

Town of Camden
Regular Town Council Meeting
Camden-Wyoming Fire Department
May 4, 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 Manager Harold Scott Jr., Town Clerk Lynda Huizinga, Account Specialist Malori Lewis, Administrative Assistant Diane Mosby, Jim Ligor for the Town Solicitor Greg Morris, and Police Chief Marcus Whitney

AMENDMENTS TO THE AGENDA

The Mayor and Council will hold a Public Workshop on Thursday May 21st and not Monday, May 18th, at 6:30 P.M. regarding the proposed FY27 Budget Draft.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- a. Town Hall will be closed on Friday, June 19th, in observance of Juneteeth and Friday, July 3rd, in observance of Independence Day.
- b. Tax bills for tax year 2026 will be mailed out in the first week of July.

MINUTES

A motion was made by Councilman Ridgely with the striking of a sentence regarding Del Dot traffic flow conversation, seconded by Councilwoman Gray after the correction was made, to approve the April 6, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes. All in favor; none opposed.

FINANCE REPORT

Ms. Lewis stated that the delinquent tax amounted to \$19,164.96. She added that we received \$16,774.56 in RETT in April. Regarding expenditure, reports show us at around 85% overall. The actual figure is 81%, primarily because those expenditures include flood-related expenses. Overall, I think we're in a good position, especially considering we only have two full months remaining until FY27. For Administration, the reporting again reflects a higher number at 101%.

The accurate figure is closer to 90%, again due to the inclusion of flood expenses. Public Works is currently at 63%, and Police is at 77%.

Mayor Sturgeon asked if we'll get an offset from the insurance company on the flood items,

Ms. Lewis reported that yes, thus far we've received an advance of \$100,000. There are still some items in limbo, so we're waiting either for the next advance or for full payment. At this point, I don't think we have an accurate final number for what we're expecting. In the meantime, we're continuing to move forward with everything necessary to get things completed and in order so we can move back in. However, as of now, we've only received one payout.

Mayor Sturgeon asked if then revenues are at 91% of budget and if that includes the insurance advance?

Ms. Lewis confirmed that it will and has been posted.

CAMDEN WYOMING FIRE DEPARTMENT

Chief Lewis gave a report that included, but was not limited to, fire and EMS calls. For the month of April, we responded to 78 alarms. Total manpower for the month was 853 personnel hours. Our average manpower per alarm was 11 personnel, with six of those members being truck qualified. Total time out for the month was 43 hours. Our average alarm time was 33 minutes, and the first truck responded in just under three minutes from dispatch. We were assisted by neighboring companies three times. We assisted Magnolia seven times, Dover five times, responded to Harrington for one fire, and assisted Marydel once. During the month, we handled 12 automatic alarms, 20 motor vehicle collisions, and assisted Ambulance eight times. We also responded to 24 miscellaneous alarms. On another note, we've officially announced our crab feast. If you considered attending last year but didn't make it, we encourage you to come out this year, it's always a great time. The event will be held on August 22 from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Tickets are currently available online, and hard-copy tickets will be available here soon. We appreciate everyone's continued support and hope to see you there.

Mayor Sturgeon asked Fire Chief Lewis if the construction had an impact on the response time.

Chief Lewis responded that we're not really feeling the impact yet from volunteers coming in. Once Route 1 fully closes coming in on upper king, we'll probably feel it more. It's still tough once we get on the street, especially getting out of here at certain times of the day. I'm still not a fan of it, but we must work with it. It slows us down once we're responding out of the station. There are still times when traffic backs up in front of the middle school, and people don't leave our front pad open for us."

Mayor Sturgeon said that I was about to ask if they are still stopping in front of your path?

Chief Lewis said that slows us down when we're leaving here, but as far as getting people to the firehouse in under three minutes for response time, I'm happy with it. Some of the signs might be at 2:00 in the morning when everybody's home.

Mayor Sturgeon asked if there was a reason why the street was not painted as a no stopping zone blocking the front of the Fire Department for trucks leaving the station for calls.

Chief Lewis said that there is a sign and that it is across the street.

Mayor Sturgeon said but not right in front of the station.

Chief Lewis said that it is tough because it is still a route of travel and that vehicles are not stopping to park or hang out.

CAESAR RODNEY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Daniel Rigby reported that he serves as the Community Liaison for the Caesar Rodney School District. I enjoyed attending Camden Little League Opening Day with Mayor Sturgeon and the Mayor of Wyoming. It was great to see both mayors there enjoying a time-honored tradition in the community, so that was enjoyable. Rider Pride Day also went very well. Many thanks to Chief Whitney and Chief Lewis for having enforcement on site. The kids absolutely love police vehicles and fire trucks it really makes their day. We had about 5,000 people in attendance, and we think the event went well. So, thank you, Malori, as well, for having a table there and for your mom coming in to help. We really appreciate that. I also want to give a special thanks to Chief Lewis. Anytime one of our teams goes to a state championship or wins a state championship, the chief is always willing to give the team an escort with the fire truck, and we think that's a special thing. Hopefully we can start putting that to work a little more often trying to get back to some winning ways. I think it was only once or twice this year, but we're going to push that limit next year. Regarding the grant application last time, Councilman Ridgely, you proposed a grant through, I believe, TAP. Our superintendent completed that letter and submitted it. We certainly appreciate that support. We think being able to get kids to and from school safely is never a bad thing, so we truly appreciate it. If you need anything else from us as a district, we're more than happy to help. And then, finally, graduation for Caesar Rodney High School is June 6th at 9:00 a.m. Chief both chiefs one of the things we did for Rider Pride Day was ask DelDOT to come out and help block off some parking lots because of the large amount of pedestrian traffic. Maybe we could talk with DelDOT again to see if they'd be willing to lend a hand with traffic assistance for graduation as well. Parking at Redner's and throughout the surrounding area starts filling up around 6:30 in the morning, so I just wanted to keep that on the council's radar for June 6th at 9:00 a.m.

