

COUNCIL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

The Council Committee of the Whole met on September 29, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. with Councilman Anderson presiding in the absence of Council President Neil. Members of Council present were Ms. Arndt, Mr. Boggerty, Mr. Lewis (via WebEx), Mr. Rocha, and Dr. Sudler (out at 11:44 p.m.). Ms. Hall and Dr. Pillsbury were absent. Mayor Christiansen was also present. Civilian members present for their Committee meetings were Ms. Jackson (*Safety, Advisory, and Transportation*), Mr. Garfinkel (via WebEx), and Mr. Shevock (via WebEx) (*Legislative, Finance, and Administration*). Ms. Kemp (*Safety, Advisory, and Transportation*) and Mr. Lewis (*Parks, Recreation, and Community Enhancement*) were absent.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

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

Booted and Suited (Bobby Wilson, CEO and Founder)

Mr. Anderson read a statement submitted by Council President Neil, who was absent due to illness. Council President Neil supported Mr. Wilson's program, subject to available funding, particularly its proposed training and downtown cleanup component. He said uniformed workers could ease the strain on Public Works employees, improve downtown's appearance and safety, and provide a yearlong training opportunity that could lead to employment. He noted that Mr. Wilson had already demonstrated his commitment through a downtown cleanup.

Mr. Bobby Wilson, CEO and Founder of Booted and Suited, provided an overview of the organization's proposed workforce development program in Dover. He stated that the organization had secured a downtown office for classroom instruction and a garage for automotive and construction training. The eight-week program would include three weeks of soft-skills training, followed by hands-on instruction provided by certified automotive mechanics and retired union tradespeople. He referenced proposed partnerships with the bricklayers' union and Local 199, as well as an existing relationship with TechForce.

Mr. Wilson explained that he had personally funded the office and garage expenses and identified a need for workforce training opportunities in Dover after observing Kent and Sussex County residents traveling to Wilmington for similar services. His goal was to connect Dover-area residents with employment opportunities closer to home.

He also discussed the organization's eight-week farmers market held on The Green and plans to expand the initiative as part of a broader effort to create a cleaner, greener, and safer Dover.

Mr. Wilson proposed establishing a uniformed downtown cleanup crew operating five to six days per week, with the potential for an evening shift as the program expanded. Modeled after Downtown Visions in Wilmington, the crew would clean streets and doorways, provide escorts for individuals who felt unsafe, and report concerns to the Police Department without performing or interfering with law enforcement duties. He also anticipated opportunities for individuals completing community service through probation and parole.

Mr. Wilson stated that the organization planned to sustain its efforts through grants and donations, with an accounting firm overseeing funds associated with the beautification initiative and communicating expenditures to the city. He noted that volunteers had already conducted power washing and street cleaning downtown with support from private citizens but that additional funding would be necessary to continue and expand those efforts.

Responding to Mayor Christiansen, Mr. Wilson stated that the program would serve returning citizens, SNAP recipients, and individuals with disabilities. He emphasized the importance of wraparound services, including assistance accessing food benefits, Medicaid, and healthcare. Individuals needing detoxification or rehabilitation would need those services before entering a jobsite, where safety was essential. The organization would work with individuals according to their needs and readiness for training. He stated that DDP had supported the farmers' market but had not yet provided financial assistance.

Mayor Christiansen suggested partnering with the Interfaith Ministers Association and Senator Paradee's upcoming expungement program scheduled for October 21 at the Dover Hope Zone, 3 North Bradford Street.

Responding to Mr. Rocha, Mr. Wilson stated that Loockerman Street would be the primary focus, with work extending to nearby streets, including Governors Avenue, Queen Street, and New Street. Workers would also engage individuals and encourage enrollment in training. He stated that donors were interested in paying tuition and described opportunities in construction, including prevailing-wage projects and school construction throughout Delaware.

Responding to Mr. Lewis, Mr. Wilson stated that he was pursuing county support and anticipated applying for state grants, including SNAP-related funding. He described access to three grant writers and a donation plan.

Responding to Mr. Lewis, Mr. Wilson stated that the organization had a contingency plan using grants and donations to continue operations.

