

**CITY OF NEWARK
DELAWARE
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**

SEPTEMBER 8, 2025

Those present at 7:00 p.m.:

Presiding:	Mayor Travis McDermott District 1, John Suchanec (<i>virtual</i>) Deputy Mayor, District 2, Corinth Ford District 3, Jay Bancroft District 4, Marge Hadden (<i>after swearing-in</i>) District 5, Jason Lawhorn District 6, Emile Brown (<i>virtual</i>)
Staff Members:	City Manager Tom Coleman Deputy City Secretary Diana Reed City Solicitor Paul Bilodeau Clerk of the Court Terri Conover Parks & Recreation Director Paula Ennis Parks & Recreation Deputy Director Tyler DeBruin Planning & Development Director Renee Bensley (<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 Water Superintendent Mark Neimeister Public Works Superintendent Jason Winterling Chief of Community Engagement Officer Jayme Gravell (<i>virtual</i>) Assistant City Manager – Operations Jeff Martindale (<i>virtual</i>) Finance Director Jill Hollander Finance Deputy Director Daina Montgomery (<i>virtual</i>) Parking Supervisor Courtney Mulvanity (<i>virtual</i>) IT Infrastructure Manager Donald Lynch (<i>virtual</i>) 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 protocol for the hybrid Microsoft Teams meeting platform. For each agenda item, assigned staff will present first. For land use applications, public comments will be invited after the presentation and prior to Council remarks. For all other items, Council will provide comments after the presentation, followed by comments from the public. Councilmembers wishing to provide additional comments should ask the Chair to be recognized. He noted in-person attendees wishing to comment should sign up by utilizing the sign-in sheet near the entrance to Council Chambers, while virtual attendees should use the hand-raising feature on Teams. Microphones will remain muted until the speaker is called upon. Comments are limited to three minutes with no ceding of time. He requested speakers to state their name and Council district or street address prior to commenting. He noted remote Council members will be polled for audible votes, and visual votes would not be accepted. He asked in-person attendees also present on Microsoft Teams to mute their speakers and microphones. Councilmembers at the dais should mute their microphones unless speaking. Public comments must relate to City business or an agenda item. Violations will receive a warning, while repeated violations may result in removal or a muted microphone. However, the City has zero tolerance for hate speech for vulgar language, which will lead to immediate removal or muting of the microphone. He concluded his remarks by thanking all for their cooperation.

He proceeded to ask for a moment of silence and the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. RECEIPT OF CERTIFICATION BY ELECTION BOARD FOR COUNCIL MEMBER AND OATH OF OFFICE

A. Receipt of Certification by Election Board for Council Member – District 4

1:51

MOTION BY MR. LAWHORN, SECONDED BY DR. BANCROFT: THAT COUNCIL ACCEPT THE CERTIFICATION BY THE ELECTION BOARD.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE 6 TO 0.

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

Nay – 0.

Absent – 0.

3. B. SWEARING IN OF DISTRICT 4 COUNCIL MEMBER ELECT MARGRIT HADDEN

2:20

Ms. Reed swore in District 4 Council-elect Margrit “Marge” Hadden.

MOTION BY MS. FORD, SECONDED BY DR. BANCROFT: TO MOVE ITEM 6E ON THE AGENDA AFTER 6A AND BEFORE 6B

MOTION PASSED. VOTE 7 TO 0.

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

Nay – 0.

Absent – 0.

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

6. 2. ITEMS NOT ON PUBLISHED AGENDA

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

7. 2-B. UNIVERSITY

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

4:30

Caitlin Olsen, UD Administration, welcomed Ms. Hadden back to Council. She noted that UD is moving forward with several initiatives related to National Campus Safety Month in September, including website updates and distributing door-to-door information. She will bring a representative from UD Student Life to a future meeting to expand on the process of sharing information with students. She noted UD is expecting significant traffic on Saturday, September 20th due to a football game at 3 p.m. She noted individuals can also watch UD’s football games on local television now.

Mr. Brown thanked Ms. Olsen for putting him in contact with Former UD Vice President John Long.

8. 2-B-2. STUDENT BODY REPRESENTATIVE(S) (5 minutes per speaker) (2 minutes): None

Mr. McDermott asked Ms. Olsen if she had reached out to the student government to determine whether a representative would attend Council meetings.

Ms. Olsen responded in the affirmative. However, she will reach out to the representative again.

9. 2-C. CITY MANAGER (10 minutes):

8:07

Mr. Coleman noted the final 2025 Parks On Draft event is Saturday at Handloff Park. Thursday, September 11th is Patriot Day and the National Day of Service. He stated all short-term Main Street pedestrian safety improvements have been installed, except for the installation of flashing red lights on top of stop signs. However, stop signs with LED flashing lights have been implemented in the interim. He noted the in-street reboundable crosswalk signage was implemented on Friday and survived the weekend. These improvements will be monitored throughout the fall but will be removed for the winter due to potential snow. Staff are both looking for feedback and collecting data.

10. 2-D. COUNCIL MEMBERS (5 minutes):

9:10

Dr. Bancroft:

- No comment.

Ms. Ford:

- Noted a previous Council discussion regarding potentially creating and publishing a list of apartment buildings with the last date of inspection and landlords willing to allow interior inspections of their properties. She noted Nick Baldini has already indicated he is willing to participate and believed other principled landlords would do the same. She hoped Council would move forward with this initiative, and both the City and University could publish this list to help students find sufficient housing.

Mr. Lawhorn:

- No comment.

Ms. Hadden:

- Thanked the residents of District 4 for putting their faith in her to serve as the District 4 Councilmember. She noted that the district boundaries have been modified since her previous term. She asked District 4 residents who wish to be added to her mailing list to sign up on the sheet she has placed at the entrance of the room by providing their name, address, and email address. They can also sign up by emailing her at haddenfornewark@gmail.com.

Mr. Brown:

- No comment.

Mr. Suchanec:

- No comment.

Mr. McDermott:

- Welcomed Ms. Hadden back to Council and appreciated her willingness to serve.

11. 2-E. PUBLIC COMMENT (5 minutes per speaker) (10 minutes):

11:50

Reverend Blaine Hackett, St. John Church, expressed his concerns about the intersection of Cleveland Avenue, Hillside Road, and New London Road, at which the church is located. He noted there have been multiple accidents that have directly damaged the church, and there has been no movement on the initiative to make the intersection safer since his previous discussions with both the City Manager and the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT). He noted another recent accident, which resulted in two totaled cars and multiple injuries. He believed something needs to be done about that intersection before a fatality occurs. He noted the church is allocating a significant amount of money toward restoring the historic building, which is the oldest Black church in Newark and has stood for 177 years as so. He requested the City's assistance in enhancing safety at this intersection. The church has not received any updates since DelDOT and New Castle County analyzed the intersection.

Mr. McDermott stated the City will reach out to DelDOT, and then the City Manager will follow up with Rev. Hackett to provide him with updates on these improvements.

Richard Gaskins, District 1 resident and member of the Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) Commission, encouraged the Council to consider nominating representatives from their districts to serve on the D&I Commission. He noted the commission currently does not have a quorum to meet regularly. He offered to help in the recruitment effort by speaking to Council, gathering what they are looking for in a representative and assisting in finding individuals who meet that criteria.

Mr. McDermott asked which districts have vacancies on the commission.

Ms. Reed stated there are vacancies on the commission for Districts 2 through 6.

Mr. McDermott noted it can be challenging for Councilmembers to find individuals to fill vacancies on the City's boards and commissions. He appreciated any assistance Mr. Gaskins could provide in finding willing individuals, such as sending a list to the City Secretary to disseminate to Council.

Mr. Gaskins agreed but believed it would be helpful to discuss with each Councilmember their desires for the commission's members.

Ms. Ford noted she has a candidate who will potentially apply for the District 2 seat on the commission. She agreed to discuss the matter with Mr. Gaskins and would share her contact information with him.

- 12. 3. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA: (1 minute)**
A. Approval of the August 11, 2025 Council Meeting Minutes
B. Receipt of the May 31, 2025 Financial Statement

17:11

Ms. Reed read the consent agenda into the record.

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

MOTION PASSED. VOTE 7 TO 0.

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

Nay – 0.

Absent – 0.

- 13. 4. APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS, COMMITTEES AND COMMISSIONS:**
A. Reappointment of Scott Bradley to the District 3 Position on the Planning Commission for a Term to Expire on September 15, 2028

18:04

Dr. Bancroft stated the positions on the Planning Commission are essential for steering the vision for Newark in the proper direction. He noted Mr. Bradley’s familiarity with these issues, as this is a reappointment.

The Mayor opened the table to Council comment.

Renee Bensley, Planning & Development Director, shared both Mr. Bradley and Chris Williamson, who is also up for reappointment on this agenda, have been recently appointed to the steering committee for the Comprehensive Development Plan Update and will be significantly involved in that upcoming project.

Mr. McDermott thanked Mr. Bradley for his willingness to continue serving, as the Planning Commission is one of the more significant responsibilities of the City’s boards and commissions.

Mr. Bradley expressed his opinion that working on the Planning Commission was an enjoyable experience, and they are lucky to have their current group of commissioners.

Mr. McDermott concurred.

There was no public comment.