CAMDEN WYOMING SEWER & WATER AUTHORITY

Councilman Ridgely reported that they had a meeting this month and that the next one is scheduled for August 14th at 7:00 PM.

FRIENDS OF HISTORIC CAMDEN

Councilman Ridgely reported they are now meeting in the Quaker Meeting House Annex, which is a great space, and all are welcome. We meet on the fourth Thursday of every month, and the next meeting will be the fourth Thursday in May. For the June meeting, we have a speaker scheduled to come in and give a historical talk about Delaware. That meeting will be on June 25th at 7:00 p.m. Even though we don't have a speaker scheduled for May, the meetings are still fun, and we encourage people to attend, especially anyone interested in the history of Camden and the surrounding area.

POLICE REPORT

Chief Whitney gave a report that included, but was not limited to, traffic arrests and criminal activity. He stated they had 3.15 hours of paid overtime and 2 hours of court overtime. He added that they received a total of 467 calls during this period, some of which were more serious, compared with 463 last year.

Mayor Sturgeon mentioned that but again, those are just the calls you all handle. There are still many more calls that the State Police handle as well. I just don't want people to think that's everything we receive.

Chief Whitney said that No, and I could probably pull some numbers on that like I did previously with that larger report. Maybe I could provide something once a quarter a quarterly report with the total calls for service. When the single officer we have on duty is unavailable, other agencies will handle calls for service for us as well. So, I can start providing some of those numbers if you'd like

TOWN MANAGER REPORT

Mr. Scott's April report noted that 20 building inspections were completed. Malori reported last month on the project previously referred to as Evans Farm, now known as CB Connor. That project is no longer moving forward. Regarding Municipal Street Aid, the program recently transitioned from a paper process to a computerized system, and we were the first municipality to receive approval. The Town was awarded \$80,677 in Municipal Street Aid funding. The Police Chief and I also met with DelDOT and GPI about the road alignment and gate. Currently, they are not willing to contribute toward the gate, so I have reached out to Representative Lyndon Yearick and Senator Trey Paradee to explore possible financial assistance.

Mayor Sturgeon added that the cost of just one gate was \$80,000.

Mr. Scott gave an update on the repairs to the building. On the third floor, we had to repair the AC unit on the right side of the building. When they got into the outside unit, they found that we had a visitor who had been electrocuted in there, it was a mouse. There were also some exposed wires and a few other issues, but thankfully everything has now been taken care of. The AC in the patrol room also wasn't working due to a belt issue and some other maintenance problems that hadn't been addressed. And the server room the mini-split unit went bad and was dripping oil, so we're having that replaced as well on top of everything else. Regarding the building claim, I spoke with the claims adjuster. He said it's currently waiting on the mitigation adjuster, and after that hopefully sometime this week it will move on to the reconstruction team. Bottom line, we should be seeing some money before next month. The \$100,000 was great, but once you factor in just the IT expenses, that money disappears very quickly. The last thing I wanted to mention is because everybody keeps asking, and just because something is on Facebook doesn't mean it's true Rite Aid has been sold, and the building is being sold, yes. However, it is not going to become a four-story apartment building, despite the rumors going around. The mayor and I also met regarding another project that's still in the very early stages. Christiana Care Hospital had originally been looking at Route 10, but now they're considering property at Cooper Farm along the highway. Hopefully that all comes to fruition because having a hospital there will definitely be a positive development. And finally, at the league meeting last week, they mentioned something I thought I'd pass along, especially for those interested in local history. On June 12th, they're planning to do a reenactment involving Caesar Rodney. Apparently, someone portraying Caesar Rodney is going to ride a horse from here to Pennsylvania.

Councilman Ridgely asked for confirmation that Christiana Care would be in the Town of Camden.

Mr. Scott confirmed that was correct and the spot being discussed is right beside the driveway for Southside Baptist Church.

Councilwoman Gray asked Mr. Scott at the last meeting, we talked about possibly putting out some RFPs, given that we have additional development coming online, for plan review services and possibly some assistance with building enforcement and inspections. Have you been able to make any progress on that

Mr. Scott said that last year, Rossi Group had a presentation by Anne Marie Townsend, AICP Senior Project Manager. That's as far as it went. It was presented to the council. She's a good resource, and another gentleman that some people may know, who used to work for MPO and is now retired, said he'd be willing to help with some of that study-related work as well Mike Petit de Mange. So, there are two potential resources there.

Councilwoman Gray said that she had some other resources that she would share that may be helpful as well.

