

Town of Camden  
Regular Town Council Meeting  
Camden-Wyoming Fire Department  
April 6, 2026

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Sturgeon 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 April 27, 2026, in the following manner:

- a. The Town Hall Front Door,
- 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 Sturgeon, Vice-Mayor Rhodes, Councilman Ridgely, Councilwoman Gray, and Councilwoman Morgan.

Council Absent:

Staff Attending: 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

- a. A motion was made by Councilman Ridgely to add the TAP Grant for discussion, seconded by Councilwoman Gray. All in favor; none opposed.
  
- b. A motion was made by Councilwoman Gray under new business (7b) to retain the reappointment of Planning Commission member Tim Sullivan, while removing the appointment of a new chairperson for the commission. We will discuss the reasons for this change during the corresponding agenda item later. Seconded by Vice-Mayor Rhodes. All in favor; none opposed.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- a. Town Hall will be closed on Monday, May 25<sup>th</sup>, in observance of Memorial Day
  
- b. The Mayor and Council will hold a Public Workshop on Monday, May 18<sup>th</sup>, at 6:30 P.M. regarding the proposed FY27 Budget Draft.

MINUTES

A motion was made by Councilwoman Gray, seconded by Vice-Mayor Rhodes, to approve the March 2, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes. All in favor; none opposed.

**FINANCE REPORT**

Ms. Lewis stated that the delinquent tax amount as of April 1, 2026, is \$36,602.06. She added that we received \$8,509.05 in RETT for the month of March.

Mayor Sturgeon mentioned that the overall revenue is on target with the budget and asked for an update on expenditures, based on the report.

Ms. Lewis reported that general fund expenditures are currently at approximately 76% of the budgeted amount, indicating that the city is under budget at this point. She noted that the police department has used about 71% of its budget, while public works is roughly 60%. Overall, departments are managing their expenditure responsibly.

Mayor Sturgeon noted that council expenditures appear to be the only category currently over budget, though it has a relatively small allocation. She asked if there was any explanation for why this category had exceeded its budget.

Ms. Lewis explained that the overage in council expenditure was due to costs associated with the election. She noted that previous reports were issued before Election Day, and additional expenses were incurred on that day for providing meals and refreshments, including lunch, snacks, dinner, and water.

Mayor Sturgeon concluded that administrative expenditure is approximately 86% of the budget, which is consistent with expectations for this point in the fiscal year. Overall, the budget appears to be on track, with no current gap anticipated. Although a deficit of approximately \$390,000 had been forecasted, current trends suggest the city is on pace to avoid that shortfall, assuming spending and revenue remain consistent.

**CAMDEN WYOMING FIRE DEPARTMENT**

Chief Lewis gave a report that included, but was not limited to, fire and EMS calls. For March, we responded to a total of 101 alarms, with a total manpower of 1,050 personnel. This resulted in an average of 10 members per alarm. The truck was out of service due to personnel 7 times. Total time on the street was 44.3 hours, with an average alarm time of 43 minutes. Our first truck response time averaged 2 minutes and 46 seconds. We were assisted by a neighboring company 7 times, and we provided mutual aid to Dover 4 times. Additional mutual aid included responses to Hartly 1, Magnolia 1, and Marydel 1.

Breakdown of incidents:

- 24 automatic alarms
- 17 motor vehicle accidents
- 13 ambulance assists
- 39 miscellaneous alarms

He mentioned that he would also like to recognize our full-time staff for their response yesterday to a high-priority pediatric call. They arrived quickly at the scene and found the child

not breathing. Within approximately 1.5 minutes, they were able to restore a heartbeat. Situations like these, especially involving children, can be very challenging, and they did an outstanding job. We are hopeful for a positive outcome. Lastly, our annual Crab Feast will be held on August 22nd, starting around 4:00 PM. This is our largest fundraiser of the year and is always a great event. VIP tickets are recommended, as they include access to air conditioning. We are also working on booking a live band for this year's event.