MOTION BY DR. BANCROFT, SECONDED BY MS. FORD: THAT COUNCIL REAPPOINT SCOTT BRADLEY TO THE DISTRICT 3 POSITION ON THE PLANNING COMMISSION FOR A TERM TO EXPIRE ON SEPTEMBER 15, 2028.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE 7 TO 0.

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

Nay – 0.

- 18. 4-B. REAPPOINTMENT OF CHRISTOPHER WILLIAMSON TO THE AT-LARGE POSITION ON THE PLANNING COMMISSION FOR A TERM TO EXPIRE ON SEPTEMBER 15, 2028**

20:40

Mr. McDermott noted Mr. Williamson resides in Arbor Park and has been on the commission for a significant amount of time. He believed he was an appropriate selection for the position and appreciated him sitting on the steering committee. He thanked Mr. Williamson for his willingness to continue serving.

There was no Council or public comment.

MOTION BY DR. BANCROFT, SECONDED BY MR. LAWHORN: THAT COUNCIL REAPPOINT CHRISTOPHER WILLIAMSON TO THE AT-LARGE POSITION ON THE PLANNING COMMISSION FOR A TERM TO EXPIRE ON SEPTEMBER 15, 2028.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE 7 TO 0.

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

Nay – 0.

Absent – 0.

18. 4-C. REAPPOINTMENT OF JAMES CLOONAN TO THE AT-LARGE POSITION ON THE BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT FOR A TERM TO EXPIRE SEPTEMBER 15, 2029

21:55

Mr. Suchanec noted he spoke with Mr. Cloonan earlier in the day and informed him it would not affect his appointment if he were not to attend the meeting.

There was no Council or public comment.

MOTION BY DR. BANCROFT, SECONDED BY MR. LAWHORN: THAT COUNCIL REAPPOINT JAMES CLOONAN TO THE AT-LARGE POSITION ON THE BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT FOR A TERM TO EXPIRE SEPTEMBER 15, 2029.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE 7 TO 0.

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

Nay – 0.

Absent – 0.

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

15. 6. SPECIAL DEPARTMENT REPORTS:

- A. Resolution 25-_:** A Resolution Honoring Carla Grygiel, Director of the Newark Senior Center on her Retirement

23:40

Mr. McDermott stated that Carla Grygiel, retiring Executive Director of the Newark Senior Center, has a reputation that precedes her. He noted the Newark Senior Center is commonly regarded as one of the “shining stars” of the City of Newark. He believed this reputation to be a testament to the 19 years of commitment Ms. Grygiel has dedicated to the center.

He presented Ms. Grygiel with a Resolution honoring her on her retirement.

(Resolution: [Attached here.](#))

18. 6-E. POTENTIAL CHANGES TO 2025 PROPERTY TAX STRUCTURE – CITY MANAGER TOM COLEMAN (30 MINUTES)

26:33

Mr. Coleman proceeded to give a presentation on potential changes to the 2025 property tax structure.

(Presentation: [Attached here.](#) The presentation spanned from 26:55 to 44:40.)

The Mayor opened the table to Council comment.

Mr. Lawhorn noted that he has had lengthy discussions with the City’s state representatives about the actions taken by New Castle County and the Christina School District Board of Education. He believed the underlying root cause of these issues is that the reassessment was done poorly and significantly inaccurate to residential houses. He noted previous discussions where Councilmembers would not vote for tax increases due to unfair tax bills among different properties, and it was a common belief that the reassessment would solve this disparity. He noted his disappointment in the New Castle County Council for voting against an ordinance to investigate the methodology behind the reassessment. He believed the answer to this problem would be to redo the reassessment. Although it would be expensive, it would effectively solve the problem.

He stated, for these reasons, he was opposed to taking any action. Instead, he believed the City should allocate its resources to pressure the State to solve the problem by fixing the reassessment. He understood the reassessment had impacted many residents in Newark. Using himself as an example, he noted since his house, which is in the 75th percentile, was higher valued, his taxes would only have increased by a few percent if everything stayed the same. In this situation, the school board had the legal right to raise revenue by up to 10% and took that opportunity. His taxes should have gone up significantly, which happened when they were first released. He believed this situation to be very frustrating because a property owner is paying half their taxes, while other individuals are splitting the error – therefore, some individuals are impacted more than others. The State gave the opportunity to split the rate and give residential properties half of what the businesses pay, and the School Board took everything they could. He noted his taxes have now decreased by \$90, which did not make sense to him as his taxes to the School Board are decreasing when they should be increasing. He believed this to be a complicated mess still, even if Council were to take no action.

Mr. Lawhorn commended and appreciated the hard work done by staff to formulate these options. He believed this to be a complex issue to understand as well as determine how to implement a solution. However, he did not support implementing any of the solutions presented due to the taxes in Newark; Newark residents pay school, county, and municipal taxes, with the latter being the smallest portion. He believed the City should put its effort and resources into fixing the root cause of the problem. He noted the benefits of choosing to do nothing would be avoiding any potential messes that taking action may cause, such as lawsuits or having to undo their decisions because of action taken by the State. He believed if Council decides to implement a split rate, there should be a provision allowing it to sunset automatically whenever a new reassessment is completed. He believed taking action would make a simple municipal tax significantly more complicated than necessary.

Ms. Hadden was concerned about the constitutionality and legality of implementing a two-tiered system. She was concerned there would be potential for a lawsuit and believed it would be a poor use of taxpayer money to fight it. She asked if there are any State-level discussions about redoing the reassessment. She asked for clarification that the City is legally obligated to collect taxes by a specific date.

Mr. Coleman stated the City's Code is unclear on this subject and has language that could be considered confusing. While the "due date" is September 30th, a separate section of Code allows the Finance Director to make payment arrangements with people to push off penalties and interest. The City has leveraged that authority and has provided it to everybody so that every resident has an extra 30 days before the City begins charging penalties and interest.

Ms. Hadden believed something needed to be done. She noted she has seen bidding wars in her neighborhood for houses that are not worth what is being bid. She did not believe that an assessor coming in will consider what a property owner might receive for the house in the distant future. She did not wish to state whether she believed the reassessment was done poorly, but believe the values were fair. She asked if an appeal process would be implemented with any of these options. She noted she does not support a two-tier option at all.

Mr. Coleman stated the City has traditionally always followed the County's assessments. Any appeals in the valuation have been deferred to the County. However, all apartment buildings are categorized as non-residential by the County. For the City to include apartments as residential in any of the proposed options, they would need to do so manually. If the property is billed as non-residential, they would not be automatically eligible for any exemptions and would need to apply. For mixed-use buildings, the City would need to get the assessed value for the residential portion of the building and then apply the exemptions only to that portion. However, he estimated only 50 buildings would meet this criterion and would require a manual adjustment.

Ms. Hadden believed, if Council determines this to be the direction they would like to take, then the City should have a separate appeals process. She requested clarification that a mixed-use building would only have an exemption applied to the residential units, and the rest of the building would be taxed at the full rate.

Mr. Coleman responded in the affirmative; the property owner would still receive one tax bill, but they would see a reduction equal to the exemption amount on the residential portion of the property assessment.

Ms. Hadden was concerned small businesses would take a significant hit, as indicated by multiple portions of the presentation. She inquired whether it would be legally feasible to grant an exemption for small businesses that meet specific criteria.

Mr. Bilodeau stated the language being relied on for exemptions does not distinguish between commercial and residential properties. He would follow up but believed this would be a possibility.

Ms. Hadden believed small businesses to be the backbone of many aspects of society; however, the City would need to determine how to define a small business. Then, they will need to consider if they are creating a separate class, which would cause legal issues.

Mr. Bilodeau believed this could be legally challenging.

Mr. Coleman noted many businesses rent their space from a landlord instead of owning it. A property owned by a commercial landlord would not be considered a small business. He shared the section of the uniformity clause being referenced: "...with respect to real property located within the boundaries of any incorporated municipality. The authority to exempt such property from municipal property tax shall be exercised by the respected, incorporated municipality, when in the opinion of said municipality, it will be to promote the public welfare." He wondered how the City could ensure the benefit they are trying to provide applies to the correct people.

Ms. Hadden wished to refrain from options that could result in potential legal challenges. However, she supported Option #2.

Ms. Ford agreed with Mr. Lawhorn but noted it was for different reasons. She was concerned about the outcome of the reassessment due to its disproportionate impact on senior citizens and residential homeowners. She stated New York City has four tax classifications, of which they split their rates. However, Newark's Council is trying to address a mess they did not create, and she did not believe they should act until it is addressed and rectified by another party. She noted her conversations with County officials have indicated the County is not going to redo the reassessment. She agreed the reassessment was done poorly. She noted that the appeals process currently involves going through the County, and then the results are channeled down to the City. She does not wish to have a separate appeal process for the City as they did not create this mess. She preferred to either not act at all, or to opt for exemptions. She was unsure how much relief this would provide to Newark's seniors and believed the more extensive relief must come at the County level and in the form of school taxes. She would rather stick to the "status quo" at the City level and see how this situation pans out at the County.

Dr. Bancroft believed these solutions made sense. He believed a two-tier system would be the fairest option. However, the tiered system was not recommended legally, as the City would then be following the County. If the County were to undo their own approach, the City would need to do the same. While he agreed that the last option would be the fairest, he believed the County would eventually resolve this issue. However, he believed voting to do nothing would mean voting to do what the County has already done. He did not believe assuming what actions the County would take be beneficial to the discussion.