MAYOR

Mayor Sturgeon reported I attended Little League Opening Day at Camden Wyoming little league park, and Mr. Scott and I have also had some very preliminary meetings regarding Cooper Farm. At this point, it's just sketches and ideas. I know Christiana Care has already posted on Facebook about coming to Camden, but it's still extremely premature and very much in the planning phase. We are also actively working on the police officers' contract and the union negotiations, so that has been ongoing as well. In addition, we've been working on the budget, which has taken up much of our time this month. So that's where things currently stand with town business. And again, I want to encourage anyone who would like to meet with me to reach out. I'm in Town Hall on Tuesdays, so just let Mrs. Huizinga know, and she can get you scheduled. We'd be happy to sit down and discuss whatever you'd like.

OLD BUSINESS

Updates on the Personnel Policy

Mayor Sturgeon mentioned the last time we brought this up; the question was whether it would be better to amend our existing document or start from scratch with a more current, legally compliant structure. She feels the best approach is to have a new, up-to-date, legally compliant manual drafted by the attorney, and then customize it with the specific items and idiosyncrasies of the town. That would likely be the most cost-effective approach. We're going to look at moving in that direction, and I'm waiting for final numbers from the attorney. It makes more sense than going through the old document line by line and trying to verify every item against current labor laws and regulations. So that's the direction we're leaning, and we should have an update next month.

NEW BUSINESS

a. The 2027 budget draft first reading

Mayor Sturgeon turned the floor over to CFO Tom Josiah who started with good evening, members of Council. I'm assuming at this point everyone has a copy of the budget draft. The total expenses in the draft budget for 2027 are \$3.9 million, which represents about a 6% increase from the last budget. Now, we have a shortfall of \$388,568. If anyone has attended past board meetings, I've always said, 'With growth comes responsibility.' In my opinion, Council has reached a point where it needs to determine how to keep pace with the town's growth and expenses. There are only two options: either raise taxes or use reserves. In a growing town, cutting expenses is extremely difficult, if not impossible. That is where the town finds itself at this point. If anyone has questions, there is a proposed tax increase in this budget of two cents in each category commercial, residential, and senior. That equates to roughly a 4% increase for commercials and about an 8% increase for residential and senior categories.

Dawn Gonzlez (Barclay Farms) ask Mr. Josiah to repeat the percentages again for her.

Mr. Josiah said 4% for commercial, 8% for residential, and 8% for seniors.

Mayor Sturgeon followed up with So it's the opposite of what it was and that's the growth in revenue. That is not the increase in the tax rate itself. That reflects the increase in revenue that would result from a two-cent increase.

Mr. Josiah said the rate would be 46 cents for commercials, 25 cents for residential and 24 cents for seniors.

Mayor Sturgeon said When we did the budget last year, we initially proposed a slightly larger budget increase. However, we went back and revisited it and decided to move forward with a rolling increase instead of smaller incremental increases over a three-year period. We were hopeful we wouldn't need to increase anything at all, but with rising costs of doing business including fuel, construction materials, and other operational expenses it has become necessary to adjust. Overall, the town has done a very good job of keeping costs steady. At this point, we feel the most reasonable approach is a minimal adjustment of two cents in each category.

Mr. Josiah stepped in by saying it would be 44 to 46, 23 to 25, and 22 to 24 cents.

Mayor Sturgeon mentioned that if you look at the budget we are presenting right now, it reflects a projected deficit, or shortage, of approximately \$385,000. If you recall, last year's proposed budget reflected a deficit of around \$390,000. So, we are operating within essentially the same range. The deficit has not grown significantly, nor has it decreased significantly, because when you examine our revenue sources, the only steady, consistent, and predictable revenue we have is property tax revenue. The remainder is dependent on the course of business activity. Building permits, business licenses, and similar revenues can fluctuate from year to year. We make our best estimates for those categories based on historical performance and trends. This budget generally follows the same structure and principles as last year's budget. What you are primarily seeing are cost-of-living increases. At this point, we felt that a two-cent increase in each category was appropriate and reasonable. The budget still forecasts a deficit; however, during the current fiscal year, we have not had to draw from reserves to cover the previously projected \$390,000 shortfall. Unfortunately, the Chief is currently understaffed, which has resulted in operating under budget in that department. Additionally, there have been other areas where we have been able to keep costs lower than anticipated. As a result, we are projecting a similar deficit for many of the same reasons as last year. We evaluate what we believe the Town will bring in as revenue and what we anticipate spending. This budget represents the optimal funding level needed to operate the Town effectively. That does not necessarily mean every dollar budgeted will be spent, nor does it mean every projected dollar of revenue will be collected. Based on the current projections, if everything were to occur exactly as budgeted, we would potentially need to draw approximately \$385,000 from reserves, or the rainy-day fund, to balance the budget. However, as of now, during the current budget cycle, we have not had to access the previously projected \$390,000 from reserves. Overall, this budget is very similar to last year's budget, and we will continue these discussions further during the upcoming budget workshop.

Mrs. Huizinga confirmed that we are looking to hold the upcoming budget workshop at the Camden Town Hall on May 21, 2026.

Mayor Sturgeon said the Budget Workshop is scheduled for Thursday, May 21st, and during that meeting we will go through the budget in greater detail. We should have handouts and additional materials available at that time. I would encourage everyone to attend so we can review the budget together and discuss any questions or concerns. The budget team has worked very diligently throughout this process to develop ideas and recommendations. In addition, we have formed what I would describe as a subcommittee or working group that will begin meeting monthly to explore new revenue avenues. The goal is to reduce the Town's long-term dependence on property taxes as the primary revenue source. This group will serve in an exploratory capacity, evaluating opportunities and identifying other potential revenue streams that could help offset operational costs and strengthen the Town's financial position moving forward.

