

Town of Camden
Regular Town Council Meeting
Camden Municipal Building
August 3, 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 July 24, 2026, in the following manner:

- a. The official bulletin board,
- b. Delaware State News.
- c. The official Town of Camden website.

Vice-Mayor Rhodes led attendees to 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: None

Staff Attending: Account Specialist Malori Lewis, Administrative Assistant Diane Mosby, Town Solicitor Scott Wilcox, and Police Chief Marcus Whitney

AMENDMENTS TO THE AGENDA

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- a. Town Hall will be closed on Monday, September 7th, in observance of Labor Day.
- b. The next Town Council Meeting, scheduled for September 14th, will be postponed until October 5th.

MINUTES

A motion was made by Councilman Ridgely, seconded by Councilwoman Gray, to approve the July 6, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes. All in favor; none opposed.

FINANCE REPORT

Ms. Lewis stated that the delinquent taxes as of July are down to \$9,270.61. Ms. Lewis reported that RETT funds received in July were \$25,464.78. Ms. Lewis stated that Fiscal Year 2026 ended on June 30, 2026. As the Finance Department has until September 30 to backdate eligible expenditures to FY2026, current expenditures are approximately 98% of the budget. Fiscal Year 2027: The Town is one month into FY2027 and is currently at approximately 9% expenditure, which was noted to be a reasonable level for the first month of the fiscal year. Revenue and expenditure statements will continue to be provided in Council packets. More detailed financial updates will be provided as the fiscal year progresses and expenditures increase. Ms. Lewis also mentioned that she had an update regarding the Town's TAP application was provided for Council's information.

Councilwoman Gray asked if there was a general estimate of the amount the Town expects to receive from the insurance proceeds.

Ms. Lewis explained that the estimated \$500,000 in damages was based on the information received to date, including the outstanding bills from Advantech. She stated that the Town is currently waiting to determine how the insurance company will handle the outstanding Advantech expenses.

Mayor Sturgeon stated that, following a walkthrough of the building, the preliminary estimate for the overall flood-related costs was between \$750,000 and \$1 million. She noted that the Town has saved a considerable amount in labor costs by having staff and other individuals perform internally, including removing drywall down to the studs, removing flooring, and completing drywall repairs. Mayor Sturgeon specifically recognized Mr. Anthony, Mr. Scott, and other staff members for their efforts. She stated that Mr. Scott and Mr. Anthony assisted with hanging drywall and that, although some individuals did not necessarily have specific experience in that type of work, everyone contributed where needed. She agreed that the preliminary estimate of approximately \$750,000 was reasonable, particularly given the significant amount of work completed in-house, which reduced the amount of work that otherwise would have been contracted out. Mayor Sturgeon thanked everyone involved for their efforts in helping the Town recover from the flood.

CAMDEN-WYOMING FIRE DEPARTMENT

Mayor Sturgeon mentioned that the Crab Feast is August 22, 2026 and reminded people to grab their tickets.

CAESAR RODNEY SCHOOL DISTRICT

N/A

CAMDEN WYOMING SEWER & WATER AUTHORITY

N/A

FRIENDS OF HISTORIC CAMDEN

Mrs. Christensen provided an update on behalf of the Friends of Historic Camden. She stated that Mayor Sturgeon had received a copy of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) regarding the Friends of Historic Camden's proposal to use insurance proceeds to reimburse the Town for expenses associated with putting the flags back on the flagpoles. She noted that the organization is awaiting review of the MOU by the Mayor and Mr. Scott and is open to any proposed changes. Mrs. Christensen also reported that Friends of Historic Camden received an additional \$5,000 Grant-in-Aid award. The funds will be used to purchase two benches for Brecknock Park, which will be placed along the walking trail. Each bench will include a brass insert recognizing the Friends of Historic Camden. The organization will work with Jeremy to determine the locations of the benches. She explained that the benches must be purchased through the designated vendors, so the organization does not have an opportunity to seek lower pricing elsewhere. Mrs. Christensen further reported that some of the historic banners have been printed and the organization is ready to move forward with them installed. She also announced that on Thursday, August 27, a representative from the Delaware Public Archives will present a program titled "Women Scorned in Petty Treason and Punishment in 18th-Century Delaware." The presentation will be held at the Friends Meeting House and is expected to be an interesting and informative program.