Mr. Brown concurred with Mr. Lawhorn. He disagreed with Dr. Bancroft, believing it would be better to refrain from choosing an option for a two-tier system. He supported exploring the exemption options.

Mr. Suchanec stated that he did not believe in a two-tier system, as he believed it would be unfair to residential properties. He did not believe the City should be involved in the appeals process but also did not believe they should wait for the County to make changes. He believed the City should be proactive, as its residents deserve a break. He favored the \$20,000 exemption, believing it would bring the number back to a realistic level for all non-residential categories.

Dr. Bancroft emphasized the importance of accurately interpreting these numbers. He gave the example of a 70th percentile house, which initially pays \$900, and now it is up to \$1,000. Despite the 1.5% listed, the bill has still increased. He noted that there are special categories for businesses that could be problematic, but the City needs to prioritize the residents' needs first. He believed all the exemptions would be detrimental to the city's residents.

Mr. Coleman noted that the change column compares the 2025 billed amount to the 2025 proposed amount. If someone wished to compare what was paid in 2024 to what was paid or billed in 2025, and then what they would be billed with this exemption, it would be 2024 and 2025 proposed columns to see the difference. In this case, the 25th percentile would increase from \$478 to \$610, rather than \$631. For non-residential uses, such as a Golf Course, instead of \$31,656, the amount would have increased to almost \$51,000. Under the proposals it will go up to nearly \$53,000. This is a \$2,000

difference from what was previously billed in 2025 but is still a \$21,000 increase from what was paid last year.

Mr. Suchanec inquired about the impact this would have on the City's tax revenue.

Mr. Coleman stated that they are all revenue-neutral from what was already billed in 2025.

Mr. McDermott agreed with Mr. Lawhorn. He understood the concerns regarding the bottom line but noted that if this were done instead of doing nothing, it would result in an additional \$1.75 per month. He wondered if the effort would be worth the outcome. He did not want the City to be in an unfavorable position. He agreed the City should follow the County to some degree but was concerned the City could end up in potential litigation if they implemented a two-tier system. He believed the City should not act for the current year and wait to see the outcome of the County's two-tier system. If the City wishes to address this later, it can proceed with doing so at that time. He noted the money paid in a tax bill might be a larger amount that could hit some individuals all at once, and the school tax is what is "crushing" people in these percentiles. He noted he previously has not voted in favor of tax increases due to massive disparities between some properties. He did not believe the reassessment fixed this problem due to Newark's unique real estate market. He reiterated his belief that it would be best for the City not to act for now and then readdress the issue during the next tax season after any potential litigation with the two-tier system has been resolved.

Mr. Coleman explained there are two actions required if Council wishes to move forward with an exemption. All exemptions would need to be codified, so staff would need to write an ordinance, bring it forward for first reading, second reading, a public hearing, and finally adopt it into Code. Staff would then prepare an ordinance concurrently for Council to adopt, setting the new tax rate, as the tax rate would have to increase. However, if the Council wishes to take no action, they could either make a motion to do so or refrain from voting and proceed onto the next item on the agenda.

Mr. Lawhorn requested clarification on whether, if the Council elects to move forward with an exemption, it will not be stacked with other existing exemptions. If an individual gets a disability exemption, a senior exemption, and a veteran exemption, they could only have one and lose the rest.

Mr. Coleman explained this is dependent on which exemption is chosen. If Council elects to go with a flat exemption, it can be stacked easily and will not cause significant issues. However, when using those that are a percentage of the property's value, a qualifying individual would receive a larger exemption under the City than they would under a senior credit with New Castle County. They would likely wish to forgo the senior exemption in that instance. He believed if Council were to move forward with a smaller option, than he would like direction on whether Council would want them to stack or not.

Ms. Ford stated that she would ultimately favor a split tax rate but believed that if they decided to implement it currently, they would run the risk of making the situation worse. She reiterated her support for taking no action and seeing how the County's split tax rate system fares in litigation. She noted that she favors a split tax rate because businesses can deduct their property taxes, while residents cannot. She believed this should be fixed so residents can also deduct their property taxes from their federal income tax. She did not think Council has had enough time to consider the ramifications or determine the best solution. She supported adhering to the status quo.

The Mayor opened the floor to public comment.

Chris Locke, District 1 resident & General Counsel for Lang Development Group, welcomed Ms. Hadden back to Council. He believed the discussion among Council has been very thoughtful. He clarified both residential and commercial property owners can deduct their property taxes on their federal income tax. He believed choosing not to act would be the best option for both taxpayers and City Council.

Kevin Mayhew, 103 Elmwood Drive & President of the Newark Landlord Association (NLA), welcomed Ms. Hadden back to Council and agreed voting not to act would be the best option.

Mary Lou Borchardt, resident, asked if residents should pay the tax bills that they have already received. She noted she had attempted to pay her tax bill previously, and the City refused to take it.

Mr. McDermott explained the discussions and uncertainty at both the County and State level led the City to temporarily stop collecting tax bills, as they were unsure if they were going to need to issue refunds. He noted that the new due date for taxes will be October 31st, and once Council decides this

evening, the City will resume collecting payments. He explained her tax bill would be different from the current one if they decide to implement an exemption, but if they elect not to act, it will remain the same.

Deborah Welch, Devon Place, noted one of the disparities in this reassessment was evaluating businesses by their revenues and not their property values. She noted this was a reason why splitting the two was favorable for the State, as the two categories were evaluated significantly different from one another. She commended Council and the City for a job well done and did not disagree with any of this evening's discussion. However, she noted taxes in the City have dramatically increased over the last 10 years. She believed this year's increase will likely be the most considerable increase the City has ever seen.

MOTION BY MR. LAWHORN, SECONDED BY MS. HADDEN: TO LEAVE THE TAX RATE AS IS WITH NO SPLIT RATE AND NO EXEMPTIONS.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE 6 TO 1.

Aye – McDermott, Suchanec, Ford, Hadden, Lawhorn, Brown.

Nay – Bancroft.

Absent – 0.

18. 6-B. FY 2026 PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT BUDGET PRESENTATION – PARKS AND RECREATION DIRECTOR PAULA ENNIS (30 MINUTES)

1:29:06

Paula Ennis, Parks & Recreation Director, gave a presentation to Council on the proposed FY2026 budget.

(Presentation: [Attached here](#). The presentation spanned from 1:29:06 to 1:41:02.)

She noted the Parks & Recreation Department's accomplishments include enhancements to Dickey Park, including a new walking trail, pavilion, and outdoor fitness station funded by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA); finalized improvements to George Read Park, featuring a new walking trail, upgraded basketball court, and playground installations with a grand reopening on September 26th; the completion of Folk Park improvements with food forest planting and a stone dust path; and the initiation of the first phase of upgrades to Coleman Park. The goals for the department include the completion of improvements to the trail at Olan Thomas & Kershaw Park, including the construction of an 8-foot wide pedestrian trail funded through the Delaware Transportation Alternative Program (DTAP); the completion of Old Paper Mill Road Park, featuring a multipurpose athletic field, six outdoor pickleball courts, and two sand volleyball courts, all of which funded by ARPA; and the completion of the design, bidding, and award for the improvements at the George Wilson Center, including bathroom renovations and new flooring, all funded by the Community Reinvestment Fund (CRF).

Ms. Ennis stated over half of the Parks Division's accomplishments were funded by ARPA, including new play features, new security gates, and hard service improvements, which are currently underway at the basketball and tennis courts for Folk Park; soon to be followed by the street hockey court at Dickey Park and the basketball court at Elan Park; and the completion of Fairfield Crest basketball court. Goals for the Parks Division include continuing the current tree inventory; the completion and purchasing of installations for new pavilions for the parks listed; the completion, purchase and installation of new play features at the parks listed, both of which are funded by CRF; and hard surface improvements listed at Kells Park, Handloff Park, and Folk Park.

She noted accomplishments for the Recreation Division include the introduction of the Holiday Artisan Market at the annual Winterfest event; updates to improvements to the Memorial Day ceremony and parade; the installation of a permanent Prisoner of War (POW) Chair of Honor in conjunction and partnership with the Newark Morning Rotary Club, which will take place at the City building on September 18th; and the reorganization of responsibilities with the recreation supervisors as two new supervisors have joined staff. She explained that goals for the Recreation Division include the completion of electrical upgrades for the pump houses at the George Wilson Center and Dickey Park pools; the implementation of web enhancements to Parks & Recreation's online registration system to improve accessibility and ADA compliance; and enhancements to the Liberty Day and July 4th fireworks celebration in conjunction with the United States' 250th birthday.

Ms. Ennis presented a breakdown of the grant awards received by the department. The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funded not only the fee assistant program, but also the pump house electrical upgrades. Other grants received included the CRF, the DTAP, and a grant from the Delaware Division of the Arts. For the budget, the department is anticipating a 3.7% increase. Most of the

increases are occurring in materials & supplies, as well as contractual services. Staff are currently anticipating a reduction in revenue, partly due to the renovations for the George Wilson Center. As the facility will be closed for two months (January – February), and is primarily a rental facility, this temporary closure will prevent any new revenue coming in. Additionally, Christina School District enrollment is decreasing, which has affected the enrollment of the department's Before & After Care Program. She noted the department is expecting some cash in lieu of parkland and trees, but it is dependent on the stage of the project's development.