Councilman Ridgely followed up with that So, essentially, when people hear the word “deficit,” it can sound alarming, but in this case, it is largely tied to the fact that some of our revenue sources are variable and cannot be predicted with complete certainty. It is variable income. Every year, revenues such as permits, licenses, and other business-related income fluctuate depending on economic activity and development trends. Because of that, the budget is built conservatively to account for those uncertainties. As discussed earlier in the meeting, the Town is currently performing roughly where we anticipated. At this point, we are at approximately 91% of projected revenue and 81% of projected expenditure, which indicates that expenditure is currently below revenue projections.

Mayor Sturgeon confirmed this was correct and mentioned that when developing the annual budget, just because every dollar is not ultimately spent does not mean those amounts are removed from the budget. You build the budget based on what the Town would ideally need to fully operate and provide services throughout the year. So, on the expenditure side, this budget reflects what we believe is necessary to properly operate the Town. Whether every dollar is ultimately spent is another matter. As you can see from the current fiscal year, we are presently at approximately 85% of projected expenditure, and we still have a couple of months remaining in the budget cycle. The Police Chief and Mr. Scott have done an excellent job managing expenditure and looking for ways to control costs when unexpected expenses arise. Whenever possible, they work to identify opportunities for shared responsibility or cost-sharing arrangements to help reduce the impact on the Town. While that is not always possible, those are also situations where reserves may be utilized if necessary. At this point, we are generally aligned with where we were last year regarding the projected \$385,000 deficit tied to variable revenue sources. If building permits exceed projections, or if business license revenues come in higher than forecasted, then we may not need to draw those funds from reserves at all. Importantly, we do not draw reserve funds throughout the year as routine operating practice. Any adjustment involving reserves would occur at the end of the fiscal year, once the books are closed and final numbers are confirmed. At that point, if there is an actual deficit, funds would be transferred from reserves only as necessary to ensure the Town ends the year with a balanced budget position.

Councilwoman Gray said I think it would be helpful for the Budget Workshop if Mr. Josiah could prepare a few scenarios showing what the proposed property tax increase would mean for the average household in Camden. For example, it would be beneficial to show the impact on a home valued at approximately \$300,000 and demonstrate what the proposed two-cent increase in each category would amount to annually or monthly for that homeowner. It would also be helpful to prepare similar examples for the average business property so residents and business owners can better understand the practical impact of the proposed increase. That way, we can provide a few clear scenarios and give everyone a better understanding of what the tax adjustment would look like in real dollars.

Mayor Sturgeon said that when considering property tax rate adjustment, it is important that the process be viewed in totality so that it is fair to everyone involved. We do not evaluate individual addresses or single out specific properties when determining a rate adjustment. Rather, the Town looks at the overall assessed value collectively and evaluates the revenue needs of the Town as a whole. The goal is to ensure that any adjustment is applied fairly and consistently across all taxpayers. We want to make it clear that this is not a matter of looking at one person’s taxes versus another’s. The only fair way to approach it is to evaluate the total assessed value and apply the rate uniformly. That said, we can certainly prepare a few sample scenarios to help illustrate what the potential impact may look like. For example, we can provide estimates for an average residential property and an average business property, so residents have a better understanding of the possible cost implications associated with the proposed adjustment.

b. Update from Chief Whitney on North Gate

Chief Whitney started by saying that as I explained previously, there is currently a gate on the property that traverses left and right. However, due to the roadway alignment installed by Delaware Department

of Transportation, the gate would now open directly into a single lane of traffic on the incoming bypass. As a result, that configuration is no longer practical or safe, so the existing gate arrangement will need to be changed. The proposed solution is to install either a vertical lift gate or a vertical pivot lift gate. The existing gate would then be relocated to the opposite side of the property, where the emergency vehicle access point is planned. That emergency access point was also suggested by Delaware Department of Transportation. While DelDOT is willing to install roadway improvements and create the access point itself, they have indicated they are not willing to fund the installation of the gate. Mr. Scott stated that staff met with DelDOT representatives on-site to discuss the matter and attempted to negotiate the issue further, but DelDOT maintained its position that it would not cover the cost of the gate installation. For reference, the estimated cost for the replacement gate project is \$73,759.

Vice-Mayor Rhodes asked if there were other ways around this and suggested speaking with the Legislator.

Chief Whitney said that Mr. Scott will be reaching out to Representative Lyndon Yearick and Senator Trey Paradee to see whether any assistance may be available regarding the secondary gate associated with the emergency access point. As discussed, Delaware Department of Transportation is constructing the roadway and access point but has indicated that it is not interested in funding the installation of the gate itself. As a result, we are exploring potential assistance opportunities to help offset that cost. Depending on what support may be available, there could potentially be enough funding to supplement this project. However, that would be entirely contingent upon what assistance they are able and willing to provide, so at this time I cannot speak definitively on that outcome.

Councilman Ridgely questioned what was the benefit to having a vertical pivot lift to having a swinging gate?