POLICE REPORT

Chief Whitney gave a report that included, but was not limited to, traffic arrests and criminal activity. He stated they had 72 hours of paid overtime and 2 hours of court overtime. He added that they received a total of 468 calls during this period, some of which were more serious, compared with 456 last year. Chief Whitney reported that all but one police vehicle has been returned and that the fleet is otherwise fully equipped and ready for service. He also noted that the final vehicle is expected to be completed shortly. Additionally, the department has two recruits who are expected to attend the Delaware State Police Training Academy in August, pending completion of their final medical testing.

Mayor Sturgeon asked for confirmation that there are two new recruits and if they were going to Delaware Police Academy.

Chief Whitney confirmed the two recruits and said they would be going to the State Police Academy and not the Delaware Police Academy.

Councilwoman Gray asked how long the training is.

Chief Whitney explained that the Delaware State Police Training Academy typically lasts approximately six months. While the length of training may fluctuate between approximately 22 and 26 weeks, the department generally considers it to be a six-month commitment. He noted that the Delaware State Police Training Academy is a live-in academy, requiring recruits to remain at the academy Monday through Friday.

Mayor Sturgeon asked what the recruits would get out of the academy.

Chief Whitney further explained that the approximately six-month academy provides recruits with a foundational understanding of law enforcement rather than fully preparing them to serve independently as police officers. The training is designed to evaluate recruits both mentally and physically while providing instruction in a wide range of areas, including communication skills, domestic incidents, physical fitness, unarmed self-defense, firearms, and other essential law enforcement topics. He noted that recruits are continually tested, evaluated, and scrutinized throughout the academy. Upon successfully graduating, recruits return to their respective agencies and typically participate in a 12-week Field Training Officer (FTO) Program. During this period, recruits work alongside multiple experienced officers and receive training specific to their agency's policies, procedures, local community, and policing practices. Chief Whitney stated that exposure to different officers and policing styles provides valuable learning opportunities for new officers. Even after being released to work independently, officers continue to gain experience and develop their skills over time. He explained that it generally takes approximately three to five years before an officer becomes fully comfortable and confident in the profession, during which time newer officers continue to receive close supervision and mentoring.

Mayor Sturgeon clarified that once an individual is selected to attend the Delaware State Police Training Academy, they become an employee of the Town. Recruits are considered Town employees while attending the academy and receiving the Town's applicable employee benefits. The Mayor emphasized that employment begins upon entry into the academy, rather than after successful completion of the academy, and the position is therefore included in the Town's personnel budget.

TOWN MANAGER REPORT

Ms. Lewis reported on behalf of Mr. Scott that two applications had been submitted for sidewalk projects. She announced that the application for the sidewalk project in front of the high school was approved.

However, the second application, which proposed a sidewalk connection from Town Hall to Nellie Hughes Stokes Elementary School, was not approved.

Mayor Sturgeon asked if Ms. Lewis had a dollar amount.

Ms. Lewis explained that she had no further information.

MAYOR

Mayor Sturgeon reported that it had been a very busy month, involving significant budget and contract work, numerous meetings, and recently passed legislation.

Mayor Sturgeon asked each Council member to review Senate Bill 23 (SB 23) in preparation for a discussion at the October Council meeting. She noted that a subject matter expert has been invited to attend the meeting to assist with the discussion and answer questions.

Mayor Sturgeon explained that the Town should consider the potential impact of SB 23, particularly as it relates to the Town's Comprehensive Plan. She encouraged Council members to review the legislation and compile any questions in advance so that a thorough discussion can take place at the October meeting.

PUBLIC HEARING

a. Ordinance 2026-0-01 – Electronic Red Light Safety Monitoring Program – Final Reading

Mayor Sturgeon asked if she could have a motion to go into Public Hearing. Councilwoman Gray made the motion to enter Public Hearing, seconded by Vice-Mayor Rhodes. All in favor, none opposed.

Mayor Sturgeon asked Chief Whitney to explain what this Ordinance is and what it does.

Chief Whitney explained how the Red-Light Camera Program came about and stated that the program will move forward regardless of whether the Town participates, as the State has already implemented the program. He noted that participation allows the Town to maintain some oversight of the program and receive a portion of the proceeds. Chief Whitney explained that the red-light camera system is automated and uses algorithms and sensory equipment to detect vehicles that cross the designated stop line after a traffic signal has turned red. The system captures photographs and identifies the vehicle's registration information. The company operating the equipment then provides the video footage and still photographs to the Police Department for review. Chief Whitney emphasized that violations are not issued automatically by technology. A police officer reviews the footage and determines whether a legitimate red-light violation occurred. If approved, the violation is returned to the company for processing, and a civil fine notification is issued. He further explained that these violations are civil in nature and do not result in points being assessed against an individual's driving record. The ordinance also provides a process for disputing a violation. If the registered owner was not operating the vehicle, they may provide information identifying the actual operator, allowing the fine to be reassigned. Individuals who believe they did not commit a violation may also contest the citation through the appropriate court process.