She noted the increase in supply costs for park maintenance as well as the department's self-supporting programs, part of which are due to the requirements to obtain automatic external defibrillators (AEDs) at their pools and summer camps. While they previously used those of the Police Department, Parks & Recreation must now purchase their own. She noted a tariff is being placed on fireworks, which the department will have to incur for the following year. She noted there is also an increase in retention basin mowing, which is a contracted service with additional sites.

Ms. Ennis shared a breakdown of the department's Capital Improvement Projects (CIP). Three projects will be removed once completed: K2305 – George Read Park Improvements, K2202 – Dickey Park Improvements, and K1203 – Old Paper Mill Road Park Improvements. She noted four capital projects have been added for 2026, with the first being safety surfacing; this would include the port & place playground for Preston's Playground at the reservoir, which is now reaching the end of its 8 – 10-year lifespan. The department has already needed to do numerous patchwork at that particular port & place. Hillside Park would be shortly behind that project, still within the 5-year capital improvement period. The next would be fencing restorations; the department has some backstops, pool fencing, and park fencing through their park system that need replacing. The last two items listed are two projects that have been added but are not expected to have any spending until 2027. Larger projects scheduled for 2026 include a park pavilion replacement, for which \$75,000 has been earmarked, and the selection will be between either Handloff Park or the George Wilson Center park. Both pavilions are part of the current outdoor park permit process that can be rented. While the Parks & Recreation Department would only have one pavilion that they wish to replace at that time, their pavilions are aging and need replacement, as well as Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) sidewalk accessibility improvements. There is also the Tree & Meadow Inventory, which was started this year and will be continued so that the department can get an idea of the diversification of the City's tree canopy. Hard Surface Improvements are slated for next year, which would currently include the Folk Park trail and parking lot, the Handloff Park parking lots, and the Kells Park multi-purpose court resurfacing. She noted the Children's Play Equipment project consists of new equipment for Elan Park, Douglas D. Alley Park, and Stafford Park, all of which utilize CRF funding.

She respected Council's concerns regarding requests for additional staff. She stated she understood the importance of balancing the community's needs with the City's financial responsibilities and that these personnel requests are not made lightly. She noted the department has been able to complete several park projects in the past year through ARPA funding, significantly improving the quality of life for residents, thanks to Council's support. However, these improvements also bring the responsibility of ongoing maintenance in addition to what staff already manage. The department has carefully viewed operations, restructured where possible, and stretched the existing team to meet growing demands, but have reached their limit. She explained this request is about ensuring the department can continue to provide the level of service residents expect and deserve. Without additional support, they could experience delays or longer response times.

She noted her request is for two full-time positions in the Parks Division; the listed salary cost does not include benefits. She explained with these positions, the department will be able to sustain the quality of newly added parkland and infrastructure, which, for this next year, includes an additional 42 acres and 1 mile of trail. This brings the department's total to over 700 acres of parkland, including 21 miles of trails, turf management, ball fields, park amenities, meadows, fencing, and more. They continue to enhance the tree maintenance program, including assessments and inquiries; the department averages 7 to 10 calls per week for tree and trail care from residents. Additionally, these positions would help to reduce growing deferred maintenance backlogs; improve responsiveness to seasonal demands, including mowing, snow removal, and tree issues; and ensure continuity of operational leadership, as they expect five of the eight seasoned staff members to retire within the next five years. The department hopes to maintain the overall quality and safety of the growing park system.

Ms. Ennis reminded July 4, 2026 is the 250th anniversary of the United States of America, and should the City wish to participate, some of these activities may require additional funding that has not been included in the current budget request. If Council wishes to pursue some or all of these ideas, or alternatives, staff will need both direction and funding approval to move forward. She shared a list of potential ideas, including an additional stage performance in the children's area at the July 4th celebration;

an optional 15-minute drone show; a separate celebration at another time or date at Old Paper Mill Road Park; some enhancements to current programs such as Community Day, the Memorial Day parade, or a service day; or a special Parks on Draft event with an America 250th theme. She reminded there is no current budget for any of these ideas, so that will need to be addressed should Council wish to move forward.

The Mayor opened the table to Council comment.

Ms. Ford acknowledged the growing concern for the health of the City's large trees. She noted the Friends of White Clay Creek State Park post a sign inviting any interested parties to help them take care of the trees every Wednesday. She was aware of the liability issues but asked if the City had considered recruiting volunteers to help address this problem. She was aware White Clay Creek State Park was experiencing a severe level of disease in large and older trees, and asked Ms. Ennis if the City's parks were experiencing the same problem.

Ms. Ennis responded in the affirmative, noting that this is especially true with ash trees, particularly along the Christina Valley Stream or in Coleman Park. While there is a concern for diseased trees, it is not overwhelming. However, the tree inventory is also helping to assist in determining the health of the mature trees. She noted volunteers have previously come in to assist City staff with tree plantings and various reforestation projects. However, much of the current tree work must be done by a tree contractor due to the extent of the work. She stated staff could look into recruiting volunteers, but the help they could provide would be limited.

Ms. Ford asked for clarification that the George Wilson Center will be closed January – February 2026.

Ms. Ennis responded in the affirmative. This will include restroom restoration, and the work on the main floor. Work will begin after the last week in December. It will be closed for at least two months.

Ms. Ford asked if there is another location that could host the classes usually held in the George Wilson Center, so the City does not miss that revenue, and so the groups who utilize those classes do not have to give up their "lifeline."

Ms. Ennis responded in the affirmative; the City will try to utilize other locations, such as schools and the Newark Senior Center, to host those classes. However, for occasions on which the facility is rented, those will not continue during the renovations.

Dr. Bancroft expressed his support for the Parks & Recreation Department. He commended Ms. Ennis and the department staff for a job well done and the myriad of tasks they balance daily. He believed the City should host a special celebration on July 4, 2026. He noted he and other residents are very supportive of using drones and encouraged the City to consider using them and to steer away from fireworks, which are expensive, loud, and polluting. He believed a special event for the USA's 250th Anniversary would be a good way to draw the community together. He commended the work done to procure grants. He appreciated the upkeep the department has done in Folk Park and Kells Park. He believed that a sufficient portion of the community is very supportive of the City's parks. He wondered if these new positions could be implemented in overlap with some of the upcoming retirements to reduce potential hiring costs. He noted multiple other cities are utilizing drone shows for events such as the 4th of July and reiterated his support for using them.

Ms. Hadden asked if it would be feasible to grant only one of Ms. Ennis' personnel requests instead of both.

Ms. Ennis stated that while two positions would be preferred, as 5 people will be lost in the near future, she would accept one position if that was all Council would be willing to give.

Ms. Hadden agreed that the City should hold a special celebration for the USA's 250th Anniversary.

Mr. Lawhorn noted a previous process in which Council has created a temporary position that would allow the City to hire an individual and train them in advance of an employee's impending retirement. Then, when the employee retires, the temporary employee will fill that position, and the temporary position will be lost through attrition. He would support that strategy and noted the substantial size of the City's tree-cutting budget between the Electric Department and Parks & Recreation Department. He wondered if this could be done in-house instead of hiring a consultant.

Mr. Coleman stated this was the original idea of staff. However, electric crews tend to trim more for clearance than appearance, and to be able to do both would require a more developed skillset. This is part of the discussion; however, the goal is to dramatically reduce the contractual costs of tree maintenance by doing this work in-house.

Mr. Lawhorn hoped to find a solution that would provide Parks with the necessary resources, determine a way to fund them, and consolidate some of these positions to improve efficiency. He asked what positions the individuals who will be retiring soon hold.

Ms. Ennis stated these positions have many tasks and no specific assignments, but most of the tree work is contracted due to the bulk of the service. However, there are staff who can remove smaller trees. While these positions are all capable of going out and assisting, the City must have a dedicated arborist to take the lead in properly removing the tree.

Mr. Lawhorn understood the City must maintain all the parkland it has acquired. However, he encouraged staff to investigate ways these activities and positions can be combined, and positions can be changed so the department can get the resources they need cost-effectively. He expressed his belief that the sports programs offered by the City are essential and wished to also keep this as cost-effective as possible. He understood the City has to periodically raise rates. He believed it to be critical for society to have these programs accessible to the public. He agreed with Dr. Bancroft regarding a potential drone show as he believed this to be the direction that society is moving in. He supported any events, such as those on Main Street, that will attract people to Newark. He was supportive of finding ways to bring events such as Newark Night back and believed the public would support spending money on these initiatives.

Ms. Ennis noted the department would be happy to bring these events back, but they will require funding to do so.

Mr. Lawhorn stated he would support having this conversation. He noted The Newark Partnership (TNP) has its own initiatives they are working on, but the City could potentially discuss events it could manage through staff or determine how to fund certain events.

Mr. Brown noted the disparity of \$155,000 to \$75,000 on Page 11 and asked for clarification as to why.

Ms. Ennis stated this line pertains to cash in lieu of trees and parkland. She reiterated there are multiple development projects in the pipeline, but it is dependent on when the development takes place. The department is unsure at what stage of development they will receive this funding.

