

**Town of Camden
Regular Town Council Meeting
Camden Municipal Building
March 3, 2025**

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 21, 2025, 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.

Councilwoman Rhodes led attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence.

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

Council Absent: Councilman Woodall

Staff Attending: Town Manager Harold Scott Jr., Administrative Assistant Diane Mosby, Town Solicitor Greg Morris, and Police Chief Marcus Whitney

AMENDMENTS

None.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

OATH OF OFFICE

Greg Morris swore in Daniel Ridgely for a 3-year Council term.

REORGANIZATION FOR THE YEAR 2025

Selection of Vice-Mayor – Unanimous vote to appoint Councilwoman Rhodes.

Selection of Town Clerk – Mayor Dougherty explained that the Town Clerk position remains vacant until we find a suitable person to fill the position.

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.

REAPPOINTMENTS FOR THE YEAR 2025

Planning Commission – Unanimous vote to extend Commissioner Lanter and Commissioner Prystajko for a 3-year term.

Board of Adjustment – Unanimous vote to extend Member Maniar for a 3-year term.

Camden-Wyoming Water Board – Unanimous vote to extend Member Steiger for a 3-year term.

MINUTES

A motion was made by Councilwoman Rhodes, seconded by Councilman Ridgely, to approve the February 3, 2025 Regular Meeting Minutes. All in favor; none opposed.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Rhodes, seconded by Councilwoman Sturgeon, to approve the February 3, 2025 Executive Session Minutes. All in favor; none opposed.

FINANCE REPORT

Mr. Scott stated that the delinquent tax amount is \$21,728.02. He added that Ms. Lewis and Mrs. Mosby have been working on calling businesses and homeowners regarding delinquent business and rental license renewals.

Councilwoman Sturgeon mentioned that she likes the new format of the delinquent tax list and requested that the agenda item for the Finance Report include “Unreconciled” in addition to “Subject to Audit”.

CAMDEN WYOMING FIRE DEPARTMENT

Fire Chief Phillip Lewis gave a report that included but was not limited to fire and EMS calls.

Mayor Dougherty extended his condolences for the loss of Mr. Jim Noble and that Mr. Noble was a great asset to our community and will be missed.

CAMDEN WYOMING SEWER & WATER AUTHORITY

Councilman Ridgely advised that their next meeting will be on April 8th.

FRIENDS OF HISTORIC CAMDEN

Councilman Ridgely stated that they received a substantial amount of donations that they are very thankful for. He added that they continue to work on the flag program and are pursuing grants for beautification of the historic area. He advised that their next meeting will be on March 27th.

POLICE REPORT

Chief Whitney gave a report that included but was not limited to traffic arrests and criminal activity. He stated they had 72.5 hours of paid overtime and 4 hours of court overtime. Chief Whitney said they have had a total of 401 calls for this period, compared to 423 calls for this period last year. He added that there were two fatal pedestrian hit-and-runs; one is being investigated by the Camden Police Department, and the other is being investigated by the State Police.

Councilman Ridgely asked if Chief Whitney had any suggestions for traffic safety.

Chief Whitney explained that while they are working diligently on traffic safety, there will be minimal relief until the Camden Bypass project and the expansion to a 3-lane highway are completed.

TOWN MANAGER REPORT

Mr. Scott stated that he did 28 inspections in February. He mentioned that the second portion of the Camden Bypass project is scheduled to begin in September, and the portion they are working on now should be completed by then. He mentioned that he signed the annual contract with DNREC for summer mosquito control. Mr. Scott added that we recently issued a permit to Walmart for the expansion of their online grocery pickup area, and we also issued the permit to begin the construction of the Popeyes on Walmart Drive. He also mentioned that he spoke with the Rossi Group during a recent land use training, and they will be sending information and pricing details on helping us with land use, subdivision regulations, and planning. Our Planning Commission has approved Savannah Farms, and they have also approved having a place of worship in the old Furniture & More building. Horthy & Horthy have completed the FY24 audit and will present it at the next Town Council meeting. Mr. Scott added that he has spoken with two different inspection companies to prepare for inspections at Savannah Farms and other projects that are in the early planning phases. He is trying to get costs together to prepare for the upcoming budget year.

Councilwoman Sturgeon asked for an update on the payment of the portion of our land sold for the Camden Bypass project, as it is not listed.

Mr. Scott mentioned that we received the money last year and he would speak to Ms. Lewis to gather the information.

