COUNCIL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

The Council Committee of the Whole met on April 14, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. with Council President Neil presiding. Members of Council present were Mr. Anderson, Ms. Arndt, Ms. Hall, Mr. Lewis (out at 10:04 p.m.), Dr. Pillsbury (arrived at 6:17 p.m.), Mr. Rocha (via WebEx), and Dr. Sudler (via WebEx). Mr. Boggerty was absent. Mayor Christiansen was also present. Civilian members present for their Committee meetings were Mr. Cunningham and Mr. Lewis *(Parks, Recreation, and Community Enhancement),* Mr. Wilson *(Utility),* Mr. Garfinkel, and Mr. Shevock (via WebEx) *(Legislative, Finance, and Administration)*. Dr. Iriowen was absent. (*Utility*)

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Ms. Arndt moved for adoption of the agenda, seconded by Ms. Hall and unanimously carried.

Council Reports – March 2026

First District

Mr. Rocha reported that he participated in the Delaware Scripps Regional Spelling Bee and attended a ribbon-cutting for IQ Fiber, a company that is bringing a new option of high-speed internet at a fair cost to Dover. He also emceed the St. Patrick's Day Parade and participated in the Delaware Laborers Local 199 workforce recruitment open house. Mr. Rocha further reported that he fielded a constituent complaint off Mifflin Road about trash on the city sidewalk that leads to the Village of Westover.

Dr. Pillsbury was absent; no report was given.

Second District

Ms. Hall reported that last month she participated in the Vietnam Board of Veterans Memorial Service for the memory of the men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice and served as a panelist with the local Eunity Day Program and was asked to speak on a panel at the Eunity Event this upcoming weekend. Ms. Hall also reported that she and Mr. Lewis fielded several constituent complaints regarding various issues in the second district.

Mr. Lewis reported that he attended the ribbon-cutting of the YMCA and attended the 50th anniversary of Dover Pools, supporting the Central Delaware Chamber of Commerce. Mr. Lewis held a meeting in coordination with Ms. Hall concerning crime in the Stoney Creek development with resident Larry Arellano. Mr. Lewis reported the meeting included Eddie Kopp, Chief Code Enforcement Officer, Ms. Duca, Acting City Manager, and Captain Roswell, Dover Police Department, to resolve some of the issues in Stoney Creek. He further explained they are trying to obtain a camera for placement in an alleyway due to the drug transactions and illicit activity going on in the area. He stated that Ms. Duca, Acting City Manager, is working on funding the camera. Mr. Lewis stated that he addressed issues with resident William Faust pertaining to the city not picking up shrubbery in his area. Mr. Lewis reported that he has been appointed as Honorary Commander at the Dover Air Force Base in the medical group and is excited to be a community liaison at the base.

Third District
Ms. Arndt reported that her interaction this month with the residents of the third district have been positive. She has had several conversations with neighbors and constituents who have stated that they are pleased with the look of the city, commenting that the tulips are blooming and the trees look great. She thanked the public works department for addressing concerns that were addressed swiftly and completely. She attended a DDP Board meeting, and she is meeting with a constituent tomorrow evening to discuss youth opportunities at city parks.

Fourth District
Dr. Sudler reported that he spoke to residents who reside on Bradford Street regarding the activity in the alleyway behind the People's Church. Dr. Sudler reported that he was able to observe the activity and witness some of the undesirable behavior, and has been working with the residents, church staff members, and pastor to come up with a solution. Dr. Sudler stated that he is working with Mr. Anderson to conduct an ADR/mediation process between the community, as well as the People's Church, to attempt to come up with a mutual agreement moving forward with benchmarks. Dr. Sudler and Mr. Anderson will be facilitating the meeting. Reverend Rita Mishoe Paige will be the mediator and will be working together to come up with a solution using a proactive collective approach. Dr. Sudler reported that he met with Dr. Allen, Delaware State University's president, who inquired about the process of having a utility easement being dedicated to the city of Dover. Dr. Sudler lastly reported that he is joining with Ms. Hall and Mr. Lewis to assist in facilitating the safety concerns meeting that has been scheduled.

Mr. Anderson confirmed that he and Dr. Sudler are working together on several issues and will be working on a couple of other forthcoming issues. He explained that he appreciates the partnership that they have had over many years. Mr. Anderson reported that there have been many events mentioned, but he added attending the prayer breakfast. Mr. Anderson thanked the city crews for some of the great work they have done repairing different items around the city, whether it is in the parks or over on the green, where they repaired sidewalks in preparation for Delaware's 250th. He reported that Silver Lake Boulevard and the barrier are getting very high marks. Mr. Anderson thanked Senator Paradee and Representative Lynn for the community transportation funding. He stated he is also thankful for their cooperation in dealing with the Lincoln Park speeding issues. Mr. Anderson reported that he will be submitting a list of potholes from around the fourth district.

At-Large
Mr. Boggerty was absent; no report was given.

