

City of New Castle Delaware
Regular City Council Meeting
New Castle Senior Center – 400 South Street
Meeting Held in Person and via Zoom
Tuesday, September 9, 2025
7:00 p.m.

Call to Order: 7:00 PM

Roll Call

Present: Council President Suzanne M. Souder
Councilperson Andrew Zeltt
Councilperson Brian M. Mattaway
Councilperson Joseph F. Day, III

Absent: Councilperson Nermin Zubaca

Also present: Antonina Tantillo, City Administrator
Michael Hoffman, City Solicitor
Mayor Valarie Leary
James Whisman, City Treasurer
Jeffrey Bergstron, City Building Official
Police Chief Richard McCabe

Council President Souder called the September 9, 2025, City Council meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The assembly stood for the Pledge of Allegiance. Roll call followed and a quorum to conduct business was declared.

Minutes

Minutes of August 12, 2025

A motion to approve the minutes of the August 12, 2025, City Council Meeting as amended was made by Councilperson Day. The motion was seconded by Councilperson Mattaway and was unanimously passed.

Treasurer's Report

Mr. Whisman presented the unaudited Treasurer's Report as of August 31, 2025:

Total unrestricted funds	\$13,960,728.61
Total restricted funds	\$ 2,977,354.68
Total cash	\$10,983,373.93

Mr. Whisman stated that for the first two months (17%) of the fiscal year:

- Receipts total \$4,247,379.74. \$3,856,000 of that is for property taxes for the current year.
- Expenses total \$1,185,058.50.

A motion to approve the Treasurer's Report as presented subject to audit was made by Councilperson Day, seconded by Councilperson Zubaca, and was unanimously passed.

Reports from the City Administrator and Staff

Report From the City Administrator

Ms. Tantillo's reported that:

- Tax bills have been sent out and are due by September 30, 2025. For this year only, we have allowed a change in the penalties:
 - During the month of September the tax base amount is due. A 1.5% penalty will be assessed on October 1st with an additional 1.5% on November 1st. In December a 6% penalty will be assessed, and for each month thereafter a 1% penalty will be applied.

Those wishing to apply for Senior/Disability exemptions have until September 30th to do so for this year only.

- The Delaware River Trail Study is completed and it is hoped a presentation will be made at the October or November Council meeting.
- DelDOT Railroad Crossing Improvements – DelDOT is still working to complete the railroad arm improvements and continues to work with Norfolk Southern to finalize the plans to complete the project next summer.
- WILMAPCO Walkable Community Study – The City hosted the WILMAPCO Walkable Community Study on August 6th. The report is being finalized and it is hoped it will be shared publicly in the next few months along with a presentation to Council. The City is working to schedule an additional Study in another area of the City this year.
- Dobbinsville Fishing Pier – No additional update. They continue to work on permit approvals.
- Grants:
 - The Delmarva Power Environmental Stewardship Grant was applied for to continue the next phase of the Delaware River Trail Project and to plan for informational kiosks along the Trail. Unfortunately, the City did not get that project.
 - The Cybersecurity and Homeland Grants were applied for in July and August, and they have moved on to the next phase for approval.
 - In August the City applied for a DNREC Surface Matching Cleaning Grant to continue the work being completed over the past few years for inventory and inspection of the stormwater management system throughout the city and to upload the data into the MBDS Database. The second part of the Grant application was to identify and prioritize potential green infrastructure for the system to potentially improve water quality and quality management throughout the system.
 - In August the City applied for another Bike Delaware Grant for the design phase of the Delaware River Trail.

- The City will apply for an Outdoor Recreation Parks and Trails (ORPT) Grant later this week to move the Delaware River Trail project along to the design phase. This Application is for \$342,982 and the City will need to match that in the same amount. The intent is to apply for additional grants to cover the match.
- Dog Park – The Engineer is finalizing the specs for the Dog Park fencing.
- Code Red – Ms. Tantillo thanked everyone who has registered for Code Red. If anyone needs assistance signing up, they can contact the City Staff for help in person or over the phone.
- City Projects:
 - The City paving and ADA curb repair work continues. Cirillo Bros continues the work on Cherry and Foundry Streets.
 - The City authorized repairs to Centerpoint Road and that work should begin tomorrow.
 - Repairs and improvements to the Dobbinsville Basketball Court will start in the next few weeks.
 - The ADA sidewalk project continues to be finalized.
- Health Fair / Blood Drive – A Health Fair/Blood Drive will be held on Saturday, September 13th from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Good Will Fire Company. There will be 30+ community vendors, flu and Covid vaccines will be available, and blood donations can be made. Vaccines and blood donations can be signed up for in advance.