Responding to Mr. Boggerty, Ms. Debbie O'Brien, Community Development Manager, stated that the proposed activities could potentially meet a national objective under public services. She had emailed the organization a CDBG application but had not received a response.

Responding to Dr. Sudler, Mr. Wilson discussed a proposed YouthBuild program for ages 16 through 24, modeled on a Wilmington program, and stated that he was speaking with the Dover Housing Authority.

Responding to Ms. Arndt, Mr. Wilson explained that Booted and Suited would provide the training rather than merely referring participants elsewhere, using qualified instructors and union partnerships.

Responding to Dr. Sudler, Ms. Sharon Duca, City Manager, stated that the only application she knew of was the economic development application that was included in the packet, and that Council had closed that application process in June.

Mr. Anderson initially noted that existing applications had been excluded from the closure.

Mr. Boggerty suggested completing the CDBG application as a potentially simpler funding route.

Mr. Anderson explained that a CDBG application would still require scoring, committee review, and Council consideration and that available funding had not yet been established.

Mr. Lewis noted that economic development money had been allocated to the Garrison Oak entrance project and that funding this request would require a budget amendment.

Ms. Trish Marney, Controller/Treasurer, concurred and stated that the application process would need to be reopened. She clarified that the committee voted to end the process on June 22, Council approved that action on July 13, and Mr. Wilson's application was dated July 15.

Mr. Anderson suggested referring the proposal to staff for consideration during the October budget amendment.

Ms. Arndt confirmed that the packet contained the application and stated that it was incomplete. She identified requirements including proof of at least two years of operation, a location map and street address, zoning confirmation, letters of support, progress reports, and the required project description. She stated that she would support consideration after the application was completed and staff verified the information.

Mr. Boggerty encouraged Mr. Wilson to pursue both applications while awaiting further consideration.

Mayor Christiansen encouraged Mr. Wilson to follow the established process, identify an available revenue source, and provide the information needed for staff review.

Mr. Lewis agreed that the application needed to meet grant standards and that applicants should be treated fairly.

William G. Faust, Jr., Dover, questioned the program's cost, responsibility for downtown sidewalk cleaning, and the effect of a budget amendment on residents with fixed incomes. He urged the city to prioritize its financial obligations and seek outside funding if city resources were insufficient.

Vonderlear Smack, Dover, requested a workshop to help organizations prepare grant applications.

LaChelle Paul, Dover, supported the concept but raised concerns about the deficit, increased user fees, equal access to funding, and tracking expenditures.

Doug Hall, Dover, supported grant-writing assistance and urged greater attention to small businesses and community needs, while criticizing city spending and enforcement practices.

Belinda Main, Dover, questioned how the city would generate revenue, support downtown businesses, and complete projects while addressing parking, safety, and neighborhood needs.

Michael Sheinbaum, Dover, owner of Chris and Holly Family Entertainment, described limited local business opportunities, his charitable activities, and the need for greater compassion toward residents experiencing homelessness.

This item was informational; committee action was not required.

Dr. Sudler moved to refer the program to staff for review while Mr. Wilson completed the application and submitted it through both recommended funding avenues. The motion was seconded by Mr. Boggerty and unanimously carried.

PARKS, RECREATION, AND COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

The Parks, Recreation, and Community Enhancement Committee met with Mr. Anderson presiding in the absence of Chairwoman Hall.

Adoption of Agenda

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

Consideration of Withdrawal and Reallocation of CDBG Funds for People's Community Center Renovation Project (Debbie O'Brien, Community Development Manager)

Mr. Rocha recused himself from the meeting at 7:17 p.m.

Ms. Debbie O'Brien, Community Development Manager, presented the reasons for recommending withdrawal of the previously approved CDBG allocation for the People's Community Center Renovation Project. She explained that the city was responsible for administering federal funds in accordance with applicable requirements and that noncompliance could lead to corrective action, repayment, or jeopardized future funding. She stated that public comments received during the environmental review prompted a broader review of project feasibility, documentation, procurement, contractual obligations, readiness, and compliance.

