

COUNCIL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

The Council Committee of the Whole met on June 09, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. with Council President Neil presiding. Members of Council present were Mr. Anderson, Ms. Arndt, Mr. Boggerty (left at 6:39 p.m.), Ms. Hall, Mr. Lewis (via WebEx), Dr. Pillsbury (via WebEx), Mr. Rocha, and Dr. Sudler (left at 7:49 p.m.). Mayor Christiansen was also present. Civilian members present for their Committee meetings were Mr. Shevock (via WebEx) (*Legislative, Finance, and Administration*). Mr. Cunningham, Mr. Lewis (*Parks, Recreation, and Community Enhancement*), and Mr. Garfinkel (*Legislative, Finance, and Administration*) were absent.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

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

Hope Center in Kent County Presentation (Matthew Heckles, DSHA Director)

Mr. Matthew Heckles, DSHA Director, reviewed the presentation entitled “Road to Hope – Delaware State Housing Authority” (**Attachment #1**).

This item was informational; committee action was not required.

Responding to Mr. Boggerty, Mr. Heckles stated that there would be approximately 160 rooms, given the center's current configuration. He explained that they are still reviewing how to manage occupancy of the building by families, mothers, children, husbands, wives, and so forth. He noted that there is a difference from the building in New Castle County, as the hotel in New Castle County had more suites, larger rooms, and adjoining rooms. Mr. Heckles stated that modifications to the facility layout may be needed to better accommodate larger families, including potential renovations to connect certain rooms and create larger family units before opening. He noted the intent to ensure family accommodation remains available and mentioned consideration of incorporating discharge respite beds into the project.

Mr. Heckles further explained that the Rural Health Transformation Grant is intended to support improvements to the healthcare system by reducing reliance on emergency rooms, ambulance services, and other high-cost healthcare resources. He stated that the project would seek to provide housing and onsite medical services for individuals who are frequent users of those services, with reduced utilization serving as part of the program's performance measures.

Responding to Mr. Boggerty, Mr. Heckles stated that plans for food services have not yet been fully developed. He noted that concepts under consideration include an on-site restaurant-style dining option for residents, potentially utilizing a meal card access system, as well as a fresh food market to improve access to fresh food in that area of the city. He emphasized, however, that food service is not intended to be the primary function of the facility or the primary service provided to residents.

Responding to Mr. Boggerty, Mr. Heckles stated that individuals currently receiving services outside of their home county may have opportunities to access services closer to where they live

as additional resources become available throughout the state. He explained that, as services expand in Sussex and Kent Counties, individuals and families may be better served locally rather than traveling to New Castle County. He noted that students attending schools in Dover would benefit from having local housing options available and emphasized that reducing long commutes would create a more supportive environment for children and families. Mr. Heckles stated that the project would provide Kent County with an option that does not currently exist to better serve residents locally.

Responding to Mr. Boggerty, Mr. Heckles stated that policies regarding whether registered sex offenders would be permitted to stay at the facility have not yet been finalized and that he was not prepared to make a commitment on that issue. He noted that similar facilities in New Castle County do not permit individuals with sex offense histories, but acknowledged that such restrictions can create barriers to access.

Mr. Heckles further explained that the project is anticipated to follow a housing-first and low-barrier-to-entry approach. He emphasized that these models do not eliminate rules or expectations for residents but instead focus on ensuring individuals do not lose housing solely due to noncompliance unrelated to the housing arrangement itself. He stated that behavioral concerns may still be addressed and appropriate action may still be taken when necessary, and clarified that the approach is intended to increase accessibility while maintaining structure and accountability rather than creating an unrestricted environment.

Mr. Rocha expressed support for the idea of incorporating a restaurant component into the project and referenced a model similar to those done by Jon Bon Jovi, in which community members who are able to pay for meals help support meals for individuals who cannot. He suggested that a similar approach could be considered for the Hope Center and further proposed that food service operations could create workforce development opportunities by allowing residents to gain training and work experience in hospitality or food service.

Responding to Mr. Rocha, Mr. Heckles stated that the concept was consistent with the type of community-oriented programming being explored for the Hope Center and referenced examples of Jon Bon Jovi's philanthropic ideas and homelessness outreach efforts that incorporate similar approaches. He noted that the existing commercial kitchen at the former Dover Sheraton facility represents a significant asset and stated that the space was previously capable of serving large numbers of people, creating opportunities for future food-related programming.

Mr. Heckles stated that plans for use of the kitchen and cafeteria space are still being developed and emphasized that food and nutrition programming are not areas of the organization's expertise. He explained that the Hope Center intends to focus on housing and supportive services while partnering with organizations that specialize in food services, healthcare, job training, and other programming areas. He stated that Requests for Proposals (RFPs) and future partnership opportunities will be used to identify qualified organizations to operate and support those services as the project develops.

