants into permanent housing. There is a continued effort to improve affordable housing in Delaware; he believed it practically does not exist at the lowest income level. One of Springboard Delaware's most significant challenges is accommodating those who are ready to move into an affordable apartment but cannot find one. However, despite these challenges, they have successfully relocated their occupants into permanent housing.

He noted many of the facility's providers have mobile units and enjoy coming onsite. Occupants come out of their units because they want to gain something from the providers or follow up with them about previous discussions. Springboard Delaware focuses on both finding its occupants a place to live and helping them afford to live there with a sustainable income. Half of their occupants are people on benefits or receiving unemployment benefits, and the other half have no income at all. Springboard Delaware continually works to find employment opportunities for its occupants. They are increasing their efforts to bring employers to on-site job fairs and to teach their occupants how to conduct compelling interviews. They work on these initiatives due to the critical need to help them get back on their feet.

Mr. Malone explained the goal of the Pallet Village in Georgetown was to demonstrate the effectiveness of this concept. They collaborated with a company called Pallet, which specializes in making small, colorful cabins. The market segment of interim housing, utilizing various approaches of quickly deployed modular construction, has evolved. He believed that if someone is homeless, that experience should be rare, brief, and non-recurring. He believed the way to achieve this is to provide enough housing for everybody, as studies show a lack of affordable housing is the leading cause of homelessness. The concept of interim housing encourages the development of permanent affordable housing while providing people with a place to live, so they are not waiting in the woods for the projects to be completed. They are looking to have something rapidly deployable and potentially fast-tracked through the zoning process, as it is not a permanent structure. While it could last 10 years, the project will not be at a selected site forever. While they are not aiming to acquire a large amount of property, they are interested in utilizing underutilized property. The First State Community Action Agency's headquarters in Georgetown had a two-acre area behind its facility that had not been used in 40 years. This was eventually turned into

the Georgetown Pallet Village. When its goal is achieved, it can be relocated to another site. He believed these housing products could potentially evolve into other forms of emergency housing, such as those required during floods or natural disasters.

He explained Pallet's headquarters are located on the west coast in Everett, Washington, and another company called Great Outdoor Cottages is in Georgetown. He believed it was an easy decision to say the latter would be the better approach and was more cost-effective. They utilize a tiny home trailer with five individual compartments, equivalent to a small pallet cabin. When it comes onsite, the wheels are removed, and they sit 1 foot above the ground. He shared that the design can be adapted, such as being made bigger, to meet Springboard Delaware's goal of addressing family homelessness. He stated that these facilities can be fitted into many sites without having a significant impact on space. They were able to accommodate 250 units on 1.6 acres of land, but they believed 50 or 60 units would be a reasonable size. This also relates to staff loading, as Springboard Delaware aims for a reasonable caseload for their case managers. He noted that this design can be situated on a parking lot, and civil engineers have stated that this is an optimal area because stormwater facilities are already present. He stressed the importance of community acceptance, as they would not want an unattractive-looking installation nearby. Both unit occupants and residents of the surrounding area at the Georgetown site take pride in its existence in the area. He believed this only adds to the neighboring working-class community's "renaissance" in Georgetown.

Mr. Suchanec hoped this discussion would correlate to the process of this initiative and what the next step may be.

The Mayor opened the table to Council comment.

Ms. Creecy noted her advocacy for affordable housing for families, as she has seen many families in her district resorting to living in motels. She supported this idea and believed it could work in Newark. She thanked Mr. Malone for his work in advocating for those who are unable to advocate for themselves.

Mr. Lawhorn asked what the objective was for discussing this item.

Mr. Suchanec stated he wished to make a motion to take small steps towards this initiative. To be successful, Georgetown identified the land, recognized the need, secured Council support, collaborated with the Police Department, and received backing from other service organizations. However, this initiative only began with defining the need and finding a location. He suggested making a motion for staff to take inventory of primarily City-owned locations that may be able to accommodate this program. He also wanted to determine if there is a genuine need for this service, or if it is an attractive solution that is looking for a problem. The City needs to determine if there is a significant enough homeless problem in Newark to support this program. The City cannot move forward with this program until this is identified. He noted he handed out an item to Council with two ideas for locations that could work. His goal in this conversation is to consider a motion he wishes to make.