#### **CAESAR RODNEY SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Daniel Rigby reported that he serves as the Community Liaison for the Caesar Rodney School District. He appreciates the opportunity to attend Town Council meetings and looks forward to continuing to provide updates, especially during times of major district events. The district held an operating referendum in February, which successfully passed. Voter turnout was approximately 4,700, a strong number for a referendum, particularly given recent trends across the state. The measure passed by a margin of about 800 votes, reflecting strong community support. The district recognizes its responsibility to be a good steward of taxpayer dollars moving forward.

#### **Upcoming Events**

- **Rider Pride Day – May 2**
  - Event time: 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM
  - FFA Plant Sale: 7:00 AM – 9:00 AM (early access for smoother traffic flow)
  - Road impacts: Expect traffic congestion on Old North Road and the surrounding areas
  - Parking restrictions will be enforced; signage and messaging will be supported by DelDOT
  - Attendance typically reaches ~5,000 people
- **Graduation – June 6**
  - Ceremony begins at 9:00 AM
  - Traffic impact window: approximately 7:00 AM – 1:00/2:00 PM
  - Early arrivals expected for seating; increased congestion and parking challenges anticipated

#### **Community Engagement & Volunteer Support**

The district continues to emphasize student involvement in community service. If the Town has events that would benefit from 20–30 student volunteers, the district is happy to assist.

#### **Safety Initiative – Zero Eyes Program**

Three schools—Caesar Rodney High School, Fifer Middle School, and Stokes Elementary are implementing the Zero Eyes weapons detection system. This program is designed to identify visible weapons and alert authorities within seconds. The district extends its appreciation to Chief Whitney and partners for helping make this initiative possible.

Police Chief Whitney confirmed the Zero Eyes system is fully operational (“live”) and that the final testing has been completed successfully. The system is currently active in schools, and noted schools are on spring break until next Monday, so no students are currently present.

**CAMDEN WYOMING SEWER & WATER AUTHORITY**

Councilman Ridgely reported that the last meeting held in January, the next meeting is scheduled for this month. He confirmed there will be no rate increase from the Sewer & Water Authority this year. Noted that any county sewer rate increases would be passed through to residential customers.

**FRIENDS OF HISTORIC CAMDEN**

Councilman Ridgely reported they are working on the 2026 speaker lineup, and more details are expected next month. They are coordinating with Delmarva Power to expand the flag beautification program. Proposed expansion from the Camden/Wyoming crossroads through the historic district and install additional flags by July 4th. The Meeting Location Change: Due to Town Hall issues, the meetings will be relocated. Planned location: Friends Meeting House (4th Thursday of each month at 7:00 PM) Pending final approval. Backup location: Sewer & Water Authority conference room.

**POLICE REPORT**

Chief Whitney gave a report that included, but was not limited to, traffic arrests and criminal activity. He stated they had 44 hours of paid overtime and 6 hours of court overtime. He added that they received a total of 417 calls during this period, some of which were more serious, compared with 390 last year. Chief Whitney provided an update regarding the replacement of the Northeast gate at the facility. He explained that the existing sliding gate, located on the north side of the building, extends approximately 20 feet when opened and, due to nearby roadway work, would encroach into two lanes of traffic, creating a safety concern. To address this issue, the proposed solution is to convert the gate to a pivoting, upward-opening design. The estimated cost for this modification is \$73,759. While the Town would need to cover the initial expense, it is anticipated, though not guaranteed, that DelDOT may reimburse the cost, as the issue is related to their roadway project. Discussions with DelDOT are ongoing, but no formal agreement has been secured at this time. Chief Whitney also noted that a separate emergency vehicle access gate is planned, which will provide direct access to the bypass and improve response times; this portion of the project will be fully funded by DelDOT. The matter is expected to be brought before Council for consideration at next month's meeting.

Mayor Sturgeon stated that the Town will continue working with DelDOT to make further progress on the Northeast gate matter before the next meeting. She noted that the item is expected to be placed on the agenda for formal consideration at the next Council meeting.

Councilman Ridgely asked Chief Whitney about the large number of brand-new vehicles observed in the Town Hall parking lot, requesting an explanation for their presence.

