

Mayor and Council,

Below is this week's weekly report. Please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Have a great weekend!

General

1. Staff has been discussing internally the need for an emergency management coordinator position, someone who would direct activities for the development and maintenance of emergency preparedness plans and programs and governmental disaster response coordination. Most recently, we attempted to have the most recent fire marshal complete these duties, but they did not have enough bandwidth to adequately dedicate time in addition to his core duties. The need for this position was really driven home during the City's response to the Fountainview flooding incident and watching the response to the train derailment in East Palestine, Ohio. We have prepared a job description and will include this position for Council consideration alongside the 2024 budget.
2. Regular council meetings begin on April 24th. Our May meetings will be on the 8th, 15th, and 22nd.
3. Staff has narrowed the Council Chamber AV contractors down to two finalists. On Monday we will hold the second-round presentations and, ideally, finalize a selection that will then come to Council for approval.
4. We have selected a new code enforcement manager to replace Stephanie Petersen who recently resigned. They are scheduled to start on May 15th and we will make a formal announcement soon.
5. We continue to see a larger than normal level of retirements and resignations that is keeping our HR staff busy. We have now posted 28 positions so far this year.
6. HB1, marijuana legalization, has been on the governor's desk for 9 days as of today, April 21st. Per state law, it will automatically go into effect if not signed or vetoed tomorrow. While I suspect he may veto it, the legislature appears to have the necessary votes to override his veto so this would merely delay the eventual legalization. HB2 was delivered to his desk a few days after HB1, so he has until next week to decide what to do with HB2. HB2 was approved by a veto-proof majority in the legislature as well so there is a high likelihood that both could be law by the end of next week. We will then have one year before marijuana is legal. As such, staff has accelerated our zoning changes to address dispensaries. We will also need to update our criminal code to mimic State code for marijuana.
7. Maryland's Governor, Wes Moore, announced this week that he is committed to completing the commuter rail connection between Aberdeen and Newark which would connect the MARC and SEPTA rail systems. We anticipate any connection is still several years away, but this is a positive development.

Purchasing and Facilities

1. Our grant request for the National Parks Service "Save America's Treasures" grant program for the Newark Train Station was unsuccessful.
2. The carpet replacement project in the City municipal building is complete and finished three weeks early. My thanks to all staff involved along with our contractor for making this project go much more smoothly than we originally anticipated.
3. Staff are close to finalizing the design and bid package for the City Hall and NPD parking lot and security upgrade project. We hope to complete repaving over the summer and security upgrades in the fall.

Public Works

1. Our new planning and design engineer, Stefan Rukowicz, started this Monday. Stephan joins us from private consulting where he worked at McCormick Taylor as a civil engineer since receiving his bachelor's and master's degrees in civil engineering from the University of Delaware.
2. The Freemont Road culvert replacement is well ahead of schedule and may wrap up as soon as the end of next week. Our contractor on the job, A-Del, has worked very efficiently.
3. The Water division is in the middle of a programming logic controller upgrade and pump and motor replacement at the Curtis Water Treatment Plant which has been offline for the work. It should be back online Friday the 21st.
4. Staff are completing plans and specifications for a large stormwater outfall repair off of Moss Court in Ridgewood Glen. This project should go out to bid later this spring for construction later in the year.

Police

1. We are holding a prescription drug takeback event this weekend.
2. Chief Farrall attended a meeting of the Office of Highway Safety this week as a representative of the DLLG.
3. Reviewers from CALEA wrapped up their on-site one year update this past week. Their review went well. Thank you to all the officers involved with the CALEA program.
4. We have finalized a date for the next promotional ceremony. It will be held on May 23rd at 2:00 at the UD Bob Carpenter Center.

Parks and Recreation

1. Dickey Park and Handloff basketball courts were resurfaced this week. They will be restriped in approximately 2 weeks.
2. The tree giveaway is sold out and the tree pickup will be on Saturday May 13th. Participants will receive a scheduled pick-up time from the City ahead of the 13th.
3. The Community Clean Up is this Saturday and the volunteer list is full.
4. Our first Parks on Draft event is scheduled for Friday May 19th and Saturday May 20th in Handloff Park. We are excited to announce that our restaurant partner this year is Iron Hill Brewery.
5. The Memorial Day parade is scheduled for Sunday May 21st.

Planning and Development

1. We received revised plans for 339, 341, and 349 East Main. These plans are compliant with the revised BB zoning requirements versus the old plan which would have been 7 floors tall.
2. Staff performed another inspection of Fountainview Building 3000 and identified several issues that will require follow-up.
3. Staff has prepared a draft marijuana dispensary zoning ordinance and will circulate it internally ahead of a discussion at the May 2nd planning commission meeting.
4. Staff are preparing an ordinance that would require new construction to be EV ready. There is a draft bill at the state level that would mandate this statewide so we will make sure our ordinance is in alignment with the state's proposal.

Finance

1. Staff met to review options to streamline the annual budget process for council presentations and the schedule for budget presentations. Internal budget hearings are scheduled for the first week of July.
2. Accounting staff is working hard on the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR) and coordinating with operating departments to finalize the management memo.
3. Payments and Utility Billing has been working with the Newark Area Welfare Committee to get financial help to utility account holders in need.
4. Staff met with our Bond Counsel and selected vendor for our master lease agreement to coordinate and prepare documents ahead of Council consideration.
5. Account credits and refunds for solar net metering credits were processed this week. As a reminder, HB298 changed how net-metering solar accounts are handled state-wide. Moving forward, accrued credits will be zeroed out on April 1st of each year. In recognition of this being a significant change from past practice, the City paid out all remaining balances this year and will zero them on April 1st of future years. Here is a summary of the credits/refunds issued:
 - a. 160 solar accounts
 - b. 67 customers had credits on 3/31/2023
 - c. Value of credits: \$11,795.81
 - d. Median credit: 413kwh, \$34.76

Electric

1. Engineering staff held a meeting with Delmarva Power to be introduced to their new points of contact following the retirement of a long-time employee who handled coordination previously. We also discussed operational items, planned capital projects, shared security concerns, and material theft issues.
2. Engineering staff met with the University of Delaware to discuss the new substation and interconnection at the UD Farm.

Communications

1. Communications staff met with Mayor Markham and Josh Shannon from the Newark Post on an article reflecting on his first year in office.
2. Saturday, 1in7B, a new charity organization, will launch their mobile trailer with hygiene services this Saturday at Calvary Baptist Church. Mayor Markham will be in attendance.

3. Staff have spent time preparing for Admin Professional Day and Bring Your Child to Work Day which are both next week.
4. The Academy Street Beer Garden with Hamilton's on Main begins May 4th on Academy Street in coordination with the Spring Concert Series. This is a fundraiser for Aetna.
5. The large Aetna graphics for the refuse trucks have arrived and will be installed on the trucks within the next few weeks as staff time allows.