In response to questions from Council Ms. Tantillo stated that:

- The Buttonwood Avenue project is part of the work Cirillo Bros will be starting in the next month or so.
- The ORPT Grant is only for the design phase of the Delaware River Trail project. JMT will have more information when they make their presentation to Council.

Report from Chief McCabe

Chief McCabe reported that:

- Chief McCabe thanked members of Council who attended the recent Swearing-in Ceremony for a new Officer.
- Chief McCabe noted a correction to Crash Data in the monthly report.
- Blue Envelope Program – Along with other agencies across the State, the Department went live with the Blue Envelope Program last week, which is an opportunity for individuals with Autism, communication issues, or diabetes to have a Blue Envelope in their car that outlines their condition and/or communication issues where they can keep important vehicle documentation. All Officers have been trained in how to react when the Blue Envelope is handed to them. In response to a question from Councilperson Zeltt, Chief McCabe stated Blue Envelopes will be available at the Health Fair/Blood Drive on Saturday.

Report from Mr. Bergstrom

Mr. Bergstrom stated that he had nothing additional to report.

In response to a question from Councilperson Mattaway, Mr. Bergstrom stated that single family homes in River Bend should be built out by the end of 2027 and townhomes should be built out by the end of 2026.

Councilperson Mattawan noted that in January and February 2025, revenue from River Bend building permits was 35% of all funds received, and in April 2025 it was 87.66% of all revenue received. He opined that after the River Bend project is completed revenue from building permits will dwindle, and suggested that the City should be mindful of how income revenues are projected forward.

Council Communications

Councilperson Mattaway

- The Community wide Health and Wellness Fair and Blood Drive is scheduled for September 13th and everyone is encouraged to attend.
- On August 29th Councilperson Mattaway attended a Lowering of the Flag Ceremony hosted by Face the Facts in respect to Overdose Awareness Day.
- The Belgian Beer Festival will be held on Saturday, September 27th at Penn Farm in partnership with the New Castle Community Partnership and Jessop's Tavern.
- On October 18th the New Castle Little League will host its Trunk or Treat. Decorating begins at 5:00 p.m. and Trick r Treating will begin at 6:00 p.m.
- On Saturday September 13th Bellanca Air Field Museum will have a British Car Club Event from 11:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. Councilperson Mattaway noted that Giuseppe Bellanca was an Italian emigrant who found his way to New Castle and went on to become a business owner and adventurer who made the best planes. As we celebrate America's 250th anniversary next year, Councilperson Mattaway stated it is important to recognize that America would not be what it is today without the stories of emigrants like Mr. Bellanca. March 2026 will be Mr. Bellanca's 140th birthday and Councilperson Mattaway will recognized him at the March Council meeting with a Proclamation. Councilperson Mattaway will engage with Friends of Bellanca to see how their mission can be fortified and elevated.

Councilperson Zubaca

- Councilperson Zubaca noted that Art on the Green will be September 27th and encouraged everyone to attend.

Councilperson Zeltt

- The Friends of the New Castle Library open their new Garden with a celebration on September 13th from 1:00 p.m. until 4:00 p.m. A ribbon-cutting ceremony will be held at 3:00 p.m.

- Art on the Green is September 27th from 10:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. There will be over 300 vendors. Councilperson Zeltt encouraged everyone to attend.

Councilperson Day

- A Litter Crew event was held on Sunday, August 24th with 12 volunteers who collected 20 bags of trash on Delaware Street from Basin Road to Ferry Cut-Off and from Ferry Cut-Off to Merit Drive.
- The Bull Hill Boat Yard is up and running. The lease is signed and they have insurance. Mr. Flowers is working on membership, and information will be in The Weekly for membership and volunteers.
- Councilperson Day attended the first Finance Committee meeting and thanked Council for appointing him to the Committee.

