

**Town of Camden
Regular Town Council Meeting
Camden Municipal Building
March 4, 2024**

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Dougherty called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and noticed that this regular Council Meeting was being held in compliance with the Delaware Open Public Meeting Act by posting the agenda on February 26, 2024, in the following manner:

- a. The electronic sign,
- b. The official bulletin board,
- c. The official Town of Camden website.

Vice-Mayor Rhodes led attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Dougherty led a moment of silence.

Council Attending: Mayor Dougherty, Vice-Mayor Rhodes, Councilwoman Sturgeon, and Councilman Ridgely

Council Absent: Councilman Woodall

Staff Attending: Town Manager Harold Scott Jr, Account Specialist Malori Lewis, Town Solicitor Greg Morris, and Police Chief Marcus Whitney

AMENDMENTS

None.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

OATH OF OFFICE

Greg Morris swore in Larry Dougherty, Sr. for a 2-year Mayoral term.

Greg Morris swore in Vicki Rhodes for a 3-year Council term.

REORGANIZATION FOR THE YEAR 2024

Selection of Vice-Mayor – A motion was made by Councilwoman Sturgeon, seconded by Councilman Ridgely, to appoint Councilwoman Sturgeon as the Vice-Mayor. Two in favor; one opposed; one abstained.

Selection of Town Clerk – Mayor Dougherty advised that nominations for Town Clerk are not being discussed at this time.

Selection of Town Solicitor – Unanimous vote to appoint Greg Morris.

Selection of Building Inspector – Unanimous vote to appoint Harold Scott, Jr.

Selection of Engineer – Unanimous vote to appoint Kevin Minnich.

Selection of official newspaper for publications – Unanimous vote for the Delaware State News.

MINUTES

A motion was made by Councilwoman Sturgeon, seconded by Councilwoman Rhodes, to approve the February 5, 2024 regular meeting minutes. All in favor; none opposed.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Rhodes, seconded by Councilman Ridgely, to approve the February 23, 2024 special meeting minutes. All in favor; none opposed.

FINANCE REPORT

Ms. Lewis stated that the delinquent tax amount is \$26,079.51. She added that we received \$31,955.71 in RETT in the month of February.

CAMDEN WYOMING FIRE DEPARTMENT

Jeff Brown gave a report that included but was not limited to fire and EMS calls.

CAMDEN WYOMING SEWER & WATER AUTHORITY

John Badger said that they have not had a meeting since our last Council meeting and mentioned that the water rate has not gone up.

FRIENDS OF HISTORIC CAMDEN

Gale Christensen said the flag program continues to evolve and they have received some funding for the project. They are looking into having QR codes embedded in the flags that can be scanned to give a history lesson and welcomed anyone to assist with providing history they can include. Mrs. Christensen mentions that their Facebook page includes their membership application and their tax-deductible membership dues are \$25 per individual or \$30 per family. She also mentioned that all are welcome to attend their meetings.

Mayor Dougherty stated that the meetings are at the Camden Municipal Building on the 4th Thursday of the month.

POLICE REPORT

Chief Whitney gave a report that included but was not limited to traffic arrests and criminal activity. He stated they have had 50.5 hours of paid overtime and 0 hours of court overtime. Chief Whitney said they have had a total of 423 calls for this period, compared to 365 calls for this period last year.

Chief Whitney also mentioned that in August 2023, the Governor signed a new law, House Bill 206, changing their governing body from COPT to POST. This switch comes with a mandatory requirement that all Delaware police agencies establish a Police Accountability Committee or Board. They have established a 3-person Committee and will expand to a 5-person Committee as they have partnered with the Town of Wyoming, who will supply two people to serve on the Committee. The Board Chair selected for Camden is Fleur McKendell, they have also selected Reverend Dr. Carol Boggerty, who currently serves on the Board for Dover, and Mary Ann Faust as Board Members. Chief Baker will provide his selections for the two people he has chosen for Wyoming. There are mandatory requirements that they meet quarterly, but he suspects that they may meet monthly.

Mayor Dougherty asked when the anticipated date of the first meeting would be.

Chief Whitney stated within the next 30 days.

Councilwoman Sturgeon asked if the meetings will be scheduled.

Chief Whitney said they will be scheduled meetings and will be determined by the Board Chair.

TOWN MANAGER REPORT

Mr. Scott said the Planning Commission met this past month for a first reading for an indoor volleyball court at St. Paul's Church. The second reading is scheduled for next month. The Board of Adjustment did not meet due to a lack of quorum and will try to meet next month. He would like the Council to consider making the Board of Adjustment a 5-Member Board with two additional Members as alternates that can attend in the absence of another Member to avoid the meeting from being canceled. Mr. Scott mentioned that 4 buildings have opened at Sunset Village. The 5th building was scheduled to open that day but is being delayed until the following week due to an issue with the Fire Marshal's inspection. He stated that he did 22 inspections during the month of February. Mr. Scott added that we were approved for the DEMA grant of \$30,000 that we applied for almost a year and a half ago, which will be used to update the technology in the King Meeting Room to allow broadcasting of Council meetings. He mentioned that we received a letter from Del-Dot offering the appraised value of \$220,300 to purchase a portion of our property for a leg of the Camden Bypass.