Mayor Sturgeon asked how many there are and where it is located.

Chief Whitney said just one, and is located on Route 13 South, just south of Redner's intersection near Old North Road. He noted that the camera will be positioned in the median and will monitor southbound traffic.

Mayor Sturgeon clarified that the proposed cameras are not Flock cameras and emphasized that they are strictly red-light cameras intended to monitor red light violations.

Chief Whitney reiterated that these cameras are not being independently installed or implemented by the Town.

Councilman Ridgely asked for clarification regarding whether the Town's adoption of the Ordinance would affect the fee charged for a red-light violation. He referenced a discussion from the previous meeting and noted that the meeting minutes stated the amount of the civil assessment is established by the State and is not determined by the Town or Police Department. Councilman Ridgely asked whether, hypothetically, the fee charged would be different if the Town chose not to adopt the resolution.

Chief Whitney clarified that the civil assessment fee would remain a flat fee regardless of whether the Town adopted the Ordinance. However, he explained that if the Town chose not to participate, it would not receive any proceeds from the program and would have no oversight or authority regarding its operation, including the review and confirmation by a police officer that an actual violation had occurred.

Mayor Sturgeon explained that the Red-Light Camera Program is a state program and that adoption of the ordinance would allow the Town to participate. She stated that if revenue generated from the program exceeds its operational costs, the Town would be eligible to receive a portion of the excess proceeds. As an example, Mayor Sturgeon explained that if the program generated \$100,000 in fines and operational costs totaled \$50,000, the remaining \$50,000 would be available for distribution to participating entities. However, if the program generated less revenue than its operational costs, the Town would not be responsible for covering the difference.

Mayor Sturgeon stated that, with no further public comments or questions, she would like a motion to close the public hearing and return to the regular meeting.

Councilwoman Gray made a motion to close the public comment period and return to the general session, seconded by Councilman Ridgely, all in favor, none opposed.

OLD BUSINESS

a. Ordinance 2026-0-01 – Electronic Red Light Safety Monitoring Program

Mayor Sturgeon requested a motion to accept the ordinance as it has been presented.

Councilwoman Gray made a motion to accept Ordinance #2026-0-01 – Electronic Red Light Safety Monitoring Program as it has been presented, seconded by Vice Mayor Rhodes. All in favor; none opposed.

b. Changes to Public Comment (2 times per meeting)

Mayor Sturgeon stated that the Town is implementing a Public Comment Protocol Policy.

Council Woman Gray said she feels it's a very good policy and thanked the Mayor for putting it together.

Mayor Sturgeon stated that a formal vote was not required to adopt the policy. She directed Ms. Lewis to ensure the policy was posted on the Town's website for public access and stated that the policy would go into effect at the next Town Council meeting on October 5, 2026.

NEW BUSINESS

a. Camden-Wyoming Sewer & Water Authority Board opening for a new member

Mayor Sturgeon announced that the New Business items would be deferred until the October meeting to allow additional time for due diligence. She explained that questions had arisen regarding the Planning Commission, including the required size of the Commission, and the matter would need to be reviewed by legal counsel before any action is taken. She also noted that an additional appointment with the Sewer and Water Authority was pending, as the Town had not yet received the complete vetting information on the individual.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Gail Christensen, 21 South Main Street

Gail Christensen noted that there was no agenda available and requested additional copies. She also asked whether the electronic sign was broken. After confirming that it was, Ms. Christensen questioned whether all required methods for publicizing the meeting had been met.

Mayor Sturgeon clarified that the required public notice methods were the State News, the Town's website, and the bulletin board. The electronic sign is separate from the bulletin board and is not one of the required methods for providing public notice.

