

**Town of Camden
Regular Town Council Meeting
Camden Municipal Building
May 6, 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 April 26, 2024, in the following manner:

- a. The electronic sign,
- b. The official bulletin board,
- c. The official Town of Camden website, and
- d. The Delaware State News.

Vice-Mayor Sturgeon led attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence.

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

Council Absent: N/A

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

AMENDMENTS

Mayor Dougherty stated that there will be three (3) Appointments to fill the open positions on the Planning Commission and Board of Adjustments and this will be conducted under Old Business (c).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor and Council will hold a Public Workshop on Monday, May 20, 2024, at 6:30 p.m. regarding the proposed FY25 Budget Draft.

Town Hall will be closed on May 27th, 2024, in observance of Memorial Day.

MINUTES

A motion was made by Councilman Ridgely, seconded by Vice-Mayor Sturgeon, to approve the April 1, 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes. All in favor; none opposed.

FINANCE REPORT

Ms. Lewis stated that the delinquent tax amount is \$17,042.59. She added that we received \$35,705.34 in RETT funds in the month of April.

CAMDEN WYOMING FIRE DEPARTMENT

Phil Lewis gave a report that included but was not limited to fire and EMS calls. He added that they have a “new to us” ambulance on the road, it is blue and white and has Camden-Wyoming on it. They are looking into getting a second used ambulance to utilize until the two new ambulances come in, which is now anticipated for 2026.

CAMDEN WYOMING SEWER & WATER AUTHORITY

Councilman Ridgely said that the Sunset Village project is ongoing and believes that their sewer and water are online. He mentioned that there is a federal mandate to provide a lead pipe report, and he is proud to say that they were the first agency to submit their required findings correctly. He added that there are some sewer repairs along Upper King Road to be planned soon.

FRIENDS OF HISTORIC CAMDEN

Councilman Ridgely said that the Resolution was approved to move forward with the Brecknock Park/Goggin House repairs with a \$1M budget, and the County is starting to research hiring professionals to complete the project. The flag project for the Historic area is moving forward, they applied for a \$10K grant and received a generous private donation. He added that they will be attending the Peach Festival on August 3rd and will have merchandise with their new logo.

POLICE REPORT

Chief Whitney gave a report that included but was not limited to traffic arrests and criminal activity. He stated they have had 32 hours of paid overtime and 7 hours of court overtime. Chief Whitney said they have had a total of 548 calls for this period, compared to 558 calls for this period last year. This was a slight decrease, but overall, the calls for service have increased significantly.

Vice-Mayor Sturgeon asked for clarification on assisting other agencies.

Chief Whitney explained that, depending on the nature of the call and the manpower available, we assist other agencies and other agencies assist us.

TOWN MANAGER REPORT

Mr. Scott stated that the streetlight project on King Boulevard is complete, as well as the streetlight project between Newell’s Creek and Tidbury. If any areas throughout the Town need

more lighting, Delmarva Power said they would be willing to do small-scale projects. He mentioned that he did 23 inspections during the month of April. First State Animal Center and SPCA have added a horse barn and a therapy pool, and they are looking to build another building in the future to house additional animals. Sunset Village is on target, the last five (5) buildings will be completed by the end of the year and their Clubhouse should be done within the next month. After some major delays, the Clubhouse at The Reserve on East is nearing completion. JK Sound is waiting for one piece of equipment and then they will come in to start the upgrades to the King Meeting Room. Mr. Scott is also working with Chief Whitney to get two new traffic cameras installed using funds from the DEMA grant. He is happy to say that most of the outstanding projects are getting completed.

Mayor Dougherty clarified that the JK Sound project will allow us to stream meetings and was made possible by the grant we received from DEMA.

Mr. Scott added that there will be microphones in the ceiling and a television in the lobby if no seating is available during a meeting.

MAYOR

Mayor Dougherty stated that due to concerns with the flag on the wall, it will be taken down.

Councilman Woodall mentioned that he does not think there is anything wrong with the flag.

Mayor Dougherty explained that we have received a lot of public comments, and it will be taken down.

Mayor Dougherty thanked the Town Administration for the very low delinquent tax amount remaining for 2023 and thanked the Town Staff and Tom Josiah for their work on preparing the budget.

