

Silver Lake Commission
February 5, 2026
5:30 PM
In person & Via Weblink

****DRAFT****

Members' Present

Kathy Doyle
John DeMarie
William Ardito
Cary Smith
Anthony Morris

Staff & Guests

Nichole Arnold, Parks & Recreation Staff
Roger Ridgeway, Parks & Recreation Director
Bryn Wambaugh, City of Dover Environmental Scientist
Cpl. Kody Frye, Dover Police Dept

Absent members

Carolyn Courtney
William Lewis

WELCOME & CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 PM

MEMBER & STAFF INTRODUCTION

Brief Introductions around the table.

MEETING MINUTES

All meeting minutes were approved, no changes were needed.

DOVER POLICE – PARK REPORT UPDATE

Officer Frye explained that Dover PD opens and closes the park typically when the sun rises and sun sets. He had no big complaints about the park and stated that the winter months are less crowded than the spring and summer months.

STORMWATER AND EARTH DAY UPDATES

Bryn presented to the group more information on storm water utilities. The City's stormwater utility was originally created to provide a dedicated funding source for managing stormwater runoff, which carries pollutants into local waterways. Fees were based on the amount of impervious surface on each property, such as roofs and parking lots. Revenue from the utility supported stormwater-related capital projects, routine ditch maintenance, personnel, and equipment such as the jet truck used for clearing stormwater lines.

The utility was repealed after concerns from residents and large commercial property owners who questioned the fairness of the fee structure. As a result, City Council directed staff to reassess the program to ensure equity before considering reinstatement.

The city is currently in the reevaluation phase, working with AECOM to update impervious surface assessments, ERUs, expenditures, and revenue projections. The intention is to establish a budget-neutral, fair fee model that funds stormwater needs without burdening the general fund.

This effort aligns with long-standing recommendations from DNREC and the EPA to help municipalities reduce pollution entering rivers and groundwater following storm events.

Earth week activities are taking place on April 22 and a community storm water day at Silver Lake Park on April 23. Bryn asked volunteers to help at the event.

SILVER LAKE AND ST. JOHNS RIVER DISCUSSION ON DNREC PRESENTATION

Kathy briefly went over the DNREC presentation from last meeting. Water quality in Silver Lake has been improving over the past decade, although some long-lasting pollutants such as DDT, dieldrin, mercury, and PCBs are still present in fish tissue. Because these remain above recommended levels, fish-consumption advisories continue, though experts estimate that contaminant levels may reach acceptable standards by around 2035. A newer concern is PFAS "forever chemicals," which come

from products like Teflon, firefighting foam, and waterproof materials. Additional PFAS testing—especially for private wells—is expected, but the city continues its routine monitoring of drinking water.

For swimming and recreation, the main issues are Enterococcus, which comes from human and animal waste, and microcystin, a toxin produced by algae. These levels can fluctuate quickly due to weather and water movement, so test results often reflect past rather than current conditions. Healthy individuals can generally swim or boat safely, but the City maintains no-swimming signage primarily for liability and insurance reasons rather than because conditions are consistently unsafe. DNREC monitors two testing stations at the lake, and there may be expanded testing this summer at no cost. Overall, Silver Lake continues to show gradual improvement, though it remains a waterway where caution and monitoring are still important.

SILVER LAKE SUB WATERSHED IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Carolyn Courtney was scheduled to report on which of the plans that are included in the 2011 Silver Lake Sub-Watershed Plan were completed. She was absent, so Ms. Doyle shared what she believes was and was not completed. The Silver Lake sub-watershed plan included riparian buffers, managing Washington Street runoff with a proposed step-pool system (which likely wasn't built), and stabilizing the dam with plantings, though it appears to be mostly turf grass now. Some projects—like plantings along Mirror Lake and partnerships with Kent County Parks and Rec, Murphy School, and what is now the elementary school—were completed, but others may not have been. The outdoor classroom at the former Central Middle School also seems overgrown and may no longer be in use. Since we did not have enough information on this, we hope to discuss this at the next meeting.

CAPITAL STATION

The Capital Station shopping center is located close to and along the St. Jones, and its stormwater runs directly into the river. The trees and other plantings in the shopping center serve as important buffers for stormwater runoff. Mrs. Doyle discussed her concerns about the trees that are dying in the area. The guard wires are kept on which causes the trees to die, and the improper mulching with mulch volcanos are also killing the trees. Mrs. Doyle wanted to share this with the Silver Lake Commission as Councilwoman Artndt felt properties along the river are appropriate areas of interest for the SLC. Ms. Doyle sent a letter to the owners asking that they review and maintain the property. So far, nothing has changed and the city has received no reply. The city had approved the landscape plans when the shopping center was built, but after a year has passed, the city cannot technically do anything about the property as it is solely in the owners' hands.

SILVER LAKE MASTER PLAN AND UPCOMING DOVER PROJECTS

Roger Ridgeway discussed some concerns and upcoming projects that are happening around the lake. The city is preparing repairs to the Silver Lake spillway, including concrete work and underwater crack sealing. A damaged playground slide is on back order, and the sand volleyball court will be refreshed in spring. A few declining oak trees near the walking bridge need to be removed once conditions allow.

Larger city projects—Dover Park improvements, a new community center, ADA playground, splash pad, and the upcoming skate park at Schutte Park—have slowed progress on the Silver Lake Master Plan, but attention is shifting back to it. The next step is to gather suggestions for what should be included before sending the project out to bid. The engineering firm selected through procurement will handle community outreach.

Tree health and long-term canopy planning are ongoing concerns, addressed by the city's arborists and grounds crews. General efforts are also underway citywide to improve stormwater practices, community education, and environmental compliance.

ENDING COMMENTS

Follow up on Silver Lake master plan and bring ideas to the group, continue to communicate with DNREC and have them join a few more meetings. The next meeting will be June 24th, 2026.