Report from the Council President

- Council President Souder encouraged everyone to attend the Health Fair. The Blood Bank will take walk-ins for blood donations, and those who wish to register can do so at the Blood Bank of Delmarva's website under Location/Mobile Sites.
- The new outdoor gathering at the Public Library is Saturday afternoon. There will be a special Story Hour for kids at 2:00 p.m. and the ribbon cutting ceremony is at 3:00 p.m. Council President Souder commended the Library Friends who initiated the idea. The concept was funded by the Friends with help from generous contributions from the Trustees, several local foundations, and many residents. Council President Souder recognized Library Friends President Matthew Alexander for his work organizing the project, working with the architect, shepherding it through the HAC review, and interfacing with the contractor. Mr. Alexander was also organized most of the fundraising efforts.

Business From the Mayor

- Mayor Leary asked the assembly to stand for a moment of silence in honor of the 24th anniversary of 9/11.
- Mayor Leary asked that residents pay attention to school buses and pedestrians.
- On Saturday September 13th there will be a Grave Marking of Patriot William Saunders, a patriot of the American Revolution, at his obelisk in the United Methodist Church Cemetery. The ceremony begins at 10:00 a.m. and the Sons of the American Revolution and the Daughters of the American Revolution will welcome everyone's attendance.

Mayor Leary read a Proclamation in honor of Master Sergeant Lou Torres of the City of New Castle Police Department. The Proclamation will be presented to Master Sergeant Torres at his retirement celebration.

Report from Good Will Fire Company

Chief Majewski reported that:

- There were 172 EMS incidents in August.
- There were 100 fire rescue incidents in August.
- Chief Majewski welcomed everyone to attend the Health and Wellness Fair on Saturday.
- The burn ban is still in effect through September 30th. Outside fires should be restrained to small bonfires. Chief Majewski reminded the community that it is always unlawful to burn leaves, yard waste, and trash.
- The Fire Company and the Special Operations Team will conduct training off Battery Park and up and down the River.
- Good Will invites everyone to the Department's Open House on Saturday, October 25th from 11:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m.

Public Comment

Florence Smith, Booker Circle, William Penn Village

Ms. Smith stated that she has not heard back from anyone regarding the issues she brought up at a previous Council meeting regarding a request for speed bumps in her development, maintenance and care of the Park where she lives, and the standing water near her home. She stated that no answers have been received regarding the problems residents bring to Council. Council President Souder stated that Council does not engage in discussions during Public Comment and offered to meet with Ms. Smith at the conclusion of the Council meeting.

Phil Gross – 1301 13th Street

- Mr. Gross stated he heard from every candidate during the election that they would discuss resident's issues but nothing has been resolved for communities surrounding the Historic Area.
- Mr. Gross opined that Code Red should be used for meeting announcements.
- Mr. Gross opined that "Events" should not be listed under "Government/Meetings" on the city website.
- Mr. Gross stated that he polled 61 residents and none of them want money spent for a Dog Park, but the project is still going forward. Mr. Gross stated that he submitted a FOIA request and if the survey does not match the location the project will be closed down.
- Mr. Gross opined that River Road was not raised enough because the water level is close to flooding. He further opined the project should have been engineered better.
- Mr. Gross opined that the City has the right to request a firm deadline of when the railroad crossing project will start.
- Mr. Gross opined that a firm deadline should be requested for the Dobbinsville Pier.

Michael Platt – Van Dyke Village

- Mr. Platt concurred with Ms. Smith regarding the condition of community playgrounds; adding that the city should care for them.
- Mr. Platt noted that when the pumping station stopped working approximately 40 houses in Van Dyke Village had sewage in their basements.
- Mr. Platt stated he has been asking that vendors at the Saturday Market have a business license, noting that the Code states anyone doing business in the city should have a business license.
- Mr. Platt thanked Councilperson Mattaway, noting that neighbors he talks to speak highly of him. Ms. Smith stated her neighbors also speak highly of Councilperson Mattaway.

Old Business

Second Reading and Possible Vote of Ordinance 558 – An Ordinance to Amend the City of New Castle Municipal Code Regarding the Good Will Firefighter and Ladies Auxiliary Real Property Tax Exemption.

Council President Souder stated that the exemption for the firefighters and the members of the auxiliary was passed several months ago, and Ordinance 558 changes the way the exemption is administered, but it does not change the qualifications or the benefits.

Councilperson Mattaway stated that he appreciates and respects the Ordinance. He stated he wants to create programs that give back to people who give back to the community. He noted that Ordinance 558 does not include lifetime members of the Fire Company and expressed his hope that in the future a way to create more revenue to acknowledge and give credit to those who dedicate their lives to the community.