Council President Neil
Mr. Neil reported that he attended the Construction and Property Maintenance Code Board of Appeals meeting on April 9, 2026, with Chairman Boggerty. Mr. Neil reported attending funeral services for former Council President Bill Hare on Friday, April 10, 2026, with council colleagues. Mr. Neil reported that he responded to numerous email inquiries regarding the People's Community Center, as well as media inquiries on the mayor's illness. Mr. Neil reported that he responded to a constituent complaint about painted markings for a 5K charity run in the Town Point community. A resident was concerned about the upcoming race and whether the painted markings would result in a form of street graffiti. Mr. Neil thanked Mark Nowak, Public Works Director, who swiftly resolved the issue. Mr. Neil explained that the sidewalk replacement that

has been reported was the result of a petition signed by citizens in the area. Mr. Neil gave kudos to Sharon Duca and Mark Nowak for making it happen swiftly. Mr. Neil reported receiving a third district complaint about pallet damage that was swiftly handled by Jeff Dill.

PARKS, RECREATION, AND COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

The Parks, Recreation, and Community Enhancement Committee met with Chairwoman Arndt presiding.

Adoption of Agenda

Mr. Lewis moved for adoption of the agenda, seconded by Mr. Anderson and unanimously carried.

Annual Report from the Silver Lake Commission (Kathy Doyle, Chair)

Ms. Kathy Doyle, Silver Lake Commission Chair, reviewed the annual report for the Silver Lake Commission

Staff recommended acceptance of the Silver Lake Commission annual report.

Mr. Michael Lewis stated that as a fellow Silver Lake Commission member, he commented that Kathy's knowledge and passion on these issues are unmatched, and the city is lucky to have her in this position, and thanked her.

Mrs. Arndt thanked Ms. Doyle for her interest in the master plan and for helping to push it forward. She stated that the Silver Lake Commission is going to be great in terms of public outreach with the master plan. Ms. Arndt asked that when DNREC presents water quality at the May meeting of the Silver Lake Commission, she would like to be invited and have the invite extended to all council members.

Dr. Sudler moved to recommend acceptance of the annual report. The motion was seconded by Mr. Anderson and unanimously carried.

Input Discussion on the Future Planning for Silver Lake Park (Councilwoman Arndt and Roger Ridgeway, Director of Parks and Recreation)

Mr. Roger Ridgeway, Director of Parks and Recreation, reviewed the proposed survey and master plan regarding Silver Lake Park.

This item was informational; committee action was not required.

Ms. Arndt stated that the surveys are located in the back of the chamber and included in the packet and requested that all council members fill one out and leave them on the table so they can be collected. She further stated that, as it pertains to mailing out the surveys to residents, after seeing how much the city spends on postage, and that mailing it out may not get as many returned as we would like, maybe having QR codes at different locations, including city hall, the park, and different locations where people can take the survey online. Ms. Arndt explained that Earth Week is coming up, and there could be some opportunities to solicit feedback from people actively using the park for those events.

Responding to Ms. Arndt, Mr. Ridgeway, Parks Director, stated that in regard to a timeline for issuing the RFP and getting that process moving, he spoke to Barry Wolfgang, Procurement Manager, and was notified that it is roughly a 45 to 60-day window to get those returned and then have to review all submissions and decide which is going to be best for the city.

Responding to Mr. Anderson, Mr. Ridgeway stated that he would look into possibly having volunteers help deliver flyers to the houses around Silver Lake. Roger further explained that he will be working with Kay Sass about getting the survey onto the city's website, hopefully within 24 hours.

Responding to Mr. Anderson, Mr. Ridgeway explained that, regarding security measures at Silver Lake, they have installed cameras and are working with the police department to make sure that the gates are shut every night. He explained that gates were the biggest issue because there were cars entering the park after hours, so the gates being closed and locked every night have helped the situation, and further explained that the cameras are helping to monitor the area when staff cannot physically be present. Mr. Ridgeway stated that they have also developed a parks crew so that staff monitors the park at least twice a day.

Responding to Mr. Lewis, Mr. Ridgeway explained that there is $75,000 in the current budget for the Silver Lake Master Plan.

Responding to Dr. Sudler, Mr. Ridgeway explained that a main concern right now is at the entrance off of Kings Highway. He further explained that there is a large dip in the road where the stream used to run, and it is progressively getting worse over time.

Jen Rini, 44 Washington Street, spoke to share her support and excitement for the Silver Lake master plan. She explained that she has personally used the park throughout all phases of her life, and especially now, having a 2-year-old. Ms. Rini explained that she is very excited about the potential of the park and sees it as an untapped resource and gem for the city, and would love to help spread the word in her neighborhood and volunteered to help pass out the surveys.

Responding to Mr. Garfinkel, Mr. Ridgeway explained that migratory animals, specifically turtles, are an area that the city really would like to focus on and expand as much as possible. He further explained that the city is confined to where we are with Silver Lake. He stated that there is a large issue right now with geese further down the St. Jones on the Mirror Lake side. He stated that they would really like to make sure all these issues are encompassed in the scope of the work so that they can be addressed in the master plan.

Ms. Doyle stated that it is her understanding that the master plan from 2020 never went through the RFP process, and so that master plan got pushed aside, and all items that were supposed to be addressed are still being considered. She posed the question, " Is the master plan only for the park, or is it also focusing on the watershed?" She asked that it focus from Washington Street down to Loockerman Street and work in conjunction with the Downtown Dover Partnership's vision for

Mirror Lake because that is considered part of the Silver Lake area. She suggested taking advantage of input from DNREC and their finances, input from folks on the county and state levels of parks and rec, because they have a lot of expertise in doing the master plans and can save time and money, rather than using the $75,000 so consultants can interview them. She stated that $75,000 is a small amount of money for a lot of these items, especially with no stormwater utility at this time. She stated that hopefully matching generic funds can be sought and that the master plan has plans for more native trees and plants, repairing buffers, permeable parking, land preservation along the watershed, and continued assessment of water quality.

