

**Town of Camden
Regular Town Council Meeting
Camden Municipal Building
December 1, 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 November 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.

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

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

Council Absent: Councilman Woodall and 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 TO THE AGENDA

None.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The 5th Annual Camden-Wyoming Christmas Parade will be held on Saturday, December 6th at 6:00 P.M.

Town Hall will be closed December 24-26 and January 1st

Elections will be held on February 28, 2026. Available seats: Mayor seat (2-year term) and two (2) Council seats (3-year term). Notification of candidacy begins on December 1, 2025, and ends January 30, 2026

MINUTES

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

FINANCE REPORT

Ms. Lewis stated that the delinquent tax amount for tax years 2022-2025 is now \$59,868.42. She added that we received \$16,706 in RETT funds in November.

Councilman Ridgely questioned what the late percentage is.

Ms. Lewis stated that it is 1.5%.

Mayor Dougherty wanted confirmation that the delinquent taxes were for 2022 to 2025 and that the

steps were being taken to collect the taxes.

Ms. Lewis confirmed this was correct, and the Town Solicitor had sent letters in October for 2022-2024 taxes, giving homeowners 30 days to make payment. Ms. Lewis and the Town Solicitor will regroup for the next steps for anyone who did not comply.

CAMDEN WYOMING FIRE DEPARTMENT

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

Chief Whitney asked Chief Lewis if the roadway construction in the area was causing excessively increased response times to calls the Fire Department receives. Chief Whitney said that he wants to ensure it is reflected in the public record that both departments are facing considerable difficulties. He added that every second counts in their professions, and an additional 5-7 minutes in response time is highly impactful.

Chief Lewis said that they are experiencing issues with delayed response times due to roadway construction and that our neighboring companies responding to assist were also delayed because they had to identify alternate routes; the normal access point they're familiar with wasn't available. Even with some notification, it still slowed everyone down significantly. Chief Lewis added that the implementation of a temporary access route would substantially enhance emergency response capabilities. At present, units must divert onto the highway, and congestion along Route 13 South, particularly during standard business hours, creates notable delays. Providing a temporary passage through the construction area would materially improve response times and overall operational effectiveness. Chief Lewis confirmed that this is particularly concerning in incidents such as cardiac arrests or strokes, where rapid response is essential. Any additional delay further impacts on our ability to provide timely, lifesaving care.

Councilman Ridgely mentioned that he is further concerned that this may be an ongoing issue, as the expansion of Route 13 is scheduled to occur after the current construction project concludes.

CAMDEN WYOMING SEWER & WATER AUTHORITY

Councilman Ridgely advised that there are no updates at this time and that their next meeting is scheduled for the second Tuesday of January, when they will reorganize and retroactively approve the FY26 budget.

FRIENDS OF HISTORIC CAMDEN

Gale Christensen said she is excited to share that the first set of flags will be going up soon. They are interested in hosting author Laurel Engelhart at their next meeting on Thursday, January 22nd, at 7:00 p.m. and need a minimum of 15 attendees for the presentation.

Mayor Dougherty said he had a chance to look at one of the flags and found that it worked very well and linked to a surprisingly informative and interesting website.

Councilman Ridgely added that the Town added a direct link to the new Friends of Historic Camden website. He added that their new website holds a collection of local history, including photos of buildings and structures that no longer exist.

POLICE REPORT

Chief Whitney gave a report that included, but was not limited to, traffic arrests and criminal activity. He stated they had 118.5 hours of paid overtime and 8 hours of court overtime. He added that they have had a total of 535 calls for this period, some of which were more serious, compared to 454 for this period last year. He also explained the difference between a burglary and a robbery.

TOWN MANAGER REPORT

Mr. Scott stated that he did 22 inspections in November. He said that the auditors started today and hopes that the process will be short and smooth, as quite a bit of documentation is already prepared for them. He explained that all the lights in the Town Hall parking lot have been replaced; some weren't working at all, and others had partially burned out, possibly due to a lightning strike. He added that one light will be removed during the Camden bypass project. He wanted to send a big thank you to the "A Walk in Their Shoes" foundation for providing Thanksgiving dinners for the Officers in both Camden and Wyoming, and to Calvary Church, providing meals to the Fire Company. This kind of generosity means a lot to the teams who are working during the holidays and cannot be at home with their families.

Councilman Ridgely thanked Mr. Scott for sending Council the sidewalk study conducted by the Kent County MPO back in November. He added that this study can be used to help prioritize improvements and explore funding options, including potential grants or Town funds. The main goal is to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public, and areas where sidewalks are missing or inadequate should be the focus for these priorities.

MAYOR

Mayor Dougherty explained that the recent sidewalk study identified areas that need sidewalks, such as near schools and high-traffic areas. He would like to see the Town install new sidewalks each year, using grants or state funding where possible. The Camden bypass will also include sidewalks in key areas. Regarding meetings and public engagement, our streamed meetings keep everyone informed, and he encourages residents to attend in person or call either him or Town Hall with questions for a timelier response. He added that face-to-face discussion is essential and that Zoom attendance for Council Members is not supported at this time. He added that with only two meetings left in his term, he wanted to remind residents to consider running for office. While serving on Council is volunteer work, it is a very rewarding way to make a difference in Camden. He wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving and a Merry Christmas.