Chief Whitney said that the proposed gate system folds up onto itself as it rises vertically and then lowers back down when closed. When asked about the benefit of that design compared to a traditional swinging gate or double-swing gate, the primary concern is space and safety. This is a very large gate, measuring over 30 feet in length. If the gate were designed to swing outward, it would extend into the parking lot area, requiring a large clear zone where no vehicles or objects could be located. That could create both operational and safety concerns. While an outward swing is technically possible, it is not considered the ideal solution because of the amount of space it would occupy and the potential hazard it could create. An inward-swinging gate is also not feasible because it would block access to the emergency access roadway. Currently, there is only approximately 15 to 20 feet of clearance between the existing gate location and the edge of the emergency vehicle access roadway. Since the gate itself exceeds 30 feet in length, it physically would not have enough room to swing inward without obstructing access. For those reasons, the vertical lift or vertical pivot lift gate is considered the most practical and safest option for the site configuration.

Mayor Sturgeon said this would be considered a capital budget item. It would not be funded through the Town's operating budget, but rather through a capital expenditure allocation.

Jim Ligori for the Town Solicitor Greg Morris questioned whether anyone has reached out to DelDOT attorney Bradley S. Eaby about this situation.

Mayor Sturgeon said that we have not and that this has been in multiple meetings and council has not suggested. She said that if Mr. Ligori suggested that then that is something they would investigate doing.

Mr. Ligori said that it seems to me that you would want to exhaust all available remedies and avenues first before involving Representative Lyndon Yearick or anyone else. My thought is that they are likely to ask whether every other option has already been explored. But ultimately, that decision is up to you all regarding how you would like to proceed.

Councilman Ridgely asked if the gate issue was a result of DelDOT's new road being put in?

Chief Whitney confirmed that was correct.

Councilman Ridgely mentioned that at face value, it could be viewed as somewhat of a hardship. However, we also must recognize that the land was sold to Delaware Department of Transportation, so in many respects this is a situation that resulted from decisions that were previously made.

Chief Whitney said that and Delaware Department of Transportation has countered by pointing out that they are installing, at no cost to the Town, the access roadway, paving, culverting, and any related construction necessary to create the emergency access point.

Mr. Ligori said that that may ultimately be viewed as a reasonable form of mitigation on their part, given the work they are already providing. However, my point is simply that there is no harm in asking the question. The worst they can do is reiterate the same response they already provided to the Town Manager.

Chief Whitney said we made the request, and they said no. And we were trying to get this done before the paving started on the road. And like I said, that's why this was brought up three or four months ago.

Mayor Sturgeon said All right, Mr. Scott, Chief, and I can meet about this tomorrow and figure out a plan.

c. TAP Grant conversation

Councilman Ridgely said this program provides opportunities for municipalities and organizations to obtain funding for sidewalks, bike trails, and similar pedestrian safety improvements. Projects that are connected to school safety initiatives receive consideration and priority during the review process. To support the application effort, the Town partnered through Dan Rigby, our new contact with Caesar Rodney School District. Through that partnership, we were able to obtain a letter of support from the Superintendent of the Caesar Rodney School District. The Town also worked collaboratively with Kent Metropolitan Planning Organization, as well as a team from University of Delaware, all of whom assisted in preparing and submitting the application. The application deadline was April 17th, so it was important that everything be completed and submitted by that date. One of the application requirements is a formal commitment from the Town Council indicating that the Town would provide any local matching funds required if the application is approved. At this time, we do not know what that amount would be. However, because this qualifies as a Safe Pathways to School type project, the local share could potentially be reduced to 0%. In the worst-case scenario, the Town could be responsible for up to a 20% cost share. The project itself would be managed by Delaware Department of Transportation, meaning it would not create an operational burden on Town staff. Overall, this appeared to be a very positive opportunity for the Town to pursue. What we need from Council tonight, Madam Mayor, is simply to formally place on the record that the Town supports the application and commits to providing any required matching funds should the application ultimately be approved.

Mayor Sturgeon said and that's up to 20%, but we don't know what that is.

Councilman Ridgely confirmed and added so even in the worst-case scenario, if the Town were responsible for a 20% cost share, it would still represent a very favorable opportunity for the Town. The Town would still be receiving a significant benefit through the program. However, based on the nature of the project and its connection to school safety improvements, I suspect the final arrangement could be even more favorable than that.

Vice-Mayor Rhodes asked if these were sidewalks that lead to the schools?

Councilman Ridgely confirmed.

Councilwoman Gray made a motion that the Town commit to matching up to 20% for the TAP application, seconded by Councilman Ridgely; 4 in favor, 1 abstain. Motion Passes.

Mayor Sturgeon mentioned that and just to clarify the process, by supporting this tonight, the Town is only indicating that it is willing to fund up to a potential 20% match if necessary. The Town is not fully committing to the expenditure at this stage because the grant still must go through the award process. If the grant is ultimately awarded, that would be the point at which the Council would review the final terms, evaluate the project details, and formally decide whether to commit the funding and move forward with the project. So, there will be another opportunity for Council to review the project and its financial impact before the Town becomes fully committed.