Mr. Rocha asked whether outreach efforts would be developed for individuals experiencing homelessness who may be unwilling to seek shelter or participate in available programs.

Mr. Heckles acknowledged that even with a fully operational Hope Center, there will continue to be individuals who choose not to participate in shelter services. He stated that experience has shown that not every individual will engage with available programs; however, he expressed the belief that participation may increase if individuals view the program as one that treats them with patience, tolerance, and dignity and provides meaningful opportunities for long-term success through supportive services and best practices.

Mr. Heckles further explained that he envisions the Hope Centers serving as central locations for intake, outreach operations, mobile health services, and coordination of resources. He stated that outreach teams could operate from the Hope Center while maintaining connections to housing, food, healthcare, and other supportive services located onsite. He described the concept as creating a centralized hub for service delivery that strengthens coordination across programs and improves the overall system of care for individuals experiencing homelessness. He noted that effective outreach requires patience, understanding, time, and the development of trust over an extended period. He explained that many individuals experiencing homelessness may be hesitant to engage with available programs because prior attempts to seek assistance have not produced successful outcomes or because they feel the system has not adequately supported them. He acknowledged that individual circumstances may vary, but emphasized that rebuilding trust requires more than offering services; it requires demonstrating how current approaches and resources differ from past experiences and showing that participation can lead to better outcomes.

Responding to Ms. Arndt, Mr. Heckles stated that they hope that after the acquisition and rehabilitation process takes place, they will be ready to open in four to six months, so that they can bring people in before the weather gets bad in the winter.

Responding to Mr. Anderson, Mr. Heckles stated that available data generally does not support the perception that large numbers of individuals experiencing homelessness relocate from outside the state to access services. He stated that most individuals experiencing homelessness in Delaware have existing ties to the state or region, although defining residency can be complex depending on how long an individual has lived in the area and when housing instability occurred.

Mr. Heckles referenced research conducted in Wilmington that examined concerns regarding individuals relocating from outside Delaware and noted that the findings indicated relatively few people had moved from outside the area. He further emphasized that homelessness affects a broad range of populations, including families and senior citizens who may lose housing due to rising costs, fixed incomes, or changes in household circumstances.

Mr. Heckles stated that the population of individuals relocating specifically to seek services at the Hope Center is expected to be limited and emphasized that the project is intended primarily to serve individuals and families experiencing homelessness within their local communities. He stated that residency requirements and related eligibility policies have not yet been finalized. He explained that the organization is currently reviewing policies and procedures used by other shelters in the region, as well as best practices from national organizations, to help inform development of its operating guidelines. Mr. Heckles stated that, while policy decisions remain under consideration, his preference would be not to impose unnecessary limitations and expressed

the view that individuals experiencing homelessness who are present in the community are likely in need of assistance.

Responding to Mr. Anderson, Mr. Heckles stated that privacy, design, and security considerations are a significant part of the project planning process and will be evaluated both inside and outside of the facility. He noted that security was identified early as a priority and stated that one of the first Requests for Proposals (RFPs) issued would be for security services to support the program. Mr. Heckles explained that the facility is expected to operate with separate service and residential functions and noted that while service areas may operate with limited hours, residential access will likely need to remain available around the clock to accommodate varying resident schedules, requiring continuous security coverage in those areas. He further stated that existing security systems, including camera systems installed at the property, may remain in place and be incorporated into operations.

Regarding the exterior of the site, he noted that improvements under consideration include redesigning parking areas, curbing, and creating clearer property boundaries and separation features. He added that engaging an architect will be among the initial project steps to evaluate the facility and provide recommendations related to design, security, and site improvements.

Responding to Mr. Anderson, Mr. Heckles stated that specific requests may develop as planning progresses but emphasized that the project's success will depend significantly on whether the city serves as a collaborative partner. He expressed hope that the Hope Center will be viewed as a community asset intended to create positive impacts for both the city and its residents and stated that a cooperative approach would improve the likelihood of successful outcomes.

Mr. Heckles noted that initial discussions had already occurred with the Dover Police Department, including officers involved in outreach and community policing efforts, and stated that the Hope Center could serve as an additional resource to support those efforts. He further stated that, at this time, he was not anticipating financial requests from the city but indicated that future support may include ideas, community connections, partnerships, and assistance in identifying organizations or providers for services such as workforce development and job training. He emphasized that collaboration with community partners will be important as the project continues to develop.

Mayor Christiansen stated that he was encouraged by elements of the proposed Hope Center model and noted similarities to strategies used during the Mayor's Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness, including rapid housing placement paired with supportive services. He shared past experiences conducting outreach to individuals living in encampments, including veterans who were hesitant to engage with services due to prior experiences, and emphasized the importance of continued outreach and building trust.