Mr. Brown asked if the new pavilions are available to be rented like the County's.

Ms. Ennis stated there are six pavilions that can be rented; not all pavilions can be rented, but all of the ones located at parks with designated parking lots to accommodate guests can be.

Mr. Brown asked if the pavilion at Old Paper Mill Park could be rented when it comes online.

Ms. Ennis responded in the affirmative.

Mr. Brown recognized the need for additional staff in the Parks & Recreation Department. He agreed with Mr. Lawhorn's idea of offering temporary transitional employment. He agreed with Dr. Bancroft regarding a drone presentation for the 250th anniversary of the United States. He commended their work in procuring grants, asking who had written them.

Ms. Ennis stated it is dependent on the grant. The Delaware Division of the Arts and CDBG grants are written in-house by staff. The CRF grant was handled by Assistant City Manager – Operations, Jeff Martindale. DelDOT approached the department regarding the TAP grant.

Mr. Suchanec wished to see Council support holiday lights. He supported any event that would attract a crowd to Newark. He wished to see more details regarding materials and supplies, as these have increased the most. He asked why the Park Special Revenue Fund had decreased by 41% and was categorized as Intergovernmental Revenue.

Ms. Ennis reiterated this is regarding cash in lieu of parkland and trees. They expect this to be reduced as they await upcoming projects to reach the stage at which the City would receive this cash.

Mr. Suchanec believed an alternative revenue source needs to be developed to compensate for the lost revenue from the George Wilson Center. He believed they could utilize other rental spaces for this purpose.

Mr. McDermott noted Council must be realistic when considering these requests. He expressed his appreciation for the City's parks, believing them to be considered the "crown jewel" of the City. However, they must be aware that they need to determine how to address the \$7 million budget shortfall as proposed. Council must consider whether they can afford the personnel requests. He agreed with Mr. Lawhorn, believing they could potentially allocate funds from the tree budget to find a revenue-neutral solution for funding these positions or implement transition plans for employees who will soon be retiring. He noted that the City's personnel costs are its largest expense, and the more employees the City has, the more it will have to pay. He wished to see some cost-cutting measures for tree maintenance services. He noted he often does not consider the cost of ash tree removal until budget season and appreciated that service. He did not oppose transitioning from fireworks to drones. While he wished to support the inclusion of holiday lights, he reminded the City must be mindful of its costs. He stated that the City cannot afford to grant every request or wish, due to its current financial situation.

The Mayor opened the floor to public comment.

Tom Zaleski, 503 Cambridge Drive & retired City of Newark Parks Superintendent, supported Ms. Ennis' additional personnel requests. He noted when he worked for the City, they were already overwhelmed with the duties which needed to be completed. The City of Newark's Parks & Recreation Department has spent decades maintaining the standards set by James F. Hall, who believed they needed additional personnel to do so. He understood the City's concerns about costs but believed there could be capital improvement projects that could be delayed to balance the budget. He noted if playgrounds meet current standards or are grandfathered in, their improvements can be postponed. He believed the same applies to the parks' shelters. He did not support cutting the tree maintenance budget, as diseased trees are a known liability and safety hazard. He believed the department will need these two additional positions to maintain the parks at their current level.

Chris Locke, District 1, noted Lang Development Group has rental space available that could potentially address the needs of the George Wilson Center. He believed a drone show, or a combination of drones and fireworks, would be an excellent idea for the 250th Anniversary. He believed there could be potential for business and corporate sponsorship for this event. He believed the City should investigate hosting military bands on the green during the springtime leading up to this event. He noted that West Chester thrives when they close their Main Street and believed it could be possible for Newark to do the same.

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

Ms. Ford supported the use of drones due to the decreasing popularity of fireworks. She noted a previously listed idea of charging or contracting a vendor for concessions in the City's parks as a new revenue stream. She asked if this idea had been considered.

Ms. Ennis stated this is a potential idea for new revenue, which would involve working with the Planning & Development Department to get vendor permits. She has spoken with Planning & Development Director Renee Bensley about this initiative, and they can continue to pursue this idea if desired. The department is also looking to increase programming and park permit fees with the ongoing enhancements and are looking for additional sponsorship. She noted she has contacted a drone company, and a show on July 4th would cost \$40,000 due to the holiday. She noted, for comparison, the annual fireworks show costs \$25,000. She confirmed that one of the previously mentioned five employees will retire in November 2026.

18. 6-C. FY 2026 JUDICIAL DEPARTMENT BUDGET PRESENTATION – CLERK OF THE COURT TERRI CONOVER (30 MINUTES)

2:12:43

Terri Conover, Clerk of the Court, proceeded to give a presentation on the proposed FY 2026 Judicial Department budget.

(Presentation: [Attached here](#). The presentation spanned from 2:12:43 to 2:16:25.)

She noted the department's staff remains unchanging from last year – herself, two full-time customer service representatives, two part-time secretaries, and four part-time bailiffs. She noted the accomplishments of Alderman's Court remain the same every year, but in 2025, they have been

processing more expungements than typical due to the passage of the Clean Slate Law in 2024. The court staff have processed approximately 1,500 expungements between January – July. This process has been streamlined with the assistance of the Records Division in Administration. The goals for Alderman’s Court also remain the same: they continue to promote the Probation Before Judgment program; submit timely reports to the City and State and try to adjudicate most misdemeanors within 90 days.

She noted the Judicial Department’s operating department has increased by 6.9% from the FY2025 budget. Personnel services have increased by 6.4%, materials and supplies have increased by 3%, contractual services have increased by 11.5%, depreciation has increased by 100%, and inter-departmental charges have increased by 4%. The court estimates a revenue decrease of approximately 17.7%, primarily due to changes in parking in 2025, including the construction of new lots, the closure of existing ones, and the implementation of the summer free parking program. She noted the Court is not requesting any additional personnel or changes, but the personnel services increase is mainly due to wage adjustments, advancements, and merit increases. The increase in contractual services is mainly due to an increase in insurance premiums. She noted the increase in interdepartmental charges accounts for the Court’s share of costs for citywide expenses, including billing, accounting, and electricity.

The Mayor opened the table to Council comment.

Dr. Bancroft asked for an explanation as to why revenue had decreased by nearly \$400,000.

Ms. Conover believed this to be due to parking changes.

Mr. Suchanec asked if Ms. Conover anticipated any impact on revenue from the speed camera program.

Ms. Conover stated the tickets from this program will not be immediately sent to Alderman’s Court. However, when it eventually comes to Court, it will be difficult to predict how much is received from the program.

Mr. Coleman stated the current plan is for the Justice of the Peace (JP) Court to handle speed camera tickets until staff can get an idea of the amount of work needed to process them in Alderman’s Court. However, JP Court has expressed a desire for City staff to take over eventually. The pilot program currently only runs until June 2028, which means it may not make sense to move, dependent on whether the program is extended permanently. He noted if the City does need to take over this program and requires additional staff to do so, they can use revenue from the program to cover those personnel costs.

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

18. 6-D. FY 2026 PUBLIC WORKS AND WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT BUDGET PRESENTATION – PUBLIC WORKS AND WATER RESOURCES DIRECTOR TIM FILASKY (60 MINUTES)

2:20:19

Tim Filasky, Public Works & Water Resources (PWWR) Director, proceeded to give a presentation to Council on the proposed FY 2026 PWWR Department budget.

(Presentation: [Attached here](#). The presentation spanned from 2:20:19 to 3:02:56.)

He began by explaining there are seven divisions within the department. He noted that staff have worked extensively to reduce their operating expenses, trimming where they could, while still maintaining the current level of service. He noted the residents expect to pay for the level of service that they are used to experiencing, which he stresses to the field and office supervisors to maintain. However, many may not understand what it takes to run a city like Newark. As costs rise, the City must pass them on to residents unless it plans to reduce the level of service. Most residents appreciate the service, and do not mind paying for it. However, the City is not a business that can absorb cost increases in the form of reduced profits, as their profits fund other City services; their only way of lowering profits is by reducing levels of service. He noted in the 2018 referendum, residents voted 3 – 1 to raise taxes and fees to support an increased level of service; he believed this trend would continue if asked. He showed multiple pictures to Council to display the department’s dedication to creating a safe, productive, and sometimes fun atmosphere among employees, where they are encouraged to raise concerns or recommend better or safer ways to complete tasks. Such pictures included a confined space entry training exercise and a teambuilding activity to build model bridges.

Mr. Filasky stated that the highlight of the Accomplishments & Goals for the Water Division is the completion of the \$4 million water main replacement project, which ARPA funded. Staff are looking forward to getting the “conditions assessment” underway in the upcoming months to provide a guide for water main replacement funding. He noted the class action lawsuit resulting from PFAS contamination; so far, it has resulted in \$1.7 million. While this is not enough to cover the actual treatment, staff intend to return with a plan for the use of these funds, which will likely be for initial pilot testing and design for upgrades at the Curtis Water Treatment Plant, and operating costs at the South Well Field Water Treatment plant. Regarding Sewer, staff have completed negotiations with New Castle County for their new contract and have budgeted for the effects. Staff have seen two of the bills based on this new contract, and the bills for the contract appear to be as expected. The new agreement with New Castle County bills the City for the actual flow at the tie-in to their system; every dollar spent on combating inflow and infiltration can result in continued real cost savings for the City, and ultimately, for the residents’ bills.