PUBLIC HEARING

Ordinance #2025-O-03 (previously Ordinance #70) – Creating the Qualifying Conditions to Serve as a Member of any Commission or Committee in and for the Town of Camden

Mayor Dougherty explained that to serve on any commission or committee, a person must reside within the incorporated limits of the Town of Camden and be a resident in good standing. For property owners, this means all town taxes and related obligations must be paid and current.

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

Gale Christensen (Main St.) asked the Council to briefly describe what the qualifying conditions to serve as a member are.

Mayor Dougherty explained that a person must be a resident within the incorporated Town limits and be in good standing with Town taxes or any other Town obligations.

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

OLD BUSINESS

Ordinance # 2025-O-03 (previously Ordinance #70) – Creating the Qualifying Conditions to Serve as a Member of any Commission or Committee in and for the Town of Camden – Final Reading

Mayor Dougherty explained that this Ordinance has been discussed over the past few months. A key modification has been made to the draft Ordinance – it will now apply only to new appointments made after the date of enactment, meaning existing members of any Commissions or Boards will be grandfathered under this clause.

A motion was made by Councilman Ridgely, seconded by Vice-Mayor Rhodes, to approve Ordinance #2025-O-03 as written. Three in favor; two absent. Motion carries.

NEW BUSINESS

Purchase of Municipal Bonds

Mayor Dougherty explained that the Town owes about \$2.75 million in municipal bonds for their building, and while we have enough funds to pay the bonds off, we cannot pay them off early. However, after consulting with bond council, auditors, and legal counsel, it has been confirmed that the Town can repurchase its own bonds on the open market if any become available. He would like to propose opening a brokerage account and starting to buy any of our bonds that appear for sale. Council will later decide whether to hold those bonds and collect the interest or retire them. There may be no bonds available right now, but this prepares us to act in the future. He would like the Council to vote on this topic at the next meeting.

Camden Wyoming Sewer & Water Authority Board Members

Mayor Dougherty explained that the Camden Wyoming Water Board consists of six members: three appointed by Camden, and three by Wyoming. Recently, all three Wyoming members resigned, and one of Camden's members has stepped down due to health issues. A qualified candidate, Anita Beckel, has expressed interest and has experience in water-related matters.

A motion was made by Councilman Ridgely, seconded by Vice-Mayor Rhodes, to appoint Anita Beckel to the Camden Wyoming Sewer & Water Authority Board. Three in favor; two absent. Motion carries.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Kahan Maniar (Tidbury Crossing) wished everyone a happy holiday and raised concerns about increasing issues with panhandling and homelessness that are impacting local businesses with safety and liability concerns. He added that other cities are considering fines for panhandling and asked whether Camden plans to discuss similar measures.

Dawn Gonzalez (Barclay Farms) thanked Mayor Dougherty for his service and offered congratulations and respect as he approached the end of his term. She mentioned public interaction during meetings, especially through Zoom, and added that she disagrees with limiting the public's ability to ask questions,

whether in person or via Zoom. She suggested that answering common questions publicly could reduce repeat inquiries and could also be posted on the town website.

Carol Milton (Camden Commons) expressed her disagreement with the Town's procedure for public comment, specifically the rule that "the Mayor and Council reserve the right to comment or withhold any comment on statements made by speakers. She also raised concerns about Council attendance and the need for clear information for residents interested in running for Council.

Gale Christensen (Main St.) mentioned that there are laws that require virtual meetings to provide time for public comment.

Mr. Maniar mentioned that he recently attended a class that was available to Council, Board Members, and Commission Members, where he learned that it is not required by law for Towns to allow virtual public comments; it is up to the Town, the Mayor, and the Town Council to decide. He noted that other Towns have attempted to use Zoom for public comments and faced challenges. Mr. Maniar expressed that while public input is valuable, residents who wish to comment should attend meetings in person, and that the Council should focus on issues of greater importance.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Vice-Mayor Rhodes thanked everyone for attending the meeting and expressed appreciation for the Police Department, Town employees, and the Town attorney for their service and dedication to the community.

Councilman Ridgely expressed his excitement for the upcoming Christmas parade on Saturday and thanked the Town staff for their regular hard work and the additional effort required to organize the event.

Mayor Dougherty stated that a state attorney recently reviewed all meeting requirements, including Zoom and voice-over-Internet options. He emphasized that neither zoom nor virtual broadcasting is legally required; the Town provides it to keep residents informed. He also noted that several other municipalities have discontinued virtual meetings to reduce costs and administrative burdens. The Mayor reiterated his preference for face-to-face communication but welcomed calls or messages from residents during office hours. He thanked everyone for attending and reminded residents that the Mayor's position, along with two Council seats currently held by Councilwoman Sturgeon and Councilman Woodall, are up for election.

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 7:48 p.m. by Councilman Ridgely, seconded by Vice-Mayor Rhodes, to adjourn the council meeting. All in favor; none opposed.

Respectfully submitted,
Lynda Huizinga, Town Clerk