

**Town of Camden
Regular Town Council Meeting
Camden Municipal Building
September 8, 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 August 29, 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, Councilman Woodall, Councilman Ridgely, and Councilwoman Sturgeon

Council Absent: None

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

AMENDMENTS

None.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

MINUTES

Councilman Ridgely pointed out that the posting date listed in the August Meeting Minutes was incorrect.

A motion was made by Vice-Mayor Rhodes, seconded by Councilman Ridgely, to approve the August 4, 2025 Regular Meeting Minutes with the amended correction for the date. All in favor; none opposed.

FINANCE REPORT

Ms. Lewis stated that the delinquent tax amount has been reduced to \$15,135.38. She added that we received \$32,157.38 in RETT funds in August, and to date, the 2025 tax revenue through August 31st is just under \$433,000, comprising residential, commercial, and trash revenue.

Councilwoman Sturgeon questioned the format of the finance reports. Ms. Lewis said that the reports were pulled from Edmunds, and the report looked different, with the same information, just a different format. Ms. Lewis stated that she does have a ticket in with Edmunds to have it reviewed.

Councilwoman Sturgeon concluded with, Once you get the ticket done, maybe we can do the financials and send those out again. Ms. Lewis said that once she gets it updated, she should be able to pull the same report, have it look a little bit familiar, and send it out.

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 new ambulances were in, and one was outside if anyone would like a tour of it. The one he brought over for everyone to tour will be going into service either tonight or tomorrow morning. He thanked all who attended the Annual Crab Feast this year.

CAMDEN WYOMING SEWER & WATER AUTHORITY

Councilman Ridgely advised that their next meeting is tomorrow at 7:00 pm and that it's open to the public.

FRIENDS OF HISTORIC CAMDEN

Gale Christensen reported that they have two speakers coming up, one for September and one for October. She added that they are also pretty excited to finally show an approved prototype for the flags that are going to go in town. They will be hanging from the street side of the utility poles. They will have a QR code on them, which can be scanned, allowing you to hear the history of wherever you are.

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 6 hours of court overtime. He added that they have had a total of 450 calls for this period, with some being more serious, compared to 522 for this period last year. Chief said that the new Tahoes came in and are getting upfitted now. He ended by saying they have two candidates and that they are running a testing process on Saturday by putting everything into basically one full day. We're going to do a PT test, a written test, and an oral board altogether because of the January Academy deadline.

Councilwoman Sturgeon asked if these are just the calls they were able to answer and if there are still more calls not answered due to manpower.

Chief Whitney confirmed.

TOWN MANAGER REPORT

Mr. Scott stated that he did 20 inspections in August. He mentioned that the second phase of the bypass has started and that we try to keep the Town informed on our website about the road closures. Mr. Scott brought up the issue that the Trash Company not picking up the trash is getting addressed. The last thing said was that we're dealing with shopping carts and people taking them home. Chief Whitney is going to work on this, as well as trying to stop this.

Chief Whitney followed up with the shopping cart issues and they were removed from a property. He said that instead of the Officers actually seeing the person removing this, it is considered theft of a shopping cart. If not and they are simply pushing the cart down the street, the person will be charged with receiving stolen property and they will be facing criminal charges.

Councilwoman Sturgeon asked if we had a penalty built into the contract for the trash company if they don't pick up the trash due to their own staffing issues. And if this type of penalty is not included in the contract, we should look into this if we renew their contract.

MAYOR

Mayor Dougherty thanked everyone for attending and showing interest this evening. Mayor Dougherty said that we have considered acquiring our own Trash trucks and drivers, but it brings a pyramid of headaches and complaints on its own. But it is a possible consideration in the future that it's a viable option for the town to take over its own trash collection. Mayor Dougherty ended by saying that he was happy with the new Ambulance and having a lift that will pick a person up on a stretcher and assist with putting them in the ambulance, as long as that person is under 700 pounds.

OLD BUSINESS

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

Councilman Ridgely wanted to clarify that this would constitute a resignation, basically, that, and then we would follow the process as outlined in the Town Charter to fill that position to replace the person. He ended by saying that he's been on other boards in the State of Delaware and that this seems to be in line with the code of conduct.

Councilwoman Sturgeon believes that it should be the Mayor and Council who decide what gets excused, not just the Mayor.

Councilman Woodall stated that it almost sounds like this type of discipline is exacerbating the problem, because you're saying here's a Council person or Mayor who is absent for whatever reason. So, his punishment is that we're going to make him absent more by getting rid of them. He ended by saying that we know it's been hard to find people to serve here, and most people do not realize just how hard it is to get people who are willing to serve on committees and Council.

A motion was made by Councilman Ridgely, seconded by Councilman Woodall, to move into Public Hearing. All in favor; none opposed.

PUBLIC HEARING

Ordinance #2025-O-02 – Establishing a Standard for Attendance at Public Meetings

Carol Milton (Camden Commons) – Questioned if this Ordinance applies to the Code Enforcer.

Dawn Gonzalez (Barclay Farms) – Expressed that she agreed with Councilwoman Sturgeon and believes it should be a consensus of the Council so that it doesn't seem to have bias in respect to the word excused. An excuse can be defined in many different ways, so there should be some sort of parameter for what you are considering. She also agrees that it is basically a uniform code of conduct in most instances, as far as punishment or any other term.