Ms. O'Brien organized her review around five questions: whether the project could achieve its CDBG objective within a reasonable timeframe; whether procurement standards had been followed; whether contractual obligations had been met; whether the city could assure compliance with federal requirements; and whether there was a reliable path to completion and service delivery. She stated that the renovation had not been completed despite multiple identified funding sources, and that a clear completion timeline and sustainable operating plan had not been demonstrated.

Ms. O'Brien reported unresolved procurement and supporting-documentation deficiencies, including failure to provide the required quotations. She stated that contractual performance and reporting concerns did not warrant extending the agreement. She also identified concerns about past performance and the ability to document eligible beneficiaries, verify eligibility, and measure outcomes supporting the CDBG national objective. She stated that the project had not progressed to implementation during the performance period and that required reports and documentation

remained outstanding. Reduced grant-in-aid funding and the denial of economic development funding added to her concerns about sustainability.

Staff recommended approving the withdrawal of the previously approved \$40,000 CDBG allocation for the People's Community Center Renovation Project and directing staff to make the funds available through the 2027 Annual Action Plan Process.

Responding to Ms. Arndt, Ms. O'Brien confirmed the requirement of three quotes and stated that she had received one quotation, with only every other page provided alongside the invoice.

Responding to Ms. Arndt, Ms. O'Brien stated that the agreement required satisfactory administration, monthly progress reports, compliance with applicable laws and policies, and completion within the performance period. She reported that requests for monthly reports on February 5 and August 13, 2026, had not produced the required reports. The performance period ended June 30, and no permit applications had been received before expiration; she did not believe permits had been submitted subsequently. She stated that compliance with the city's purchasing policy and federal requirements had not been demonstrated. She described a May 26 meeting and follow-up emails, including reminders on October 7, May 27, and June 10 about procurement requirements. She stated that repeated attempts to obtain documentation and move the project forward had often gone unanswered. Ms. Arndt expressed disappointment that conditions had not been met for a project the committee had hoped to pursue.

Responding to Mr. Boggerty, Ms. O'Brien said that, according to the ARPA application, members were expected to contribute \$152,978 in matching funds; however, the documentation provided reflects only \$1,642 in matching disbursements. The 2025 CDBG application identified the church endowment as the source of the matching funds. In a subsequent conversation, Dr. Hodge indicated that the endowment would have to be used to complete the project if sufficient grant funding was not received. He acknowledged that this would not be sustainable long term, as revenue from the endowment was also being used to fund the church's operations.

At the Legislative, Finance and Administration Committee meeting on February 26, 2026, Dr. Hodge stated that funding had been received from a private foundation to completely renovate a space that would be designated for various groups, including Neighborhood Partners, the Department of Labor, and Polytech, to conduct workshops and provide case management services. No additional information or documentation was provided regarding funding from the private foundation.

In an April 6, 2026, email, Dr. Hodge stated that the Governor's Office had funded a renovation project in the basement of People's Church to convert one large space into private offices and a conference room for training and case management. She subsequently contacted the Governor's Office, which indicated that it had no knowledge of such a funding commitment. The Governor's Office did reference a separate grant; however, after reviewing that grant, she determined that it was unrelated to this project.

The 2026 CDBG application identified the requested \$40,000 as only 5% of an \$800,000 project, with the remaining funding to be provided through other sources. Even if the full CDBG funding

contemplated under the 2025–2029 Consolidated Plan were awarded, \$40,000 annually for five years, for a total of \$200,000, a substantial portion of the project cost would still need to be funded from other sources.

Given the varying representations regarding matching funds, the church endowment, private foundation funding, and funding reportedly provided through the Governor’s Office, she felt that additional transparency and documentation regarding the other funding sources for the project were warranted.

Responding to Mr. Boggerty, Ms. O’Brien stated that \$153,978 was allocated in the first ARPA round and of that \$40,000 was for the renovations. She noted that none of the money had been spent on those renovations, as she had receipts. She explained that instead it had been used for other work, including showers, the kitchen, and the sprinkler system, rather than the proposed renovation.