Chief Whitney explained that the vehicles in the Town Hall parking lot belong to the New York City Police Department (NYPD). He noted that, with approximately 35,000 officers, the NYPD requires multiple facilities along the East Coast to upfit and equip their vehicles. The NYPD requested use of the Town's parking lot as a secure location while their vehicles are being replaced by Island Tech Services, the same company the Town uses for its own vehicles. Chief Whitney approved the request, emphasizing the benefit of maintaining a positive relationship with the NYPD. He clarified that the vehicles are not Town property.

Councilwoman Gray mentioned that she had a question for Chief Whitney. She asked if he had been able to get the opioid settlement grant at all.

Chief Whitney provided an update regarding the handling of controlled substances and emergency medications. He stated that all personnel are fully trained in the handling of fentanyl, noting that exposure risks have significantly decreased and testing is no longer routinely conducted. Regarding Narcan, Chief Whitney clarified that the department does not carry it and would be happy to discuss it offline.

#### **TOWN MANAGER REPORT**

Ms. Lewis presented Mr. Scott's report for March, noting that 16 building inspections were completed. She provided an update on Town Hall restoration efforts, stating that the Town has received \$100,000 in insurance funds to begin repairs. Work completed to date includes removal of damaged carpet and materials, mold treatment, replacement of affected drywall, restoration of telephone and computer systems, and approximately 90% completion of ceiling tile replacement. Ductwork in impacted areas has been re-insulated, and painting and sealing in the processing room are scheduled to begin. HVAC repairs are ongoing, with two leaks already fixed and an additional coil expected by the end of April. Maintenance staff also addressed missing bolts on the telecommunications tower, with further inspection planned to use Fire Department equipment. Ms. Lewis further reported that Mr. Scott attended multiple meetings and initiatives, including the TAP (Transportation Alternatives Program), discussions with St. John's Properties regarding the Evans Farm development, and sessions on energy efficiency funding, grant opportunities for well house cameras, and municipal electric cost reduction. He also participated in Kent County planning meetings, DFI stewardship, and the City Management Association of Delaware. Work on the Town budget is currently underway. Additionally, South Street is expected to remain closed until at least June 1st, contributing to significant traffic congestion and public safety concerns. Emergency response has been impacted, with limited access routes creating hazardous conditions for fire and police response.

Councilwoman Gray inquired about the status of the Savannah Farms project, noting she had heard a possible timeline of mid-year but was unsure of its accuracy. She also followed up on prior discussions regarding securing a third-party contractor to assist with the project, emphasizing the need to move forward proactively by issuing a request for proposals (RFP) to bid out the work.

Mayor Sturgeon responded that Mr. Scott has been tasked with researching options to provide more defined legal and technical support in the areas of permitting and planning. This support would assist the Planning and Zoning Commission, particularly in anticipation of larger developments such as Savannah Farms. Mayor Sturgeon noted that while the Town relies on volunteers, it is important to supplement their efforts with professional expertise. She added that the Town will explore options, including the potential need to issue a request for proposals (RFP), to ensure the Commission has appropriate resources and guidance moving forward.

Councilman Ridgely requested an update on the status of the Code 360 / E360 development project.

MAYOR

Mayor Sturgeon reported an update on current activities, noting that she has been addressing a high volume of constituent emails and has begun scheduling meetings. She announced that her office hours will begin this week, with availability at Town Hall every Tuesday during the business day, while also offering flexibility to meet with residents during evenings and weekends as needed. Mayor Sturgeon reported that the Town has initiated the budget process and is currently engaged in police union contract negotiations. She added that efforts to restore and reopen the Town Hall building remain a priority. Mayor Sturgeon encouraged residents to reach out via email and stated her goal of responding within 24 hours.

OLD BUSINESS

*Updates on the Personnel Policy*

Mayor Sturgeon led a discussion on the proposed updates to the personnel policy. She recommended that, due to the legal and human resources nature of the policy, the Town seek review by an attorney with expertise in labor and HR law. She advised Council members to submit any questions, concerns, or suggested revisions to Mr. Scott via email, copying her, so that a comprehensive list can be compiled for legal review. The goal is to evaluate compliance, clarify language, and address any policy concerns. Following an initial consultation, the Town will determine whether it is more cost-effective to revise the existing policy or adopt a new, updated version. Mayor Sturgeon noted that Council will vote at the next meeting on how to proceed, either amending the current policy or starting anew.