The mayor noted that the facility's kitchen and food service capabilities create opportunities for workforce development and suggested potential partnerships with organizations that provide culinary and workforce training opportunities. He expressed support for developing programs that promote both resident self-sufficiency and long-term success.

Mayor Christiansen thanked Mr. Heckles for his leadership and collaboration efforts and stated that the city supports the project's success because of its potential to address community needs.

He noted that while direct financial support may not be available, the city remains willing to provide support through partnerships, resources, and community connections to assist with the implementation of the Hope Center initiative.

Mr. Heckles thanked Mayor Christiansen for his participation in the collaborative effort and stated that the collaborative has since been divided into ten committees to allow for more focused work on specific areas related to homelessness. He explained that topics under review include Code Purple, centralized intake, shelter capacity, exit strategies, and other targeted issues, with recommendations expected to be brought forward in October. He stated that breaking the work into smaller groups allows for more detailed evaluation and development of solutions than addressing homelessness through a single committee structure.

Mr. Heckles also expressed interest in continuing discussions regarding potential food service and workforce development opportunities associated with the Hope Center. He reflected on lessons learned through efforts to address veteran homelessness and emphasized that successful outreach requires actively engaging individuals, building trust, identifying needs on an individual basis, and connecting people with stable housing and supportive services.

Mr. Heckles stated that the Mayor's Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness demonstrated that focused efforts, coordinated resources, and active participation from local governments can produce measurable results. He noted that veteran homelessness outcomes improved because the initiative concentrated attention and resources on a defined population and stated that those strategies provide examples of approaches that could be applied more broadly to homelessness initiatives.

Mr. Neil stated that housing affordability and rising housing costs continue to contribute to homelessness, particularly for individuals with low or fixed incomes. He noted that employment does not always prevent housing instability and referenced examples of individuals who remain employed while experiencing homelessness.

Mr. Neil expressed concern about the potential impacts that homelessness and related challenges may have on surrounding businesses, commercial property owners, public safety resources, and overall community conditions. He discussed concerns raised by commercial property owners regarding property conditions and impacts on property values and noted the additional demands placed on law enforcement and public systems in responding to homelessness-related issues.

Mr. Neil further stated that homelessness often intersects with substance use disorders, mental health needs, and economic hardship, creating challenges that extend beyond the city's direct authority and financial capacity. He acknowledged limitations on the city's ability to provide certain services directly and emphasized the importance of partnerships and supportive programming.

Mr. Neil stated that, despite those concerns, he supports development of the Hope Center and views it as an important community resource that could provide housing, supportive services, and opportunities to help individuals stabilize, reconnect with services, and improve long-term outcomes.

Responding to Dr. Sudler, Mr. Heckles stated that funding and facility design are two key components that distinguish the proposed Kent County program from similar models. He explained that while the New Castle County Hope Center utilized ARPA funding for acquisition, it did not have additional funding dedicated to sustaining operations. In contrast, Kent County has funding available through the Rural Health Fund, which will allow the program to develop services, operate over an initial five-year period, and establish sustainable funding sources through medical and supportive services over time.

Mr. Heckles further stated that the proposed facility is better suited to support the vision of providing residential services and shelter. As an example, he noted that the inclusion of on-site laundry facilities addresses a challenge experienced by the New Castle County Hope Center, where residents must travel off-site to complete laundry. He explained that providing these services on-site is intended to reduce barriers and allow residents to spend more time focused on education, employment, job training, family support, and other personal goals.

Responding to Dr. Sudler, Mr. Heckles stated that the intake process policies have not yet been created. He explained that they are currently gathering information and will be put in place before the opening. He emphasized that those decisions would affect people, keeping some from wanting to go there and others from being able to go there, while letting others in. These are all important factors they need to weigh.

Responding to Dr. Sudler, Mr. Heckles stated that his vision would include on-site mental health services as part of a broader healthcare component, although specific programming and partnerships have not yet been determined. He noted that the intent is to provide both physical and mental health resources and expressed interest in potentially incorporating dental services to address challenges often experienced by low-income populations. Mr. Heckles emphasized that these concepts remain aspirational at this stage and that final decisions will depend on future partnerships and guidance from subject matter experts regarding appropriate on-site services and program structure.

Regan Coder, Dover, questioned why it would be beneficial to build a homeless outreach center when places like the People's Community Church could use the funding for the programs they already provide.

Mr. Heckles stated that the proposed Hope Center is intended to serve both as a direct provider of services and as a catalyst for broader system improvements. He explained that the scale and capacity of the facility could enhance service delivery in Kent County and support community organizations that may currently face resource limitations. He further stated that the model could help establish standards and accountability for state-funded programs by evaluating whether participants are receiving appropriate supportive services and progressing successfully through available programs. Mr. Heckles emphasized that he is not advocating for any specific provider or existing program but views the Hope Center as an opportunity to facilitate evaluation and discussion regarding service effectiveness and outcomes.