Mr. Lawhorn believed this was a phenomenal program and idea that helps a need throughout the country. He researched the program's background and spoke with Carrie Casey, a member of Springboard Delaware's Board of Directors, who also serves as the General Manager of the County department overseeing the Hope Center. He spoke with her about the differences between the Hope Center's and Springboard Delaware's models. He wanted to understand the goal and the need for this program in Newark, so he spoke with Georgetown's town manager to get his perspective. The town manager stated that this program is excellent and is doing everything it had hoped for, while also explaining the specific need that Georgetown had for this service. There was a homeless encampment with 40 – 50 people in Georgetown's woods that had been there for 20 years. A rookie police officer answered one of his first calls to that area, which had many problems, and 20 years later into his career, he recognized the problem was still prevalent and no solution had been found. This was a heavy burden on the town with a clearly defined problem. Georgetown aimed to assist 40–50 people and has been highly successful in doing so through this program.

He continued by stating that he wanted to understand the need and scale of the problem in the City of Newark so they could look for a location that suits those needs. He noted there is a community of homeless people scattered throughout the city, such as at the library or the wooded areas. He asked for this goal to be clearly defined when looking for a location because you cannot find a solution without clearly characterized problems. He also believed funding needs to be found for the plan, as both the Hope Center and the Georgetown Pallet Village were federally funded through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). He noted the Hope Center spent \$19 million to buy a hotel and asked Mr. Malone what the price range was for the Georgetown facility.

Mr. Malone stated that the purchase of the pallet structures was approximately \$500,000, but the site improvement and infrastructure costs totaled an additional \$1 million. However, they learned a lot and would not need to spend as much on future iterations.

Mr. Lawhorn stated that the City needs to determine what mechanism will be used to fund this and how it will impact City staff. He noted that the Planning & Development Department is already overworked, which has led to some of their goals not being met. He wondered if a new position would need to be created to support this initiative, if a consultant would need to be hired, or if Council would remove some items from the department's list so they can work on this project. He believed this project would be a potentially significant undertaking. He believed finding a location for this program would be challenging. While he believed there was a need in Newark, he wanted to define it. He appreciated the program but had reservations about how it would be executed in the city.

Ms. Ford stated that she also toured this facility and thanked Mr. Suchanec for requesting that this item be put on the agenda. She was disappointed that Kim Eppehimer from the Empowerment Center did not attend this evening because of the insight she has into this issue. The homeless do not only consist of those without homes in the woods, but also those who are in jeopardy of losing their homes because their landlord has given a sudden 30-day notice that they will not renew their lease. She explained many people become homeless because they are not protected as tenants. She believed this indicates the multiple levels of individuals facing housing insecurity. Pastor Corey Fields of Calvary Baptist Church also does a lot of work with the homeless in the area. She has also seen many homeless individuals in Lumbrook Park, the Dorothy Miller preserve, and on the James Hall Trail. She believed a potential location for this program would be 1.6 acres of land that the City purchased near one of its electric stations. She believed the first step is to approve the recommended motion to identify if they have a need and a suitable location.

Mr. Malone stated he knows Ms. Eppehimer very well. The Empowerment Center has a caseworker who works with Springboard Delaware and is forming a partnership with them.

Ms. Ford added the Georgetown Pallet Village is building a commercial kitchen. She asked for clarification that people will be trained here to become certified in the food service industry.

Mr. Malone stated Springboard Delaware is currently working with the First State Community Action Agency's culinary arts program to allow their graduates to apprentice in this commercial kitchen.

Ms. Ford stated that the Food Bank of Delaware has a similar program where people can come in and learn the skills needed to get a job and the money, they need to be no longer homeless. She thanked Mr. Malone for all his work and hoped the City would partner with him in the future.