He stated that, revisiting the discussion from last year regarding refuse, the changes to bulk pickup have been a success so far. The negative feedback has been limited, and as the City moves into the latter part of the year, it will see the collection fees increase as residents enter the 3rd–4th collection realm and decide to pay for it. Although these numbers are not substantial, he believed this program to be a success. Additionally, there is now an option within the City’s subdivision agreements to allow for the City to take over refuse collection at commercial properties. The City does not have any large commercial properties yet, but they want to ensure that this option is available and enforceable in the subdivision agreement, should they decide to pursue it. Additionally, the bulk system changes have also emphasized the need for additional leased refuse carts. He noted that the City currently has a program where residents can receive an extra cart for \$100 per year; based on the amount of field work, the City now has 140 additional carts. He believed the City should continue this program, noting that it will only increase. Additionally, the City is now collecting refuse from nearly 10 annexed and private locations at an annual fee, generating approximately \$36,000 in revenue each year. He noted this does not add a significant amount of work to the division’s operations.

Regarding Stormwater, he noted an incident in which a storm sewer failed underneath Academy Street, and all the dirt surrounding it entered the pipe and then flowed downstream. The department received a report that a hole was opening on Academy Street; they have since implemented a temporary repair, and the department is currently putting together plans to replace the entire length of pipe to Kells Park. He stated this incident is an example of why they cannot “take their foot off the proverbial pedal” in making infrastructure repairs or in the investigations to uncover these situations before they become a significant problem. He noted that taking a proactive approach is more cost-effective than taking a reactive approach.

Mr. Filasky stated that both the Streets and Water Divisions have a backhoe loader that is used daily. He noted that sometimes both are needed to expedite the time it will take to complete a specific repair. He stated this division is also where the annual street contract is housed, so the City will need to discuss the needs and priority of funding pavement improvements versus other needs. He noted the Engineering Division has spent considerable time this year working with the Enterprise Permitting & Licensing (EPL) system and working with the project team to identify efficiencies that can be realized through the program. One of this division’s overlooked tasks is project management and engineering assistance for other operating departments through design, review, and inspection of project plans and construction. Very few projects are completed in the city without the involvement or coordination with outside agencies, such as DelDOT, Delmarva Power, or UD.

He stated in the Fleet Maintenance Division, all employees, except for one, are new to the City of Newark as of October 2024. He noted the new employees all come from diverse backgrounds and have “hit the ground running.” While he was initially concerned about the transition, the new Fleet Manager and collaborative efforts gave him the confidence that he could not have asked for a better result than this group of employees. He noted that a benefit of this transition is a reduction in the contractual work required for vehicles being sent out. He noted a project highlighting the capabilities of this group, is the engine replacement for an older steel stake body truck with a lift gate that is utilized daily. The truck was in good condition aside from a blown engine. The engine was replaced in-house for \$7,500; it would have cost \$12,000 if contracted out, and it would have been \$120,000 to replace the truck entirely. Additionally, this savings has delayed the need to replace the truck by about 5–7 years.

Mr. Filasky stated overall the department’s operating expenses have decreased. He reiterated that staff have carefully monitored their operating expenses to offset known increases and made cuts where possible. Staff also considered where they could cut contractual expenses to pay for more materials and supplies, as “in-house” work is always cheaper than the alternative. He noted a significant decrease in contractual services, led by a \$50,000 reduction in contractual fleet services. He stated this will improve

as the Fleet Maintenance team becomes even more familiar with the City's processes and fleet. He noted the City has 330 pieces of equipment that will all eventually need repairs. The City needs this equipment to maintain their level of service and cannot do so should that equipment fail.

He noted the estimated revenue, which are without rate adjustments. He stated the increases and decreases are all based on trends. He noted the most significant adjustment is due to a substantial reduction in the sewer fund, which is lower than what staff anticipated. Expenses may follow this because if the City sells less water, it sends less sewage to New Castle County, and it pays less to the County in the end. He noted that staff would monitor this for the remainder of the year, especially as they will receive another bill before discussing any revenue or rate adjustments.

Mr. Filasky stated the initial packet distributed does not include any position requests, but he has included a few high-priority requests at the end of this presentation. He noted the materials and supplies in the department are used to fix and maintain what they already have, such as pothole patching, water main repairs, and service line completions – the prices of which have all risen dramatically over the past few years. Additionally, some materials are between 50% - 100% more expensive than they were pre-pandemic. He noted the reason behind the increase in the materials and supplies item for both Street & Water is due to the corresponding decrease in contractual expenses of nearly the same amount. When the department is fully staffed, their dollar goes further with in-house crews than with a contractor, and contractual dollars partially offset this personnel increase. Due to the Fleet Maintenance staff being built out, the department's reliance on outside shops has dropped by \$50,000 and they anticipate the expenses to continue to decrease as the mechanics build out their knowledge of the City's fleet. The budget is currently \$150,000 for contractual work. He noted that there is contractual work that City staff are unable to perform due to warranties and other contributing factors. However, outside engineering help can be reduced with the addition of the staff engineers proposed later in the presentation.

He noted there are a few new capital projects, but most do not require spending in 2026, such as the water meter replacement program. These meters have 20-year lifespans, so by 2033, all of the City's water meters will be in need of replacement. The City hired a contractor for the previous replacement project, but they are now looking to see if this can be done gradually so they do not have to hire a contractor to do all meters at once. He noted that W2602, the Paper Mill Storage Tank Improvements, will enhance the system on Paper Mill Road and Possum Park Road, as well as the overall downtown pressure zone. S2601 is a resiliency project that would reactivate an old force main to be used in the event of an emergency repair needed on the City's primary force main, which serves most of the southern end of Newark.

He noted one of the department's most significant projects is W2401. In 2024, staff looked at how to implement PFAS treatment at their Curtis Water Treatment Plant. This is the largest project that the utility has undertaken since the construction of the reservoir. He noted the regulations will not likely be modified, but the City has been given some time due to the rules being delayed by the new federal administration. Staff have already begun providing data and samples to the State to comply with local regulations. Revenue and water rates will be discussed at the next meeting, but staff have been clear over the past three to four years that this is coming to the Curtis Water Treatment Plant, and the price will necessitate significant rate increases. He noted that both neighboring water utilities have installed this treatment, for which the cost is reflected in their higher rates. Staff will not be doing anything different; they need to ensure that the system is right for their treatment processes. He noted that some results have been observed from the class action lawsuits the City joined; these numbers, after deducting legal fees are significant. The City expects to receive more settlement funds over the next few years, but it does not have an idea of the magnitude. Staff will return to Council with a plan for this funding as part of the revenue discussion.

Mr. Filasky stated there are no new refuse capital projects. However, for Streets, the street program is an annual discussion in which the City needs to evaluate its priorities, and if it wishes to make the streets look nice, this funding must come from taxes. The City realizes approximately \$10 million annually in taxes, and if they reached their annual street funding goal of \$1.5 million, that would be 15% of all tax revenue allocated toward street paving. Anything else that taxes theoretically pay for must also come from that \$10 million. He noted a request for vehicle replacement in which staff have repeatedly checked to ensure it needs replacement, and staff do not believe they can continue to keep it safely on the road to perform its regular duties.

He noted staff currently anticipates zero dollars of current resources for capital expenditures for water. However, this is not how a utility should be run, and a reasonable capital investment or funding for future capital investments should be made each year. He believed the City should continue to discuss how to move forward with rate setting in its utilities, specifically water and sewer. He noted the City has

made progress since the 2018 referendum, but not enough. He displayed a graphic showing two lines equaling 49%, or 64 miles, of the City's water main which needs immediate replacement. The City uses the expected lifespan of 70 years; they hope the pipes currently being implemented will last 100 – 110 years. However, the City also has pipes that are only 50 years old, which they are replacing. The conditions assessment will help staff design a multi-year replacement plan moving forward. He noted the City has 40 miles of pipe in the "yellow" category to replace in the near future. While they have made progress, it is still only a dent in the full project. It requires sustainable funding – preferably in the form of cash – for projects like this. He noted that 64 miles, at \$2 million per mile, equals \$128 million in total. He believed the City needs to have a plan to secure this funding. The City can continue to repair broken pipes, but every fractured pipe requires a dedicated crew to fix it – this is especially common in the middle of the night, and the same crew is expected to report for a full day's work in the morning. Additionally, due to the number of staff, crew members are often pulled from other departments to fix the mains when they break. He believed the City needs to continue actively pursuing these replacements and repairs to make a decent dent in the project workload.

Mr. Filasky displayed a chart showing Newark's water rates since 1959, in comparison to the same rates adjusted for inflation through 2024. He noted the difference between the actual rates and the inflation-adjusted rates. As shown in the graph, there is a significant gap of \$47 million over 30 years that was not invested into the City's infrastructure, which would have potentially resulted in 50 – 60 miles of water main replacement that will now cost over \$100 million to replace. He noted nearly \$10 million of this was not invested in the general fund as the City has always had a general fund transfer, and if they brought in \$50 million, \$10 million would have gone to the general fund. While the City has made tremendous progress, and this body has made efforts over the past 20 years, they cannot ignore the gap that was created when rates were left the same from 1983 to 2008. Despite being increased to where they belong now, the City cannot recover the lost \$47 million.