Councilman Ridgely asked whether a deadline should be established for submitting questions and feedback regarding the personnel policy review.

Mayor Sturgeon suggested that Council members submit their questions and feedback by Friday evening or Saturday morning, noting that the personnel policy has already been available for review. Establishing this timeline will allow staff to assess the volume and scope of proposed changes and help determine whether it is more practical to amend the existing policy or develop a new one.

NEW BUSINESS

a. Reappointment of the Board of Adjustment (Gale Christensen). A motion was made by Councilman Ridgely to reappoint Ms. Christensen to the BOA Community, seconded by Councilwoman Gray. All in favor; none opposed.

b. Reappointment of the Planning Commission (Tim Sullivan). A motion was made by Councilwoman Gray, seconded by Councilman Ridgely. All in favor; none opposed.

Councilwoman Gray reviewed the history of the Planning Commission and found that:

- The original ordinance from 2008 established a 5-member commission and required rules of procedure, which were never created.
- Later ordinances changed the size back and forth between 5 and 7 members.
- The most recent confirmed ordinance sets the commission at 5 members.

- There's no documentation supporting the current claim that there should be 7 members.

Based on that:

- She believes the commission should legally be 5 members, not 7.
- Therefore, there aren't really "extra vacancies"—the number aligns once recalculated.
- If a member is reappointed, the commission would be properly filled at five.

On governance:

- She is working on rules of procedure and bylaws (long overdue).
- She recommends that the commission elect its own chair and vice chair annually, which is standard practice for most planning commissions.

Attorney Morris mentioned that it is standard practice for bodies such as a Planning Commission or a Board of Adjustment to choose their own leadership. Typically, they select a chair, vice chair, and sometimes other roles (like secretary). This selection is usually made annually by the members themselves.

Mayor Sturgeon is thinking through the implications out loud and aligning with what's already been said. She concluded that if the most recent ordinance sets the commission at 5 members, then that's the correct number. That means there aren't two vacancies; the commission is already of its proper size once you apply the correct ordinance. The next step isn't to fill seats, but to have the commission: Meet formally, create and adopt their rules, procedures, and bylaws. Organize themselves, including choosing leadership (chair, vice chair, etc.)

Mrs. Huizinga asked the mayor if I could mention something. Since this is an all-volunteer board, one of the biggest challenges I'm running into is getting consistent commitment. For example, last month I had both a BOA meeting and a planning meeting scheduled right after, and neither one ended up happening due to a lack of attendance. I sent out multiple reminders, three or four emails, letting everyone know about this month's meeting and asking them to notify me if they couldn't attend. Despite that, last month, I believe only one person would have been showing up. It's becoming difficult to move forward or conduct business effectively without reliable participation.

Mayor Sturgeon asked if the policy had been discussed anywhere?

Councilwoman Gray said it doesn't, but we could add something in there about attendance.

Attorney Morris, I agree we need to get to the bottom of whether the number is five or seven. I also want to point out that having everything properly codified is critical. When I'm trying to find information, I'm literally going through ordinances one by one. In most municipalities, all the town codes are organized and laid out in a structured way, which makes it much easier to navigate and reference. Right now, that lack of organization is making it more difficult to do the work efficiently.

c. Reappointment of the Election Committee (Bobbi Scott and Carri Wanstall), Michael Steindl.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Gray, seconded by Vice Mayor Rhodes. All in favor; none opposed.

d. Reappointment of Anita Beckel to the Camden Wyoming Sewer and Water Authority (3-year term). A motion was made by Councilman Ridgely, seconded by Councilwoman Morgan. All in favor; none opposed.

e. Discussing having a Vice Chair for BOA and PC going forward. - Mayor Sturgeon said that no action is required and that this just needs to be enforced going forward.

f. Discussion for public comments at the beginning and the end of the meeting.

Mayor Sturgeon said that this is really an opportunity to share ideas about what we'd like to public comment to look forward to. Right now, the structure of public comment hasn't always been consistent; there have been different approaches at different times. So, this is our first step toward creating a more consistent and predictable process. The goal is to build some structure around public comment, so everyone understands how it works and what to expect. There's nothing for us to vote on tonight. This is simply a conversation to gather input and start shaping what could eventually become a formal policy.