MAYOR

Mayor Dougherty stated that we are working on several things now and within the next few months. We have proposed a Committee to begin reviewing changes to the comprehensive plan. He has reviewed 36 pages of Police salary comparisons. We are waiting for an update from Kent County regarding their property reassessments so we can see what we need to do regarding tax rates. Fiscal year 2025 budget preparation will begin and is due by July 1st. We are accepting letters of intent for Board of Adjustment Members in hopes that a quorum can be met for each meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Letter to Kent County in support of funding for the Goggin House

Mayor Dougherty stated that we are asking Kent County to fund their prior commitment of \$500,000 in funding for the Goggin House. The advantage of providing this funding is that it would kick in another grant from the Federal Government for an additional \$500,000. If the county can fund their share, a total of \$1,000,000 could be used to refurbish the Goggin House.

Councilman Ridgely thanked Mayor Dougherty for putting this item on the agenda on behalf of the Friends of Historic Camden. He mentioned that the ultimate goal is that the Goggin House will be a museum that the Friends of Historic Camden will volunteer to operate. The museum will house the history of Kent County, the underground railroad and will educate residents of Kent County of all ages.

Councilwoman Sturgeon added that this is an excellent funding opportunity.

A motion was made by Councilman Ridgely, seconded by Councilwoman Sturgeon, to accept the signing of the letter to Kent County in support of funding for the Goggin House. All in favor; none opposed.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Tyeisha Grier (Smyrna resident) – Spoke on behalf of Fleur McKendell as her request for being placed on the agenda to give a presentation on building bridges, enhancing community engagement, ensuring transparency, and fostering accountability was denied. She mentions the lack of diverse engagement Mayor Dougherty had at the election and that it is crucial to ensure all residents feel acknowledged and valued. She adds that diverse members of the community could be contacted in order to understand their concerns and welcome them to the decision-making table.

Mayor Dougherty mentioned that our agenda states that requests to be added to the next agenda must be submitted in writing ten (10) days prior to the next meeting. This is due to the 7-day notice required to post an agenda and that is the process we follow ahead of each meeting. He added that he supports Ms. McKendell's statements regarding the Town website, and changes are coming to revamp the site. He also mentions that she is on the agenda for the next meeting.

Fleur McKendell stated there is no need to place her on the agenda for the next meeting.

Angela Williams (Wynn Wood resident) – Spoke on her inability to vote in the Town of Camden election and asks that Mayor and Council consider building bridges to enhance community engagement with new developments or businesses to go over what they can do to be annexed into Camden so their voices can be heard. She adds that residents outside of Camden town limits cannot vote, they do not have a voice and they cannot speak on anything Camden is doing. She wants the Mayor and Council to see that something needs to be done about that and added that she is going to approach her HOA to see how her development can be annexed into the Town of Camden. She mentions that she is not against Mayor Dougherty, but does support Fleur McKendell because residents want to see change and ensure that everyone is supported and has a voice.

Mayor Dougherty added that she is not within Camden town limits and that several years ago Wynn Wood residents voted against being annexed into the town because of town taxes. He would be happy to speak to their HOA to discuss being annexed.

Gale Christensen (21 S. Main St.) – Mentioned that the flag on the wall of the King Meeting Room violates U.S. flag code 18, section 700 – you cannot change the colors of the flag. Referred back to the Board of Adjustment discussion; she is member and wants to remain on the Board of Adjustments, but she doesn't know what the protocol is for reassignment after terms are complete. She is aware that it is a 3-year term and should get information when said term is ending to determine if they want to continue. She adds that she is in favor of a 7-Member Board, as meetings are not consistent and believes they do not get enough notice.

Mayor Dougherty stated that he will look into this and be in touch with her.

Councilman Ridgely mentions that the Zoning Ordinance, Section 240-50, outlines terms and appointments, and how to adopt rules of conduct. He adds that the first sentence reviews that there are 5 Members, and they are appointed for 3-year terms.

Ms. Christensen suggests that Members and terms be posted on the website.

Mayor Dougherty said it will be included when we revamp the website.

Dawn Gonzalez (Barclay Farms) – Spoke regarding the absences and cancellations of Board of Adjustments meetings and mentioned that she has never seen a full Board in the many meetings she has attended over the last two years. She added that she has some confusion about the denial of Savannah Farms in November to the approval in February. She concluded by congratulating Councilwoman Rhodes and Mayor Dougherty.

David Williams, Jr. – Spoke on behalf of Fleur McKendell as her request for being placed on the agenda to give a presentation on building bridges, enhancing community engagement, ensuring transparency, and fostering accountability was denied. He mentioned that he is in support of Fleur’s vision to address a long-standing concern as it relates to the current lack of local presentation. He adds that dozens of residents showed up to vote and were turned away because they do not live within Camden town limits, and questioned how people with a Dover address were able to vote. To address this gap within the diverse community, Camden Town Council, Kent County Levy Court and impacted communities should work towards annexing eligible areas to ensure that all residents have a voice and benefit from services funded by their taxes. He ends by congratulating Mayor Dougherty.