Mr. Coder asked if the new Hope Center would ever expect to partner with current centers.

Mr. Heckles stated that his biggest concern regarding homelessness in Delaware is that services are too fragmented, with too many groups operating independently. He noted that there are faith-based organizations, nonprofits, municipalities, counties, and other entities all doing work in this area; however, efforts are not coordinated effectively. He further stated that even the centralized intake system required by HUD is not functioning as well as it should and is only participating in and referring to certain homeless services.

Mr. Heckles stated that Delaware needs to rebuild the system by identifying organizations that are doing effective work, understanding why their approaches are successful, and empowering those efforts to expand and be shared across the state.

As an example, Mr. Heckles referenced a recent visit to Family Promise of Northern Delaware, which is opening a newly constructed shelter for families. He described the facility as beautiful and noted that it is part of a broader network of organizations across the state that are doing meaningful work. He stated that these organizations need continued support because the Hope Centers will not be able to address homelessness on their own.

Mr. Heckles concluded that the focus should be on creating a coordinated network and system to ensure the entire State of Delaware responds consistently to individuals in need, rather than having varying levels of resources and services available depending on location.

Responding to Mr. Lewis, Mr. Heckles stated that the New Castle County Hope Center is not located near a retail area, which he noted has both advantages and disadvantages. He stated that outreach has been conducted with surrounding businesses and that several conversations have taken place, with additional discussions ongoing.

Mr. Heckles expressed hope that they can ensure they are good neighbors to nearby businesses, both in the immediate vicinity and throughout the corridor. He stated that through security measures, facility design, and supporting infrastructure, they aim to create a positive experience for everyone.

William Faust, Jr., 136 Orchard Avenue, questioned how they will maintain the funding since the city has funding issues and cannot provide financial support.

Responding to Mr. Faust, Mr. Heckles stated that the acquisition is associated with DSHA, and that operations will primarily be covered through the Rural Health Transformation Grant, which he believes has sufficient funding for the first five years.

He stated that the overall goal is to ensure sustainability over a 20-year period, which he described as a reasonable planning horizon. He expressed confidence in the funding stability for the first five years, noting that this period will also allow the development of financing mechanisms, including reserve funds and capital reserves for the building, to support long-term sustainability.

Mr. Heckles further stated that while the specific provider or program, such as food service delivery, may change over time, the intent is to maintain a consistent base of operations throughout the 20-year period.

Bonnie Pennington, Dover, questioned if the facility would have a cafeteria or individual eating areas, who would provide the funding for cleaning staff, doctors, and cooks, and how medication would be disbursed.

Mr. Heckles stated that he did not have answers to all of the questions raised, noting that some operational details still need to be developed. He stated that one issue regarding food service is whether food can be stored or kept in rooms, as this may create pest or infestation concerns in some facilities, and will need to be addressed through policy.

He noted that there are larger rooms on each floor that may allow for the placement of microwaves and potentially serve as communal spaces. He stated that while challenges are expected, policies and procedures are still being developed.

Mr. Heckles further stated that the facility includes approximately five floors, and that certain floors may be designated for specific populations based on need, including individuals requiring higher levels of medical care and a potential respite care floor. He stated that floor access could be managed through badge-controlled elevator access, limiting residents to designated floors.

He compared aspects of the facility design to hotel industry practices and stated that lessons can be learned from that sector. He also noted that a small number of suite-style units already exist with multi-room layouts, which would likely be used to accommodate families initially. He expressed hope that, following opening, adjoining rooms could be arranged to provide separate spaces for adults and children.

Mr. Heckles stated that first-floor space is being considered for storage of personal belongings, recognizing that individuals experiencing homelessness often have possessions that may not be suitable for in-room storage. He also noted the need to consider transportation-related needs, including parking, scooters, and bicycles.

He concluded by stating that these issues will require ongoing collaboration with partners experienced in this work, both locally and nationally, and emphasized the importance of learning from best practices in other jurisdictions, including examples from Seattle, Washington, by engaging with organizations that have implemented similar solutions.

Mr. Anderson moved to defer the Council Reports of May 2026 to the next meeting. Hearing no objection the motion was unanimously carried.

PARKS, RECREATION, AND COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

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

Adoption of Agenda

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

Revitalization of Mary Street Playlot (Roger Ridgeway, Parks and Recreation Director)

Mr. Roger Ridgeway, Parks and Recreation Director, reviewed the background and analysis regarding the revitalization of the Mary Street playlot.

Staff recommended approving to proceed with the revitalization plan.

Dr. Sudler moved to recommend approval to proceed with the revitalization of the Mary Street playlot. The motion was seconded by Mr. Anderson and unanimously carried.

