

# City Manager's Weekly Report

Thursday, July 2, 2015

**Department:**

Administration - City Manager

**Notable Notes:**

Mayor and Council -

It is with both regret and applause that I have accepted notice of retirement from Parks and Recreation Director Charlie Emerson. Charlie's retirement follows what will be 35 years of progressive and dedicated employment, including serving as Director of the department for the last 15 years. Charlie's last day of active employment will be January 15, 2016. Please join me in congratulating Charlie on his decision as we enjoy his continued participation on our team over the next 7 months.

I had the opportunity to participate in the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony this past Tuesday for the Community Garden which was a very nice event (squeezed in between some showers) with the backdrop of a very successful and thriving project. I share with you that this garden of 40+ plots is a testament to doing something well (well planned and researched) through community engagement (citizen/staff working committee - developed the rules - got it done - recruited gardeners) ultimately offering improved quality of life opportunity within our community. I commend our Parks and Recreation staff, the committee members and volunteers, Christina School District's "Networks" program, Boy Scout Troop 255, Eagle Scout Alan Buckmaster and the University of Delaware Cooperative Extension for their efforts to make our community garden a success!

I also had the opportunity to visit Legislative Hall over the last two weeks along with other members of the League of Local Governments and Legislative Committee. Once to observe and interact with Bond Committee members and more recently this past Tuesday evening as the end of the session wrapped up. The process this year was troubling and interesting, and I had opportunity to communicate and share information with our Legislators and Lobbyist Rick Armitage regarding various items of concern most notably the discussions to reduce transfer tax funding and cut Municipal Street Aid and Community Transportation Funding. When the dust settled the municipalities fared well as both of the above noted cuts were not enacted. I have reached out to our Legislators to thank them for their support. You have since received more detailed information from both the League and Rick which I have attached here for ease of review or future searchable access. I have also asked Rick to share any insight into the high priorities of the State next session so that we as a community can attempt to be better prepared.

Please note that you can find an update in the IT report regarding efforts related to WI-FI research and that we will be requesting a date be set for a workshop to take place at your next Council meeting.

Of course, we will have our annual fire works display from the University of Delaware grounds! Hope to see you there.

**Activity or Project:**

Railroad Crossing - Improved Safety Measures

Description:

On June 21st Newark Police Officers Sergeant Thomas Buglio and Corporal Robert Sharpe pulled an operator of an SUV from his vehicle prior to its being struck by a CSX train. We're all very thankful for their quick and appropriate actions. Additionally, and as a result of this and previous collisions, a meeting was held Tuesday at the site of last week's railroad incident with representatives from Newark (Admin., PWWR and Police, Mayor Sierer and Councilwoman Hadden); CSX; DelDOT and Century Engineering (DelDOT's consultant) to review the current safety measures in place and discuss additional options. I will add that all acknowledge we need to try additional measures as those increased in 2010 have not proven to be enough. We came away with agreement that lighting would be evaluated again; roadway striping would benefit from additional widening; directional arrows and tubular delineators would be installed. These measures are expected to be able to be put in place in the near term upon agreement between DelDOT and CSX. Additionally, various options for raising the gravel rail bed while limiting access to it are to be explored.

Status: Started  
Expected Completion: 8/31/2015  
Execution Status: On Track

**Activity or Project:**

Description:

Status: Not Started  
Expected Completion: 6/5/2015  
Execution Status:

**Activity or Project:**

Description:

Status:  
Expected Completion:  
Execution Status:

**Department:**

Administration - Deputy City Manager

**Notable Notes:**

- I was among various staff members to attend a meeting with CSX and DelDOT regarding the E/W/S Main Street/New London intersection. Many ideas were provided, some more feasible than others, with short-term improvements generally settled upon, with future pending authorizations required.
- Police candidate, and now Officer, Matthew Coughlin, was sworn in and started his FTO training on Monday. He was a part of the LEO program at DelTech that reduces the time required at the Academy by a few weeks over his peers. Three (3) other candidates (Craig, Hatton and Whitt) will graduate on July 31 and start their FTO training.
- The Refuse RFP review panel heard proposals from ranked, narrowed vendors, which I am a member. The recommendation and review is ongoing with the target now set for a special meeting of Council on September 21.
- The RFP review panel for the parking equipment heard from three (3) vendors, and while Marvin was attending the national parking conference, he was further reference checking the operations, equipment and references of the narrowed vendors.