In showing a chart of water rates in New Castle County, he noted the reflected rates are not the actual published rates from all water purveyors but instead is a calculation City staff created using their rate structure for the average residential user. He noted that Newark's in-city rates are 19% lower than Veolia's and 37% lower than Artesian's; these discrepancies have existed for some time but are less pronounced following their latest rate increases. The primary difference now is that these utilities are already investing in PFAS removal, which is reflected in their rates. He noted that when the City operates on a margin transfer system, it takes excess funds from utilities, transfers them to the general fund, and uses that to fund various city expenses. However, due to the tax base being limited by tax-exempt properties, the City needs to charge more for water. The problem is that the City wants to take the margin, but do not charge extra to do so. The City's rates are consistently lower than those of surrounding utilities, and they have traditionally advertised it as if it were a badge of honor; however, he disagreed, as this means the utility is not being run correctly. He believed the City needs to focus on returning to a more sustainable model over the next few years, but this cannot be implemented overnight to avoid any shock to the residents. Staff are investigating various options to make this work, which they will present to the Council for its revenue discussions.

Mr. Filasky continued by noting that the City already generates the necessary funds to operate the water utility. In 2025, they budgeted a margin transfer of roughly \$3.5 million on revenue of \$10.5 million, meaning that 33% of the water revenue was allocated to something other than water. The City's rates are set up to benefit the residential user, whether or not that was the intention. The first tier of the City's water rates is based on average monthly residential use. All the water residents use is billed at the lower tier, whereas commercial use exceeds that amount in a day and pays the higher rate for the rest of the month. He stated that staff can investigate modifying this as part of the overall rate discussion. He wanted to ensure the City does not focus too much on the \$30 million PFAS treatment or the ongoing water main replacement, as they have other projects that need attention. However, if they consider debt service on \$30 million, in addition to \$1 million per year for water main replacement, that amounts to approximately \$2.5 million per year. He noted that the City already receives this revenue, but it is transferred out to other funds. While it is not wrong to transfer it to other divisions in the PWWR department, he believed this should be rectified if possible.

He noted that there is a resiliency project in the capital improvements for the Sewer Division. The Silverbrook Pump Station is where this project would be placed, which pumps about 500,000 gallons of sewage per day during dry weather. While there is not a lot of current funding from stormwater, the department does have some projects slated for the utility. He reminded Stormwater is unique in the City's enterprise funds. Since they created this fund more recently, they have avoided the pitfalls of margin transfer outside of the fund. Stormwater revenue only funds the stormwater utility and its associated projects. He noted that there were a few years, starting with COVID and the ARPA funding that followed, that took staff on a slight detour; now, they are catching up with the Academy Street project, which will

utilize most of the reserves accumulated over the previous few years. He believed this was a prime example of why sweeping funds away from Water into the general fund is bad for utilities. He believed that while margin transfer is fine, there needs to be a cap, which can be predicted each year and budgeted for. He noted the department also opened several projects to target specific issues, but is now consolidating them into an annual project to give some flexibility in which projects they tackle each year. He noted there are no Fleet Maintenance capital improvements.

Mr. Filasky proceeded to present his personnel requests for the FY2026 budget. He noted a full-time Equipment Operator in the Stormwater Division has been requested for multiple years; the department's reasoning is that they have a crew for inspection and cleaning, and then another crew that comes back to make any necessary changes or repairs to the catch basins and pipe systems. However, they only have half of the second crew, which leads to maintenance staff from other divisions being pulled to do this work. This creates an issue in that the second division does not have the necessary personnel to complete their own tasks. In FY2025, instead of funding a new position, they financed a capital project to repair catch basins identified through the inspections. Although this project has begun, it has not yet been completed. He noted if this position were added, this capital project would not need to be funded in FY2026. He stated the City has a permit from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) through DNREC to make sure its municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4) is maintained and fully compliant. He believed ensuring the department has the personnel to maintain that compliance is critical for City staff.

He noted that the second position request, for a Public Works Engineer I in the Engineering & Stormwater Divisions, is a new position. He noted that this position has been contemplated for multiple years for various reasons, as he and Public Works Deputy Director Ethan Robinson often complete tasks that would fall under this position, which ultimately takes their time away from completing director level tasks. He noted that, despite appearances, the department does not have as many staff members as expected. He noted it took an extensive amount of time to rebuild the garage staff. While these are things directors should do, they should not interfere with the City's day-to-day operations or force a project to be delayed due to the work done to run the department. He noted the directors will sometimes complete tasks when there is nobody else available to do so. He believed that hiring an additional engineer to review the plans being developed and ensure they comply with federal and state mandates would be beneficial to the department. Currently, the City is contracting a consultant, but they need oversight due to the nature of the work. While they are paying a contractor to maintain the City's lead service lines, they have not made any progress in identifying new lead service lines beyond those identified by the volunteers who came forward as a result of the survey. Additionally, numerous plans require updating, and someone will need to perform these updates. When the Council notifies the department of concerns, typically Mr. Robinson would attend to their concerns, which additionally takes away from his time to complete directorial tasks; however, he does so as he wishes to provide the same service given to any other resident. He appreciated Dr. Bancroft's use of the CivicPlus Request Tracker program to contact the department. He stated that the department wants to ensure the long-term planning, CIP review, and utility management reviews are completed at the appropriate level, but many of these items are often delayed due to more urgent tasks.

The Mayor opened the table to Council comment.

Dr. Bancroft commended the department staff for a job well done and appreciated their efforts to address Council's concerns. He noted the significant spending on the tanks and roads, and the CIP work at the Curtis Treatment Plant, including the work on the tanks and water mains, is costly. He believed this addressed the mandate on the City to provide clean water to its residents. He believed the City should discuss a cap on the amount of funding transferred out of utilities to make planning within the department more reasonable. He noted that while Council wants to approve personnel requests, and can do so if feasible, they need to make careful decisions when determining this budget. He believed they should give deep consideration on how to support them, along with projects that cannot continuously be postponed. He agreed there would only be more problems if the department did not keep up with the water main replacement project. He appreciated the effort to do more work in-house instead of paying contractors.

Ms. Ford appreciated and supported being proactive in maintenance. She noted she asked the City Manager for a headcount of all departments; it was determined that 59 people work in the PWWR Department. She believed the department did a phenomenal job of accomplishing a significant amount of work with only 59 people.

Mr. Filasky stated the majority of the department's staff are cross trained, so they can fill in any position when necessary. He stated that this is a credit to Public Works Superintendent Jason Winterling

and his field supervisors, as they know they can call most staff members to come in and complete a task if needed, even in the middle of the night.

Ms. Ford believed this is also a testament to Mr. Filasky's management of the department. She believed while Council has many difficult decisions to make during this budget session, she would be inclined to honor Mr. Filasky's personnel requests above others. She believed this to be a well-managed department that does its best to reduce costs where possible. She believed the City should also review the department's accounting practices to provide them with a level of relief. She noted she is often intrigued how some individuals will pay a significant amount of money for unnecessary beverages like alcohol but will usually oppose paying a few cents more for water. She noted it puts costs into perspective when her water and electric bill for the City is less than her bill from Verizon for Internet and cable services. She thanked the department for their hard work.

Mr. Lawhorn asked for clarification that the City now pays sewer by actual flow instead of predicted water flow.

Mr. Filasky stated the County used to bill the City by their metered water consumption.

Mr. Lawhorn asked if this was tracked. He believed, in theory, the City would only have the flow of sewer equal to metered water in a perfect system.

Mr. Filasky stated since moving over to the new contract, staff have not gone back to gather and aggregate water data, as they previously did not need it. He noted he has a spreadsheet that was previously used to track what the City would be paying as they knew the total flow & metered flow, and New Castle County knew both as well. Staff know what they would have paid, but now they need to return and essentially reverse that to identify where infiltration is coming into the system.

Mr. Lawhorn stated this would essentially ask how much money the City is "flushing down the toilet." He noted he wondered if this puts a priority on staff's work.

Mr. Filasky noted this has occurred for years; he noted staff have worked under the idea that the more inflow can be reduced, the less can be paid. He noted that Mr. Robinson ensured it was included in the contract for the sewer main lining, specifying that adjustments were made; previously, the main was lined and made watertight. Now, the City is lining the inside of them, so if the water table continues to rise, it never actually reaches the sewer.

Mr. Lawhorn wondered, as staff complete their analyses, whether they observe the number dropping and the magnitude of the difference. He believed that if it were significant, that would be a good metric to help prioritize deciding whether to spend money on that work. He inquired on a previous chart whether the two red bars shown represented only the water utility.

Mr. Filasky responded in the affirmative. He noted Sewer does not have as significant a problem with replacement as those pipes can be lined in place. He noted the department has done many lining projects but could not recall the exact distance.

Mr. Lawhorn asked for the current plan on how to pay for the lining projects. Whether it would be debt or State Revolving Fund (SRF).

Mr. Coleman stated that the chart shows only a projection based solely on the age of the pipe. He noted the pipe along Main Street is 120 years old, installed in 1888, and is still functioning appropriately. He explained that the initial plan is for staff to conduct their condition assessment and determine a final number. Once that number is specified, the City will begin planning for the future. However, assuming it still exists, it will likely be funded through SRF.