Ms. Hall moved for adjournment of the Parks, Recreation, and Community Enhancement Committee meeting, hearing no objection the meeting adjourned at 7:31 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE, FINANCE, AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

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

Adoption of Agenda

Dr. Sudler moved for adoption of the agenda, seconded by Mr. Rocha and unanimously carried.

Presentation on the Transfer on Death (TOD) deeds (Eugenia Thornton, Recorder of Deeds)

Ms. Eugenia Thornton, Recorder of Deeds, reviewed the presentation on the Transfer of Death Deeds.

This item was informational; committee action was not required.

Dr. Sudler thanked Ms. Thornton for her presentation.

Mr. Anderson thanked Ms. Thornton for lobbying the state legislature and being a leading force in implementing the Transfer on Death (TOD) deeds in the State of Delaware.

Responding to Ms. Hall, Ms. Thornton stated that, currently, there are no programs that assist with the financial costs of filing for a Transfer on Death Deed. She explained that Kent County Levy Court supported her in recommending that the filing fee be \$88 rather than \$105. She noted that the law requires that all fees be collected before recording a document. She has been working with

the CenDel Foundation to try to create a fund that will assist with legal issues that are associated with a TOD deed and property fraud, because clearing the title falls on the victim.

Responding to Mr. Rocha, Ms. Thornton stated that Transfer on Death (TOD) deeds do not provide protection from Medicaid estate recovery or other outstanding debts. She explained that if sufficient debts exist at the time of the property owner's death and cannot be satisfied by those inheriting the property, the property may be required to go through probate to resolve those obligations. In Delaware, those matters would be administered through the Register of Wills.

Ms. Thornton noted that Delaware's process differs from some other states due to the role of the Register of Wills in handling probate matters, whereas in other states those matters may involve the courts, attorneys, or funeral directors. She emphasized that individuals who inherit property also inherit the responsibilities associated with the property and may ultimately need to decline or dispose of the interest if they are unable to maintain it.

She further stated that Delaware's law includes a provision allowing insurance coverage on the property to remain in place for the first 60 days after transfer to provide time for the beneficiary to determine whether they can assume ownership responsibilities. Ms. Thornton added that while some individuals use TOD deeds due to financial circumstances, others have used them simply as a means to avoid probate.

Mr. Coder asked about the procedure for someone revoking a TOD.

Responding to Mr. Coder, Ms. Thornton stated that the law regarding a transfer-on-death (TOD) deeds is very clear. She explained that a TOD deed may be revoked at any time, including up until the time of death; however, it must be recorded in her office in order to be valid and effective.

She noted that the timing of recording is critical. If a TOD deed is changed and recorded prior to death, the most recently recorded deed governs distribution. However, if a revised TOD deed is submitted but not yet recorded at the time of death, the previously recorded TOD deed remains controlling, even if the newer version designates a different beneficiary.

Ms. Thornton compared TOD deeds to wills, noting that while both may be updated, TOD deeds function as deeds rather than testamentary instruments and therefore require recording to take effect. She also referenced the ability in some jurisdictions to safeguard wills through storage programs in the Register of Wills office, and noted that in the case of wills, the most recently executed valid document generally prevails, even if multiple versions are discovered.

She further stated that TOD deeds are more limited in flexibility than wills and do not include the same contingencies or protections. She noted that wills may include requirements for acknowledgment of heirs, including providing nominal bequests, whereas TOD deeds allow a direct transfer designation without such requirements.

Ms. Thornton stated that TOD deeds require two witnesses and notarization to help ensure the individual is of sound mind and acting without duress. She emphasized that, once recorded, changes to property designation can be identified through the Property Fraud Alert program,

allowing individuals to be notified of changes and potentially address disputes directly with the property owner.

Responding to Mr. Coder, Ms. Thornton stated that the law in question has been adopted in approximately 30 other states, in some cases for up to 20 years. She referenced Chicago, where she stated she studied the practice extensively, noting that approximately 30,000 transfer-on-death (TOD) deeds have been processed over the past decade. She further stated that studies, including those conducted by DePaul University and others, have found that TOD deeds can help create generational wealth, which she cited as one of the reasons she supported implementing the law in Delaware.

Ms. Thornton stated that in cases where a property is sold, the TOD deed becomes incompatible because the grantor no longer has an ownership interest in the property and therefore cannot transfer it. She noted that some title companies recommend revocation of a TOD deed during the settlement process to ensure clear title, although this practice is not uniform. She stated that in Delaware, some title companies are currently requiring revocation as part of closing due to the relative newness of the law.

She further explained that the legal effect is the same as with wills in that a disposition cannot apply to property no longer owned by the testator or grantor. She stated that any attempt to transfer property through a will or TOD deed is ineffective if the individual no longer owns the property at the time of death.

Ms. Thornton also noted that inheriting property includes assuming associated obligations, including mortgages, homeowners' association fees, insurance, and utilities. She stated that property transfer does not eliminate existing debt or financial responsibilities tied to the property.