Dr. Bancroft supported this project but was concerned that the City would face challenges in finding a suitable location. He hoped the City would be sensitive to local opposition from neighbors. He believed that making it look pleasing to any surrounding neighbors was vital for educating them about this campaign. He wished the City luck on a potential future search for a location.

Mr. Brown asked if the rendering Mr. Malone shared in his presentation showcases solar panels on the roof of the building.

Mr. Malone stated this is a potential development option because these homes require minimal energy. This is an advantage from both conservation and infrastructure standpoints, as they do not require power connections to the grid, despite having only electric service and no plumbing.

Mr. Brown asked if the heating units inside the facility heat any water that comes through.

Mr. Malone stated that each unit is a single-room occupancy for sleeping, but the shower and laundry facilities are communal with plumbing. However, the purpose of the cabin is only for sleeping and storage, and therefore only require electricity. It is a significant advantage to be able to electrify them without impacting the site with a considerable amount of infrastructure.

Mr. Brown asked how many doors could be provided with \$500,000.

Mr. Malone stated it covered two bathhouses and 40 cabins. However, he estimated this amount of funding would not buy as much now.

Mr. Brown asked if the culinary arts program previously mentioned was from Delaware Technical Community College (Del Tech) in Georgetown.

Mr. Malone clarified it is a part of the First State Community Action Agency.

Mr. Brown believed the Stanton location of Del Tech had just expanded their culinary program.

Mr. Malone was aware that this location has an entrepreneur ghost kitchen where chefs can attend, develop their menus, and start their businesses. While different, he believed this program to be beneficial.

Mr. Brown supported this initiative.

Mr. McDermott stated Council wants to be compassionate, empathetic, and desires to solve this problem. However, there are inescapable and realistic hurdles to achieving that solution. He noted \$1.5 million equates to a 15% property tax increase for the City. He estimated Council will already need to raise property taxes for this year. He anticipated it would likely be a year or two before the City could fund a project of this nature. As this is an opportunity cost, the City would need to give up another project to accomplish this one. He asked if the \$1.5 million for the Georgetown project was provided by public funds.

Mr. Malone explained that for the Georgetown project, \$500,000 was funded by ARPA and not from the Georgetown tax base. This amount of funding alone covered the cost of the cabins. A separate \$1 million ARPA grant was given for the remainder of the project. There was no burden on the town's tax base to fund this building's construction.

Mr. McDermott noted there was likely another project that the ARPA funding could have funded. However, that is still taxpayer money in the end.

Mr. Malone stated that the Georgetown project is taxpayer-funded moving forward. When Springboard Delaware applied for these ARPA grants, the State was impressed enough with the program to encourage Springboard Delaware to apply for a grant for their potential second location. Springboard Delaware received another \$1.4 million following this approval. However, this location will not be at the Georgetown site; Springboard Delaware must determine a site and utilize the funding by December 2026 to avoid losing it. This does not cover operating expenses, but it will cover the cost of building another village. They have the money but need the vision. Springboard Delaware views this as a public-private partnership between itself and the State, as they understand municipal budgets are tight and there is no room for a program of this nature. Additionally, homelessness and a lack of affordable housing are ultimately statewide problems for which the State ought to contribute to the operating expenses. As Springboard Delaware continues to replicate this model, it can raise private capital funding to build itself. He stated that the most significant and critical role for the municipality is leadership, understanding and identifying the problem, helping Springboard Delaware to navigate the approval process efficiently, and routinely monitoring them to ensure they are doing their job.

Mr. McDermott asked how Georgetown is currently being funded.

Mr. Malone stated that the program initially began as privately funded, solely for operational expenses, but eventually encountered donor fatigue. In 2024, the Carney Administration and a matching grant from Longwood provided the project with another year of funding. In this year's legislative session, so far in the markup is another \$750,000 to go toward another year of this project's operation. They have not yet stepped forward to state they will create a mechanism for sustainable long-term funding for programs of this nature.

