

**Town of Camden  
Regular Town Council Meeting  
Camden Municipal Building  
December 2, 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 November 22, 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, and Councilman Ridgely

Council Absent: Councilman Woodall

Staff Attending: Account Specialist Malori Lewis, Administrative Assistant Diane Mosby, Town Solicitor Greg Morris, and Police Chief Marcus Whitney

**AMENDMENTS**

Councilman Ridgely stated that he would like to propose an amendment to the agenda, under New Business, referral of the City of Dover draft resolutions for Planning Commission review and consideration. Mayor Dougherty stated this will be discussed under New Business (b).

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Camden-Wyoming Christmas Parade will be held on Saturday, December 7<sup>th</sup>, at 6:00 P.M.

Town Hall will be closed on December 25<sup>th</sup> and January 1<sup>st</sup>

Elections will be held on February 22, 2025; Available seats: One (1) Council seat (3-year term)

**MINUTES**

A motion was made by Councilwoman Rhodes, seconded by Vice-Mayor Sturgeon, to approve the October 29, 2024 Public Workshop Meeting Minutes. All in favor; none opposed.

A motion was made by Vice-Mayor Sturgeon, seconded by Councilwoman Rhodes, to approve the November 4, 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes. All in favor; none opposed.

**FINANCE REPORT**

Ms. Lewis stated that the delinquent tax amount is \$37,862.79.

Vice-Mayor Sturgeon said that she would like to meet with Ms. Lewis regarding reporting and an entry to adjust canceled invoices for prior year business license renewals since the cancellation of these invoices affected the anticipated business license revenue for FY25.

Mayor Dougherty asked when payments for 2025 business licenses are due.

Ms. Lewis stated that the invoices are going out this week and will be due by January 31<sup>st</sup>.

Mayor Dougherty advised that FY25 business license revenue will increase as payments for 2025 begin to come in.

**CAMDEN WYOMING FIRE DEPARTMENT**

Newly elected Fire Chief Phillip Lewis gave a report that included but was not limited to fire and EMS calls. He stated that the State Fire Marshal has lifted the burn ban. He added that they will be escorting Santa throughout their district beginning this Sunday afternoon through next Friday evening and that this schedule and any updates can be found on their Facebook page.

Mayor Dougherty thanked Mr. Lewis for his service.

**CAMDEN WYOMING SEWER & WATER AUTHORITY**

John Badger stated that there were no updates to report at this time.

**FRIENDS OF HISTORIC CAMDEN**

Councilman Ridgely stated had they are gathering information on significant people and places in Camden to put online in association with their flag program. He added that they are pursuing grants for potential opportunities at the West Street property owned by the Town of Camden.

**POLICE REPORT**

Chief Whitney gave a report that included but was not limited to traffic arrests and criminal activity. He stated they have had 98 hours of paid overtime and 5.5 hours of court overtime. Chief Whitney said they have had a total of 454 calls for this period, compared to 525 calls for this period last year.

He added that HB206 converted COPT to POST, and part of that conversion requires every police agency in the State of Delaware to become accredited. State-level accreditation follows national standards, there are 108 points that each agency needs to meet. Chief Whitney is requesting that we establish an Accreditation Manager position for the period of one year to get us through the

initial accreditation process. This individual would be considered an outside party who will be under contract, and POST will assist us with information on certified and experienced individuals that we can pursue. The anticipated cost for this individual for a period of one year would be \$38,000, which could be a RETT expense, so as not to affect the current budget. After this individual gets us through the initial process, we will be able to maintain the “proofs” required for future inspections, which will occur every 3 years. If we were to not maintain this accreditation, it could result in decertification and loss of funding opportunities. HB206 requires that the initial accreditation be completed by 2028, but POST would like to see it completed by 2026.

Vice-Mayor Sturgeon asked when we wanted to begin this process and how many hours this individual would work in a week.

Chief Whitney explained that we need to begin this process as soon as possible and there will not be a certain number of hours per week, the individual selected will simply be paid based on the hours worked like other contracted parties we have.

Vice-Mayor Sturgeon clarified that this individual would assist us for one year to get us set up to be self-reliant in the future.

Councilman Ridgely asked if there were any grant opportunities for this.

Chief Whitney advised that there are no grant opportunities for this type of requirement.

A motion was made by Vice-Mayor Sturgeon, seconded by Councilwoman Rhodes, to authorize Chief Whitney up to \$38,000 for an outside contractor to handle the initial accreditation of the Camden Police Department, funded by RETT. All in favor; none opposed.

## **TOWN MANAGER REPORT**

Not available.

## **MAYOR**

Mayor Dougherty stated that we are looking into training opportunities through the University of Delaware for members of the Board of Adjustments and the Planning Commission, as well as training opportunities for Public Works employees to expand their knowledge and skills.

Councilman Ridgely mentioned that we do not want to lose sight of the discussion on hiring a public safety official to assist the Town Manager with his many obligations.

Mayor Dougherty explained that the goal of the training opportunities for the Public Works employees is to help with this concern.