Evaluation of Proposals – City Hall Roof Replacement (Andrew McNatt, Facilities Manager)

Mr. Andrew McNatt, Facilities Manager, reviewed the background and analysis regarding the City Hall roof replacement.

Staff recommended awarding the City Hall Roof Replacement to Quality Exteriors, Inc. as per the proposal submitted in response to RFP #26-0018FM.

Responding to Mr. Rocha, Mr. McNatt stated that the money was allocated from Fiscal Year 2026.

Mr. Neil moved to recommend approval of the staff recommendation. The motion was seconded by Ms. Arndt and unanimously carried by a roll call vote (Boggerty, Sudler, Garfinkel absent).

Transportation Infrastructure Investment Fund (TIIF) Grant Application (Jason Lyon, Water/Wastewater Director)

Mr. Jason Lyon, Water/Wastewater Director, reviewed the background and analysis behind the Transportation Infrastructure Investment Fund (TIIF) grant application.

Staff recommended approval of the grant application in accordance with the City of Dover Department of Finance procedure.

Mr. Rocha moved to recommend acceptance of the staff recommendation for the approval of the grant application for the TIIF. The motion was seconded by Mr. Shevock.

Responding to Mr. Anderson, Mr. Lyon stated that the intent of the budget that was presented to the body included money to pay for the improvements at Garrison Oak Technical Park using Economic Development funds. The goal is that the money will be awarded through the TIIF so that they will not have to use the Economic Development funds as a funding source.

Mr. Rocha moved to recommend acceptance of the staff recommendation for the approval of the grant application for the TIIF. The motion was seconded by Mr. Shevock and unanimously carried.

Sole Source Request – ZeroEyes Gun Detection Solution (Thomas Johnson, Chief of Police)

Mr. Thomas Johnson, Chief of Police, and Ryan Kelly, Advantech, reviewed the background and analysis behind the sole source request for the *ZeroEyes* gun detection solution.

Staff recommended approving the request to sole-source Advantech/ZeroEyes vendors.

Responding to Ms. Arndt, Chief Johnson stated that he has been tracking the ZeroEyes technology for approximately five years. He noted that when he first became aware of the system at a conference, it was primarily marketed for campus protection applications, such as healthcare or educational campuses, with the primary objective of identifying visible firearms in public spaces.

He explained that the intended use of the technology aligns with existing surveillance coverage of common areas within campuses and the city, and that it would only be applied to existing camera networks already used for recording video for criminal investigations, post-incident review, and other public safety purposes.

Chief Johnson stated that the system is intended to serve as an augmentation to current practices and uses narrowly focused artificial intelligence and analytics. He emphasized that it is not facial recognition technology and is not designed for identifying individuals. He described the system as being limited to detecting visible firearms, including pistols, revolvers, rifles, and shotguns, based on known firearm imagery.

He further explained that any alert generated by the system would be independently verified by a separate monitoring station staffed by vendor-employed specialists prior to notification being sent to law enforcement. He stated that this verification process is intended to reduce false alerts, such as those involving law enforcement officers carrying firearms in the course of duty.

Chief Johnson concluded that, once verified, notifications would direct staff to review specific camera feeds in real time, noting that the technology is designed to supplement, rather than replace, human monitoring capabilities, which are limited by staffing constraints.

Responding to Ms. Arndt, Chief Johnson stated that the system will initially send a photograph as part of an alert process. He explained that the review process is learned over time and improves with experience, as analysts become familiar with routine scenarios such as armed security personnel conducting cash drops at locations like Wawa.

He noted that the individuals reviewing the alerts are law enforcement personnel and retired military analysts who make determinations on whether an alert should be cancelled or forwarded to the police department. He emphasized that these reviewers assess context, such as armed guards performing routine duties, in order to avoid unnecessary escalation while still ensuring appropriate notifications are made when a legitimate threat is identified.

Responding to Ms. Arndt, Mr. Kelly stated that the process includes human intervention, whereby the analytic system first identifies a potential firearm, which is then verified by a human reviewer in dispatch. He explained that the “human-in-the-loop” verification step ensures that alerts are reviewed and confirmed before being forwarded to the Dover Police Department. He noted that this means alerts are already subject to a verification process prior to law enforcement notification.

Responding to Mr. Neil, Chief Johnson stated that, in response to an earlier observation from Council President Neil, he wanted to distinguish the technology being proposed from ShotSpotter, which is a sound detection system that identifies gunshots. He noted that the department has followed ShotSpotter for some time and receives frequent inquiries about it; however, he stated that it is very expensive and, in his view, offers limited additional value given the existing level of citizen reporting and dispatch response when gunfire occurs in the city. He noted that in most cases, though not all, when a firearm is discharged, police receive multiple calls quickly and response times are generally strong.