Vonda Smack (Dover resident) – Spoke on behalf of Fleur McKendell as her request for being placed on the agenda to give a presentation on building bridges, enhancing community engagement, ensuring transparency, and fostering accountability was denied. She mentioned that she is in support of Fleur’s vision for community-enabled governance through the establishment of Council Committees tailored to address specific facets of community growth and well-being. These Committees would focus on cultural and recreational initiatives, support services, community engagement, public safety and more. She adds that said Committees could be chaired by Council Members and comprised of residents working to bring fresh perspectives and solutions.

Mary Ann Faust (267 Paynter’s Way) – Mentioned that Zoom meetings should be considered for people who are unable to attend meetings in person and that we should consider going back to three (3) minutes for public comment.

Audrey Bethea (101 Meeting House Ln.) – Spoke on an issue regarding the bus stop at the entrance of Meeting House Ln. that she has brought to the attention of the bus company and the School District. A large group of children must wait for the bus on a narrow sidewalk that is located on a busy street and that is very unsafe for the children. She suggests widening the sidewalk or the school having a crossing guard to assist in getting the children on their bus safely. She added that the bus company said they cannot get the bus into the development due to its size, nor are they coming up with alternative solutions, and that she is waiting on a response from the School District.

Councilman Ridgely confirmed that the location of the bus stop is at the entrance of Meeting House Ln.

Taevann Calloway – Spoke on behalf of Fleur McKendell as her request for being placed on the agenda to give a presentation on building bridges, enhancing community engagement, ensuring transparency, and fostering accountability was denied. He mentioned responsible management for Camden’s growth and that the town must align its future growth with the capacity of our infrastructure and services. He suggests implementing a plan to temporarily halt new development until a plan is in place that supports growth effectively.

Name unknown (44 E. Fred Cir.) – Spoke on behalf of Fleur McKendell as her request for being placed on the agenda to give a presentation on building bridges, enhancing community engagement, ensuring transparency, and fostering accountability was denied. He wanted to give his thoughts as a youth in the community on the pivotal role of shaping the youth in our community. He mentions that Ms. McKendell recently met with the Superintendent of Caesar

Rodney School District, who expressed interest in establishing a partnership that would be aimed to provide young residents with skills, knowledge, and support to be involved in the community. Linda Durr (302 Meeting House Ln.) – Mentioned that as the town grows, it is important to create a Senior Support Committee for older residents to call to find answers to questions they may have, such as how they can obtain healthcare, where bus stops are located and how to obtain transportation to appointments.

Susan Savage – She stated that she learned previously that Savannah Farms is exempt from paying taxes and expressed her concern with nepotism and past experiences. She suggested that newsletters be written and sent to residents. She owns a home in Camden Commons and has had issues with people parking in that development for events going on at the High School and mentioned Tamarac having a Dover address with homes being within both Camden and Dover town limits.

Fleur McKendell – Expressed her concern about not being able to speak with Mayor Dougherty and explained that the reason she does not need to be placed on the agenda for the next meeting is that the residents spoke on her behalf tonight. She mentioned the ability for hybrid meetings should be prioritized, and that she is broadcasting this meeting on Facebook Live tonight and will do the same for future meetings. Ms. McKendell added that the last audit posted on the website is from 2010 and the last budget is from 2013, and that audits and budgets should be available to the public on the website. She expressed her concern that taxpayer's dollars are being spent on fuel that is benefiting the former Mayor, as well as her concern about the absentee ballot process for elderly residents. She mentioned that the well-being of all residents must be prioritized, and she wants to work with us to do that.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilman Ridgely thanked the public for their comments. He thanked the Town Staff, the Police Department, and the Fire Department for their service. He added that there were many constructive comments tonight, and he would like to see if he can contribute to the lobbying for a better bus stop on Meeting House Ln. He also wanted to thank the Mayor and Council for supporting the Friends of Historic Camden's effort to renovate the Goggin House.

Councilwoman Sturgeon thanked everyone for being there, thanked the Town Staff for working diligently through the election process, and stated that everyone did a great job. She added that the most important part is getting the community out and involved.

Councilwoman Rhodes also thanked everyone for being there and gave assurance that we take their comments seriously. She thanked the Town, the Police Department, and Harold and his group for all the work that they do.

Mayor Dougherty thanked Jody Sweeney for attending the meeting, as well as the attendance from the public. He added that updating the website is a major focus.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

To consider strategy with respect to pending and/or potential litigation and/or with respect to personnel issues and/or collective bargaining.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made at 8:36 p.m. by Councilwoman Sturgeon, seconded by Councilwoman Rhodes, to adjourn the council meeting. All in favor; none opposed.

*Respectfully submitted,
Malori Lewis, Account Specialist*