**PUBLIC HEARING**

*Annexation (i.) – Central Delaware Habitat for Humanity – Map #7-00-094.08-03-46.00-000*

Mayor Dougherty explained that we would like to incorporate this property into the Town of Camden.

A motion was made by Councilman Ridgely, seconded by Vice-Mayor Sturgeon, to enter a Public Hearing. All in favor; none opposed.

John Badger (35 Dill Ln.) – Asked for the reason for these annexations and if these properties would be taxed.

Mayor Dougherty stated that this specific parcel is owned by a non-profit charitable organization and will be exempt from Town taxes, and the other parcels being discussed are currently owned by the State of Delaware, who are also tax-exempt.

Chief Whitney explained that the jurisdiction on the highway varies based on boundary lines, and having a continual boundary will allow for clear-cut coverage areas to avoid unnecessary confusion or delays for motorists who are not aware that the Camden Police Department cannot currently assist certain areas of the highway.

Chrissy (Habitat for Humanity) – She expressed that Habitat for Humanity is excited about the potential of being a part of the Camden community.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Rhodes, seconded by Vice-Mayor Sturgeon, to exit the Public Hearing. All in favor; none opposed.

Vice-Mayor Sturgeon asked the Town Solicitor if the annexed properties were to be sold in the future, would they continue to be exempt from Town taxes, or would the new owners be responsible for taxes at that time.

Mr. Morris explained that should the properties sell; the new owners would be responsible for taxes if they are not typically tax-exempt individuals or businesses.

*Annexation (ii.) – State of Delaware – Map #7-00-103.00-01-28.00-000*

Mayor Dougherty explained that he would like to incorporate this property into the Town of Camden. This is the former Troop 3 building, and the parcel is approximately 5 acres in size.

A motion was made by Councilman Ridgely, seconded by Vice-Mayor Sturgeon, to enter a Public Hearing. All in favor; none opposed.

No public or council comments.

A motion was made by Vice-Mayor Sturgeon, seconded by Councilman Ridgely, to exit the Public Hearing. All in favor; none opposed.

*Annexation (iii) – State of Delaware/DNREC – Map #7-00-086.13-01-42.00-000*

Mayor Dougherty explained that he would like to incorporate this property into the Town of Camden. It is open land on the north side of Isaac Branch and Route 13, across from the POW/MIA Pkwy.

A motion was made by Councilman Ridgely, seconded by Vice-Mayor Sturgeon, to enter a Public Hearing. All in favor; none opposed.

Ashley Torbert (108 Cedar Ln.) – Asked if we are concerned about the homeless encampments in that area.

Mayor Dougherty advised that the property has been cleared and there is no encampment on the property at this time.

Vice-Mayor Sturgeon advised that it is the owner's responsibility to maintain the property.

Chief Whitney agreed that the encampment has been cleared from the property and that Camden PD will stay on top of this potential concern by doing regular patrols of the area and they will continue to provide any help or resources should the need arise.

A motion was made by Vice-Mayor Sturgeon, seconded by Councilman Ridgely, to exit the Public Hearing. All in favor; none opposed.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

*Annexation (i) – Resolution #2024-R-02; acknowledging the request of Central Delaware Habitat for Humanity to Annex parcel 7-00-094.08-03-46.00-000; property address 2311 S Dupont Hwy, Dover, DE; into the Incorporated Camden Town Limits.*

A motion was made by Vice-Mayor Sturgeon, seconded by Councilman Ridgely, to approve the request for annexation for 7-00-094.08-03-46.00-000, property address 2311 S. Dupont Hwy, Habitat for Humanity. All in favor; none opposed.

*Annexation (ii) – Resolution #2024-R-03; acknowledging the request of the State of Delaware to Annex parcel 7-00-103.00-01-28.00-000; property address 3036 Upper King Rd, Dover, DE; into the Incorporated Camden Town Limits.*

A motion was made by Councilwoman Rhodes, seconded by Vice-Mayor Sturgeon, to approve the request for annexation for 7-00-103.00-01-28.00-000, property address 3036 Upper King Rd, State of Delaware. All in favor; none opposed.

*Annexation (iii) – Resolution #2024-R-04; acknowledging the request of State of Delaware/DNREC to Annex parcel 7-00-086.13-01-42.00-000; property address S Shore Dr, Dover, DE; into the Incorporated Camden Town Limits.*

A motion was made by Vice-Mayor Sturgeon, seconded by Councilwoman Rhodes, to approve the request for annexation for 7-00-086.13-01-42.00-000, property address S Shore Dr, State of Delaware/DNREC. All in favor; none opposed.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### ***(a.) Delaware Paid Leave Program***

Ms. Lewis explained that the Healthy Delaware Families Act was signed into law on May 10, 2022, and this act created the Delaware Paid Leave Program that requires employers in the state to provide their employees with Paid Family Medical Leave. The total number of employees will determine what coverage they are required to provide, if any, from Parental Leave, Medical Leave, and Family Caregiver/Qualified Exigency Leave. Employers with 9 or fewer employees are exempt, 10-24 employees requires Parental Leave only, or 25 or more employees requires full coverage.