Responding to Mr. Lewis, Mr. Ridgeway explained that the full scope of the master plan will be gauged by the survey responses from the residents and what we can get included for the amount that is budgeted.

Revisit Request for Review of Cash-in-Lieu Payment for Active Recreation Area Requirement for Cecil Street Townhouses at 207 N. West Street (Dawn Melson-Williams, Principal Planner)

Ms. Dawn Melson-Williams reviewed the background and analysis of the revisited request for a cash-in-lieu payment for the active recreation area requirement for the Cecil Street Townhouses at 207 North West Street.

Staff recommended approval of the active recreation report.

Responding to Ms. Arndt, Ms. Melson-Williams stated that there are several exemptions under which this project could be considered. She explained that there are exemptions for what are called small developments, explaining that one of them is related to acreage and number of units, and there is also one that is because of location within the downtown redevelopment target area. Ms. Melson-Williams explained that if you do the straight calculations for what the cash-in-lieu would be based on, following it under the area and number of lots versus the development in the downtown redevelopment target area, the second exemption ends up with an even bigger number of what cash-in-lieu would be. She further explained that they defaulted to the exemption of small development, which is less than five (5) acres of land and less than ten (10) dwelling units.

Responding to Ms. Arndt, Ms. Melson-Williams explained that the exemption refers to a different method of calculating the cash-in-lieu. She stated that this exemption is the five (5) acres and less than ten (10) dwelling units goes to a cash-in-lieu of 10% of the gross land area value and the other exemption is a different calculation and is based on a land area, but the minimum, while the land area is 75 square feet per dwelling unit and there is a minimum amount of land area, and that amount ends up a bigger number. Ms. Melson-Williams further explained that the determination made originally in selecting the exemption was based on land area and the number of dwelling units.

Responding to Mr. Lewis, Ms. Melson-Williams stated that Mary Street Park is located a block to the north, and there are sidewalks from the park to where the units are proposed for development.

Responding to Mr. Lewis, Ms. Melson-Williams stated that, in the past, cash-in-lieu has been used most recently for much larger projects where not all the land area could be accommodated as part of the development. She further stated there were at least two apartment projects that utilized cash-in-lieu for part of their active recreation requirement. Ms. Melson-Williams explained that The Edge at Dover, which is under construction now, while having amenities, including a dog park, clubhouse, pool, and other game court surfaces, did not include enough land areas, so they did a cash-in-lieu for part of the requirement. She confirmed those projects were much larger projects that included a cash-in-lieu payment.

Responding to Mr. Lewis, Ms. Marney stated that she would defer to the recommendation of Ms. Melson-Williams, as she is not familiar with the code in this case and will review it and respond to council via email.

Cameron Llewellyn, 117 West Reed Street, stated that they have almost put their porch back together. Mr. Llewellyn stated that this has been a process for him, and if his daughter and son-in-law were not moving into unit four (4), he would have given up the project altogether and placed them for sale. He further explained, for context, that the Raising Cane's restaurant was at the same application meeting as the first meeting for this project, and that the whole restaurant had been built and opened, and he is still trying to get this project going. Mr. Llewellyn commended Sharon Duca, Acting City Manager, for her efforts in three (3) weeks since taking the position. He now has a recorded site plan and is really close to being able to submit for a building permit. He further explained that right now, there is the SJR8 Housing Reform Program, an initiative to figure out how to make homes more affordable in Dover, Delaware; however, it seems there isn't the ability to make a two-by-four or two-by-six cost less money at Lowe's or any supply house. He stated that when looking at affordability and homes, the only thing that can be done to make it cost less is to get to the point where the shovel is placed in the ground and pour the concrete. Mr. Llewellyn proceeded to go over the site plan of the townhomes. He further explained that they have lost buyers due to the time it has taken to go through this process. He explained that the cost has been substantial, at over $50,000 worth of engineering costs to bring in the water, sewer, electric, and all utilities. Mr. Llewellyn explained that there is a need to figure out a way so that these homes do not take this much effort to get to the point where they can start building. Mr. Llewellyn explained that he met with Jason Lyon and Sharon Duca, and they went through the cost of what it was going to take, and they came up with alternative solutions to bring the sprinkler lines into the backyard and not have to dig up half of Cecil Street at a cost of approximately $30,000. Mr. Llewellyn stated that this process is failed and we need to reexamine it and need to make sure that it is looked into, if nothing else, the large amount of money and time that has been spent trying to get a project approved, and make sure that it is looked at when we look at housing reform and find another way so that it doesn't take two years to get to the point that you say okay you can build.

Responding to Ms. Arndt, Ms. Melson-Williams explained her interpretation of the code is that council, as the recommending body to the Planning Commission, could say full cash-in-lieu as it is calculated out to be $8000, or could be a lesser amount, including zero.

Responding to Mr. Neil, Ms. Melson-Williams stated that previously, there was a large single-family detached house, and it was divided into multiple units.