Chief Johnson further contrasted sound detection technology with ZeroEyes, emphasizing both cost and operational differences. He stated that ZeroEyes is significantly more economical and aligns with the department’s “left of bang” philosophy. He explained that “left of bang” refers to intervening before a weapons discharge occurs, rather than responding afterward.

He stated that while post-incident response involves investigating and addressing events after a shooting, the goal is to move earlier in the sequence of events to prevent harm. He explained that identifying a brandished firearm prior to discharge could provide officers additional time to respond and intervene.

Chief Johnson stated that such situations may include lawful firearm possession, which officers are trained to assess and handle appropriately, as well as unlawful possession cases requiring intervention. He emphasized that early identification could provide a critical window to prevent a potential shooting.

He concluded that this technology represents a significant advancement in using available tools to proactively address gun violence and improve the department’s ability to intervene before weapons are discharged, rather than solely responding after the fact.

Responding to Mr. Neil, Mr. Kelly stated that the technology is an analytic system that is expected to continue improving over time. He noted that there are over 250 cameras throughout the downtown area and that the intent is to leverage this existing infrastructure through analytics in order to be more proactive, rather than relying solely on human monitoring.

He stated that it is not feasible for staff to manually monitor all camera feeds without significant additional personnel, estimating that it would require a substantial increase in staffing to do so. He emphasized that the purpose of bringing the technology forward is to support law enforcement personnel by enhancing existing capabilities.

Mr. Kelly concluded that the city would continue to evaluate technology and analytics to assist the men and women behind the badge and to support public safety in the community.

Responding to Mr. Rocha, Chief Johnson directed him to page three of the action form, noting that the project had been approved by the Criminal Justice Council for two consecutive years at slightly more than \$60,000 per year for the base cost of the detection system. He stated that the platform fee and associated upfront costs required by Advantech to interface with existing technology totaled slightly over \$13,000, which was identified as the additional funding needed to implement the system. He further noted that the funding source is listed to the right of the corresponding amount on the form.

Responding to Mr. Rocha, Chief Johnson stated that the approval covers a two-year period. He explained that, prior to the meeting, he requested that the Criminal Justice Council consider approving funding for the second year during their budget deliberations. He stated that the Council subsequently approved the second-year funding.

He noted that this approval was significant for two reasons: first, to reassure city council that the system is funded for two years; and second, to allow sufficient time to evaluate the effectiveness and efficacy of the technology. He stated that this evaluation period would help determine whether he would recommend continuing the system and, if alternative funding cannot be identified, whether costs would need to be absorbed by the city in the future.

Responding to Mr. Rocha, Chief Johnson compared the system to a traditional alarm company process. He explained that when an alarm is triggered, for example, for an ADT customer, the signal is first sent to the alarm company, which contacts the customer according to established protocols and, if necessary, forwards the alert to the appropriate 911 center.

He stated that the proposed system follows a similar path. Once the technology identifies a potential weapon, the alert is sent to a monitoring station in Conshohocken, where trained professionals staff the system 24 hours a day, seven days a week. He explained that these personnel verify the alert and once confirmed, electronically transmit the image and location information to the 911 center, where it is received through electronic means for further response.

Responding to Mr. Rocha, Mr. Kelly stated that the system includes geotracking capabilities that provide location information within dispatch. He explained that designated staff members will also receive alerts directly on their cell phones through an application. He stated that alerts will identify

the individual, the location, and any movement across multiple camera feeds in real time. He noted that this information will be simultaneously transmitted to both dispatch and mobile devices, allowing for immediate awareness and response as the situation develops.

Responding to Mr. Rocha, Chief Johnson stated that the technology detects the image and shape of a firearm regardless of how it is constructed, including polymer, metal, or 3D-printed weapons. He emphasized that the system does not identify or focus on individuals, noting that it is not concerned with who a person is or what they are doing. He explained that the system simply detects when a firearm appears to be present in an uncontrolled or public setting, such as in a person's hand or on a vehicle, and generates an alert so that authorities can determine whether it presents a public safety concern.

Chief Johnson further stated that the alert is reviewed by a monitoring center staffed with trained personnel who are familiar with distinguishing lawful firearm possessions from potentially unlawful or threatening situations. He noted that if there is any uncertainty or concern, the alert is forwarded to the police department, which then follows standard response protocols. He compared the system to a 911 call reporting a person with a gun, noting that in traditional calls there may be only a verbal description and no visual confirmation. He stated that this technology provides an additional layer of information that is both faster and more detailed than a verbal report, enabling quicker situational awareness and response.

Mr. Rocha moved to recommend acceptance of the staff recommendation for the approval of the sole source Advantech/ZeroEyes vendor.