Mr. McDermott noted the Hope Center was initially purchased with ARPA funds. At the time, the County Executive was under the impression that it would remain privately funded; however, this did not occur, and it has subsequently relied on taxpayer funding. He did not believe the Hope Center was fully occupied due to a lack of money and resources. He was concerned that Newark might approach a similar issue with this project. He wondered who would be responsible for funding once the remaining ARPA funds had been fully utilized. He reiterated his compassion for this cause and believed Mr. Malone was making a positive impact, but these are the concerns the Council must evaluate. He was additionally worried about where this project could be placed due to the lack of free space to use. He had not heard of any financial solutions to this problem, nor had he found any solutions to the issue of staff time. The Council will hold its prioritization meeting in July, during which they will present a list of items they would like City staff to accomplish. However, he could not recall a time since taking his seat on Council when

staff were entirely able to complete that list due to the City's bandwidth. He believed it would require another full-time employee (FTE) to manage such a project.

Mr. Malone suggested speaking to Georgetown's town manager as they did not need a staff increase to handle this project.

Mr. McDermott was unsure of Georgetown's operations, but was aware of the City of Newark's operations, staff, and bandwidth.

Mr. Malone stated Springboard Delaware staffs this project to be entirely sufficient.

Mr. McDermott stated that another concern would be that this project would be placed on private property instead of public property. Additionally, if the City must hire a new staff member, it could run out of money because it cannot afford it. He wondered what would happen to the people residing in the units. He would not support setting up this project and then abandoning it due to the long-term financial implications.

Mr. Malone stated he has heard similar concerns from other municipalities. He clarified he would not spend the \$1.4 million in ARPA funding until sustainable, multi-year funding is identified for the long term. Springboard Delaware is currently advocating for this with the legislature as their condition. They will not put any town or city into an unfavorable position. They do not want the expense of a funding gap in Georgetown, and they never went back to them for help. They received the funding without burdening the town through hard work, which he asked Council to trust him to do for a potential Newark project.

Mr. McDermott noted Springboard Delaware would need to double their efforts to raise the funds for both projects.

Mr. Malone noted his goal of ending homelessness in the state of Delaware. He stated Springboard Delaware envisions 5 – 7 of these facilities across the State by the end of the decade. They believe this is part of the solution to homelessness. Before opening in Georgetown, Springboard Delaware did six months of outreach to the homeless community. They have also established a street outreach program for the homeless, where participants are asked to fill out a questionnaire every week to stay informed. They have documented that over 260 more people are still homeless in Sussex County and are beginning to learn their exact locations. He believed these are the same questions Council wants the answers to for Newark.

Mr. Lawhorn noted he shared some of Mr. McDermott's concerns, but he envisioned determining the need as the first step in any effort. He asked if this was something Springboard Delaware could do upfront without the need for Council to act.

Mr. Malone shared that Springboard Delaware has a lengthy questionnaire that gathers multiple types of data, along with an interviewer who can easily gain the public's trust. This information is confidential and not shared except under non-disclosure agreements. If there is interest, the first person he would speak to is Ms. Eppehimer to see how this survey could be completed for Newark.

Mr. Lawhorn believed this should be completed before any other steps of the project are taken so they can determine the problem's scope.

Mr. Malone believed that both questions could be answered concurrently. As the City walks around and identifies where the homeless currently reside, it can also identify potential sites for this project.

Mr. Lawhorn stated that there are many communities of homeless people that they do not want to drift away from. When he heard about the situation in Georgetown, that is what defined the specific issue for him. This data indicates the project would be successful if completed in Georgetown. However, he did not believe the City of Newark had the same data about its homeless population.

Ms. Creecy stated she is aware of the current number of homeless individuals in Delaware as she lives in a community with many underprivileged residents. She noted there are 1,857 homeless people in Newark, many of whom live in their cars around her district. While they are present in Newark, she believed they are "hidden" if the public does not pay attention to them. She thought it was essential to evaluate this project to see if it is possible for Newark, as she heavily supported it. She noted that a marijuana cultivation facility would soon open for business in Newark and asked why the City could not levy a small tax on its sales to fund this project.

