

**Town of Camden  
Regular Town Council Meeting  
Camden Municipal Building  
January 5, 2026**

**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 December 29, 2025, in the following manner:

- a. The electronic sign,
- b. The official bulletin board,
- 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 Ridgely, and Councilwoman Sturgeon

Council Absent: Councilman Woodall

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**

Vice-Mayor Rhodes asked for an Amendment to the Agenda to have the MPO Sidewalk Study report presented by Mike Petit de Mange added to Old Business (b.).

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- a. Town Hall will be closed on Monday, January 19th, in observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- b. The 2026 municipal election is scheduled for Saturday, February 28th, 2026, from 12-8 p.m. at the Camden Municipal Building. Available seats: Mayor seat (2-year term), currently held by Mayor Dougherty, and two (2) Council seats (3-year term), currently held by Councilman Woodall and Councilwoman Sturgeon. Qualified parties may submit a letter of intent to the Town of Camden no later than the close of business on January 30th
- c. Town Hall will be open on January 21st until 8 p.m. for candidates to file notification of candidacy

**MINUTES**

A motion was made by Councilman Ridgely, and seconded by Councilwoman Sturgeon to approve the December 1, 2025 Regular Meeting Minutes. All in favor; none opposed.

**FINANCE REPORT**

Ms. Lewis stated that the delinquent is down to \$47,215.78. She added that we received \$19,594.57 in RETT funds in December. She concluded that the updated 2025 tax revenue information was included in the meeting packet.

Councilwoman Sturgeon mentioned that overall, Town revenue is approximately 83% of the annual budget. Expenditure remains within budget targets, with Administration at 61%, Public Works at 41%, and the Police Department at approximately 50%, consistent with the midpoint of the fiscal year. Appreciation was expressed to staff and departments for their diligence in managing expenditure and adhering to budget expectations established at the start of the budget cycle.

#### **CAMDEN WYOMING FIRE DEPARTMENT**

Chief Lewis gave a report that included, but was not limited to, fire and EMS calls. The Fire Department responded to 83 calls in December, with an average of 11 personnel per alarm and an average response time of three minutes for first apparatus arrival. The department handled 24 motor vehicle accidents, 13 automatic alarms, assisted EMS 10 times, and provided mutual aid to neighboring departments. Chief Lewis reported over 5,600 calls for service in 2025, the busiest year on record. Concerns were expressed regarding potential emergency response delays related to ongoing East-West Bypass construction, particularly near Upper King Road and Main Street, and the need for continued coordination with DelDOT to maintain emergency access.

Councilwoman Sturgeon asked if he was in contact with DelDOT.

Chief Lewis said that attempts to contact DelDOT regarding emergency access concerns related to the West Bypass construction have not received a response. Ongoing lack of communication was noted as a concern due to potential impacts on emergency response routes.

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

Councilman Ridgely reported that no update was available at this time. A meeting is scheduled for next week, and it is anticipated that a quorum will be present with the addition of a new Camden representative. Approval of the budget is expected to occur retroactively once a quorum is established.

Councilwoman Sturgeon inquired about the Sewer & Water Authority's contingency funding and expressed concern regarding the frequency of recent meetings.

Councilman Ridgely said that Sewer & Water Authority meetings are now scheduled every quarter. The lack of a quorum at the October meeting, which delayed budget approval, was identified as an unusual occurrence. The Authority was reported to be in sound financial condition, and it was stated that the superintendent anticipates the budget will be approved retroactively at the next scheduled meeting.

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

Councilman Ridgely reported on ongoing activities and accomplishments, including the installation of flags in the town center, with plans for an additional 29 flags pending permits from Delmarva Power. A meeting is scheduled for January 22nd at 7:00 PM in this room, featuring a guest speaker who authored a book on the first African American woman to run a newspaper in the U.S., a Delaware native. He also noted that a thank-you letter to members will be sent outlining recent accomplishments and that the organization's website is now online and linked to the town website.

#### **POLICE REPORT**

Chief Whitney started by emphasizing the importance of emergency vehicle access, echoing concerns raised by the Fire Chief regarding delayed response times due to restricted travel paths on local projects. He noted that seconds added to response times can critically impact emergencies such as crimes, strokes, and other urgent incidents. The Chief reported that the issue has drawn attention from the Attorney

General's office, which reached out to Senator Buckson's office approximately four weeks ago. Follow-up is planned to further address the situation.