OLD BUSINESS

Amendment to Ordinance #2020-O-01 – New Construction Public Safety Impact – Second Reading

Mayor Dougherty explained that this Ordinance change will increase the Public Safety Impact fee from \$535.20 to \$934.20. This applies to anyone building a new residential unit and will be effective on July 1, 2024.

New Ordinance #2024-O-01 – Traffic Ordinance – Second Reading

Mayor Dougherty advised that this Ordinance would change certain traffic citations from a violation of State Ordinance to a violation of Town Ordinance. Some fees that currently show on traffic citations will no longer apply. The traffic citation for a moving violation would only increase by \$2.50, from \$104.50 to \$107. Key benefits of this new Ordinance for the citation recipient are that pleading guilty results in no points on their driving record, which means there

is no impact on their insurance rate. This will also allow the Town to receive additional revenue as the portion the Town receives from the citation will double.

Chief Whitney clarified that this change does not replace State charges, these charges are still on the table and there are certain State charges it would not apply to, such as felonies, DUIs, suspensions, and other charges of that nature. There is no requirement to plead guilty to this Ordinance or any State charge, everyone has their right to a fair trial. The typical fine is currently \$104.50 and the new fine would be \$107, which is \$2.50 higher but could potentially save the recipient thousands of dollars in insurance costs.

Councilman Woodall asked if issuing a Town versus a State citation would be at the Officer's discretion.

Chief Whitney confirmed that it would be at the Officer's discretion. He added that there are State charges that we cannot apply this Ordinance to, and, depending on the nature of the violation, it may require the citation be issued at the State level.

Appointments to the Planning Commission and Board of Adjustment

Mayor Dougherty explained that several people have submitted letters of intent to join our Boards and confirmed that the Council has reviewed these letters. There are two open positions on the Planning Commission; one existing, and the other due to the resignation of Thomas Wanstall, who is moving out of state.

Mayor Dougherty recommends Carrie Wanstall and Emily Lanter to fill these seats.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Rhodes, seconded by Vice-Mayor Sturgeon, to accept the above individuals to the Planning Commission. All in favor; none opposed.

Mayor Dougherty said there is also one open position on the Board of Adjustment and that he recommends Kahan Maniar to fill this seat.

A motion was made by Councilman Ridgley, seconded by Councilwoman Rhodes, to accept the above individual to the Board of Adjustment. All in favor; none opposed.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Rhodes, seconded by Councilman Ridgely, to move into a Public Hearing for the two Ordinances. All in favor; none opposed.

PUBLIC HEARING

Councilman Woodall asked if the change to the fee under Ordinance #2020-O-01 is per unit or project.

Chief Whitney confirmed that the fee is per unit.

Vice-Mayor Sturgeon confirmed that the increased fee is still fairly low.

Mayor Dougherty said it is the lowest in the area.

Chief Whitney added for comparison, some municipalities charge upwards of \$2,500.

Councilman Woodall asked how this change would impact developments that have been approved but have not started construction.

Mayor Dougherty explained that this change would apply to all permits issued after July 1, 2024. It does not apply to permits that are issued before this date.

PUBLIC HEARING PUBLIC COMMENTS

Joe Amado (Pharsalia) - Asked if this public comment opportunity is for general comments or only for the two Ordinances being discussed.

Mayor Dougherty explained that this public comment opportunity is for the Public Hearing regarding the two Ordinances and that public comment on other topics will be open after the meeting.

OLD BUSINESS (CONTINUED)

A motion was made by Councilman Woodall, seconded by Vice-Mayor Sturgeon, to approve the Amendment to Ordinance #2020-O-01 and the New Ordinance #2024-O-01. All in favor; none opposed.

A motion was made by Vice-Mayor Sturgeon, seconded by Councilman Woodall, to move back into the Regular Meeting. All in favor; none opposed.

NEW BUSINESS

FY25 Budget Draft – First Reading

Mr. Josiah explained that the proposed budget goal is \$3M, which is an increase of 20% from the prior year. The revenue budget includes two non-recurring revenue sources, the sale of a portion of our property for the Camden Bypass and building permit revenue, which is roughly \$330,000.