Mr. McDermott stated the City is not permitted to do so.

Ms. Creecy believed it should be made possible.

Mr. Suchanec believed that with this specific problem, Council needs to take baby steps and tackle the larger issue one small piece at a time. He advised against thinking about the “endgame” of this initiative, but rather to focus on the initial pieces first. Two small steps they can take are to acknowledge the issue of homelessness within the city and to take an inventory of City properties that can be used for this project. Taking small steps one at a time will help to eventually solve the entire problem, which is where the City can identify funding sources, service providers, and develop a concept into reality. While he asked staff to estimate the number of homeless individuals within the city, there are sources where they can research, such as those who already serve the homeless. Once these individuals understand the scale of the City’s homelessness issue, they can then take inventory of what areas could accommodate a pallet town. He did not want to try and solve the entire issue in a single meeting. He believed that the easiest thing a person can do to avoid a problem is to reject a potential solution or convince themselves it is not worth pursuing. He reiterated his request is to find locations where a project like this could potentially be constructed.

The Mayor opened the floor to public comments.

Jon Cooper, 209 Winslow Road, noted there was a recent fire in a homeless encampment under the Cranston Heights Bridge. While he understood Council’s concerns regarding the future cost of this project, he advised being mindful of what this issue is currently costing the City. Even if it is not monetary, it costs the City its community and humanity to be aware that this is a presence within its limits. He did not believe the City was doing much to address this issue. He noted that everything done by a municipality will cost taxpayer money in some form and found it redundant to state that they need to keep that factor in mind. Additionally, he said he felt concerned as a City of Newark citizen to witness what he believed to be Council interrogating a guest about his program. He thought the City of Newark owes it to its guests to treat them with respect. However, he appreciated that this item was included on the agenda and stated he was proud to live in the City of Newark.

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

Mr. Lawhorn agreed with Mr. Suchanec that defining the problem should be the first step toward this initiative. He suggested creating a compromise where that instead of asking staff to identify locations, Council identifies locations to propose within their district. If a Councilmember has an idea for a location outside of their district, they can notify the respective district’s Councilmember.

MOTION BY MR. SUCHANEC, SECONDED BY MS. FORD: TO INSTRUCT CITY STAFF TO TAKE INVENTORY OF CITY-OWNED PROPERTIES TO DETERMINE THE FEASIBILITY OF USING ANY SUCH PROPERTIES FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING EFFORTS.

MOTION BY MR. LAWHORN, SECONDED BY MS. CREECY: TO AMEND THE MOTION ON THE FLOOR TO REMOVE THE RESPONSIBILITY FROM STAFF AND TRANSITION IT TO THE COUNCILMEMBERS WITH THE IDEA THAT EACH COUNCILMEMBER FORWARD THEIR LOCATION IDEAS TO THE CITY MANAGER AND BE CULMINATED AND BROUGHT BACK AT A LATER DATE WITHIN THEIR OWN DISTRICTS.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE: 4 to 3.

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

MOTION BY MR. LAWHORN, SECONDED BY MS. CREECY: TO ACCEPT THE MOTION AS AMENDED.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE: 5 to 2.

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

Mr. Suchanec suggested placing a one-month time limit for Councilmembers to present their suggested locations to City staff.

Mr. McDermott noted the June 23rd Council meeting will need to be cancelled due to a lack of quorum.

MOTION BY MS. FORD, SECONDED BY MR. LAWHORN: TO CANCEL THE JUNE 23, 2025 CITY COUNCIL MEETING.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE: 7 to 0.

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

Nay – 0.

Absent – 0.

Ms. Bensley asked if it would be beneficial if staff were to provide a list of City-owned parcels in each district to each Council member.

Mr. McDermott responded in the affirmative.

14. 4-B. OTHERS: None

15. Meeting adjourned at 10:49 p.m.

Tara Schiano
Director of Legislative Services
City Secretary

/jh