Chief Whitney gave a report that included, but was not limited to, traffic arrests and criminal activity. He stated they had 98.5 hours of paid overtime and 10 hours of court overtime. He added that they have had a total of 532 calls for this period, some of which were more serious, compared to 432 for this period last year.

Chief Whitney requested approval to purchase three new Chevrolet Tahoes, noting that ordering immediately would result in \$750 savings per vehicle. He explained that the request includes the normal annual replacement cycle plus one additional vehicle for a new hire. The Tahoes currently in service were ordered the previous year, and the estimated cost is approximately \$70,000 per fully equipped vehicle.

Mayor Dougherty asked whether the request reflected the standard replacement cycle plus an additional vehicle, which Chief Whitney confirmed. Councilman Ridgley noted that the Chief was attempting to capitalize on the savings. Chief Whitney clarified that he had submitted an email request to the dealer expressing intent to purchase three vehicles but had not completed an order pending council approval.

Councilwoman Sturgeon noted that delivery could take up to two years, as experienced previously, and that approval does not guarantee immediate delivery. Chief Whitney responded that GM manufactures vehicles in batches and that prior delays were not due to late ordering.

Councilman Ridgley asked whether this recurring expense should be included in the annual budget or treated as a special request. Chief Whitney stated that while the department typically requests vehicles with each order, he does not favor including them as a fixed budget item due to the unpredictable nature of police operations, citing the recent totaling of a Tahoe as an example. He noted that the insurance payout of \$28,000 for that vehicle remains unspent and could be applied toward the purchase.

Ms. Lewis stated that the budget does account for two Tahoes within the RETT expense.

It was determined that this topic will be added and discussed further under New Business (b.).

#### **TOWN MANAGER REPORT**

Mr. Scott stated that he did 15 inspections in December. and reminded residents that building permits are required for most home projects. He noted that the BOA will meet on the 21st regarding setback requests for 1 South Main Street. He also thanked Lynda for leading the Adopt-a-Family program, which provided over \$300 in gifts to a family in need.

Mr. Scott expressed interest in participating in decisions related to sidewalks and lighting, citing poor lighting on Walmart Drive and gaps in sidewalks. He noted that while funding could help, it would not cover larger connectivity gaps, particularly beyond Tamarack, which are outside town control.

Councilman Ridgely asked about grant opportunities. Mr. Scott mentioned Safe Routes to School is currently unavailable and identified sidewalk gaps on Center Street and near the ballpark where students walk in the roadway.

Councilman Ridgely proposed forming an exploratory committee with Mr. Scott, using the Kent MPO report to prioritize projects and pursue grants. Mayor Dougherty asked Mr. Scott to form the committee and report back within 30 to 60 days.

**MAYOR**

Mayor Dougherty said that he just wants to note that my position is up for election next month, and I will not be running for reelection. When I first ran, I committed to serving one term, and I'm keeping that promise. It's been an interesting and informative experience. You'll have the opportunity to elect a new mayor next month. The election is on February 28, and at that point, I'll no longer serve as mayor. The new mayor will be sworn in at the March meeting.

**OLD BUSINESS**

*Purchase of Municipal Bonds*

Mayor Dougherty reported that the Town will move forward with Charles Schwab to establish a brokerage account for the sole purpose of repurchasing municipal bonds used to finance the building. Once active, the Town will monitor the open market and purchase bonds as they become available. The mayor noted that initial purchases would be limited, as the bonds are still relatively new and not yet callable.

Councilwoman Sturgeon questioned the lack of a professional investment advisor and asked about the Town's investment policy. The mayor clarified that the account is not for investing, will not hold funds long-term, and that money would only be transferred when bonds are available. He also confirmed that the Town does not currently have an investment policy.

Councilwoman Sturgeon stated that an investment policy is necessary to establish risk parameters and fulfill fiduciary responsibilities, noting that brokerage accounts are not insured. The mayor requested that Councilwoman Sturgeon draft an investment policy for review at the next meeting.

*Sidewalk Study Presented by the Kent Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)*

Mike Petit de Mange from the Kent Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) presented the results of a Sidewalk Gap Analysis Study conducted for the Town of Camden. Key points that were discussed are as follows.