MAYOR

Mayor Dougherty mentioned that many people think that the Mayor and Council run the town, but it is the Town Staff that handles the daily operations, and he thanked them for all their hard work and dedication.

PUBLIC HEARING

Discussion on Marijuana

Mayor Dougherty explained that the Council had the opportunity to discuss and voice their opinion at the last Town Council meeting regarding growing, testing, manufacturing, and retail sales facilities in the Town of Camden.

Councilwoman Sturgeon asked for a recap since she was not in attendance at the last meeting. She added that she feels we have enough participation because we already have a testing facility and does not feel that we need to offer retail sales.

Mayor Dougherty advised that he suggested a 24-month moratorium at the last meeting, but other members of the Council wanted to discuss this further and decide now. The current testing facility would have to be grandfathered in and would be unaffected by any current or future decisions right now.

Councilwoman Sturgeon asked what the backlash has been for other towns that have allowed retail sales.

Chief Whitney stated that this is still new, and HIDTA can give detailed reports or look at states that have been doing retail sales for years. He anticipates rises in DUIs and consumption at younger ages since it will be more readily available and more accepted. It will still be illegal in public and will likely see more problems and more law enforcement involvement. He added that he does not think it's a good idea for our community.

Councilwoman Sturgeon added that our town is small. We have so many children, schools, and churches that it does not feel appropriate to offer retail sales of marijuana because of the likelihood of it being around a child. We already have multiple liquor stores and sports bars. She added that if you grant someone an agricultural license, they can partner with another business with a different license for retail, and they can sell retail right there. She suggests voting against it right now so that this does not happen, with the possibility of reviewing the topic again in a few years since the first few years will likely be rocky.

Mayor Dougherty clarified that we are not outlawing marijuana; it is legal, and anyone who wants it can shop at local dispensaries within a mile or two of Camden. We are simply talking about what we will allow or not allow in our town.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Sturgeon, seconded by Councilwoman Rhodes, to enter a Public Hearing. All in favor; none opposed.

Justine Zimny (515 W. Lebanon Rd.) – Asked for clarification on having different types of licenses at the same location and that the current testing facility could not partner with someone else and begin offering retail sales if the Council votes against marijuana as a whole.

Councilwoman Sturgeon confirmed.

Kahan Maniar – Stated that he believes that the stance of the Mayor and Council is perfect and agrees with where they stand.

Sergeant First Class Kersey (Wilmington, DE) – Explained that he is in the marijuana business and does not agree that the State of Delaware does not allow municipalities to make any additional revenue on marijuana businesses and that we should be open to the thought of allowing marijuana businesses in the Town of Camden.

Dawn Gonzalez (Barclay Farms) – Stated that she is still opposed to marijuana businesses in the Town of Camden.

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

OLD BUSINESS

Discussion on Marijuana

A motion was made by Councilman Ridgely, seconded by Councilwoman Sturgeon, to draft an ordinance for review that would prohibit marijuana facilities in the incorporated town limits of Camden, Delaware. All in favor; none opposed.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Justine Zimny (515 W. Lebanon Rd.) – Asked if the existing testing facility will be able to test recreational marijuana and mentioned that virtual attendees have been unable to speak during public comment.

Mayor Dougherty explained that it would be based on the laws and regulations set forth by the Office of the Marijuana Commissioner. He reiterated that Zoom is for viewing purposes only, and any questions or concerns for individuals unable to attend public meetings can be done by email or telephone.

Ashley Torbert (108 Cedar Ln.) – Asked what the traffic plan on Route 13 at the Holy Cross High School will be.

Mayor Dougherty said he would be happy to answer that question at the close of the meeting.

Audrey Bethea (101 Meeting House Ln.) – Expressed her appreciation for the sidewalk and signage in Camden Commons and expressed her concern with the property behind her house.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilwoman Rhodes thanked the Town Staff for everything they do for the Town, the public for attending, and the Police and Fire Departments for their hard work.

Councilwoman Sturgeon thanked everyone for coming and the Town Staff for their efforts in running the Town while wearing many hats. She added that she is looking forward to starting the budget process.

Councilman Ridgely thanked our public servants and the Mayor and Council for the opportunity to be part of the Town Council.

Mayor Dougherty thanked everyone for attending the meeting and the Town Staff for their hard work.

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 Councilwoman Sturgeon, seconded by Councilman Ridgely, to adjourn the council meeting. All in favor; none opposed.

*Respectfully submitted,
Malori Lewis, Account Specialist*