Councilman Woodall wanted to clarify why there was an increase in Admin salaries even though we do not currently have a Town Clerk.

Mr. Josiah advised that the position is still open and will be filled during this budget year.

Mayor Dougherty explained that the increase in Admin salaries is due to the cost-of-living increase.

Vice-Mayor Sturgeon said that the key items we were able to budget for are two new Police Officers, as well as 5 promotions within the Police Department. We also budgeted for the cost-of-

living increases that everyone receives. The Town Clerk position will be filled, but the cost-of-living increase was not applied to this position since it is currently vacant. The biggest thing to take note of is that we are using one-time revenue sources to balance the budget. If we did not sell a portion of our property for the Camden Bypass, we would be in a deficit. Vice-Mayor Sturgeon added that Chief Whitney is working on an Officers grant, which would hopefully bring in an additional Police Officer. Going forward, we need to figure out how we are going to find the revenue to replace the \$330,000 in one-time funding we received for this budget year, as we do not have many opportunities to “cut” budgeted amounts.

Mayor Dougherty added that tax revenue is much of the Town’s income and ultimately drives the budget. We have not received the newly assessed property values from Kent County, so we are not increasing the tax rate this year. However, we will be receiving these soon and will be anticipating a tax increase next year. We have been producing a balanced budget since 2011, which is when the last tax increase occurred.

Vice-Mayor Sturgeon said that she would like to consider budgeting for only one (1) new Police Officer instead of two, to allow for salary increases within the Police Department.

Mayor Dougherty explained that we are shooting for two new Officers, and this is what has been included in the proposed budget.

Purchase of Two (2) New Police Vehicles

Chief Whitney explained that these vehicles would replace aging fleet vehicles and the need for vehicles for new Officers.

Mayor Dougherty asked if the vehicles would be funded by RETT and what the cost would be to purchase and fully equip the new vehicles.

Chief Whitney said that their new vehicles have typically been funded by RETT funds and cost around \$55,000 to purchase and equip each vehicle.

Mayor Dougherty clarified that, if approved, a total of \$110,000 would come from RETT to purchase and equip the new vehicles.

Councilman Woodall asked which vehicles Chief Whitney would be getting rid of.

Chief Whitney explained that they must retain two vehicles as spares and that he plans on using two other vehicles as a trade towards the two new vehicles.

Councilman Woodall confirmed that Chief Whitney will be getting rid of two vehicles and adding two in their place, and asked if the new vehicles are included in the approved FY24 budget or the proposed FY25 budget.

Mr. Josiah said that the \$110,000 for the purchase of these vehicles is listed in the proposed FY25 budget under RETT expenses.

Chief Whitney added that he expects the new vehicles will not be delivered until sometime in 2025.

A motion was made by Councilman Woodall, seconded by Councilman Ridgely, to approve the purchase of two (2) new Police vehicles using \$110,000 from RETT. All in favor; none opposed.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Linda Der (Meeting House Ln.) – Mentioned that the woman who collects payments at Camden-Wyoming Sewer & Water is excellent.

Mayor Dougherty asked Mr. Badger and Councilman Ridgely to pass this on to the Camden-Wyoming Water Board.

Maxine Wayson (300 Williams St.) – Asked what the issue is with the flag decal on the wall as she does not see an issue with it.

Mayor Dougherty said that several people felt it was disrespectful and is not red, white, and blue.

Mrs. Wayson asked if it could be changed instead of removed.

Mayor Dougherty said that we will take her comments under advisement and see what we can do. He added that we may be able to replace it with a different decal.

John Badger (Barclay Farms) – Wanted to say that he sees no problem with the flag on the wall, as a Veteran he knows it's an American flag. If the flag must be taken down, he would like us to consider something to honor First Responders and Police.

Joe Amado (Pharsalia) – Expressed his concerns with roads in Camden and asked if the roads are on the agenda to be repaired, such as the road at the stop sign of Voshell's Mill/Upper King Road and Caesar Rodney Avenue.

Mayor Dougherty explained that these are State roads, and they are maintained by Del-Dot, not the Town.

Mr. Scott and Chief Whitney reiterated that these roads are State roads that we cannot maintain.