**Activity or Project:**

Deputy Director of Planning & Development

Description:

The first reading of the ordinance to restructure the Planning & Development Department occurred on June 22, with a second reading on July 27. This amendment elevates the position to afford recruitment of a talented individual to be an official #2 in the department. Initial recruitment efforts will be planned in the coming week to fill the vacancy.

Status: Started

Expected Completion: 8/28/2015

Execution Status: On Track

**Activity or Project:**

DVHT Health Trust Retreat and Education Meeting

Description:

Last week I spent 3 days with other DVHT Trustees reviewing the current Trust performance, future plans and methods to continue cost control. 2016 and beyond impact of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) filled many sessions, including ways to try to mitigate or eliminate future ACA costs for employers. Expanded employee wellness efforts are being made, including an DVHT-only medical clinic that is free to DVHT members and their dependents (this includes copays and prescriptions).

Status: Completed

Expected Completion: 6/26/2015

Execution Status: Completed

**Activity or Project:**

Description:

Status:

Expected Completion:

Execution Status:

**Department:**

Alderman's Court

**Notable Notes:**

We held 3 court sessions this past week and one DUI case review session.

**Activity or Project:**

Court Sessions

Description:

We processed 39 arraignments, 34 trials, 13 case reviews, 7 capias returns and videoed 3 prisoners from the various prisons this past week.

Status:

Completed

Expected Completion:

7/1/2015

Execution Status:

Completed

**Activity or Project:**

Description:

Status:

Expected Completion:

Execution Status:

**Activity or Project:**

Description:

Status:   
Expected Completion:   
Execution Status:

**Department:**

Community Relations

**Notable Notes:**

After observing a relatively high level of success with disseminating information via bill stuffers to our citizens, we are working on a regular cycle of newsletter-style bill stuffer documents to be sent out with utility bills throughout the year. The initial stuffer is attached and will be sent out throughout July. We will be actively looking for feedback and plan to adjust our standardized template over the coming months to best communicate key dates and information to residents. We will also be consolidating numerous citizen email lists that we have accumulated through the years, and sending a similarly formatted email message with key information and links for further reading.

We are experimenting with using the Greater Newark Economic Development Partnership color scheme and logo, that we developed to be an evolution on Newark's blue/green color scheme, but with more modern fonts and a more modern color palette. Since the logos and stylized "Newark DE" aren't currently in active use, it may present an opportunity to brand many of our communication methods in a more aesthetically pleasing manner.

**Activity or Project:**

Website Update

**Description:**

We began the process of analyzing our City homepage in anticipation of our regular update cycle as part of our CivicPlus contract. We are excited that the new CivicPlus platform will provide for enhanced functionality. We are working with analytic data, and will be soliciting user feedback, in order to enhance the user-friendliness of our website for our citizens, with the goal of meeting the newer industry "two-click" standard, where users can find the information that they are seeking within two clicks on the website. We anticipate launching our new site in the first quarter of 2016, more exact dates will be forthcoming.

Status:   
Expected Completion:   
Execution Status:

**Activity or Project:**

12th Annual Food and Brew Fest

**Description:**

We continue to work with our partners at Out and About Magazine on the 12th Annual Food and Brew fest, scheduled for July 25th.

Status: In-Progress  
Expected Completion: 7/25/2015  
Execution Status: On Track

**Activity or Project:**

**Description:**

Status:  
Expected Completion:  
Execution Status:

**Department:**

Electric Department

**Notable Notes:**

Tuesday, a 75,000 lbs. substation transformer was delivered with only a little drama. The truck bringing the transformer from a truck stop on Elkton Road broke down on I-95 when trying to take the transformer to East Main Substation that morning. The crane contractor saved the day by providing a tractor to pull the trailer after a tow truck brought everything to Main Street. Although the delay caused some waiting time, the unit was successfully moved from trailer to the foundation by 12:30.

A storm front rolled though early Wednesday morning at 3 a.m. knocking down a large tree on Delaware Circle and taking out two phases of primary along with it. Along with another tree related outage on Lafayette Road at the same time, the crews restored power to all customers by 7 a.m.