d. IQ Fiber

My name is Mark Wagner, and I serve as Vice President for New Markets for IQ Fiber. I am joined this evening by Jason Vicidomini although everyone refers to him as Jason Vick. Thank you for having us here tonight. We certainly understand the current situation with Town Hall, and we appreciate everyone working through it together. I know I have been speaking with Mr. Scott and members of Council over the past year regarding this project, so many of you may already be somewhat familiar with it. However, for anyone who may not be, I would like to provide an overview. IQ Fiber is currently constructing a fiber optic network that will extend from the South Dover area all the way to the Maryland border. We began our work here in the Camden area, and as part of that effort we established a regional warehouse facility located nearby. That warehouse serves the entire Chesapeake Bay region. Through the course of this project, we anticipate hiring between 50 and 100 new employees, ideally Delaware residents, to support the buildout and ongoing operations. The overall investment in this project exceeds \$150 million. Governor Matt Meyer attended the ribbon cutting for our warehouse facility, and we are currently preparing for participation in the State's priority permitting initiative. We expect our broadband project may be among the first approved under that initiative, potentially within the coming weeks. We believe this project is exciting not only for Delaware, but specifically for Camden as well. We have already begun construction activities within the area, primarily within Delaware Department of Transportation rights-of-way, so the Town has already had some opportunity to observe our construction methods and operations. This is a fiber optic network dedicated exclusively to internet service. The network is designed to deliver significant capacity, with infrastructure capable of supporting up to 10 gigabit speeds to homes and businesses from day one. Currently, we are offering service packages up to five gigabits, which already exceed what is commonly available in Delaware outside of Verizon's highest-tier services. Fiber optic systems differ substantially from traditional cable networks. Fiber uses light transmission through a passive medium, meaning there are far fewer active electrical components distributed throughout the network. We maintain electrical service only at our primary cabinet locations, including the cabinet near Rising Sun and State Street. Those facilities are battery-backed and generator-supported. Beyond that point, the network itself is passive. This design provides several advantages over traditional cable systems, including improved reliability, reduced maintenance issues, fewer service disruptions, and virtually unlimited future speed capacity. Much of the system will be installed underground using boring directional methods, which minimize surface disruption during construction. One aspect that distinguishes IQ Fiber is our emphasis on customer service. We operate our own customer support center using company employees based out of our headquarters in Jacksonville. We currently operate in Delaware, Maryland, Georgia, and South Carolina, and while we are growing, we remain a relatively modest-sized company with approximately 250 employees. Because of that, it is critically important to us that we perform well in communities like Camden. We understand that we are entering as a competitor in the marketplace, and we recognize that building trust with residents and local officials is essential. We work hard to communicate proactively during construction, provide clear

points of contact, and respond quickly to any issues or concerns that may arise. If there are any problems related to construction, restoration, or property impacts, we want those concerns directed to us immediately so we can address them promptly. Jason oversees much of that response process directly. Our customer support model is built around responsiveness, with calls typically answered in less than 30 seconds. That commitment to service has resulted in strong customer satisfaction ratings, including a 4.8 out of 5-star Google rating and one of the highest Net Promoter Scores in the industry. Ultimately, our goal is to provide reliable, future-forward internet infrastructure, competitive pricing, and responsive customer service while being a responsible community partner throughout the construction and operational process.

Mr. Vicidomin said our final two cabinet service areas within the first building zone are located just outside of Camden, specifically our Zone 6 and Zone 7 areas. We recently crossed the highway to complete work in that section and replaced the cabinet near the edge of the Tidbury Apartments area. That location represents our Zone 7 service area. North of that area will be the Town of Camden itself, and we expect that portion of the network to be activated soon. We have cable pulling crews arriving this week and fiber splicing crews scheduled for next week to begin finalizing that portion of the buildout. At the same time, we are continuing expansion efforts toward Woodside. Construction has also begun in Milford and Dewey, and we hope to continue expanding throughout the surrounding region with the Town's continued cooperation and support. Up to this point, nearly all our construction activity has been within areas regulated by Delaware Department of Transportation. In some locations, we also obtain right-of-entry agreements from homeowners' associations, which our sales team works diligently to secure. As part of our construction process, we primarily use what is referred to as a boring pneumatic missile system. This equipment is powered by compressed air and allows us to install conduct underground with minimal surface disruption. Typically, crews excavate narrow pits approximately five feet long and one foot wide every 20 to 30 feet at depths ranging from 18 to 24 inches. The missile travels underground from pit to pit as the conduit is installed. During active construction, there may be approximately fifteen workers on-site handling excavation and boring operations. Initially, the work area can appear disruptive, but restoration is completed afterward and all disturbed areas are returned to their original condition. If restoration does not meet expectations, we want to know immediately. Each door hanger distributed during construction includes a QR code. When scanned and directed to the Delaware section, residents are provided with my direct contact information, including my photograph, phone number, email address, and access to our customer service center. Any complaints or concerns are sent directly to me, and I make every effort to respond within 24 hours — often much sooner. As our operations expand, we anticipate bringing on additional coordinators to assist with customer response and construction management. Currently, however, I remain the primary point of contact. I live locally in Harrington, which allows me to respond quickly when issues arise. While some of our crews are not local, we are increasingly hiring local companies and contractors to assist with the buildout as we continue expanding throughout the region. We recently engaged a local traffic control company as part of that effort. For any work occurring within Delaware Department of Transportation rights-of-way, installations are generally located approximately fifteen feet from the edge of the roadway pavement. We submit all construction plans to DelDOT for approval, and DelDOT ultimately determines the placement requirements for the cable infrastructure. In some cases, there is minor flexibility, but in most situations, we are directed to place facilities toward the back side of the right-of-way corridor.