Mr. Neil stated that there was one building that was there, and now there will be four desperately needed homes. He further stated that each will be paying property taxes annually, so to bring this down to zero, the city loses nothing because the recreation is a block away. He explained it makes sense to put people in the center of the city, where there is trouble finding housing, and get four houses for the price of one in terms of property tax for the future yield.

Responding to Dr. Pillsbury, Mr. Ridgeway explained that currently, Mary Street Park is in very good condition and that there is nothing that needs to be replaced as of right now. He further explained that the park is being looked at by NeighborGood Partners to potentially donate funds to help expand the park to the property next to the park.

Responding to Dr. Sudler, Ms. Melson-Williams explained that the zoning ordinance does not lay out specific criteria. She further explained that in the statement of reference that construction of recreation is not practical due to and then gives the list of three things; proximity to existing available recreation facilities, not feasible due to the natural characteristics of the land, such as being totally wooded or very heavily sloped, or that it will not benefit the residents of the development. Ms. Melson-Williams explained that the three criteria are subjective, and the code is set up so that the matter comes before this body as a technical review on the recreation side, and then the Planning Commission has to look at all the information on a case-by-case basis and make a decision on the matter.

Dr. Sudler stated that he was concerned about the process, specifically how to be able to withstand scrutiny moving forward, and making sure that there is some uniform criteria that is being followed in the process.

Ms. Arndt suggested the possibility of putting the $1,000.00 towards street trees, as there is not a very strong tree canopy in that area, and that would be a benefit to the residents in the immediate area and to the purchasers of the townhomes.

Mr. Anderson moved to recommend a partial waiver of the fees down to $1,000.00 for the cash-in-lieu. The motion was seconded by Mr. Rocha and unanimously carried.

Review of Active Recreation Plan – Lands of Fuller at 7 Nixon Lane (Dawn Melson-Williams)

Ms. Dawn Melson-Williams reviewed the background and analysis of the active recreation plan for the Lands of Fuller at 7 Nixon Lane.

Staff recommended approval of the active recreation report.

Responding to Dr. Pillsbury, Ms. Melson-Williams showed the proximity of the park to the project and explained that the main entrance of the park is actually from White Oak Road, which you could access from two separate roads and that there is a shoulder and sidewalk that could be used if you wanted to reach the park from the proposed properties.

Mr. Anderson agreed that when doing the revisions that are being worked on in the code, council needs to revisit what is considered a small development.

Mr. Anderson moved to recommend a partial waiver of the fees down to $750.00. The motion was seconded by Dr. Pillsbury and unanimously carried.

Review of Active Recreation Plan – Bay Village Residential Planned Neighborhood Design on the south side of White Oak Road (Dawn Melson-Williams, Principal Planner)
Ms. Dawn Melson-Williams reviewed the background and analysis of the active recreation plan for the Bay Village residential planned neighborhood design.

Staff recommended approval of the Active Recreation Area Plan for the project, subject to the conditions outlined in the Active Recreation Review Report.

Responding to Ms. Arndt, Ms. Melson-Williams confirmed that the amenities proposed are just for what is on this site plan, and if the apartments are built in a separate phase, it would require additional recreational opportunities due to the calculation of the land area.

Responding to Mr. Rocha, Ms. Melson-Williams confirmed that the location of this development tract is on the south side of White Oak Road, directly opposite part of the Garrison Oak Business and Technology Center. Ms. Melson-Williams stated that the easter entrance of Garrison Oak Drive will align with the main entrance going into this neighborhood.

Dr. Pillsbury moved to recommend approval of the Active Recreation Area Plan subject to the conditions outlined in the report. The motion was seconded by Ms. Hall and unanimously carried.

Silver Lake Dam – Annual Inspection Review (Jason Lyon, Water & Wastewater Director)
Mr. Jason Lyon, Director of Water and Wastewater review the background and analysis of the Silver Lake Dam annual inspection.

Staff recommended acceptance of the Silver Lake Dam 2025 Dam Safety Inspection Report and the FY2026 Silver Lake Dam Inspection update memorandum.

Responding to Mr. Lewis, Mr. Lyon stated that $22,000 to $24,000 is the amount that is included in the annual budget for this inspection.

Responding to Mr. Lewis, Mr. Lyon explained that although he is a licensed professional engineer, he is a water/wastewater engineer, not a structural engineer. Mr. Lyon further explained that he does not have his scuba certification, which is also a part of the requirement.

Responding to Mr. Lewis, Mr. Lyon stated that they do not have estimates yet for the 22 recommendations in the report. He further stated that everything listed in the report is a non-immediate repair, so it will be part of the 2028 capital improvement program.

Responding to Mr. Lewis, Mr. Lyon stated that he appreciated Mr. Lewis providing the funding information from the federal government to potentially help cover the cost of the upcoming repairs. He explained that the deadline had passed for the FEMA grant that Mr. Lewis provided, and when they asked about future grant opportunities, they did not know at this point.

Mr. Anderson moved to recommend acceptance of the report as recommended by staff. The motion was seconded by Ms. Hall and unanimously carried.

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Proposed Grant Recommendations for 2026 (Debbie Obrien, CDBG Program Manager)
Ms. Debbie Obrien, CDBG Program Manager, reviewed the background and analysis of the proposed grant recommendation for 2026.