The Town currently falls within the requirement of Parental Leave only, which is 12 weeks of paid leave annually to bond with and care for a new child, whether through birth, foster placement, or adoption. The coverage is effective on January 1, 2026, which is when claims can begin to be submitted. If the claim is approved, the employee will get up to 80% of their wages, up to \$900 per week. Delaware Paid Leave offers paid leave to employees who have been employed for at least one year and at least 1,250 hours with a single employer. We also have a choice of joining the State plan or applying for a private plan. Private plans only offer full coverage, and the quote received was extremely high compared to the cost of the State plan. Since we are only required to offer Parental Leave, the State plan would be the most cost-effective option.

The rate for Parental Leave is 0.32% of an employee's weekly wages. Employers can require employees to contribute up to half the cost via payroll deductions. Should the Town opt to pay for this cost without requiring employees to contribute, it would be around \$3,900 a year based on the current number of eligible employees and their weekly wages. Should the Town require employees to contribute up to half the cost, payroll deductions would begin with the first pay in 2025 and could cause costly negotiations of the CPOA contract. Since this is a mandatory state requirement that employers must provide, and the Town currently pays for both short-term and long-term disability at no cost to the employee, Ms. Lewis suggests that the Town pay for this cost without requiring employees to contribute.

Vice-Mayor Sturgeon asked if this program supersedes FMLA, or if an employee could potentially be out for 24 weeks between the two programs.

Ms. Lewis explained that FMLA is similar, but not the same as Delaware Paid Leave. FMLA allows employees to take up to 12 weeks unpaid job-protected leave with continued medical benefits. Delaware's program requires paid time off that provides employees with income-replacement payments following the weekly wage limitations. She advised that she can look into the potential of an employee utilizing both programs and being out for 24 weeks.

Vice-Mayor Sturgeon asked if this program is comparable to unemployment in that we pay into it and the employee gets paid directly by that entity, if claims could result in rate increases, and if

we opt to pay 100% at this time, can this be changed in the future as the Town expands, employee count increases and rates change.

Ms. Lewis explained that we would pay into the program through the State, and they would handle the claims and payments from there. This is a brand-new program that isn't fully rolled out yet, rates are locked for now but will likely be reviewed after the program has been in place for a certain period to ensure that the rates are sufficient. She added that until we have 25 or more employees, we will only need to provide Parental Leave and that changes to what is decided this evening can always be discussed.

A motion was made by Vice-Mayor Sturgeon, seconded by Councilwoman Rhodes, to participate in the State plan at the approved rates required by this plan, with no employee contributions required at this time. All in favor; none opposed.

*(b.) Referral of the City of Dover draft resolutions for Planning Commission review and consideration*

Councilman Ridgely stated that the City of Dover did extensive studies on public opinion of recreational marijuana and drafted four (4) resolutions that went through a first reading in October. The draft resolutions discuss manufacturing, testing, and retail in different zones. He proposes that we refer the study results and draft resolutions to our Planning Commission and allow them to review and make recommendations to the Town Council on whether we should follow suit.

Mayor Dougherty said that he would like to get in contact with Chairwoman Gray and ask the Planning Commission to review the situation and make a recommendation to the Council.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Eva Stoklosa (219 W. Darby Cir.) – Expressed her concern with speeding vehicles and minimal lighting in Tamarac and suggested placing speed bumps and additional lighting.

Brian Lessard – Suggested that the Town look into leasing some of the storage space at the old State Police barracks that was annexed this evening and that some of the trees be cleared from this property, expressed his concerns about staffing shortages with people on vacation or paid leave, and feels that Camden should do their own studies on the public opinion of recreational marijuana because Camden and Dover are very different and not comparable.

Chief Whitney explained that the State has rented their space to multiple businesses, so he does not believe that leasing storage space is an option.

Gail Christensen (21 S. Main St.) – Suggested a program that allows residents to track the status of code enforcement issues and her concern with tractor-trailers parking on Upper King Rd.

Chief Whitney said he will investigate her concern regarding the tractor-trailers.

Dawn Gonzalez (Barclay Farms) – Asked if there was somewhere that the public could see the Town's budget and expressed her concern with code enforcement issues that other individuals have reported.

Maxine Wayson (300 Williams St.) – Expressed her concern with a property near her residence.

#### **COUNCIL COMMENTS**

Councilwoman Rhodes thanked everyone for coming, thanked Ms. Lewis for all she has done, and thanked the Police and Fire Departments for keeping us safe.

Vice-Mayor Sturgeon thanked everyone for coming and showing interest in what we are doing and recommended an agenda item to discuss the Town Manager's responsibilities to see if it is adequate to add another position.

Mayor Dougherty asked Vice-Mayor Sturgeon to call him to discuss having this on the agenda for the next meeting.

Councilman Ridgely thanked everyone for their involvement, thanked the Town Staff for their diligence, and mentioned that he would like to speak to the Town Manager about unfinished business.

Mayor Dougherty thanked everyone for their comments and for attending the meeting.

#### **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 8:29 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*