Responding to Ms. Arndt, Chief Johnson stated that his prior remarks were intended to clarify that individuals such as uniformed security guards, police officers, sheriffs, and other persons acting in an official capacity would be included within that context. He stated that the reference was meant to address those individuals specifically. He further stated that the system does not consider additional personal factors related to individuals and that alerts are treated similarly to a 911 call reporting a person with a firearm. He explained that in such situations, dispatch and officers initially have limited information and must respond based on available details. Chief Johnson emphasized that whether information originates from a 911 call or from a ZeroEyes alert, the response is governed by standard dispatch procedures, officer training, and departmental policy. He stated that the source of the information does not change how incidents are handled operationally.

Responding to Mr. Lewis, Mr. Kelly stated that to dismantle the system there would be zero cost. The physical server would be returned back to ZeroEyes who have the analytics on it and there would be no additional cost to remove that.

Responding to Mr. Lewis, Ms. Marney stated that the funding was pulled from the police budget auto line and applied to the construction line, and the funds are available through the existing budget.

Responding to Mr. Lewis, Ms. Marney stated that funds are being reallocated from the Auto line object code 5022 to the Construction line object code 54031. She explained that the funds were

already available in the Capital Budget (Fund 101), which is the city's capital budget fund. She further noted that object code 5402 is an internal general ledger classification, and that the funding is being moved into the Construction line because the project is classified as a capital construction project.

Responding to Mr. Faust, Chief Johnson stated that the technology does not distinguish between individuals carrying a firearm; rather, it alerts when a firearm is visible. He explained that the department will process any resulting alert in the same manner as other notifications. He further stated that, for security purposes, he could not disclose specific methods used to identify law enforcement partners, noting that the department uses both active and passive deconfliction processes. He acknowledged concerns regarding potential "blue on blue" incidents but stated that the additional alerting system is not expected to increase that risk. Chief Johnson emphasized that existing rules of engagement and deconfliction procedures remain in place to ensure coordinated operations when law enforcement agencies are operating in the same area.

Mr. Rocha moved to recommend acceptance of the staff recommendation for the approval of the sole source Advantech/ZeroEyes vendor. The motion was seconded by Ms. Hall and carried by a roll call vote of seven (7) yes (Hall, Anderson, Pillsbury, Arndt, Rocha, Neil, Shevock, one (1) no (Lewis), and three (3) absent (Boggerty, Sudler, Garfinkel).

Allocation of Higher Education and Public Safety Fees (Grant in Aid Funds) for FY2026 (Patricia Marney, Controller/Treasurer)

Ms. Patricia Marney, Controller/Treasurer, reviewed the background and analysis of the allocation of the Higher Education and Public Safety fees for FY2026.

Staff recommended applying the remaining funds to police revenues to offset expenditures related to state-mandated expenses.

Mr. Rocha moved to recommend acceptance of the staff recommendation to apply the remaining funds to the police revenues to offset expenditures related to state-mandated expenses. The motion was seconded by Ms. Arndt and unanimously carried by a roll call vote (Boggerty, Sudler, and Garfinkel absent).

Closing of the Economic Development Grant Application Period (Councilman Anderson)

Mr. Anderson reviewed the background to the closing of the Economic Development Grant application period.

Staff recommended approval of closing the Economic Development Grant Application period.

Mr. Rocha moved to recommend acceptance of Mr. Anderson's recommendation to close the Economic Development Grant application period. The motion was seconded by Ms. Hall and unanimously carried.

Mr. Anderson moved for adjournment of the Legislative, Finance, and Administration Committee meeting, hearing no objection the meeting adjourned at 8:42 p.m.

Mr. Neil moved for adjournment of the Council Committee of the Whole meeting, hearing no objection the meeting adjourned at 8:42 p.m.

Fred A. Neil
Council President

Attachments

Attachment #1 - DSHA Presentation entitled "Road to Hope"

Road to Hope

Delaware State Housing Authority



Project Overview

- Governor Meyer's Interagency Collaborative to End Homelessness identified significant gaps in shelter capacity and access to supportive services, especially in Kent and Sussex counties.
- Federal Rural Health Transformation Program allocated funding for the Hope Center expansion downstate.
- A center in Dover will close regional gaps, strengthen crisis response, and improve the pathway to permanent housing.
- In 2025:
 - State – 1,585 experiencing homelessness
 - Kent County - 321 experiencing homelessness



Vision for Kent County

- DSHA owned and operated
- Provide residential space for those who need housing and ensure access to supportive services
- DSHA will partner with DHSS and contractors to integrate those services on-site:
 - Rural Health Clinic
 - Daycare
 - Job training
 - Food needs
- DSHA will contract for security at the property

Property & Project Plans

- Identified the DSU Living and Learning Commons as most viable location for a Kent County Hope Center.
- Property is in a high-traffic commercial area with bus service and parking.
- Building is outfitted for various styles of living quarters and common areas.
- DSHA will provide overall management and oversight of the building and residential component.





Matthew Heckles, Director

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