Mark Wagner followed up with I believe the next step in this process is expanding beyond just the Delaware Department of Transportation roadways within Camden and making this service available more broadly throughout the community. We believe this is a valuable amenity for both residents and businesses, and we believe having additional competition in the marketplace is something the community would appreciate. There are numerous studies showing that access to high-quality fiber internet service is considered a highly desirable feature in residential communities. In some cases, studies suggest that fiber connectivity can contribute up to approximately 3% in additional home equity value because of the attractiveness and reliability of the service. At this point, many communities like Camden already have multiple broadband provider options available, and we hope to become one of those options

here as well. Moving forward, we would like to continue discussions with the Mayor and Town Manager Scott regarding a potential right-of-way agreement. We have prepared a proposed memorandum of understanding that has been utilized successfully in other jurisdictions. However, if that format is not the best fit for the Town, we are certainly open to discussing alternatives and working collaboratively to develop an agreement that meets the Town's needs. Our goal is to work with the Town in a way that is comfortable and appropriate for everyone involved, and we would welcome the opportunity to begin those conversations whenever the Town feels the timing is appropriate and convenient.

Councilman Ridgely mentioned to Mr. Vicidomin, I see your map here the Camden build plan. Yes, sir. And looks like you can- Incorporated or encompassed most of the town, and Wyoming is not touched.

Mr. Vicidomin said Wyoming is an example where Verizon, through its Fios fiber service, completed a build-out and then extended service into that community. That situation is consistent with what we've seen in other areas, and it may also relate to communities served by providers such as Tidewater Utilities in terms of overlapping infrastructure regions. From our perspective, it is not our intention to overbuild existing Verizon Fios service areas where strong fiber competition already exists. Instead, we are prioritizing communities that currently lack comparable high-speed fiber options, where we can provide a meaningful improvement in service and choice for residents and businesses.

Mayor Sturgeon confirmed that they would be doing places that don't have Fios.

Councilman Ridgely asked there is a portion of what would be considered "white space" in the network footprint that is currently surrounded on at least two sides by existing development. From what I understand that area corresponds to the planned Savannah Farms development, which is expected to include approximately 800 homes on the Camden side. Given that context, I just wanted to ask whether you would be willing to adjust your planning approach to include that area as part of the building consideration.

e. 103 South Main Street, Camden, Delaware

Mayor Sturgeon said the applicant is seeking a minor subdivision, one new lot, and rezoning from commercial one to residential two.

Councilwoman Gray said I have a procedural question regarding this item. Specifically, I would like to confirm whether this was properly noticed in accordance with our zoning ordinance, including whether the required 15-day notice period was met under Section 240-52, which governs text and map amendments within our code.

Mr. Scott said so that was my question with it already being public notice to the BOA and then to the planning. This is the first rezone that I've been involved in. Last year, the mayor and council did a rezone, and we didn't publicize at all or do anything.

Attorney Eliassen stated this has been in topic for a couple months now.

Mr. Ligori said to councilwoman Gray I see last night at approximately 6:30 Ms. Gray emailed Greg Morris, looks and basically says "I don't see a clear path per Delaware Code Title 22, Chapter 7, as well as the town's regulations which specify that the planning commission reviews and approves land use plans for the town council tonight to hear this land use application for minor subdivision. Please advise." So, my question is, since I literally had to call the chief on my way down from Wilmington, where I was meeting you guys tonight, have you spoken with Greg Morris about this?

Councilwoman Gray said Yes, there was an email exchange regarding this matter, although I understand you may not have received that correspondence. I have since followed up with Mr. Scott and the Mayor to confirm the details. The Planning Commission did meet and approve the minor subdivision component of the application. However, this application also includes a rezoning element. My question at this point is procedural in nature: under the zoning code, any rezoning or text or map amendment is required to have a 15-day notice period, and that notice must be legally published in a newspaper.

Mr. Ligori asked if this was done for this meeting.

Mr. Scott confirmed that it has not.

Mr. Ligori asked Mr. Eliassen if he was aware of this inquiry?

Mr. Eliassen said not until he arrived tonight.

Mr. Ligori said so out of an abundance of caution I'm thinking it should be noticed. But respectfully, I don't want to do any unnecessary academic gymnastics either for the applicant. And I'm wondering if you could just explain to me again, what do you mean it wasn't noticed for this meeting?

Mr. Scott said it was noticed when they came in front of the Planning Commission.

Mayor Sturgeon said procedurally, the code indicates that the required public notice must be posted at least 15 days prior to any action on a rezoning. That is how the requirement is written and interpreted in the ordinance. So the question becomes: if that notice requirement was not fully met prior to tonight's consideration, then the appropriate corrective step would be to ensure proper legal posting and restart the required 15-day notice period before any final action on the rezoning is taken in addition to any posting already completed for the Planning Commission process.

Mr. Scott confirmed again that we did notify the public when this was presented at the Planning Commission meeting. Mr. Scott also said the first time this matter was scheduled to be heard, the Planning Commission was unable to meet due to a lack of quorum. As a result, the meeting had to be rescheduled, and we worked to assemble a quorum so that the subsequent meetings could take place. So, this process has been ongoing and has experienced delays since December 2025.

Mr. Ligori said I feel somewhat uncomfortable moving forward if the required procedural predicates have not been fully met.

Mayor Sturgeon confirmed and said I just want to make sure everything is done properly this time so that there's no question later about whether the required procedural steps were followed.

The concern is that if those prerequisites haven't been fully satisfied, it could create issues down the line or give someone grounds to challenge the project with a technicality. I think if we take the time to ensure everything is properly noticed and documented now, it will help protect the Town from any procedural challenges later.