Audrey Bethea (101 Meeting House Ln.) – Would like to follow up on her concerns with the bus stop at the entrance to her development, 10-12 students are standing on a small sidewalk, and she feels this is unsafe. He added that the School District and the bus company are not finding a solution. She said that after she expressed her concerns at a Town Council meeting a few months ago, a gentleman did come out to take measurements, but she has not gotten an update since this happened. She mentioned that there may be a high volume of traffic through her development with the upcoming event at the High School. She would also like to know how the public can be a part of the Board process and how they can speak about their communities.

Regarding the upcoming graduation in June, Chief Whitney said he is establishing a special duty assignment, where an Officer will be stationed at the entrance of Camden Commons. Residents will need to show ID to gain entry and non-residents will be denied entry.

Mayor Dougherty added that we are looking at other options to address the parking concerns in Camden Commons, and asked what time of day her bus stop concerns are happening.

Mrs. Bethea said it is in the mornings around 7:55-8:05 a.m. She then mentioned that the drainage pipe near the property behind hers turns into a lake when it rains heavily and this causes a lot of debris. She's not sure who owns this property or who is required to maintain it.

Mayor Dougherty advised that we do maintain public property, but we cannot maintain private property. He added that he will be visiting Camden Commons within the next few days, and he will stop by to see her when he does.

Dawn Gonzalez (Barclay Farms) – Asked if the amounts decided on for the proposed FY25 budget will be discussed in the Public Workshop and she believes that the Police Department should get a salary increase instead of hiring new Officers. She asked if the Police Union is part of the salary discussions and if the increase in revenue from the Traffic Ordinance will go towards salary increases.

Mayor Dougherty explained that the Officers are not part of the salary decisions, but they are highly involved in the Police contract discussions and negotiations. He added that he is analyzing salaries which will be discussed again later in the year. He also said that the purpose of the Public Workshop is to discuss what the budget draft amounts are and to discuss any adjustments that may need to take place.

Susan Savage (Non-resident, owns 302 Meeting House Ln.) – She believes the Police are underpaid and added that when she worked here, she felt as though taxpayer money did not go to the Police Department because the Police receive grants.

Mayor Dougherty advised that Chief Whitney has applied for a grant to potentially pay a Police Officer's salary for up to 3 years and that the Public Workshop to discuss the budget is on May 20th at 6:30 p.m.

Commissioner Jody Sweeney wanted to thank Chief Whitney and his team for their assistance in breaking up an unsanctioned party at Brecknock Park that about 400 people showed up to. He also explained why he believes the flag decal on the wall is a violation of the U.S. Flag Code.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilman Ridgely said that they have put the Camden Commons bus stop issue on their radar, he has been speaking with the Town Manager and they see a potential opportunity for a grant for a sidewalk on that side of Old North Road. He is keeping tabs because he believes it will help and hopes it will become a reality. He thanked Chief Whitney, as well as the Town staff, adding that they are short-staffed, and Ms. Lewis and Mr. Scott are doing a great job.

Vice-Mayor Sturgeon thanked everyone for being in attendance and for their input. She thanked Mr. Scott and Ms. Lewis for carrying double duty due to the Town Clerk vacancy. She also thanked Chief Whitney and all the Officers for their diligence in what they do, it's a difficult job and they do it for all of us, and she wanted to make sure we share our appreciation for what they do.

Councilwoman Rhodes wanted to thank the Town staff because she knows they are pulling triple duty instead of double duty. She also wanted to thank the Fire Department for being in attendance, and another thank you to the Police Department and Mr. Scott. Everyone is doing a great job.

Councilman Woodall said it was good to see public attendance because he remembers meetings that little to no public showed up. He would like to suggest more lighting near the liquor store on the corner of Old North Road and Caboose Road. He added that he understands the U.S. Flag Code, but the decal on the wall is a flag and does not see an issue with it.

Mayor Dougherty thanked everyone for attending, we nearly had a full house and hopes that the public come back for the Public Workshop and the next Council meeting. He thanked all Town employees, and Commissioner Sweeney for being in attendance.

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 8:05 p.m. by Vice-Mayor Sturgeon, seconded by Councilwoman Rhodes, to adjourn the council meeting. All in favor; none opposed.

*Respectfully submitted,
Malori Lewis, Account Specialist*