Staff recommended approval of the recommended funding amounts.

Responding to Ms. Arndt, Ms. Obrien explained that the information has been in the draft action plan, and she is before council to receive approval of this report to include the recommendations for the funding plans.

Responding to Mr. Anderson, Ms. Obrien explained that to remain code compliant, some items that are not a code violation, such as a window that doesn't lock from the inside, code enforcement may not enforce that unless it is a rental, but that is still a safety issue.

Mr. Anderson moved to recommend acceptance of the staff recommendation. The motion was seconded by Ms. Hall and unanimously carried.

Ms. Arndt moved for adjournment of the Parks, Recreation, and Community Enhancement Committee meeting, hearing no objection, the meeting adjourned at 7:33 p.m.

UTILITY COMMITTEE

The Utility Committee met with Chairman Rocha presiding.

Adoption of Agenda
Ms. Hall moved for adoption of the agenda, seconded by Dr. Pillsbury and unanimously carried.

Evaluation of Proposals – Manganese Removal Systems for Drinking Water (Kate Mills, P.E., Assistant Director of the Department of Water & Wastewater)
Ms. Kate Mills, P.E., Assistant Director of the Department of Water & Wastewater, reviewed the evaluation of the proposal for the manganese removal systems for drinking water.

Staff recommended awarding the contract to Verdantas for the Manganese Removal Systems for Drinking Water, RFP #26-0012WW, for the amount of $449,500.)

Responding to Mr. Lewis, Ms. Mills explained that two proposals were received and, after grading each, Verdantas was chosen. Ms. Mills further explained that their proposal was also the lowest cost between the two proposals, so that was factored into the grading.

Responding to Mr. Lewis, Ms. Mills explained that one of the items submitted with proposals is references; these are required to see if they work with other municipalities. She further explained that prior to advertising this proposal, they reached out to other municipalities or water systems to see what they had done to treat manganese, so they used that information to guide what was placed in the proposal.

Ms. Hall moved to recommend acceptance of the staff recommendation to award the contract to Verdantas for the Manganese Removal Systems for Drinking Water, RFP #26-0012WW, for the amount of $449,500. The motion was seconded by Dr. Pillsbury and unanimously carried by a roll call vote (Boggerty and Iriowen absent).

Presentation – Safer Community Campaign HELP Initiative (Charles Kistler, HELP Initiative)

Mr. Harold Stafford and Ms. Rosalynd Rodriguez reviewed the Safer Community Campaign presentation.

Staff Recommended approval for the Acting City Manager to sign and submit a letter of authorization.

Responding to Mr. Anderson, Mr. Stafford explained that in order for residents to take advantage of the credit to reduce their utility bill, they would have to allow them to go inside their home to complete the home energy check-up and counseling, and they would have to have an all-encompassing assessment that includes the exterior and interior. Mr. Stafford explained that it is different than before due to a different funding source; it was 100% funded by specifically interior, now that the funding is different, the focus is different. It is necessary to have the entire project completed.

Responding to Mr. Anderson, Mr. Stafford explained it is not considered a summer jobs program, they are trying to prepare people to get careers into trades by hiring people at $18.00 an hour and have them work with the program for at least 20 hours a week and in order for them to be able to be hired as an intern, they have to commit to pursue a trade at one of the vocational schools. Mr. Stafford further explained they have just entered into an agreement with the Carpenters Union and plan to work with all of the unions because a lot of the interns, due to a lot of the interns, have had an interest in the trades. He stated the goal is for those who meet the requirements to be referred to the unions and hopefully stay on the pathway to certification, not just a summer job, and end up with high-paying jobs. Mr. Stafford further explained that they also have funding to pay for the interns taking classes and getting their certifications.

Responding to Mr. Lewis, Mr. Stafford explained that they have started to work with Neighborhood Crime Watch programs, stating that the City of Seaford has been their concept working with Chief Craft, and would like to expand and cover more areas.

Responding to Mr. Lewis, Mr. Stafford stated that they had funding for cameras, and they purchased the first LPR device in the City of Dover with that funding. However, they do not have that funding anymore, as the original funding was through ARPA funds.

Responding to Mr. Lewis, Mr. Stafford stated that they have installed a lot of lights in Barrister's Place, and he explained that when he was approached by Councilman Boggerty for additional lights, the funding had run out, and they were not able to provide any additional resources. Mr. Stafford further explained that they have grant applications pending and are hopeful that by July 1, 2026, they will have been approved for further funding.

Responding to Ms. Hall, Mr. Stafford stated that even if they have installed exterior lighting in the area, they would still be eligible to receive the homeowner's check-up and counseling, as well as become eligible for the $300.00 credit for their energy bill.

Responding to Mr. Neil, Mr. Stafford stated that they do not currently partner with the DEMEC Efficiency Smart Program but are open to partnering with that program or anyone else that might be able to help with better leveraging the limited resources so that the impact is greater for the residents.

Dr. Sudler moved to recommend acceptance of the staff recommendation to approve the Acting City Manager to sign and submit a letter of authorization to the HELP Initiative. The motion was seconded by Mr. Anderson and unanimously carried.

