

**Town of Camden
Regular Town Council Meeting
Camden Municipal Building
May 5, 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 April 28, 2025, in the following manner:

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

Councilman Woodall led attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence.

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

Council Absent: N/A

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

AMENDMENTS

None.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mayor and Council will hold a Public Workshop on Monday, May 19th, at 6:30 P.M. regarding the proposed FY26 Budget Draft.

Dover Kent MPO will hold a Public Workshop on Tuesday, May 20th, at 5:00 P.M. to review existing conditions and share your ideas for improving the Sidewalk Network in Camden.

Town Hall will be closed on Monday, May 26th, in observance of Memorial Day.

MINUTES

A motion was made by Vice Mayor Rhodes, seconded by Councilman Ridgely, to approve the April 7, 2025 Regular Meeting Minutes. All in favor; none opposed.

A motion was made by Vice Mayor Rhodes, seconded by Councilwoman Sturgeon, to approve the April 7, 2025 Executive Session Meeting Minutes. All in favor; none opposed.

FINANCE REPORT

Ms. Lewis stated that the delinquent tax amount is \$18,995.48. She added that we received \$20,117.29 in RETT funds in April.

CAMDEN WYOMING FIRE DEPARTMENT

Fire Chief Phillip Lewis gave a report that included, but was not limited to, fire and EMS calls. He added that the Annual Crab Feast is on August 23rd and tickets are available online or at the station. He stated that the ambulances ordered a few years ago are finally being built in Florida, and a few Members will be going down to inspect them next month.

CAMDEN WYOMING SEWER & WATER AUTHORITY

Councilman Ridgely advised that they have not had a meeting so far this year, but there should be a report from the June meeting presented in July.

FRIENDS OF HISTORIC CAMDEN

Gale Christensen advised that their ongoing work includes developing their website and the flag project, and they are halfway through their membership drive and are always looking for volunteers. She added that they will have speakers at their meeting on May 29th who will be talking about the Brinkley brothers' role with the Underground Railroad. They look forward to partnering with the Town on a grant for different projects.

POLICE REPORT

Chief Whitney gave a report that included, but was not limited to, traffic arrests and criminal activity. He stated they had 20 hours of paid overtime and 6 hours of court overtime. Chief Whitney said they have had a total of 463 calls for this period, compared to 548 calls for this period last year. He added that there was a record number of criminal arrests at 63.

Councilman Ridgely asked if there was a particular area of crime seeing a spike.

Chief Whitney advised that the spike is from commercial-related incidents.

TOWN MANAGER REPORT

Mr. Scott stated that he did 28 inspections in April. He mentioned that both Popeye's has started construction, Wal-Mart has started their renovation, and we have been working on figures for Municipal Street Aid to include the streets of Tidbury Crossing and Sunset Village. Now that the weather is warming up, he wants to remind residents that yard waste needs to be bagged, bundled, or put in a yard waste can. Mr. Scott added that the traffic circle on Route 10, as part of Del-Dot's Camden Bypass project, will likely start soon, which will result in detours and be an inconvenience for summer, but hopefully it will be an improvement in the long run.

MAYOR

Mayor Dougherty thanked everyone for attending.

OLD BUSINESS

New Ordinance #2025-O-01 – Prohibit the Production and Sale of Marijuana – First Reading

Mayor Dougherty explained that this Ordinance will prohibit the growing, manufacturing, testing, and selling of marijuana; the current testing facility will be grandfathered into this proposal. We will have a public hearing and second reading at the next Council meeting, where public comment will be heard.

NEW BUSINESS

FY26 Budget Draft – First Reading

Mayor Dougherty explained that the budget conversations were a little different this year because of the recent assessments made by the County, which we could not control. The last county-wide property tax reassessment in Kent County took place in 1987. Residents had the opportunity to appeal their assessment to the county, and some may have had an adjustment made through this process. Since the reassessment resulted in a significant increase, we must reconsider our current tax rates. Mayor Dougherty stated that we have a balanced budget that calls for a tax increase. The current residential rate is \$1.42 per \$100 of the assessed value. This rate will be greatly lowered to reflect the increase in assessed value. Some bills may increase, and some may decrease. The last tax increase in Camden was in 2011; we may consider a small rate increase every other year to keep up with inflation. The projected revenues and expenditure for the proposed budget are \$3.6M. Growth of our Police Department is typically the largest expense year after year; this budget includes 3 new Officers, one of whom will be covered by the COPS grant. Mayor Dougherty added that we will have a Public Workshop on May 19th at 6:30 P.M.; everyone is welcome to come in and voice their opinion on the budget draft.

