

**Town of Camden  
Regular Town Council Meeting  
Camden Municipal Building  
June 2, 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 May 23, 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.

Vice Mayor Rhodes led attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance and 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, Administrative Assistant Diane Mosby, CFO Tom Josiah, Town Solicitor Greg Morris, and Police Chief Marcus Whitney

**AMENDMENTS**

Councilwoman Sturgeon would like to discuss Zoom at the next meeting.

Mayor Dougherty stated that he would like to add the appointment of a new Board of Adjustment Member/Chairperson to Old Business (c.).

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Town Hall will be closed on Thursday, June 19<sup>th</sup>, in observance of Juneteeth and Friday, July 4<sup>th</sup>, in observance of Independence Day.

Tax bills for tax year 2025 will be mailed out in the first week of July.

**MINUTES**

A motion was made by Vice Mayor Rhodes, seconded by Councilwoman Sturgeon, to approve the May 5, 2025 Regular Meeting Minutes. All in favor; none opposed.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Sturgeon, seconded by Councilman Ridgely, to approve the May 19, 2025 Public Workshop Minutes. All in favor; none opposed.

**FINANCE REPORT**

Ms. Lewis stated that the delinquent tax amount is down to \$18,221.17. She added that we received \$4,974.75 in RETT funds in May.

Councilwoman Sturgeon added that we are 100% collected and 100% budgeted for tax revenue and have received about 87% of the budgeted Comcast franchise revenue. We are about 84% of what we budgeted

for license revenue and 83% of rental income, and permit revenue has exceeded the budget by \$152,000, which means we have met our revenue budget for the year by 100% and we are up by about \$7,000. We are under budget as we have only utilized 88% of our budgeted expenditure for the current fiscal year; Admins at 85% utilization, Code Enforcement at 72%, Public Works at 70%, Council at 112% due to unexpected advertising expenses, and Police at 94% with a slight increase in insurance, vehicle maintenance and Police Officer over time.

Mayor Dougherty added that it is normal to be around 88% of our budgeted expenditure at this point in the year, because we only have one month left of the current budget.

Tom Josiah reported that the draft budget is currently \$3.6 million for expenditure and \$3.3 million for revenue. The two big increases are taxes and assessments, increasing by 22% from the prior year, and public safety, increasing from \$1.6 million to \$2.1 million. The Town is growing. With growth comes responsibilities, and those responsibilities need to be funded.

#### **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 nearing completion and should hopefully be in service by the end of July.

#### **CAMDEN WYOMING SEWER & WATER AUTHORITY**

Councilman Ridgely advised that they have not had a meeting due to lack of quorum.

#### **FRIENDS OF HISTORIC CAMDEN**

Gale Christensen advised that they had a successful lecture by Taylor Brookings, who spoke about the Brinkley Brothers and their role with Camden and the Underground Railroad and the laws that were stacked against people of color. She added they are working with the Town on applying for a grant for sidewalks and hopes to have an update on that soon.

#### **POLICE REPORT**

Chief Whitney gave a report that included, but was not limited to, traffic arrests and criminal activity. He stated they had 39 hours of paid overtime and 4 hours of court overtime.

Councilman Ridgely mentioned that there is a significant jump in tickets compared to last year and asked if this was due to increased traffic.

Chief Whitney advised that increased traffic, complaint loads, and manpower all play into that.

Councilwoman Sturgeon asked if the Police report can be modified to show a comparison of last year versus this year side by side.

Mayor Dougherty added that ticketing depends on the number of officers that are available, and we are occasionally short-handed due to sickness or vacation time.

#### **TOWN MANAGER REPORT**

Mr. Scott stated that he did 30 inspections in May. He mentioned that he issued the CO for the surgery center at the SPCA, and Holy Cross High School is nearing completion. He advised that no parking signs have been placed in Tidbury Crossing to prepare residents for when we take over; Residents will only be

able to park on one side of the road to ensure that larger vehicles, such as fire and trash trucks, will be able to make it through the roadways. Mr. Scott added that there is a home business with 6 transport vans that we are looking into. He mentioned that the lack of quorum for the Sewer & Water Board is because they do not have any Wyoming members at this time. This board consists of three members from Camden and three from Wyoming, and without the three from Wyoming, they cannot meet quorum.