Shela D Groce-Gray, 15 South Street

Rose Sprader addressed several concerns regarding conditions on Plum Street and South Street. She stated that she had previously raised these concerns with the County and was directed to bring them before the Camden Town Council. Ms. Groc-Gray reported that two streetlights on Plum Street were malfunctioning and intermittently flashing on and off. She stated that she had previously reported the issue but had not observed any repairs. She offered to provide the identification numbers from the streetlight tags if needed. She also expressed concern about overgrown trees and branches along Plum Street, stating that branches extend into the roadway and could potentially damage pass vehicles. Additionally, she noted ongoing flooding along one side of Plum Street following recent rainfall, requiring motorists to navigate around standing water and overhanging tree branches. Ms. Groc-Gray stated that she had photographs documenting the flooding. Ms. Groc-Gray also raised concerns regarding the storm drains on South Street. Having lived in Camden for many years, she stated that she had not observed the drains being cleaned and noted that they contained trash and vegetation, including a tree growing from one of the drains. She expressed concern that the drains could become blocked and contribute to flooding during a severe storm, particularly with the increased traffic and ongoing construction in the area. Ms. Groc-Gray asked who is responsible for addressing and maintaining these issues and whether they fall under the responsibility of the Town Council.

Mayor Sturgeon said she will be in the office on Tuesday, and she will follow up with the town staff to see about each one of these items. She asked Ms. Groc-Gray to please leave her contact information for a follow-up.

Andrea Black, 921 Blair Court

Andrea Black asked about property tax relief available to senior citizens and disabled veterans. She stated that she had previously attended a county meeting and was referred to by the Town Council for assistance. Ms. Black explained that she was seeking information regarding the property tax benefit available to veterans who have a 100% service-connected disability rating. She also asked about the

senior property tax relief program and stated that she had received conflicting information regarding whether a senior tax benefit was available. Ms. Black asked who she should contact to obtain additional information about the disabled veteran property tax exemption and the senior property tax program.

Mayor Sturgeon stated that she would research the property tax provisions applicable to disabled veterans, as the Town does not have a separate veterans' tax rate. She explained that she would consult with Town staff and legal counsel to determine what options or benefits may be available. Mayor Sturgeon noted that additional research would be necessary and asked Ms. Black to leave her contact information so that she could follow up with her once more information was available.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilwoman Gray welcomed everyone and thanked those in attendance, particularly those who were attending for the first time. She thanked the residents for their comments and expressed her appreciation to Town staff for the information provided regarding insurance and the savings achieved for the Town and residents through in-kind services. She stated that the information was very helpful and appreciated the efforts of staff.

Councilwoman Morgan thanked everyone for attending the meeting and stated that it was good to see residents continuing to support the Friends of Historic Camden. She reiterated that the Council is working to make the Town a better place. Councilwoman Morgan also expressed her appreciation for the two new police recruits, noting that additional officers are greatly needed. She wished the recruits success as they continue through their training and careers with the Town. She encouraged residents to continue attending Council meetings, emphasizing that their voices and participation are important.

Vice Mayor Rhodes thanked everyone for attending the meeting and expressed appreciation for the Town staff, Police Department, and Fire Department. She also welcomed and expressed her appreciation for the Town's new attorney.

Councilman Ridgely echoed the appreciation expressed to residents and Town staff for their continued work. He provided an update regarding the Ideas Committee for the West Street property, noting that the Committee held its first meeting on July 17, 2026, in the meeting room. He announced that the next Ideas Committee meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, August 18, 2026, at 1:00 p.m. in the same location. Councilman Ridgely stated that the meeting would be open to the public and encouraged residents to attend.

Mayor Sturgeon thanked everyone for attending the meeting and expressed her appreciation to the Town staff for their continued work. She reminded residents that she is available in the office on Tuesdays and stated that residents may contact Mrs. Huizinga by phone or email to coordinate an appointment to meet with her. Mayor Sturgeon stated that she would follow up on the concerns raised during the meeting and would contact the appropriate residents by phone or email with updates. She also expressed her appreciation to the Police Department for its continued work, particularly during the Town's recent events. She acknowledged the challenging weather conditions during the Peach Festival and thanked the officers and staff who worked outside in the heat while wearing their protective equipment. Mayor Sturgeon reminded those in attendance that the Town would not hold a meeting the following month and would resume meetings in October. Notice of the meeting schedule will be posted on the Town's website. She also stated that the Town was working to coordinate a date for another grand reopening of the Town Hall and encouraged residents to stay tuned for additional information. Mayor Sturgeon noted that there was no Executive Session scheduled for the evening and requested a motion to adjourn.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

To consider strategy with respect to pending and/or potential litigation and/or with respect to personnel issues and/or collective bargaining.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made at 7:38 p.m. by Councilwoman Gray, seconded by Councilman Ridgely, to adjourn the council meeting. All in favor; none opposed.

*Respectfully submitted,
Lynda Huizinga, Town Clerk*