Engineering continued working on DelDOT lighting requirements for a potential upgrade of high pressure sodium streetlights to LED fixtures. Specific streets are being heavily scrutinized to ensure compliance.

Engineering worked with the electricians and the SCADA developers to fix a long undiscovered SCADA bug. Recent lightning strikes caused some surge arrestors to fail and a couple of circuits tripped and immediately reclosed, but no alarms showed up on SCADA. After several simulations in the field on circuits that were already off for the crane installing the transformer, it was found that a certain type of fault was not registering. Engineering and the SCADA developer are working on fixing the issue.

**Activity or Project:**

Alder Creek

**Description:**

Installing underground cables and padmount transformers for the complex.

Status: In-Progress

Expected Completion: 9/1/2015

Execution Status: On Track

**Activity or Project:**

Description:

Status:

Expected Completion:

Execution Status:

**Activity or Project:**

Description:

Status:

Expected Completion:

Execution Status:

**Department:**

Finance Department

**Notable Notes:**

Payments and Utility Billing

The group handled 592 phone calls the week of 6/22/15 with an average call length of 5:09 and an average hold & queue time (average speed of answer) of 6:12. The group also processed 3,490 utility payments and CityView transactions while the Welcome Center processed 329 visitors. 178 service calls were initiated by Payments and Utility Billing in response to the calls and visitors. Higher call volume continued into this week, though not at the same levels as during the peak move out period. The group's average speed of answer and abandonment rate improved for the third consecutive week. I'd like to reiterate the hard work that is being put in by our PUB Manager Larissa Jones and her team, both the veterans and our new staff alike. Our statistics will continue to improve as our newest staff members recently completed their onboarding training, which will be reinforced with experience over time.

Accounting

The accounting team has completed the work to finalize the year-end financial statements and related work in connection with the annual audit and production of the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR); see additional information reported in the Independent Financial Audit project detail.

The 2016 budget process is underway. The first round of administrative budget meetings was concluded and the finance team is compiling operating estimates and budgets. The departments are focusing on the operating budget in the initial rounds of meetings. Items such as meeting summaries and preliminary budget drafts will be posted to 2016 Budget Central as they become available.

**Activity or Project:**

Independent Financial Audit - 2014

**Description:**

The independent financial audit process is complete, including the production of the CAFR document. The independent audit review was completed on 6/11/15 and the higher level peer review was completed by our auditors on 6/29/15. The auditors' comments and GFOA comments were incorporated into the final edits to Management's Discussion and Analysis and the Transmittal letter. The CAFR was posted to the City's website and will be presented to Council at the July 27, 2015 meeting. The process was successful and was completed in a timely fashion, and there are no surprises, misstatements or issues to report. Minor items include a passed adjustment for an immaterial level of unearned revenue and a fund reclassification that will appear on next year's CAFR related to GASB54 (Government Accounting Standards Board pronouncement 54) and the treatment of the self-insurance fund as an internal service fund rather than a special revenue fund. The reclassification next year is technical in nature and has no impact on the government wide financial statements or the City's fund balance.

Status: Completed

Expected Completion: 6/30/2015

Execution Status: Completed

**Activity or Project:**

Billpay Efficiency Project

**Description:**

The Finance team and the IT team have completed the testing process on the sample files provided by Fiserv. The IT team wrote a script to convert the test files to a format able to be imported to the City's utility billing system, and we have successfully used the script and imported the key data from the test files into the utility billing system. Accordingly, we have signed off on the testing and asked the vendor to go live effective June 30, 2015. The next group of billpay payments will be submitted to us electronically, resulting in significantly reduced float time and posting time. The automatic process will also serve to reduce posting errors.

Status: Completed

Expected Completion: 7/1/2015

Execution Status: Completed

**Activity or Project:**

**Description:**



Status:

Expected Completion:

Execution Status:

**Department:**

Information Technology Department

**Notable Notes:**

Municipal Broadband Update

This week, Joshua Brechbuehl, met with two groups to discuss options for Municipal Broadband. First, we met with FiberTech, a company that specializes in the deployment and leasing of fiber and is on the State of Delaware contract. They have significant assets in and around Newark that may be able to be utilized for a multitude of projects.

