

Mayor & City Council/ BWP Joint Meeting

101 Adams Ave, Bonnie Osler Meeting Room
Meeting Minutes

July 27, 2026, 1:00 PM

A. Call to Order & Roll Call

The Mayor & City Council / BPW Joint Meeting was called to order on Monday, July 27, 2026, at 1:00 PM in the Bonnie Osler Meeting Room, 101 Adams Avenue, Lewes, DE.

BPW Present: Board President Tom Panetta, Bob Heffernan, Preston Lee, Barbara Curtis; General Manager Robin Davis; Assistant General Manager Sharon Sexton; Legal Counsel Mike Hoffman (remote).

City Present: Mayor Amy Marasco; City Council Members Joe Elder, Trina Brown Hicks, Tim Ritzert; City Manager Ellen Lorraine McCabe; Deputy City Manager Janet Reeves; City Solicitor Alex Burns.

B. Announcements

Deputy City Manager Janet Reeves reported that eleven members of the Lewes Beach Patrol competed in a regional competition in Rehoboth, finishing 4th overall in their second year of competition. The team is self-funding travel to the National competition in Fort Lauderdale the following week, with a potential path to the World competition in South Africa in November. Donations may be made through the city's beach patrol page.

President Tom Panetta commended the city's management of the July 4th heat event, noting that BPW contributed sprinklers at Zwannendael Park and that the town's voluntary irrigation curtailment prevented a water supply shortfall. He also noted a University of Delaware public Extreme Heat Resource Fair scheduled for August 5th, with a joint City/BPW table.

Council Member Trina Brown Hicks noted that Johnny Walker Beach Day is September 19th and National Night Out is August 4th at George HP Smith Park.

C. Presentations

None

D. Meeting Items:

1. Update and continued discussion on the W. Fourth Street/Park Avenue/Burton Neighborhood Infrastructure Project

Ben Hearn and Andrew Lyons, GMB, presented a bid and construction schedule. Advertisement is planned for the end of August, with a 45-day bid period to accommodate the project's complexity, a mid-October bid opening, and bid award anticipated at the BPW's October 28th regular meeting. A potential special City meeting was discussed to avoid delay, as the next regular City Council meeting is on November 9th. Construction is expected to commence in late November or early December.

The project is phased in two overarching stages: Phase 1 covers utility and road work on Fourth Street and Park Avenue (estimated 22 months), followed by Phase 2 covering Burton, Painter, DuPont, and Johnson streets (estimated 24 months). Contractor overlap between phases is possible and would be encouraged at the mandatory pre-bid conference.

Key operational and community coordination points were discussed at length:

- All road closures are planned for daytime, block-by-block closures, with full pedestrian access and overnight reopening maintained as standard.
- The team was directed to coordinate with DelDOT regarding advance signage and truck detour routing, and to engage community members in identifying and notifying regular truck and delivery operators (including oil, propane, and package delivery companies) of construction impacts.
- The availability of city-owned land (the Schley Avenue yard and the wastewater treatment plant yard) as a contractor staging area is to be discussed at the pre-bid conference.
- City staff is to coordinate with event stakeholders (Farmers Market, Bethel Church, and others) now regarding potential disruptions, as construction is expected to begin during the winter.
- New water service to homes is expected to become active mid-project, following completion of utility work on a section-by-section basis.
- Regular monthly progress updates are to be provided to both the BPW Board and City Council, coordinated through General Manager Robin Davis.

Regarding Chesapeake Utilities (natural gas), Kerry Tripp (400 Park Avenue) reported that Chesapeake has met with residents and that a community survey is underway to assess feasibility and interest, particularly for the Burton subdivision side streets where gas does not yet run. Board President Tom Panetta noted that gas already runs along Fourth Street itself. Council Member Tim Ritzert was asked to reach out to his Chesapeake contact to encourage a timely response.

On Phase 2 street design (DuPont, Painter, Johnson, Burton), survey work and utility modeling are ongoing. A meeting with city staff was scheduled for the following day to review preliminary street concepts, after which public meetings will be scheduled for community input.

2. Update and continued discussion of the municipal complex at the Army Reserve Center

City Manager Ellen Lorraine McCabe reported that a fully executed Brownfields Development Agreement with DNREC is in place. The environmental testing contractor is finalizing its testing scope and schedule, which will be submitted to the Army Corps of Engineers—the current site managers—to arrange on-site access for testing. An additional \$50,000 in Brownfields grant funding became available with the start of the new state fiscal year.

Mayor Amy Marasco noted that Senator Coons has expressed urgency and indicated that any remediation funding requests must enter his cycle by no later than next April, given an approximate two-year lead time.

The city has \$100,000 budgeted for a program manager role (via RFP) to oversee project scheduling, coordinate environmental testing timelines, and develop alternative planning

scenarios (e.g., which city functions move, whether to retain City Hall, the need for a secondary police access point, etc.). The RFP draft, developed with assistance from Larry Franz, will be brought before City Council for review, tentatively at the September work session.

Board President Tom Panetta clarified for the public that the MOU framework establishes the site as a municipal campus; BPW would occupy space as a tenant to the city, consistent with its current arrangement at City Hall. Mayor Amy Marasco clarified that while the MOU requires a municipal function presence, additional uses on the five-acre site are not precluded. Parking constraints and interim office space needs for both organizations were noted as ongoing concerns.

City Solicitor Alex Burns confirmed that sub-quorum working group discussions are permissible under open meetings law, as no decisions are made in those sessions; final decisions will be made in open public session.