Mr. Rocha moved for adjournment of the Utility Committee meeting, hearing no objection the meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE, FINANCE, AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

The Legislative, Finance, and Administration Committee met with Chairman Anderson presiding.

Adoption of Agenda

Mr. Garfinkel moved for adoption of the agenda, seconded by Mr. Shevock and unanimously carried.

Review of Snowstorm Budget Costs (Sharon Duca, Acting City Manager)

Ms. Sharon Duca, Acting City Manager, reviewed the snowstorm budget costs presentation.

This item was informational; committee action was not required.

Responding to Mr. Lewis, Ms. Duca explained that they place snow response staff up in local hotels if there is going to be difficulty with them being able to come and go from their homes, further explaining that some staff live in more rural areas and it can be challenging to get to work. Ms. Duca stated that it is only used when there are larger storms that could potentially create an issue, but they are placed so that the city can ensure there are enough personnel on duty during the storm, confirming this has been a common practice throughout the years.

Responding to Mr. Lewis, Ms. Duca explained that Kay Sass, Emergency Management Director, keeps a very close eye on what qualifies for federal assistance. Ms. Duca explained that the two storms were not bad enough this year to qualify for federal funds.

Responding to Mr. Lewis, Ms. Duca stated that, as noted during the presentation, the personnel expenses were covered with what was budgeted. Ms. Duca further stated that it is the overtime costs that the budget analyst and the finance department are working to balance out those costs. Ms. Duca explained that the contractor's assistance came from the reserve fund and that the amount was for salt and snow melt in the grounds division and public works. Ms. Duca stated that it was due to the cost of contractors that it was necessary to find savings in other areas in the operational fund that had not been utilized in order to cover those costs. Ms. Duca further stated that there may be money left in the grounds budget to purchase more ice melt, but the funds are pretty much depleted.

Responding to Mr. Lewis, Ms. Duca explained that when the snow plan is updated in the fall, prior to the winter season, one of the tests in the plan is to call different contractors to check their availability. She further explained that they try to avoid actually having someone under contract that we have to pay regardless of what occurs; therefore, they have certain people available. Ms. Duca stated that some contractors cannot respond until 24 hours after the storm starts because they have contracts with other facilities or the state, so they make calls to follow up to see who is available.

Consideration of Restoring an Alderman's Court (Council President Neil)

Council President Neil reviewed the background and analysis regarding the restoration of an Aldermen's Court.

This item was informational; committee action was not required.

Mr. Lewis stated that he believes this matter is worth exploring; however, he has concerns about costs, as well as whether the city has sole jurisdiction over the court. Mr. Lewis also asked if the state would assist with funding to help establish the Alderman's Court. Mr. Lewis suggested conducting a feasibility study.

Dr. Sudler stated the reason he is not supportive at this time is not that he believes in the status quo; it is to be financially and fiscally responsible in making this decision. He further explained that he would like to see the financial picture before moving forward with this matter. He asked if all the Alderman's court decisions would be final, if there were an appeal process, and if appealed, would it go to the State of Delaware court system. He stated he is worried about whether this implementation will result in an increase in residents' property taxes. He stated he is ready to explore this matter; however, moving forward would be premature.

Responding to the concerns, Mr. Anderson explained that they are not looking to authorize the expenditure of any funding at this time. He further explained that it would not be a commitment of any funding; it is about getting the authorization of what other cities around the state are doing. He further explained that this doesn't have to be implemented in nine (9) to twelve (12) months; it would take two (2) to three (3) years to get set up and established.

Mr. Anderson further explained that tonight they would be authorizing the city solicitor to create a resolution and a charter amendment that would go to the state legislature and if it is not done now, there would be a waiting period of a year to have it be considered and that this is step one, with many other steps taking place in the overall discussion that will not be able to be rushed. He stated that there is no reason to rush this matter, as it is necessary to get it done correctly.

Mr. Garfinkel stated that he has a better understanding of why getting the authorization now is imperative to the process; however, he does agree that this is an incredibly complex matter, and we don't want to move along too quickly. He stated he believes that the authorization to start the process should be done immediately.

Dr. Sudler stated his concerns about staying aligned with constituents' needs due to it being they who will bear the financial brunt of the decision. He stated he is worried that he doesn't believe this is a constituent-driven matter. He explained that it is for innovative ways to deal with the problems that are plaguing the city, but believes that there needs to be data to support further discussions. He believes this matter should be community-driven.

Mr. Neil stated that this initiative is being driven by the constituents who are tired of seeing their homes and businesses destroyed due to the quality-of-life issues happening around the city. Further stating that residents are moving out of the city due to these issues. Mr. Neil further explained that there are hurdles to the process, and he has asked the acting city manager to review the budget and decide if it is possible this year, and if not, possibly next year. Mr. Neil explained that we need to raise the quality of life as the city is crumbling.

Ms. Arndt requested additional information from other municipalities that have an Alderman's Court to be able to support this matter.

Vonderlear Smack, Dover, DE, read a written statement of public comment on Alderman's Court and submitted it for the record **(Attachment #1)**.

Responding to Ms. Smack, Mr. Anderson asked that she recommend someone to sit on the ad-hoc committee.