Chief Whitney said that I understand your point. He recommends that public comments should remain open in terms of subject matter; it shouldn't be limited to specific agenda items, but it should be reserved primarily for town residents. You're suggesting that anyone wishing to speak during public comment should be required to sign in with their name and address, so residency can be verified. Including a topic could be optional, and that's something for the Mayor and Council to decide. The sign-in list would then be provided to staff, such as yourself and Mr. Scott, so you can help confirm who a resident is. During the public comment period, speakers would be called in order from that list. If there's a set time limit and it runs out before everyone has spoken, priority would be given to residents. Non-residents who don't get a chance to speak could attend a future meeting.

Mayor Sturgeon said that basically, you are giving priority to Camden residents first instead of just letting non-residents go first.

Attorney Morris, I understand your concern. He emphasized that we need to be careful about restricting public comment because of First Amendment considerations. For example, under FOIA, we can't limit participation strictly to town residents. At most, we could potentially distinguish at the state level, but even then, we should proceed cautiously. So you'd be hesitant to adopt any policy that outright excludes non-residents. Based on his experience with other municipalities, a structured approach tends to work well. Having a sign-in sheet and then calling speakers up in order helps maintain fairness and organization. Each speaker would be given a set amount of time, typically around three minutes, with a visible timer to ensure consistency. He also pointed out that non-residents can still have legitimate reasons to speak, so they shouldn't be excluded entirely. That said, he recognizes the value in prioritizing local voices. A reasonable approach could be to call on speakers in this order: town residents first, then local business owners, and then all other speakers. That way, we're not cutting anyone off, but we are giving priority to those most directly connected to the town.

Mayor Sturgeon said that, typically, a sign-in sheet is made available 15 to 20 minutes before the meeting starts. Then, at a set time shortly after the meeting begins, that list is collected and closed. From there, it's reviewed, and speakers are called in order. That helps maintain structure and fairness. For example, a name is called— 'John Doe'—they come up and have three minutes. Then the next person is called, and so on. Where we tend to run into issues is when we allow people to go beyond that time. It's important to emphasize that enforcing a time limit isn't personal. It's not about dismissing what someone has to say; it's about making sure everyone has an equal opportunity to speak. This becomes especially important during larger meetings, like budget sessions, when turnout is high. That's when we really need to stick to the three-minute limit to ensure we can get through all public comments. Public comments should be treated as an opportunity for an impact statement, bringing an issue or concern to the Council's attention. It's not really intended to be a back-and-forth Q&A during the meeting. Instead, any questions raised can be recorded in the minutes and then forwarded to the Mayor and Town Manager for follow-up. If someone wants a more detailed discussion, they can also stay after the meeting. The key is consistency. We don't want to answer one person's question on the spot while others are waiting, because that creates an uneven process. All questions should be documented, and there should be clear expectations for follow-up. A reasonable approach would be to have the Mayor or Town Manager respond or at least acknowledge those inquiries within 48 hours. That doesn't necessarily mean the issue will be resolved at that time, but it does mean there's communication and an effort to address it. At the end of the day, the goal is to respect everyone's right to speak while also ensuring the meeting can move forward in an organized and fair way.\

Attorney Morris said that I also want to clarify that this policy would not affect public hearings. Public hearings are a separate process, and individuals still can speak specifically during those hearings. If someone signs up for public comment but their topic relates to an item that has a scheduled public hearing, they would be directed to speak during that designated portion of the meeting instead. That way, we keep the process organized and ensure that comments are made at the appropriate time, while still fully preserving everyone's opportunity to be heard.

Mayor Sturgeon said, looking at public comments, she thinks we've run into a situation before where having public comment only at the end of the meeting creates some challenges. Specifically, we don't always get to hear from the public before we act on an agenda item, and there may be comments or input that could be relevant and potentially inform or even influence a vote. In some cases, that means we've had to go back and reopen an issue afterward. In my experience serving on other commissions, a structure that has worked well is to include a short public comment period of about 10 to 15 minutes at the beginning of the meeting, limited to agenda items only. Then, at the end of the meeting, there is a separate public comment period for any other topics. That way, if there is a motion on the agenda, the public could speak to it before a vote is taken. Again, each speaker would still be limited to three minutes. This is simply a suggestion based on what I've seen working effectively elsewhere. It doesn't have to be done this way, but it may be worth considering. My thought is we should gather all these ideas, compile them, and then put together a draft policy. We can circulate it, have it reviewed and vetted legally, and then bring it back to the full Council for a vote. From there, we can do reading and make edits as needed. Ideally, we could aim to have the first draft ready by the next meeting. Does that sound reasonable?