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

NEW BUSINESS

Resolution #2025-R-03 – A Resolution in Support of the ORPT 2025 Grant Application

Councilman Ridgely expressed that this is part of a grant application that the Friends of Historic Camden assisted Mr. Scott with. The Outdoor Recreation Parks and Trails (ORPT) program provides grant assistance to local municipalities that are park-focused. When the Town purchased the land with the American Rescue Plan Act funds several years ago, one idea that was floated was that the property could become a Municipal Park. If we receive it, it would be understood that we are moving forward with at least part of this property to become a Municipal Park. He mentioned he received a letter from Dover/Kent County MPO in favor of this idea. Councilman Ridgely said that the requested ORPT grant would help facilitate safe quality, pedestrian access to the planned Municipal Park, and would enable the town to advance its vision toward a more complete, connected and distant continuous pedestrian system in Camden, in addition to the sidewalk that the Mayor mentioned as to improve and upgrade the accessibility of the section along Camden-Wyoming Avenue where a lot of people congregate during parades. They also want to add a section of sidewalk along West Street. With the support of this Resolution, they can move forward with applying for this grant, which offers 75% of the application amount, leaving 25% owed by the Town.

Vice-Mayor Rhodes asked Councilman Ridgely if this was the property across from the Firehouse and if he spoke with Wyoming about their park and the issues they have experienced. She also asked Chief Whitney if he was familiar with the issues Wyoming has had. Vice-Mayor Rhodes mentioned that Wyoming Park had a child who was seriously injured on their playground equipment.

Chief Whitney said that he discusses this with Chief Baker regularly. Chief Whitney said that the park had drug activity, loitering, other things of that nature, and people being in the park after hours. Brecknock Park is also an area where the Police have dealt with people congregating and hanging out. Chief Whitney mentioned that the battle with hiring new Officers has been an issue, and he feels the money could be put to better use.

Mayor Dougherty mentioned that he supported the purchase of the property to be used as our Public Works area. He stated that he has been talking to them about the removal of a pile of debris, which essentially is just leaves that have been picked up by the street sweeper and dumped there. Mayor Dougherty mentioned he looked at the grant application that Councilman Ridgely is referring to and saw on the front of it that the area is supposed to be designated as a park or a trail. He said that he personally doesn't want to designate this area as a park. Mayor Dougherty stated that if we spend money putting sidewalks in, he would rather see sidewalks in places where there are no sidewalks at all. He added that we need three Police Officers, and we lost the part-time Public Works person, and he feels there are better things to do with \$20,000 than to replace an already existing sidewalk.

Councilman Woodall asked that if we dedicate this area as a Municipal Park, if we are locked into leaving it as that, or could we build on it in the future.

Councilman Ridgely said that if the Town were to change its mind and would like to use it as commercial space, we may have a problem doing that. He said that the property is over five acres, and it could be multipurpose.

Councilman Woodall asked if the Town would be required to put money into this, and wanted to know how much money was expected for the Town to put in. He feels that with \$20,000, we could probably just put sidewalks and some nice landscaping in there and be done with it and not have that labeled municipal park.

Councilwoman Sturgeon asked Mr. Scott what was written in the ARPA application for these funds and what information was included in the close-out report.

Mr. Scott responded that it was to be used as money for the Town.

Ms. Lewis said that the final report included the land purchase.

Councilwoman Sturgeon asked Councilman Ridgely to research whether the grant is an In-Kind Grant.

A motion was made by Councilman Ridgely, seconded by Councilwoman Sturgeon, to approve Resolution #2025-R-03. Mayor Dougherty asked for a Roll Call vote.

Roll Call:

Councilman Ridgely – Yes
Councilwoman Sturgeon – Yes
Councilman Woodall – No

Mayor Dougherty – No
Vice-Mayor Rhodes – No

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Gale Christensen (S. Main Street) would like to know what the status of the public comment for the Zoom participants is and asked Chief Whitney if Brecknock County Park is a dangerous place.

Carol Milton (Camden Commons) asked if Mayor Dougherty was going to start answering public comments and when the Planning Board Meetings are scheduled so she can attend them. She asked if the Code Enforcer that we have hired will be coming to these meetings because she thinks that she should be attending to find out what areas of town are having an issue because of her ongoing concerns with her development. She ended with a request for a “no-exit” sign in Camden Commons.

Susanne (A Walk In Their Shoes) reminded attendees that the annual Blue Honor Walk is on Saturday, September 20th, from 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. They will be here for three reasons: to celebrate their 10th anniversary, to support law enforcement, and to celebrate National Thank a Police Officer Day. She also said they will recognize Chief Whitney for all he has done for their organization and the Town of Camden. Susanne ended by saying they will have a giveaway for gift cards that were donated to them, they will have raffles that are worth \$100 to \$200, and that Tre Sorelle will be there with their ice cream truck and will be donating a portion of the proceeds to their organization.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilman Woodall stated that he appreciates Councilman Ridgely’s vision for the Town property, and he feels we can accomplish things such as landscaping without dedicating the space as a park.

Vice-Mayor Rhodes thanked everyone for attending, thanked the Police and Fire Departments for everything that they do, and thanked the Town Staff.

Councilman Ridgely said that although he's not happy with the outcome of the Resolution discussion, he is very excited about a lot of things that are happening in the Town. He added that anyone interested in the projects being presented by the Friends of Historic Camden can speak with him or Mrs. Christensen, and they would be happy to provide more information about the efforts that they are putting in to beautifying the Historic area and other parts of Camden.

Mayor Dougherty thanked everyone for attending and is not opposed to a grant that would be used to add landscaping to the West Street 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 8:16 p.m. by Councilman Woodall, seconded by Councilman Ridgely, to adjourn the council meeting. All in favor; none opposed.

*Respectfully submitted,
Lynda Huizinga, Town Clerk*