We also met with Christopher Mitchell of the Institute for Local Self-Reliance (ILSR) who is the chief expert on Municipal Broadband efforts across the country. He provided excellent insight into some of the benefits and challenges that the City will need to account for during any push for Municipal Broadband.

**Activity or Project:**

Munis SAAS Migration and Upgrade

Description:

Test and Validation was successful. Issues found during this phase are in the process of being resolved. Expected Go-Live for Phase 1 is July 22.

Status:

Expected Completion:

Execution Status:

**Activity or Project:**

Description:

Status:

Expected Completion:

Execution Status:

**Activity or Project:**

Description:

Status:

Expected Completion:

Execution Status:

**Department:**

Parks and Recreation Department

**Notable Notes:**

We committed significant time this week doing tree removal and trimming due to recent rain and high wind events.

The contractor selected to do tennis court renovation started the project this week. The following courts will be temporarily shut down to complete the work: Handloff, Phillips, Wilson and Fairfield.

We had arranged for a volunteer group to paint the stub posts at Old Paper Mill Road Park last Friday but rain force a cancellation. We're working to reschedule the project.

Liz Williams' last day with us was on Wednesday, July 1. Liz retired following 18 years with the city. She was an outstanding employee, and we'll miss her greatly.

We reviewed three subdivision plans this week.

On Tuesday evening we held a formal dedication for the opening of the Newark Community Garden at Fairfield Park. We're very excited about the early success of the program. More than 40 garden plots have been rented.

We recently observed that the evergreen landscape screen located on the south side of the Shoppes at Louviers had some issues. We met with the owner's representative to have them addressed.

Last Wednesday Mayor Sierer joined our maintenance crew for a ride-a-long.

This year's Youth Beautification Corps (YBC) started their summer work experience this past Monday. The CDBG funded youth employment program will engage the teens in various park maintenance and landscape maintenance projects.

The field crew committed lots of time with weed control operations at various park and landscaped sites.

The recreation staff is busy planning for the fall season.

Summer camps and programs are going well. Frequent rain events have caused us to shift gears a bit but the kids are having a great time! We're particularly happy about how well our newest camp at Dickey Park is going. Each day 15-25 children are attending.

We held the final Newark's Got Talent event last Wednesday evening.

We're completing final plans for this weekend's Liberty Day event and Fireworks display.

Our summer volunteer corps committed more than 354 volunteer hours at various recreation programs and camps last week.

We're continuing to research and evaluate replacement software for our recreation program registrations.

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**Activity or Project:**

Newark Community Garden

**Description:**

We held the official dedication of the Newark Community Garden this week.

Status: Completed

Expected Completion: 7/1/2015

Execution Status: Completed

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**Activity or Project:**

**Description:**

Status:

Expected Completion:

Execution Status:

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**Activity or Project:**

**Description:**

Status:

Expected Completion:

Execution Status:

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**Department:**

## Planning and Development Department

### Notable Notes:

#### Building Maintenance

- Facilities maintenance performed the following this week:
  - Replaced light bulbs in the City Hall lobby.
  - Installed a White Board in the IT Training Room.
  - Continued changing air filters in the Municipal Building.
  - Repaired the loose stair tread in stair tower #2 in City Hall.
  - Began staining the terra cotta baseboard tile in the City Secretary's Office bathroom.

#### Code Enforcement

- The conditional Certificate of Occupancy has been issued for the Academy Street Dining and Residence Hall.
- The renovation work at the Washington House began this week.
- Sprinkler and fire alarm final inspections were approved for the following:
  - Newark Toyota (1344 Marrows Road).
- The addition at the Courtyard by Marriott Hotel (400 David Hollowell Drive).

#### Community Development

- A Public Hearing/Question and Answer Session was held on Thursday, June 25<sup>th</sup> to distribute information and answer questions about the Community Development and Revenue Sharing Programs and application process.

#### Parking

- Municipal Lot #2 expansion project began this week. The expansion project will continue throughout the summer.
- This week Parking Manager Marvin Howard is attending the International Parking Conference reviewing Pay-on-Foot/Cashiered Lot Payment options.
- Summer maintenance continues this week: mowing and installing shelving at warehouse in new Parking Division room.
- This week photos of signage in Trader's Alley in response to customer concerns were taken.
- Monthly Parking Permits for the new semester were prepared and distributed.
- The Q2 2015 Financial Report was finished this week.
- This week multiple systems in the Parking Division were repaired after power outages from the recent storms.
- New summer scheduling was completed and implemented for the Parking Ambassadors (formerly Parking Enforcement Officers).