Councilwoman Gray questions Zoom.

Mayor Sturgeon said, please make sure that you have sent the exception of Zoom going forward and what they would like to see.

g. TAP Grant conversation-

Councilman Ridgely said that I'd like to discuss the TAP grant program. TAP stands for the Transportation Alternatives Program, which is a grant opportunity facilitated by DelDOT using federal funds. It's focused on public use and access projects. Under this program, the typical funding structure is an 80/20 split—80% federal grant funding and 20% local sponsor match. If the Town of Camden is awarded the grant, we would be the sponsoring entity responsible for that 20% match. The total project cost is capped at \$1.5 million, meaning we cannot apply above that amount. There is also a Safe Routes to Schools component, where certain eligible projects may qualify for up to a 0% sponsor match until construction. Based on the types of projects we are considering, we may fall into that category. The application deadline for the TAP grant is April 17th, which is why I'm bringing this forward at this meeting. As a reminder, the Dover/Kent MPO completed a sidewalk study for us last year. They provided a detailed report and mapping that identified gaps in our sidewalk network, areas where sidewalks simply stop or are disconnected. Some of you may recall seeing those visuals. We followed up with them recently and reviewed potential priorities from their recommendations. While the total estimated improvements across town could be around \$3 million, there are two projects that we believe are strong candidates for this grant. The first is Upper King Road. I have maps that I can share showing this area. Upper King Road runs near Nelly Stokes Elementary School and toward Town Hall. The purple areas on the map represent gaps in the sidewalk network. As you know, there is currently no continuous pedestrian route from Newell Creek to Nelly Stokes Elementary School. In addition, the MPO has recommended potential sidewalk improvements along the opposite side of Upper King Road as well as sections near that corridor, which we can review in more detail if this project moves forward. For this segment, the estimated total cost is approximately \$1.1 million. We believe this project is competitive because of its direct connection to Nelly Stokes Elementary School and the emphasis on safe routes for students. Mr. Rigby has also helped in obtaining a letter of support from the CR School District, which would strengthen our application. If Council is supportive, we would move forward with preparing and submitting the application ahead of the April 17th deadline.

Mayor Sturgeon added that they were not voting tonight and that this is just a discussion. She said that we don't need to vote to submit a grant application.

Councilman Ridgely mentioned that we would likely, at a later point, need to formally vote to commit to the 20% local match unless we qualify for the Safe Routes to Schools provision, in which case the match could potentially be reduced to 0%. That said, these are the two priority projects we've identified for this TAP application. The first is the Upper King Road corridor, which we discussed earlier. The second priority project is along Old North Road. On the map, the purple areas again represent gaps in the existing sidewalk network. This includes the area on the opposite side of Old North Road near Camden Commons, where sidewalks are incomplete, as well as a potential connection across toward St. Paul's Episcopal Church and tying into Northwest Street. From there, the network could potentially extend further down Old North Road and possibly connect closer to W.B. Simpson in the future. Together, these two projects total approximately \$1.3 million in estimated costs. These are the primary projects we are focusing on for this application. To be clear, we are not voting on the application tonight.

However, if there is Council support, staff will proceed with preparing and submitting the TAP grant application ahead of the deadline.