Chelle Paul stated that she has been part of the conversations regarding Alderman's Court and believes it is wonderful in concept; however, the issue is the marginalized people and communities it affects. Ms. Paul stated that if it does move forward, code enforcement violations are not brought to Alderman's Court. Ms. Paul explained that the way the council is handling matters in this chamber is creating distrust among black and brown communities. Ms. Paul has concerns that the Alderman's Court be utilized as intended, not to make money for the city. Ms. Paul explained that she is on the fence with this initiative, as it could have unintended consequences on marginalized communities.

Mr. Neil stated that he cannot support the motion to create an ad-hoc committee until there is a resolution to begin the process with the state legislature. Mr. Neil stated that he believes everyone should show a sign of faith to the people who are paying property taxes who have approached council and then work on the details as funding decisions, etc., are made. Mr. Neil stated that he has assured everyone that code enforcement items will not be considered at Alderman's Court; they will remain within the Construction and Property Maintenance Code Board of Appeals.

Responding to Ms. Hall, Mr. Anderson explained the timeline of when the resolution would need to go to the state legislature to begin the charter change to allow the discussion to begin.

Dr. Sudler stated he believes that council needs to take time and consideration of this matter prior to submitting a resolution to the state legislature.

Mr. Rocha stated that he agrees with the motion by Mr. Lewis and believes that rushing into sending a resolution to the state legislature seems premature. He stated that he believes that the concept is good and worth exploring, but there are too many details that need to be figured out. He further stated that he would not feel comfortable voting for a resolution that has not been reviewed by the council. He suggested taking the time necessary to include facts and figures needed to make an informed decision.

Mr. Shevock stated that he understood that there is a need to take the step of completing the resolution to the state legislature to then have the ability to move forward, but then it would take time to go through the process of setting up the entire process. He further explained that taking the time to go forward with the ad-hoc committee and get the ball rolling without having the resolution passed by the state legislature could end up being a waste of time if they don't approve

Mr. Lewis moved to recommend conducting a feasibility study of an Alderman's court and establishing an Ad Hoc committee to obtain input from the community. The motion was seconded by Mr. Garfinkel and passed by voice vote with one abstention (Neil).

Responding to Mr. Rocha, Mr. Anderson confirmed that if the charter is amended by the state legislature and it is decided that it cannot be done currently, the option will remain in the charter going forward and give the flexibility to bring the matter forward in the future.

Dr. Sudler stated that he will not be supporting the motion because he believes resolutions should come from constituents, and he does not see any constituents here in support.

Mr. Anderson stated that he has heard from approximately 200 people stating that the system is broken and the city needs to do something.

Bonnie Pennington, Dover, DE, stated that she rejects this initiative. She stated she believes it would be a waste of money on something that will not work.

Mr. Faust, Dover, DE, stated that if someone can appeal to a higher court, why is this necessary? He further stated that with the current budget concerns where the funding is going to come from. Mr. Faust explained that council needs to be realistic and practical about this matter.

Responding to Ms. Smack, Mr. Anderson explained that charter changes are normally easily passed through the state legislature, and there are elected officials willing to sponsor this initiative.

Mr. Neil moved to recommend creating a Resolution to change the charter, drafted by the City Solicitor, which would be brought back for review and discussion at the committee. The motion was seconded by Mr. Anderson and failed by a roll call vote of five yes (Anderson, Pillsbury, Neil, Shevock, Garfinkel), five no (Hall, Arndt, Rocha, Sudler, Lewis), and one absent (Boggerty).

Consideration of an Alderman's Court – Speed Control (Council President Neil)

Agenda Item #3, Consideration of an Alderman's Court – Speed Control, was not addressed due to the failure of Agenda Item #2, Consideration of Restoring an Alderman's Court.

The Mayor's Blue Ribbon Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) Taskforce Committee's Recommendations (Councilman Dr. Sudler)

Ms. Arielle Rivera, Assistant City Clerk, reviewed the committee's proposed recommendations.

This item was informational; committee action was not required.

Mr. Lewis moved to recommend acceptance of the report. The motion was seconded by Ms. Hall and unanimously carried.

City of Dover Municipal Police Academy Cost Review (Thomas Johnson, Chief of Police)

Mr. Thomas Johnson, Chief of Police, reviewed the background behind the City of Dover Municipal Police Academy.

This item was informational; committee action was not required.

Responding to Ms. Arndt, Chief Johnson explained that the City of Dover Municipal Police Academy is the only commuter academy below the canal. He explained that Delaware State Police Academy is five (5) days a week, including overnights, and that they do accept municipal police recruits and that they are brought back to their own organization. He explained that the costs are approximately the same for either academy. He stated that he has found that most of the time, agencies prefer the City of Dover model of academy.

Responding to Dr. Sudler, Chief Johnson referred to page three (3), Item nine (9) of the binder of information that explains the return on investment of the academy and officers produced.

Responding to Dr. Sudler, Chief Johnson explained that there are three (3) officers assigned to the academy as the core instructional team, and if the supervising officer was not over the academy, he would be reassigned to another supervisory role, and that would leave two (2) corporals.

Responding to Dr. Sudler, Chief Johnson explained that they are not getting additional pay to staff the academy; that is just their assignment for the week. He further explained that they flex officers from unit to unit to solve organizational problems all year long, from motorcycles to patrol to community policing, if there is a void in a particular area. He stated they will also fill in an SRO for a school day if the assigned officers cannot be there. Chief Johnson stated they are constantly shifting staff around to whatever role they need to perform to make sure that all mission objectives are met. He further explained that it is a constant, flexible model to allow as much efficiency as possible.