Council President Souder stated that the issue of lifetime members was also brought to her attention and suggested that Council consider this as a possible future Ordinance; reiterating that Ordinance 558 is more of an administrative change and a new Ordinance needs to be considered thoughtfully and hopefully it will be in place for next year's tax cycle.

In response to questions from Councilperson Zubaca, Ms. Tantillo stated that approximately 20 individuals have applied for the exemption and Chief Majewski stated that he believed there are approximately 12+ Fire Company members still living in the city that are or were lifetime members. He was unable to comment with authority on the Ladies Auxiliary membership, but opined that it might be an additional 15 to 20 individuals.

A motion to approve Ordinance 558 as presented was made by Councilperson Day. The motion was seconded by Councilperson Zeltt and a roll-call vote was taken:

Council President Souder – Yes

Councilperson Day – Yes

Councilperson Zubaca – Yes

Councilperson Zeltt – Yes

Councilperson Mattaway - Yes
The motion passed unanimously.

At Councilperson Zubaca's request, Ms. Tantillo will update the numbers and report the cost for Ordinance 558 to Council, projecting approximately 50 additional lifetime members.

New Business

Council President stated that Items 1 and 2 on the Agenda were deferred to the October Council meeting because revised plans are not yet available.

Council Discussion, Possible Motion and Vote on Resolution 2025-41 – A Resolution to move the November 2025 City Council Meeting to Monday, November 10th due to the Veterans Day Holiday.

Council President Souder read Resolution 2025-41.

In response to a question from Councilperson Zubaca, Council President Souder explained that the Senior Center is cleaned on Wednesdays and not available for a meeting.

Council President Souder called for a poll of Council to approve Resolution 2025-41. All Council members voted Aye to approve Resolution 2025-41.

Council Discussion, Possible Motion and Vote on Resolution 2025-42 – A Resolution of the City Council of New Castle, Delaware, extending a Formal Invitation to the National Football Teams and Dignitaries of the Netherlands, Sweden, and England to Visit the City During the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

Council President Souder read Resolution 2025-42.

Council President Souder noted that some of the games will be held in the Philadelphia area, which would make visiting New Castle easy.

Council President Souder expressed her concern with Item #3 regarding the City hosting ceremonial visits, tours, and community events and what, if any, security requirements would be needed. Councilperson Zubaca explained that his thought was to extend an invitation for not only the three countries mentioned in the Ordinance but to any attendees to visit New Castle. He drafted a letter that the City Administrator will send if Resolution 2025-42 is adopted to request support from the New Castle Historical Society in organizing tours of the city. He felt that security needs could be determined later in the year when more information about attendance would be available.

Mr. Whisman noted that the Kalmar Nyckel has hosted similar programs in the past where foreign dignitaries have been invited and may be able to assist Council with organizing events or tours.

A motion was made by Councilperson Day to approve Resolution 2025-42. The motion was seconded by Councilperson Mattaway and was unanimously passed.

Council Discussion, Possible Motion and Vote on Resolution 2025-43 – A Resolution to Authorize Outdoor Recreation, Parks, and Trails (ORPT) 2025 for the Delaware River Trail Design.

Council President Souder read Resolution 2025-43.

In response to a question from Councilperson Zubaca, Ms. Tantillo explained that the project is in the feasibility study stage, and once it moves to the design phase there will be public workshops to get input on the design. Ms. Tantillo added that the reason she has to submit the Resolution before the Application is submitted is that it is retroactive.

In response to a question from Council President Souder, Ms. Tantillo explained that if the ORPT grant is awarded but additional grants are not awarded to cover the match the City would not be obligated to accept the ORPT grant.

Councilperson Mattaway noted that community input will be needed, and the project speaks to responsiveness to residents' concerns and desires. He added that the 2009 Comprehensive Plan spoke in detail about connecting isolated residential communities.

A motion was made by Councilperson Zubaca to approve Resolution 2025-43. The motion was seconded by Councilperson Zeltt and was unanimously passed.

Council Discussion and Possible Vote regarding the possibility of remote City Council meetings.