Councilwoman Gray mentioned that if I could just expand on this a bit further. I think this is a good example of how we can effectively leverage our resources, partnerships, and available funding opportunities. The Kent County/Dover MPO—Metropolitan Planning Organization, which is located on the third floor of our Town Hall, approached the Town some time ago with an opportunity. They had grant funding available to complete a sidewalk gap analysis study, which was done roughly two years ago. They recognized a need in the community and were already conducting similar studies across the MPO region. The intent was to identify gaps and have shovel-ready projects prepared in advance, so that when funding opportunities like the TAP program become available, municipalities can apply quickly and competitively. As a result, this study has already identified not just the two projects we discussed tonight, but several additional potential projects that could be advanced when future funding opportunities arise. So, in a sense, we are now positioned—through our partnership with the MPO—to take advantage of these programs as they come up, rather than starting from scratch each time. That puts us in a much stronger position competitively when applying for grants like TAP. Ultimately, even if we are responsible for a 20% match, or potentially less under Safe Routes to Schools, we are talking about leveraging a relatively small local investment to secure significant infrastructure improvements for the community. I think this is exactly the direction we should continue moving in, actively pursuing funding opportunities and building partnerships that allow us to improve critical infrastructure without placing the full burden on local taxpayers.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Dawn Gonzalez (Barkley Farms) Just a quick question for clarification, when you talk about a ‘reappointment,’ does that mean the individual is already serving on the Planning Commission, and they are simply extending their term? Also, I may have missed an update, but regarding the issue at Town Hall, what exactly happened? I understand a pipe broke, but has there been any determination as to why it failed? Was it related to age, usage, or something else? Is that information something that can be shared at this time?

Mayor Sturgeon confirmed that the individual was already serving on the commission and is simply being reappointed for another term. Regarding the question about the incident at Town Hall, it was explained that a pipe broke, which resulted in flooding on the second floor. Efforts are currently underway to address the damage and complete necessary repairs. However, there is no confirmed timeline for when the building will be fully restored.

Dawn ended by saying. Lastly, I’d like to thank the Council. Congratulations to those of you who have recently joined. She was glad to see some new members of the Council. She also appreciates the consideration being given to public comments. She’s a strong advocate for it, and as the attorney noted, it is tied to First Amendment protections and freedom of speech, which we should be careful not to diminish in any way. She’s looking forward to seeing how the Council’s procedures develop and what the overall dynamic will look like going forward.

#### **COUNCIL COMMENTS**

Councilman Ridgely, I also want to echo what Dawn mentioned and welcome the new volunteers joining us on the Council. Thank you all for stepping up and helping serve the town.

I'd also like to thank all the town staff and employees. You consistently do a great job, and I appreciate everyone's flexibility in adapting to current needs and circumstances. I'm happy to continue assisting with the grant opportunity and will keep working on that effort. Mary Ellen, I look forward to teaming up with you on it, and hopefully, we can provide a more detailed update next month on our progress. Our goal is to make sure everything is submitted on time and with all the required documentation.

Councilwoman Gray, I echo Council Ridgely's comments in recognizing the staff for working under challenging circumstances. I also look forward to the time when everyone is able to work together in a fully restored building.

Vice -Mayor Rhodes, thank you all for coming. I'm glad we had some members of the public in attendance tonight. Mr. Rigby, I appreciate your idea. Thank you for bringing that forward. I'd also like to thank our town staff, state partners, our police officers, and our attorney for all the support and assistance you provide. We truly appreciate the work you do for the town.

Councilwoman Morgan, I'd like to thank our town staff, state partners, our police officers, and our attorney for all the work and support you provide. We truly appreciate it. As always, I want to thank the residents and business owners for coming out tonight. I also want to recognize the staff, especially given the challenging conditions you're currently working under. I know it's not easy right now, but we will continue to push through together. I'd like to thank Dan for looking into the TAP program. This is something that has been needed for some years, particularly in the area around Nelly Stokes Elementary. My son attended Nelly Stokes, so I know firsthand that the pedestrian pathways in that area are not ideal. I also appreciate the input from my fellow Council members. I hope we continue to see more residents come out and participate as the weather improves.

Mayor Sturgeon - Alright, everyone, thank you all for coming. I know we ran a little long tonight, but I think the discussion was very productive and thorough. Hopefully, this gave everyone a better understanding of the items we're considering and how we're moving things forward. Our goal is to continue being transparent and to help provide more insight into how we conduct discussions and make decisions. Thank you again, and have a good night

#### 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 8:19 p.m. by Councilman Ridgely, seconded by Councilwoman Morgan, to adjourn the council meeting. All in favor; none opposed.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Lynda Huizinga, Town Clerk*