Dr. Sudler stated he would like to resume the conversation about budgetary constraints of the Dover Municipal Police Academy as they work through the upcoming budget issues.

Responding to Mr. Garfinkel, Chief Johnson explained that poaching is a touchy subject in their industry. He further explained that he is militant about the idea that if another agency sends a recruit to them to be trained, that conversation does not take place. He stated that he had two officers that have been trained and then went elsewhere and then returned.

Responding to Mr. Garfinkel, Chief Johnson stated that the idea that they retain more people who are trained brings stability to the organization. He further stated that they have had turnover, as well as attrition, in the last few years. Chief Johnson explained that they are doing well at retaining officers, further explaining that trying to project as the harder to see number is economical for Dover when it comes to retention and reducing all the costs that we currently are struggling with through the hiring process and turnover. He stated that retention is paramount because recruitment is still a struggle; however, they are not going backward any longer, as they were in 2023 and 2024. He believes they are starting to see a little bit of the return and interest, not just in the profession but in Kent County as a destination.

James Overton, Delaware State University Police Superintendent, gave an overview of his experience with his recertification process, attending the City of Dover Municipal Police Academy, and gave his support.

Responding to Mr. Anderson, Chief Johnson explained that it is longer if they send recruits to another police academy and explained that a longer academy is less return on investment.

Responding to Mr. Neil, Chief Johnson explained that the State Police Academy is a live-in academy and they build troopers, not shovel-ready municipal officers.

Responding to Chelle Paul, Chief Johnson did not give the costs of the police academy. Chief Johnson stated that if the city wants enough officers on the street, training their own officers helps us achieve authorized strength and maintain it.

Mr. Anderson moved for adjournment of the Legislative, Finance, and Administration Committee meeting, hearing no objection, the meeting adjourned at 10:33 p.m.

Mr. Neil moved for adjournment of the Council Committee of the Whole meeting, hearing no objection the meeting adjourned at 10:33 p.m.

Fred A. Neil
Council President

Attachments
Attachment #1 – Vonderlear Smack's Alderman's Court Statement

April 14, 2026

Public Comment On Alderman's Court:

Good evening Council President, members of Council, and my community.

My name is Vonda Smack, and for the past **five months**, I have been intentionally researching Alderman's Courts across Delaware. That research started when I saw Councilman Anderson's post about the possibility of bringing an Alderman's Court back to the City of Dover. Since then, I've taken the time to understand not just how these courts operate—but how they have impacted people, especially in communities that look like mine.

And I want to be clear tonight.... this is not just about policy.
This is about **history, trust, and impact**.

Because while this proposal is being presented as a solution to nuisance issues and speeding, what many of us hear is something different. We hear the expansion of local enforcement power. We hear faster processing of low-level offenses. And we hear the potential for more fines, more penalties, and more interaction with systems that have not always treated us fairly.

Let's be honest in this room......
Alderman's Courts, here in Delaware and across this country, have a history. And that history has not always been kind to Black and Brown communities or low-income residents. These systems have too often created pipelines, not to safety, but to **debt, warrants, and deeper system involvement for minor issues**.

And I need to say this clearly so there is no confusion and no backdoor surprises later:

Code enforcement tickets must NOT be included in any Alderman's Court in the City of Dover.

Because we've seen this before. Previous Alderman's Courts have **ruined Black and Brown property owners** through fines, violations, and systems that quickly escalated situations without support or fairness.

We do not need a system where someone is one ticket away from a cycle they can't get out of.

The people have made it clear>>> **we want code enforcement matters to remain in the State courts**, where there is more structure, more oversight, and more protection.

And let's be real, if that is not clearly defined now, it leaves room for expansion later. And that's how harm happens... quietly, over time.

Now I hear the intent. I hear the concerns about speeding. I hear the need for accountability. But the real question is not just *can we do this*.

The real question is:
Who will this impact the most?
And just as important......
Who will this system be used on the most?

Because if we cannot answer that with equity at the center, then we are setting ourselves up to repeat history.

And for those of us doing the work every day around probation reform, around reducing incarceration for technical violations, around breaking cycles we cannot ignore the reality that this could become a **front-end version of the very system we are trying to fix on the back end**.

And let's talk about trust.

Right now, there are already concerns in this city about fairness, about racial bias, about whether all communities are treated equally. So bringing back a system that historically caused harm without first addressing that trust gap is not going to land the way some may think it will.

If this Council is serious about moving forward with something like this, then there must be **non-negotiable guardrails**:

- Full transparency with public data by race, zip code, and income
- Clear protections so that inability to pay does not lead to punishment
- Alternatives like community service instead of fines
- Independent community oversight - not just internal control
- And ongoing, real engagement with the people most impacted

Because without that, this is not reform.
This is regression.

And I'm going to say this plainly...

You cannot build a new system on top of old pain and expect people to feel safe.

So I urge this Council to slow this down, to engage the community deeply, and to center the voices of those who have historically been most impacted by systems like this.

Because public safety should not come at the cost of public trust.

Thank you.

Vonda Smack

Dover Delaware Resident