- Inventory and field verification of existing pedestrian infrastructure
- Identification of 70 sidewalk gaps on 32 roads, totaling approximately 13 miles
- Public engagement via survey and public meeting
- Emphasis on pedestrian safety, connectivity, and access to key destinations
- Identification of nine priority projects with cost estimates
- Recommendations for potential funding sources
- Inclusion of three model ordinances: crosswalks, pedestrian lighting, and unified sidewalk requirements

Council discussion included connectivity to schools and residential areas. It was suggested that the sidewalk ordinance recommendations be reviewed at a future meeting.

**NEW BUSINESS**

*Updates to the Personnel Policy*

Councilman Ridgely and Councilwoman Sturgeon asked Mr. Scott to provide a red line copy so that they could see the changes that were made to make the answer and question easier.

Mayor Dougherty said that there was relatively little change in the revised document, mostly updates to reflect current practices and laws. For example, the prior version stated medical coverage would be 100%, but the town has been providing 85% for several years, so the new copy reflects that. Several state laws and HR requirements, such as drug and alcohol policies and the Family Leave Act, have also been added.

*Purchase of three Police Vehicles*

Mayor Dougherty asked if he could have a proposal to fund and purchase three replacement police vehicles, plus an additional vehicle for an increase of one.

Councilman Ridgely said Mr. Mayor, a quick question earlier, it was noted that \$28,000 was refunded for the wrecked Tahoe. Would it be appropriate to subtract that from the amount currently being requested?

Ms. Lewis said that when the refund or trade-in for the total vehicle was received, the \$28,000 was just deposited into the general account. If you'd like, I can transfer it into the specific account so the full expense comes from there, or we can handle it as two separate items.

Councilwoman Sturgeon suggested that Ms. Lewis split the payment and offset \$28,000, but I wouldn't put that into the RETT account since it's a completely different bucket of money. Alternatively, you could offset and split the purchase between accounts.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Sturgeon, seconded by Vice-Mayor Rhodes, to authorize Chief Whitney to purchase three vehicles (\$70,000 each), using RETT funds and any applicable insurance refund. All in favor; none opposed. Motion carries.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Mark Wagner (Vice President with IQ Fiber) said that I'm here representing IQ Fiber, a fiber-to-the-premise company. We'll soon begin building in Camden and have all the necessary permits. We'll coordinate with the town on road work and avoid areas that already have service. Residents will be notified before construction with door hangers including a QR code and 24/7 contact info. We take full responsibility for any issues. IQ Fiber is fully funded, operates in six states, and has top customer service ratings. We value Camden and aim to build a positive, long-term relationship with the town.

**COUNCIL COMMENTS**

Councilman Ridgely thanked the Mayor; I'm sorry to see you go, but I appreciate you keeping your promise to serve one term. Thank you for your leadership and for the conversations we've had; you've taught me a lot. I'm also excited about 2026. There's a lot of interesting work ahead, and I'm glad to be part of it. Thank you.

Councilwoman Sturgeon expressed her appreciation to the Mayor for everything he's done. It's often a thankless job, and it doesn't go unnoticed. I also want to extend my condolences and sympathy to law enforcement. Today, we lay someone to rest and offer our final farewells. Our first responders are truly unique. This isn't just a job; it's a calling that deserves respect. Whenever possible, a kind word or show of support means a great deal. We are fortunate in Camden to have experienced, dedicated, and thoughtful first responders, and I want them to know they are deeply appreciated.

Vice-Mayor Rhodes said that I agree with you 100%. Thank God for our police officers and firefighters. We don't see as many people entering these fields as we used to, and we truly appreciate those who do.

Thank you to everyone who came to the meeting tonight, to all our town employees, and to our attorneys. We appreciate everything you do.

Mayor Dougherty said it's always nice to see everyone here, and I do look forward to next month. One of the best things we've started this past year is the clarification and updating of our ordinances. They hadn't been reviewed since 2005, and some may not have been enforceable, so bringing them up to date has been a major step forward, like what we did with the employee handbook. And lastly, I hope the council is moving well and moving forward, and I'm confident you'll do just fine.

**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 8:09 p.m. by Councilman Ridgely, seconded by Councilwoman Sturgeon, to adjourn the council meeting. All in favor; none opposed.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Lynda Huizinga, Town Clerk*