3. Update and discussion of general topics to consider as part of the Memorandum of Understanding between the City and BPW

A joint MOU negotiating sub-group (Mayor Amy Marasco, Council Member Trina Brown Hicks, Deputy City Manager Janet Reeves on the city side; Board President Tom Panetta, General Manager Robin Davis, and Board Member Barbara Curtis on the BPW side) is scheduled to meet on August 12th. BPW has already compiled a preliminary topic list. Council members were asked to submit any desired MOU topics to City Manager Ellen Lorraine McCabe no later than August 5th. The goal is to complete a working draft MOU before the end of the year, with final adoption occurring in open session.

4. Update and continued discussion on the Night Sky Pilot Program

Council Member Tim Ritzert reported that the dark sky pilot program has been delayed due to his other obligations and requested that the study group be formally reconstituted. The program will be placed on the August City Council agenda for formal establishment as a public ad hoc committee, with Council Member Tim Ritzert continuing as chair.

Assistant General Manager notes that installation of the 18 pilot fixtures (across Cape Shores, Highland Acres, and Pilot Town Village on Ocean View Blvd) is planned to begin the following week. The new fixtures include remotely controllable nodes, enabling real-time brightness adjustments. The committee, once reconstituted, is expected to gather survey data, evaluate results through the darkest months of the year, and develop a prioritized citywide rollout plan and associated budget recommendations in time for the December/January budget cycle.

An audience member noted that BPW is providing labor at no cost.

Mayor Amy Marasco noted that the existing lighting ordinance was likely sufficient authority for the program, though the committee is to review it for any needed amendments.

Members noted commercial properties were identified as a key future target, with a noted five-year compliance window upon ordinance approval; the library, DRBA facility, and Beebe Hospital were cited as the top lighting concerns.

5. Review of existing electric vehicle charging stations in the Schley Avenue/Franklin Avenue parking lot and the Otis Smith Parking lot to include the possibility of expansion of this amenity in these lots and/or additional public locations

Board President Tom Panetta summarized that BPW has provided free electricity to the city's two EV charging stations since approximately 2017, but noted this arrangement is outside BPW's core charter and is unsustainable. The existing equipment is beyond its serviceable lifespan with no replacement parts available. The body discussed transitioning to a fee-based model administered by a third-party vendor (e.g., ChargePoint or similar), which would also assume maintenance responsibility, and expanding the charging network given the growing number of EVs in the community.

Council Member Tim Ritzert raised the prior unsuccessful attempt at a federal grant for EV expansion, noting the city was disqualified based on community wealth metrics. He advocated for renewed grant research and a more comprehensive charging amenity model consistent with modern expectations (canopies, multi-port stations, etc.). Mayor Amy Marasco agreed to contact the Delaware League of Local Governments grant resource and to reach out to state contacts (Senator Hansen's office and others) regarding available state or federal funding. The National Electrical Code's move toward unified charging port standards was noted as a positive development. The potential for requiring EV-ready circuitry in new construction was raised; city staff confirmed it is likely already required under the ICC energy code and will verify.

E. Public Comment

Brenda Afzal (418 Park Avenue) requested confirmation that the 22-month Phase 1 timeline assumes continuous work with no seasonal stoppage, which was confirmed. She urged that community members be included in the early stages of Phase 2 streetscape design discussions prior to broader public meetings, and called on both bodies to document lessons learned from this project to improve future infrastructure processes. She also requested that the Burton neighborhood task force continue meeting at an appropriate cadence through project completion, which Mayor Amy Marasco affirmed.

Kevin McGuiness (1108 Bay Avenue) addressed the meeting to express that it is "unconscionable" that residents of the Burton subdivision lack access to clean, aesthetically acceptable water in 2026, and called on the broader Lewes community to support the neighborhood's efforts. Board President Tom Panetta acknowledged the longstanding infrastructure deficiency, affirming the water meets state standards while conceding the iron levels are objectionable, and attributed the situation to decades of deferred infrastructure investment now being addressed.

Council Member Joe Elder shared a personal account of living with the iron water quality issue, including monthly blood tests required as a result.

Kerry Tripp (400 Park Avenue) raised governance questions regarding the Army Reserve project, including the role of the mayor versus city manager in drafting the RFP, the appropriateness of discussing a city-owned project in a joint BPW meeting, the absence of a feasibility study prior to issuing the RFP, and the need for a public workshop on the best use of the five-acre site given current economic pressures. Mayor Amy Marasco clarified that the RFP draft was prepared on a pro bono basis by a procurement volunteer, and reiterated that the MOU permits—but does not restrict to—a municipal campus use.

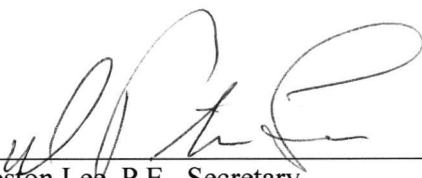
Thierry Poirey (19 Harborview Road) suggested that, as an interim measure, the city consider providing bottled water dispensers to residents in the Burton neighborhood who cannot use their tap water while the project is underway.

George Terrell (50 Harborview Road)(remote) submitted written comment thanking all parties for the night sky effort and encouraging BPW and MCC to consider restricting chemical use in Great Marsh Park to support the nocturnal insect population and the Atlantic Flyway. Mayor Amy Marasco directed that the comment be forwarded to the dark sky committee.

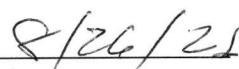
F. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:30 pm

Respectfully Submitted,
Kristina Keller



D. Preston Lee, P.E., Secretary



Date