Reconsideration of traffic pattern on Thomas Harmon Drive

Mayor Dougherty advised that some residents expressed concern about removing the bollards at the Walmart Drive entrance into Newell's Creek, and we have a proposal to reverse the decision made last month to remove them.

Councilman Woodall stated that his decision was based on the information provided by Chief Whitney regarding the increased accidents on Walmart Drive and the potential for positive changes that may occur when people are no longer forced to go around.

Councilman Ridgely mentioned that whether the vote was right or wrong, we should have held a public hearing to get feedback on this topic.

Councilwoman Sturgeon added that we should have a public hearing when voting on something that impacts the community. This was an oversight, and the best thing right now is to reverse the decision.

Chief Whitney clarified that when it comes to street closures, traffic flow, or similar, he can only provide statistical information.

A motion was made by Councilman Ridgely, seconded by Councilwoman Sturgeon, to not move forward with the removal of the barriers at Thomas Harmon Drive at this time, and to have a public hearing if this comes up again. 4 in favor; 1 opposed. Motion carries.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Tracy Torres (Newell's Creek) – Expressed her concern with the decision to remove the bollards, and she is glad the decision was reversed. She asked how many accidents occurred in the last 6 months, how much the bollards cost, and if any additional fees are being charged to developers to help support the growth of our Police Department. She also asked if the business grandfathered into the Ordinance discussed this evening produces or sells marijuana and added that the business is owned by a Council person.

Gale Christensen (21 S. Main St.) – Asked about securing two more Board of Adjustment Members so we have a full group.

Robert Crowe (29 East St.) – Expressed his concern with cars speeding down East Street and suggested speed bumps that he would be happy to help with. It is a dead-end road with a “No Outlet” sign, but it seems that Google sends people down East Street to get to Wawa or surrounding businesses, even though East Street does not connect with King Boulevard, where these businesses are located.

Councilman Woodall asked Mr. Scott if we can place speed bumps or if there is something we must do to consider this.

Mr. Scott said we have an ordinance prohibiting speed bumps.

Fleur McKendell – Asked if the Town of Camden was in an agreement with ICE because she noticed that we are the only municipality in Delaware listed as of April 29th.

Multiple Newell's Creek residents expressed their concern about the removal of the bollards from the Walmart Drive entrance into their development, and they are thankful they will not be removed at this time.

Dawn Gonzalez (Barclay Farms) – Asked where the Town Clerk position will be advertised and when the comprehensive plan will be reviewed again.

Carol Milton (Camden Commons) – Thanked the Town for the cleanup in her development, expressed her concern with people parking in the green space now that parking signs have been placed in Camden Commons.

Maxine Wayson (Williams St.) – Shared her appreciation for the cleanup done on Williams Street and East Street.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilman Ridgely thanked everyone for joining, and he appreciates the opportunity to serve. As volunteers, the Mayor and Council are here for the residents of Camden, and they are thankful for the feedback from the community. He added that we need two Board of Adjustment members, and anyone interested can reach out to Town Hall.

Councilwoman Sturgeon thanked everyone for attending and said that she is glad that we were able to address the concerns brought forward after the last meeting. She thanked the Town staff for their hard work in getting the budget and reporting together. She thanked the Police Officers, First Responders, and everyone on the Council for serving and dedicating their time and efforts.

Councilwoman Rhodes thanked everyone for attending and giving their comments, thanked the Town Staff for everything they do while being short-staffed, and thanked the Fire and Police Departments.

Mayor Dougherty thanked everyone for coming and voicing their concerns and reminded residents that they can call Town Hall with any questions or concerns they have, because many of them can be answered or addressed right away. He explained that he does not like the idea of speed bumps as they negatively affect emergency response, and that we may need a larger and/or blinking “No Outlet” sign for East Street. He welcomed the residents of Camden Commons to call him regarding the signage placed in their development after complaints were received about non-residents parking there. Mayor Dougherty added that Camden Commons is considered private property, and we cannot tow or ticket a vehicle there. The parking spots are owned by the homeowner, and the signs allow the homeowner to have cars towed that are parked on their property.

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 8:02 p.m. by Councilman Woodall, seconded by Councilwoman Sturgeon, to adjourn the council meeting. All in favor; none opposed.

*Respectfully submitted,
Maleri Lewis, Account Specialist*