

**Town of Camden
Regular Town Council Meeting
Camden Municipal Building
August 4, 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 July 28, 2025, in the following manner:

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

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

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

Council Absent: Councilwoman Sturgeon

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

AMENDMENTS

Mayor Dougherty advised that he would like to add two items to New Business, the nomination of Ashley Torbert for the Board of Adjustment position, and the first reading of a new Ordinance pertaining to attendance at public meetings.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Tax bills will be mailed out and made available online this week.

Town Hall will be closed on Monday, September 1st, in observance of Labor Day.

MINUTES

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

A motion was made by Councilman Ridgely, seconded by Vice-Mayor Rhodes, to approve the July 7, 2025 Executive Session Minutes. All in favor; none opposed, motion carried.

FINANCE REPORT

Ms. Lewis stated that the delinquent tax amount has been reduced to \$15,092.37. She added that we received \$38,808.99 in RETT funds in July.

Mayor Dougherty asked if the delinquent accounts had been sent to our Attorney.

Ms. Lewis advised that the delinquent list was sent to Mr. Morris, and he sent letters to the homeowners.

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 scheduled for August 23rd, and tickets are available for purchase online or at the station. He stated that the ambulances are getting equipped this week, then they will be inspected by the State Fire Commission to approve them for service.

Councilman Ridgely asked if the Fire Department has plans to get a new ladder truck and if it would be able to provide rescue to a four-story building.

Chief Lewis said that they tried a year or two ago and are waiting on funds for a new ladder truck, and that it should be moving forward to get it replaced. He added that the Fire Department has a new tanker truck that holds more water.

Mayor Dougherty mentioned the Blue Honor Walk that will be held on September 20, 2025.

CAMDEN WYOMING SEWER & WATER AUTHORITY

Councilman Ridgely advised that they had a meeting and that it was decided that there will be no rate increase for Camden Sewer and Water, but that Kent County will be raising Sewer rates again. He added that they will be having a public workshop on September 9, 2025, and invited everyone to attend.

FRIENDS OF HISTORIC CAMDEN

Gale Christensen advised that they have no updates at this time.

POLICE REPORT

Chief Whitney gave a report that included, but was not limited to, traffic arrests and criminal activity. He stated they had 57 hours of paid overtime and 4 hours of court overtime. He added that they have had a total of 456 calls for this period, with some being more serious, compared to 638 for this period last year.

Vice Mayor Rhodes asked if Officers are responding to calls by themselves.

Chief Whitney confirmed that they were responding to calls by themselves, and that one of his Officers did respond alone at 1:30 a.m. to a very serious incident, and that the Officer had to wait for State backup. He added that this was the same Officer who responded to another serious call and had to wait for backup to respond to the scene.

Vice-Mayor Rhodes asked how long Officers must wait for State backup.

Chief Whitney said that State Troopers were on scene when he arrived an hour later. He added that they had another serious call that an Officer couldn't respond to because they had an individual in custody, and they were the only Officer on duty at the time, which held them up from responding.

Chief Whitney supplied the council with the traffic intensity study. He mentioned the last study he received came from the Delaware State Police and explained what it meant in detail.

TOWN MANAGER REPORT

Mr. Scott stated that he did 25 inspections in July. He said that DelDOT will be doing road work this August and that he has reached out for more details on their upcoming project. Mid-September is when Walmart plans to have the re-grand opening. Mr. Scott said that they should be in Camden Commons to finish the other half of the curbing. Also, this week, Sewer & Water will have West Street closed from

Center Street to Old North Road for a sewer installation for the new indoor volleyball facility. He added that we have applied for a couple of grants, one for trees and the other for sidewalk work, and we are waiting to hear back with an update. Mr. Scott advised that the Code Enforcement Officer has written 107 code violations already.

MAYOR

Mayor Dougherty thanked everyone for attending and showing interest this evening. Mayor Dougherty said that they have passed the budget and that they will still be looking for reductions in the budget. One reduction to the budget is possibly paying off the municipal building.

OLD BUSINESS

Resolution #2025-R-02 – Tax Rate

Mayor Dougherty said that they looked at what rates would generate the same amount of taxes as last year, based on the new assessed values. The neutral rates would be 40 cents for commercial, 20 cents for residential, and 19 cents for seniors, which are all per \$100 of the new assessed value. These rates are different than the rates included with the budget that was approved at the last meeting.

Councilman Woodall asked why we are discussing different rates when the budget has already been approved.

Mayor Dougherty said that the public's opinion was grossly unfavorable to a tax increase. He explained that to provide some sort of continuity, they passed the budget and a version of a tax rate, which they are trying to correct tonight.

Chief Whitney asked how many residents disagreed with the rates.

Mayor Dougherty answered that there were at least four individuals who disagreed with the rates.

Councilman Ridgely agreed that Councilman Woodall has a valid point and added that we do not want to put ourselves in a legal bind.

Mayor Dougherty asked Mr. Morris if he had any concerns from a legal standpoint.

Mr. Morris said that he does not believe there are any concerns at this time, because they haven't taken a vote on this Resolution yet.

A motion was made by Councilman Woodall to reject the rates included in Resolution #2025-R-02 and continue with the rates as approved in the budget. Motion fails.

Before moving into New Business, Councilman Woodall mentioned the urgency of hiring additional Police Officers due to higher crime rates in Camden. He said there is a word going around about freezing the Police positions that were approved in the budget, which he does not agree with.

Mayor Dougherty explained that the positions were approved with the budget and will be carried out through the budget year, but there was discussion to freeze the positions unless a certified Officer applied for the position, and the Mayor and Council must approve the interview process.

NEW BUSINESS

Ordinance #2025-O-02 – Ordinance to Establish a Standard for Attendance at Public Meetings – First Reading

Mayor Dougherty explained that this Ordinance includes the removal of a person who misses more than three meetings in a rolling 12-month period, not including medical conditions or family emergencies. The Ordinance would be effective on November 1st and applies to elected or appointed members of the Town Council, Planning Commission, and the Board of Adjustment. He added that we will have a Public Hearing for this Ordinance next month, which will include the second reading and vote.

Nomination of New Board of Adjustment Member

Mayor Dougherty explained that he would like to nominate Ashley Torbert to fill our vacant Board of Adjustment position and welcomed Ms. Torbert to introduce herself.

A motion was made by Councilman Woodall, seconded by Vice-Mayor Rhodes, to accept Ashley Tobert to the Board of Adjustment. All in favor; none opposed.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Many residents came to express their support for the Camden Police Department and voiced their concern with the possibility of not hiring any more Police Officers. They stressed the safety concerns with having only one Officer on duty at a time, and the potential outcome of something happening to an Officer while being alone on duty.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Vice-Mayor Rhodes thanked everyone for attending, thanked the Police and Fire Departments for everything that they do, and thanked the Town Staff. She added that two Police positions must be filled, and that she will do everything in her power to get these positions filled.

Councilman Woodall thanked the public for their support of our Police Department.

Councilman Ridgely thanked everyone for their participation and agreed that we need more Police Officers. He added that Mayor Dougherty has been supportive of our Police Department and requests that they have had.

Mayor Dougherty expressed his support for the Police Department and thanked the Officers for showing up and voicing their opinions and concerns. He also thanked everyone for attending and thanked the Town staff for running the Town.

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 8:48 p.m. by Councilman Woodall, seconded by Vice-Mayor Rhodes, to adjourn the council meeting. All in favor; none opposed.

*Respectfully submitted,
Lynda Huizinga, Town Clerk*