Mr. Filasky stated staff will have data to observe and use to prioritize which mains should be repaired or replaced first. He noted that a meeting is scheduled to kick off the conditions assessment. This would also allow the City to potentially hold a referendum, where they would note the amount of pipe that is critical to repair, how much it will cost, and ask the public if they believe the City should spend that amount on the project immediately.

Mr. Lawhorn asked if the City is required to go for a referendum for this process.

Mr. Filasky states the City does not, but they may need to if it is a high amount, such as \$40 million.

Mr. Lawhorn stated Council does not want to spend such a significant amount without giving the residents time to prepare. He noted that the previous referendum required a lengthy process to explain why the City needs to spend a significant amount of money, the plan to acquire that money, and how much had been previously spent in comparison to what should have been spent. He believed the City needs to repeat that exercise to educate the public on this situation. He believed people would be more willing to pay for something they are thoroughly educated about and understand.

Mr. Filasky stated this is the path staff wished to take when they decided to move forward with the conditions assessment. While they could move forward with small parts of the project, they never had a comprehensive plan to explain what they needed to do to make significant progress on the project.

Mr. Lawhorn believed the previously shown water chart would be beneficial to residents if staff made it slightly easier to understand. He noted that the \$48 million mentioned is the value of projects and repairs that the City should have addressed but did not. He believed this told a story that residents would understand. He was intrigued that the City did not increase rates for such a lengthy amount of time.

Mr. Filasky stated this was an anomaly. He noted the City did not raise rates, even during the construction of the South Well Field Treatment Plant and the reservoir.

Mr. Lawhorn believed that it would also be beneficial to explain why the City does need to raise rates.

Mr. Coleman noted the City could have replaced 50 – 60 miles of water main with the \$43 million listed. The City currently has 64 miles of water main in need of replacement.

Mr. Lawhorn noted he had a limited understanding of the rate comparison, as he considered the matter from the perspective that the City owns the water utility. As they are not a for-profit company, it should be cheaper. However, he noted that the City is, in fact, a for-profit company because the profits are allocated to the general fund. He believed a referendum and “roadshow” to share this information with residents would be beneficial.

Ms. Hadden stated she was impressed with how well the department stuck to its budget. She asked for clarification about the 2012 Ford F250 included for purchase for \$200,000.

Mr. Filasky stated this is not quite the same truck that is listed, which is the reason why this purchase has been delayed. Staff have identified the need for a different type of utility truck. That original truck was a regular pickup truck that staff would use to transport bricks and other materials; it also had a snowplow and four-wheel drive. He noted it would only cost about \$50,000 to replace that truck with the same truck. However, staff are now considering a different type of truck to haul materials, such as a generator and air compressor. This has been identified as a need in order to make catch-basin and stormwater repairs.

Ms. Hadden asked if this was a critical need for the department.

Mr. Filasky stated this is needed in order to complete the work. While the truck they have can get the job done, staff can do better and more efficient work with the newly proposed truck.

Ms. Hadden believed that the funding allocated for this truck could instead be used to fund a position.

Mr. Filasky agreed; this is the approach staff have taken in determining where they can make cuts to fund new positions. He believed this truck is in the stormwater utility, so funding it is a bit different from what it would be if it were in another division.

Ms. Hadden noted this is in water and wastewater.

Mr. Filasky stated this would be the same situation. He noted that it is often hard to break either a person or a vehicle away from the utility they are assigned to assist another, as it will ultimately harm that division’s productivity.

Ms. Hadden asked which company the City utilizes to purchase its fleet vehicles.

Mr. Filasky stated the City either goes out to bid on them or utilizes State contracts; for the latter, the City will “piggyback” off the State to buy at a discount, however, that has begun to shrink. The City has gotten good deals by putting these vehicle purchases out to bid.

Ms. Hadden noted the existence of a site called GAS EBuy, where the website’s staff will take the client’s request, find vehicles, and then auction them. She noted they are often successful in providing decent costs and encouraged the City to investigate using this service.

Mr. Filasky stated he would investigate this service.

Ms. Hadden congratulated the department on forming a suitable Fleet Maintenance team.

Mr. Filasky reminded all members of this team come from very diverse backgrounds and was appreciative of their work.

Ms. Hadden concurred with Ms. Ford’s comments regarding the department’s efforts to stay close to its budget and supports its personnel requests.

Mr. Brown inquired about any State funding for the Curtis Water Treatment Plant project.

Mr. Filasky explained there is State funding primarily available through the SRF, which staff would contemplate using. Currently, the interest rate remains at 2%. While grant money is available, it has primarily been allocated to larger projects in the City of Wilmington. He noted that Newark received a substantial grant from the State of approximately \$1.6 million to expand the PFAS treatment at South Well Field. He noted that the City has received grants in the past as part of the SRF; they have a requirement to provide forgiveness for several loans. He was unsure if there were any available now, but the City will act if the opportunity to acquire any presents itself.

Mr. Brown asked how much funding would be needed to close the gap created by not raising rates if the City raised its rates closer to those of companies such as Veolia and Artesian.

Mr. Filasky reiterated the debt service to fix water mains is \$3.5 million a year. The City brings in about \$10 million a year, approximately \$10,000 for every thousand gallons. If the rates were up at \$13.62, which is the out-of-city rate, that would cover \$3.5 million in any given year. However, this is a significant increase from the current City rates.

Mr. Coleman noted an item discussed during the initial budget presentation was creating an RSA process similar to what they have for Electric, including some amount of retained earnings that would stay within the utility for capital. He had developed some language, and the Finance team ran numbers on what that would look like. This could potentially be brought forward to Council to see if that is something they would be interested in implementing. He noted the revenues look unsatisfactory every year as everything is taken out of the utility; the City cannot project out into the future because of what they have done historically, since everything left over is sent to the general fund. Whereas, if the City has a fixed percentage, he can begin to project the City’s utility expenses and identify the gaps. He noted that the gap is currently in the general fund and is much larger than any of the City’s revenue growth.

Mr. Filasky explained if staff project revenue of \$10 million in the water fund, and they instead bring in \$11 million, the extra \$1 million will go into the general fund instead of the water fund. He noted that this is an anomaly in the way the City has always performed, and staff have not realized the consequences of doing so for a long time until now.

Mr. Suchanec stated he was pleased with the review of the budget and the way most of the numbers were hit. He believed this was the only budget presentation where personnel services expenses had been reduced, despite having 59 people within the department. Additionally, contractual services have reduced by 1% in favor of in-house services. He noted when returned to Council, he shared with his residents that the City is no longer deferring maintenance and is being proactive. He noted that he was unaware that the deferred maintenance had been happening for such an extended period of time and did not believe that any rate increases would address a \$47,000,000 gap. He believed this would be funded differently. He also believed it was critical to have a strategy to improve the City’s infrastructure and to get back to a place where they are on top of their maintenance. He believed there was a story to be told if staff investigated increasing rates so they can reasonably accomplish things. While the City has always communicated that they are the cheapest water utility in the area, he was unsure if this was a necessity. He believed the City needs to be priced appropriately for the services it provides. He wished to see supporting information from staff stating what needs to be done for the department to do the right thing.

He believed that any profits remaining in the department or allocated to the general fund should be designated or assigned to capital improvement projects for the department from which the surplus originated. He noted he had wished to support Mr. Filasky's previous personnel requests and would be receptive to hearing more about the need for them at this time. He believed if this were done, he would say these requests were justified. He believed the department had reasonable control over its budget, and the public appreciated the services it provided.

Mr. McDermott believed if the City should be "invested in", it should be into its infrastructure. It cannot be avoided and not investing in infrastructure would set the City up for failure. He agreed with Mr. Suchanec that a rate increase would not make up the funding gap in the City's infrastructure repairs. He would support another option to recover this shortfall. He noted in the initial general overview of the budget that water rates would be increased by 25% solely for PFAS treatment. This would not address the gap. He believed if the City were to try to close the gap, it would take more than minor increases to rates. He additionally noted the City cannot take more money out of their utilities for this funding as they also help to fund things like public safety in the Police Department; taking out that money would mean the Police Department would not get those funds. He added the Police Department does not make money at all to fund itself and is 100% an expense. He believed if the City is going to cap how much money will come out of their utilities, that money would need to come from somewhere else, such as taxes. He noted he is not fond of how Council does not see the final "ticket" and cost of the budget during the ongoing process. He stated that he would be more inclined to support Mr. Filasky's personnel request if the budget were not as tight as it currently is, and the City did not have to account for a projected shortfall. He noted many costs are going to increase by the end of the budget process, and the City needs to be prepared to do so when they approve the budget. However, he believed utilities were worth prioritizing if Council chose to grant any personnel requests as part of the budget.

There was no public comment.

- 16. 7. **FINANCIAL STATEMENT:** None
- 17. 8. **RECOMMENDATIONS ON CONTRACTS & BIDS OVER CONSENT AGENDA LIMIT:** None
- 19. 9. **ORDINANCES FOR SECOND READING & PUBLIC HEARING:** None
- 23. 10. **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE PLANNING COMMISSION AND/OR PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT:** None
- 24. Meeting adjourned at 10:40 p.m.

Tara Schiano
Director of Legislative Services
City Secretary

/jh