Mr. Ligori agreed especially with zoning aspects and apologized to Mr. Eliassen for keeping him.

Mr. Eliassen said Just to clarify, is the interpretation that the 15-day notice requirement applies to both the Planning Commission hearing and the Town Council hearing on the rezoning?

Mayor Sturgeon said she was deferring to councilwoman Gray. Councilwoman Gray said according to the ordinance, it appears that the 15-day notice requirement applies specifically to the Town Council hearing for the rezoning, rather than the Planning Commission hearing.

Mr. Ligori, that he and Mr. Eliassen, were both blindsided by this.

Mr. Eliassen said that I will not be able to be here at 7:00, but I can arrive shortly thereafter. If possible, I would appreciate this item being placed later the agenda in the meeting. If that works for everyone, that would be fine. I'm not sure about Mr. Adams, our consulting engineer, and whether he has any additional input on timing as well.

Mr. Adams confirmed as of right now he was good.

Mayor Sturgeon said we will accommodate Mr. Eliassen and this will be moved to next month's meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Rachel Rowland (Newells Creek Drive in Camden) I just want to take a moment for full disclosure. I am employed by the Delaware State Police in the Intelligence Section, where I have access to criminal data daily. I also wanted to share that last weekend my husband's vehicle was broken into, and I would like to take a moment to recognize and commend the Camden Police Department. I did file a report, understanding that in cases such as attempted motor vehicle theft, these incidents are not always solved. However, that same afternoon, I received a call back from Lieutenant Kane. There was another related incident involving the suspects connected to my husband's vehicle break-in, and additional activity occurred. The individuals were identified, and they ultimately confessed to attempting to steal the vehicle. From my professional experience, that is not a typical outcome in these types of cases. I am also aware that the Wyoming Police Department assisted in the investigation. I would like to acknowledge that the Chief and the Department deserve recognition for their work. We are increasingly seeing younger offenders, particularly in larger jurisdictions such as Wilmington and Dover, and unfortunately these types of incidents are becoming more common. I have been attending meetings here for approximately two years, and I also want to take a moment to thank the Town Council. I have observed the support shown for law enforcement and the fire department, and I recognize that not all municipalities provide the same level of public support. At the same time, I want to acknowledge the growing needs as the population continues to increase. The Chief is doing his best to recruit and retain qualified officers, and that need is expected to grow. If there is anything I can do to help, please feel free to reach out. Again, I want to extend my appreciation to the officers involved for the work they did in this case.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilman Ridgely, I just want to say that it has been a pleasure. I appreciate the clarity throughout this process. Although we are just at the first reading of the budget, the level of transparency and understanding so far has been very helpful. I am looking forward to working toward the best possible outcome for the residents of Camden. As always, I would also like to thank our staff for their hard work and dedication throughout this process.

Councilwoman Gray, I look forward to the upcoming workshop, and I want to thank you and the staff for making that possible. I know it takes additional effort to schedule an extra meeting, and I recognize the significant work that goes into preparing the budget on top of day-to-day responsibilities. So I appreciate all the work that has gone into putting this together and making the budget workshop happen. I think it is an important opportunity for us to have that discussion and for the public to have a chance to ask questions and get clarification on the items that matter to them.

Vice-Mayor Rhodes, I do want to thank the staff for all they do for us, as well as the police department. I also want to acknowledge that the fire department noting that they have already left, but we extend our thanks to them as well. And thank you all for attending this evening.

Councilwoman Morgan, I want to again thank everyone who attends, as well as the staff, especially given everything they are managing right now with the condition of the building. I appreciate the continued effort to carry out daily operations without interruption and for keeping things running smoothly. As we head into the warmer months and school leaves in another two to three weeks, we will unfortunately see more kids out and about. We've experienced this before in our neighborhoods, where younger individuals are roaming or spending time around homes, and at times that can lead to mischief. I am hopeful that the Chief can continue identifying and recruiting the right candidates so we can strengthen the police force. The department is doing well, but I also recognize they are currently operating short-staffed, and that creates challenges. I want to again recognize the efforts being made to address these issues. In our own neighborhood, we have seen similar concerns arise, and it really does start with us as neighbors not turning a blind eye. If we see something, we should document it if appropriate and report it, because otherwise these issues can continue or escalate. As the Town continues to grow, with more people moving into the area, it is important that we stay engaged, attend these meetings, and stay aware of both the positive developments and the challenges we are facing. I do also want to say I appreciate everyone being here tonight, because I know it takes time out of your workday to attend and participate in these meetings and discussions.

Mayor Sturgeon, I want to thank everyone for being here this evening. I know it can be difficult, especially for staff, the Town Manager, and the Chief, who work full days and then come here at night to attend these meetings. I also want to thank Malori for attending Rider Days, it was nice to meet your mother as well. This reflects how dedicated our staff is. If they were not present at these community events, our Town would not have proper representation. It is very important that we show up and participate, but it is just as important that we recognize the staff for all they do and the extra effort they consistently put in for every event. They always have the Town's best interests at heart. I also want to express my appreciation for the support I have received while transitioning into the role of Mayor. The Town Manager and Police Chief are very informative and valuable resources throughout that process. Thank you all again for coming, and we will see you next month.

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 8:11 p.m. by Councilman Ridgely, seconded by Councilwoman Gray, to adjourn the council meeting. All in favor; none opposed.

*Respectfully submitted,
Lynda Huizinga, Town Clerk*