Council President Souder stated that Ms. Tantillo confirmed the City has the technical capacity to conduct remote City Council meetings and the City Solicitor provided details about what the State of Delaware requires. If Council proceeds, it would have two purposes:

1. It would allow the public to comment on Zoom instead of just watching; and
2. As long as there is an "anchor location" a remote Council member could attend virtually and would be able to speak and vote so long as all conditions are met.

Ms. Tantillo added that all pertinent information would need to be on the Agenda, Council members would have to properly identify themselves once they are on screen, public comment could be allowed virtually, and technical issues should not prevent the meeting from proceeding as long as a quorum is present. City staff should be able to manage the process.

Councilperson Zubaca thanked Ms. Tantillo and Council President Souder for looking into remote attendance. He opined that having the public being able to make comments remotely would be beneficial.

Mayor Leary questioned whether the City Charter would need to be amended to allow remote attendance. She also expressed a concern if future Council members choose to attend all Council meetings remotely. Councilperson Zubaca noted he also had a concern for 100% remote attendance.

Mayor Leary also questioned whether allowing City Council to approve remote attendance would open the door to all committees requesting the same option. Councilperson Zubaca opined that having commissions meetings fully accessible via Zoom for commission members and public comment would be a greater need than having remote attendance for Council; noting that due to work constraints some commission members are hard-pressed to be on time for the meetings.

In response to a question from Council President Souder, Ms. Tantillo stated that the Police Station does have the ability to accommodate remote attendance; adding that additional support would be required at those meetings.

Councilperson Day stated he is in favor of remote attendance and the ability to have Zoom public comment. He expressed his concern with future Council members opting for 100% remote attendance, managing attendance to ensure a quorum is present, and adhering to FOIA requirements; opining that some constraints should be placed on it.

Councilperson Zubaca stated he is in support of conditions on attendance, deferring to the City Solicitor for advice as to what other municipalities have in place. Mr. Hoffman will research the matter and report back to Council. Mr. Hoffman added that (1) there is a risk if a Council member is dropped from Zoom and there is no longer a quorum, and (2) a remote option has become quite common and Council can address whatever standards they want to put into Council rules and they can establish rules governing meetings and expectations. He will research sample rules.

Councilperson Mattaway stated he is in favor of the concept, concurring with Council members' concerns about constraints that need to be evaluated. He stated that if it is approved for Council it should be approved for all commissions. He added that he would not be in favor of any Council member being remote for more than 15%-20% of the time. In response to a question from Councilperson Mattaway, Mr. Hoffman stated that the new rule is not entirely clear or specific about the number of Council members that must be present in person.

Ms. Tantillo stated that if a Council member will be absent, they must contact the City Office. She agreed that adding parameters is a good idea. Ms. Tantillo noted that from her experience in Townsend, only certain commissions were approved for remote attendance and public comment.

In response to a question from Councilperson Mattaway, Ms. Tantillo stated that the individual monitoring public comment would control who is speaking and would have the ability to mute individuals exceeding their three-minute time, or if someone is being abusive or offensive.

Councilperson Zubaca asked Ms. Tantillo to reach out to the committees to gauge their interest in having remote attendance and/or public comment, and to prepare some language for limitations.

Councilperson Day suggested that the Ordinance should specifically state that limitations on attendance should be only for regular Council meetings. Councilperson Mattaway recommended that attendance limitations be required for Budget meetings as well. In response to a question from Councilperson Zubaca, Councilperson Day stated that he had no problem with not having limitations for remote attendance at Special City Council meetings.

Council President Souder recapped that Ms. Tantillo will draft guidelines for a possible Ordinance.

Council Discussion, Possible Motion and Vote on Resolution 2025-44 – A Resolution to Re-Appoint Susan McLaughlin to the Board of Health.

Susan McLaughlin – Board of Health – Term Ending October 9, 2027

Council President Souder read Resolution 2025-44.

Councilperson Zubaca noted that the Resolution should be redrafted to change “appointment” to “re-appointment” in the title, the 2nd and 3rd WHEREAS clauses, and the THEREFORE statement.

A motion was made by Councilperson Zubaca to approve Resolution 2025-44 as amended. The motion was seconded by Councilperson Day and was unanimously passed.

There being no further business to discuss, Council President Souder called for a motion to adjourn.

A motion to adjourn was made by Councilperson Zubaca and seconded by Councilperson Day. The motion was unanimously passed and the meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen R. Weirich, City Stenographer

Next Regular Meeting Date: October 14, 2025