#### Planning

- The Planning and Development Department reviewed changes to the façade of 58 E. Main Street, at the future location of a QDOBA restaurant. An earlier proposal by QDOBA restaurant to paint the exterior ground floor walls yellow, replace the awnings with a wooden overhang with logo, and install a sidewalk over deck sign was rejected by the Planning and Development Department as "not substantially conforming" to the rendering

reviewed by Council at the time the major subdivision was approved. In their revised plan, QDOBA uses an awning like what was shown in the rendering approved by Council. However, they proposed changing the color of the awning from "black" to "green" to complement their corporate colors. The exterior walls continue as red brick, like what was reviewed by Council. They propose using a wall sign rather than an over deck sign. The Planning and Development Department determined that the revised design substantially conforms with the rendering reviewed by Council when they approved the major subdivision.

- The Planning and Development Department completed:
  - 11 Deed Transfer Affidavits
  - 2 Plan Reviews
  - 32 Building Permit Reviews
  - 1 Certificate of Occupancy

**Activity or Project:**

Comprehensive Development Plan V

Description:

Time was spent this week working on the Comprehensive Development Plan V.

Status: Near Completion

Expected Completion: 7/6/2015

Execution Status: On Track

**Activity or Project:**

Planning Commission

Description:

The Planning and Development staff report on proposed changes to definitions of "Accessory Use" and "Neighborhood" was completed and forwarded to Planning Commission. The Planning Commission will review the revised proposals and is expected to make a final recommendation to Council at its July 7th meeting. In addition, the Planning Commission will review the following: • The minor subdivision, parking waiver and special use permit for the .043 acre property at 70 E. Main Street. Approvals are sought to add two floors above the existing one-story retail building and the addition of two residential units at the site. • The rezoning of 163, 171, 175, 179 South Chapel Street and a portion of 52 Benny Street from RM (multi-family dwellings – garden apartments) and RD (one family semi-detached residential) to RA (multi-family dwellings – high rise apartments) and major subdivision approval to construct a four-story, 16 unit apartment building and five townhouse style apartments for a total of 21 units at the site.

Status: In-Progress

Expected Completion: 7/7/2015

Execution Status: On Track

**Activity or Project:**

## Community Development/Revenue Sharing

### Description:

Development Manager Mike Fortner is working on the final Community Development Block Grant Financial Draws for the 40th Year. The fiscal year for the 40th year ended on June 30, 2015. The 41st Fiscal Year begins on July 1, 2015. The Planning and Development Department is beginning its planning for the 42nd Fiscal Year that begins on July 1, 2016. The Community Development/Revenue Sharing Advisory Committee will begin meeting in August and make a final recommendation to City Council by November 2015.

Status: In-Progress

Expected Completion: 11/23/2015

Execution Status: On Track

### Department:

Police Department

### Notable Notes:

On June 29, 2015, officers responded to a report of an armed robbery in the parking lot of a business located on South Main Street. Upon further investigation, the victim admitted the robbery occurred while he was attempting to sell marijuana to the suspect.

On June 29, 2015, one of our new police recruits, Matthew Coughlin was sworn in. Matt attended a police program at Del-Tech, which enabled him to complete his academy training early. He will attend field training the next few weeks, before he returns to the academy for a final week of training and graduation.

Chief Tiernan and Deputy Chief Feeney attended a grant meeting at the New Castle County Office of Emergency Management. Since Newark has adopted the New Castle County All Hazard Mitigation Plan, we are eligible to apply for mitigation grant funds. The Chief and Deputy Chief will be meeting with Tom Coleman to identify possible mitigation projects.

Plans and personnel are in place for this weekend's July 4<sup>th</sup> activities.

### Activity or Project:

N/A

### Description:

N/A

Status: Completed

Expected Completion: 7/1/2015

Execution Status: Completed

### Activity or Project:

Description:

Status:

Expected Completion:

Execution Status:

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**Activity or Project:**

Description:

Status:

Expected Completion:

Execution Status:

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6/28/2015

to 7/4/2015