**MAYOR**

Mayor Dougherty thanked everyone for attending and showing interest this evening.

**PUBLIC HEARING**

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

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

Adrian Torres (15 Kathleen Ct.) – Asked who owns the marijuana business currently in town and if it was a conflict of interest.

Mayor Dougherty explained that the testing facility is owned by a Councilmember and is not a conflict of interest because they are not voting on the Ordinance.

Sharon Morgan (Newell's Creek) – Asked for clarification on the business being grandfathered in since the Ordinance is to prohibit the sale, cultivation, manufacturing and testing of marijuana.

Mr. Morris stated that this business is a testing facility contracted with the State of Delaware; they do not manufacture, sell or grow marijuana.

Chief Whitney explained that the testing facility is just that; they test “green leafy substances” that are turned over to them to see if they test positive for THC.

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

Councilman Ridgely stated that he agrees with this Ordinance because of the amount of children in our community.

Councilwoman Sturgeon stated that she also agrees with this Ordinance because the State is still figuring things out and we may revisit this topic after it begins to operate smoothly. She added that we do have a lot of schools and churches and feels that marijuana facilities do not need to be in the mix of the Town right now.

Vice Mayor Rhodes stated that she is in favor of the Ordinance, because allowing marijuana facilities could bring more work for our Police Department and negatively affect the children in our community.

Mayor Dougherty added that we are not prohibiting the use of marijuana, and it can be purchased at dispensaries that are only a few miles away.

***FY26 Budget***

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

Dave Failing (Wyoming Mill Work) – Complimented the Town for a balanced budget and thanked the Mayor and Council for their service. He pointed out the struggles the Town had nearly 15 years ago; taxes increased, and permit fees were high; but there hasn't been a tax increase since, which shows good stewardship and financial responsibility. He added that the bulk of the budget is for the Police Department and feels that tax rates should be different based on those who utilize Police services the most.

Dawn Gonzalez (Barclay Farms) – Stated that there must be a way to figure out what businesses are utilizing Police and bill taxes based on a percentage accordingly.

Justin King (109 S. Main St.) – Expressed his respect for the Mayor and Council and the time they commit to volunteering in their positions, and that he experienced the same struggles when he was the Mayor. He understands that there needs to be a tax increase, but passing the brunt onto businesses is not the answer and asked that we look at different ways to balance this budget. He added that he respects the Town Staff and the Police Department and there is no doubt they deserve salary increases, which is how we remain competitive. It is hard to find Police Officers, and we need to be sure we hire the proposed positions on renewable income to build their careers.

Brian Lessard (Lessard Builders) – Asked why there is a tax increase if we are currently under budget.

John Paradee (Brockstedt Mandalas Federico, LLC) – Stated that it is troubling to clients that there is a disproportionate tax increase for commercial properties and asked that the budget be tabled at this time and give an opportunity to meet with business owners to find a more equitable way of addressing the challenges being presented.

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

Vice Mayor Rhodes agrees with tabling the budget and would like to meet with business owners to discuss alternative tax revenue options.

Councilman Ridgely stated that he is open to tabling the budget and expressed his appreciation for the feedback given by the public both tonight and at the budget workshop. He added that members of the Mayor and Council have done a lot of preparation and research there has been changes and progress made since the workshop to make it more favorable and maintain a balanced budget.

Councilwoman Sturgeon stated that she has heard the feedback throughout the budget meetings and there is two ways to go; we either do a massive budget increase or we stagger it. She reviewed past financials going as far back as 2022 and came in with revisions that she proposed to the Council that would have a lower impact. She explained that when preparing a budget, we must be conservative and most of the revenue items are variable, so we must look back at the performance in past years to determine an estimated revenue for items like building permits. We do not want an unnecessary burden on everyone, and we have taken initial steps to lowering the tax increase and reworking the numbers that were proposed at the last meeting, which would require us to pull from reserves. She is open with tabling the budget to give time to meet with the public to discuss ideas in lowering the tax increase while maintaining a balanced budget.

Mayor Dougherty explained that it has been many years since we have had a tax increase. We must adjust our tax rates to account for the higher assessment, and we also need to increase our revenue to cover our expenses. He stated that there are new buildings that were not taxed last year, which provided some growth in tax revenue this year. He has looked at several properties around town and some taxes will go up, and some will go down. He is open to tabling the budget until the next Council meeting and would like to meet with the business owners to discuss their ideas.

**OLD BUSINESS**

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

Mayor Dougherty stated that this is the second and final reading of Ordinance #2025-O-01 to prohibit the production and sale of marijuana in the town of Camden. In summary, this Ordinance would prevent additional testing facilities, as well as the growth, manufacturing, and sales of marijuana within Town limits.

*Roll Call:*

Councilman Ridgely – Yes

Mayor Dougherty – Yes

Councilwoman Sturgeon – Yes

Vice Mayor Rhodes – Yes

*FY26 Budget – Final Reading*

A motion was made by Councilwoman Sturgeon, seconded by Vice Mayor Rhodes, to defer the decision of the FY26 Budget, and continue to operate in the FY25 budget, until the next Town Council meeting. All in favor; none opposed.

*Appointment of new Board of Adjustment Member/Chairperson*

Mayor Dougherty explained that he has provided the resume of Kevin McCarthy to the Council, and based on his experience, would like to appoint him as the Chairman of the Board of Adjustment.

A motion was made by Vice Mayor Rhodes, seconded by Councilwoman Sturgeon, to accept Kevin McCarthy as the new Chairman of the Board of Adjustment. 3 in favor, 1 abstain. Motion carries.

**NEW BUSINESS**

*Resolution #2025-R-01 – Adoption of FY26 Budget*

The FY26 Budget was tabled until the next Town Council Meeting.

*Resolution #2025-R-02 – Tax Rate*

The FY26 Budget was tabled until the next Town Council Meeting.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Mayor Dougherty stated that Mr. Scott received a comment via email from Justine Zimny.

Gale Christensen (Main St.) – Believes that public comment should allow for questions and answers, not just comments, and would like to have an email address for her Board of Adjustment position.

Audrey Bethea (101 Meeting House Ln.) – Asked if the Town can spray for mosquitos and expressed her concern with a tree and sidewalk near her home.

Adrian Torres (15 Kathleen Court) – Explained that he is an ICE Officer and assured attendees that, while there are a lot of negative opinions on ICE presence Delaware, they are doing everything by the book, and everything is being done correctly.

Thomas (Tidbury Crossing) – Thanked Mayor and Council for placing the “no parking” signs in his development to help give space to emergency vehicles and asked who to contact if residents and guests are not obeying the signs.

Dawn Gonzalez (Barclay Farms) – Expressed her concern with public comment via Zoom.

Tracy Torres, on behalf of Justine Zimny (515 W. Lebanon Rd.) – Expressed her concern about a comment made by a Council Member, the inability for public comment on Zoom, and tax burdens on local businesses.

Sarah Cahall – Expressed her concern with Zoom and a comment made about what the City of Dover allows in their virtual meetings.

Justin King (109 S. Main St.) – Asked for clarification on the Sewer & Water Board and the lack of quorum for their meetings.

#### **COUNCIL COMMENTS**

Councilwoman Rhodes thanked everyone for attending and giving their comments, and thanked the Town Staff, Police Officers, Fire Company, and Mr. Josiah.

Councilman Ridgely thanked everyone for attending and will continue to review public comment via Zoom.

Councilwoman Sturgeon thanked everyone for attending and giving their comments, asked to add another Zoom discussion to the next meeting agenda, and expressed her concern with the lack of participation of a fellow Council Member.

Mayor Dougherty thanked everyone for attending and stated that he would answer any questions after 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 8:28 p.m. by Councilwoman Sturgeon, seconded by Vice Mayor Rhodes, to adjourn the council meeting. All in favor; none opposed.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Lynda Huizinga, Town Clerk*