Responding to Dr. Sudler, Ms. O’Brien stated that there was not one item that she could think of that they were compliant with. She stated that documentation had consistently required additional work and that the pattern of repeated requests without responses was unusual. She also stated that the 2026 application had been submitted more than two weeks late.

Responding to Dr. Sudler, Ms. O’Brien stated that the process had been unusual and that she had not encountered similar issues previously.

Responding to Dr. Sudler, Ms. O’Brien stated that she had consulted the City Solicitor and that her sustainability concerns relied in part on statements from Dr. Hodge.

Responding to Mayor Christiansen, Ms. O’Brien confirmed that reporting, accountability, and timing requirements were applied consistently to all recipients and noted that the September 24, 2025, agreement ran through June 30, 2026, although the application estimated that the work would take no more than three months. She noted that the project had not started before the agreement expired.

Mr. Lewis expressed disappointment regarding the reported noncompliance. He felt that for somebody who wanted the grant money so badly, not to follow the guidelines and rules was appalling.

Ms. Arndt pointed out that only five members remained available and six were needed for a quorum. Mr. Anderson stated that the applicant would be allowed to respond on the record before the committee adjourned without action.

Dr. Hodge stated that he believed Ms. O’Brien was very capable and a valuable asset to the city and that, as a taxpayer, he appreciated the city’s efforts to ensure that subrecipients properly accounted for public funds and maintained appropriate financial controls. He stated that he supported the city closely scrutinizing subrecipients to ensure that funds were being properly administered.

However, Dr. Hodge stated that he felt blindsided by the concerns being raised. He emphasized that the organization had not received any federal pass-through funding from the city, including ARPA or Community Development Block Grant funds, that had not been spent appropriately. He noted that reimbursement would not have been issued unless the organization had submitted the required documentation and receipts. He further stated that city representatives were welcome to conduct a site visit and review the work completed.

Dr. Hodge provided a timeline of the project, explaining that after the proposal was approved and the contract was signed by the Mayor in September, work began immediately. He stated that Tracey and Ms. O'Brien conducted a site visit and identified peeling paint that could potentially contain lead. The organization subsequently hired Harvard Environmental to conduct lead testing, which confirmed the presence of lead and the need for remediation. The remediation was completed, followed by a reinspection confirming that the issue had been addressed. He stated that the associated reports and receipts were submitted to the city.

Dr. Hodge stated that the organization was later advised that a Tier I environmental review was required. The organization hired a company recommended by the city, completed the review, and had the report submitted to the city. He further stated that during a site visit, Ms. Harvey advised him that three bids were not required because the project amount was under \$50,000. Nevertheless, the organization had several contractors consider the project. After being dissatisfied with one prospective contractor, Dr. Hodge contacted the Downtown Dover Partnership for a recommendation. The organization ultimately entered into a contract with a recommended contractor and paid for the first phase of work, which included demolition of the existing bowling alley. He stated that the canceled check was submitted to the city for reimbursement.

Dr. Hodge recalled that Ms. O'Brien subsequently advised him that she was uncertain whether the organization would receive the full reimbursement because there had been significant public opposition. He believed this referred to approximately 17 form letters received by Council in January and maintained that many of the complaints contained in those letters did not relate directly to the organization. Regarding approximately \$40,000 in prior funding, Dr. Hodge stated that the funds had been used to hire Becker Morgan to prepare plans for the new community development center and that documentation was available to substantiate those expenditures. He asserted that every expenditure made by the organization was accounted for, completed in a timely manner, and could be verified through an audit. He maintained that the organization had not been noncompliant with any funding requirement.

Dr. Hodge acknowledged that there had been considerable back-and-forth with Ms. O'Brien regarding documentation submitted for both programmatic CDBG expenses and the third round of ARPA funding. He stated that whenever additional information or documentation was requested, the organization provided it. He maintained that the organization had complied with all requests and emphasized that reimbursement-based funding required the organization to demonstrate that expenditures were appropriate before receiving city funds. For that reason, he questioned assertions that funding received several years earlier had been improperly spent or was noncompliant, stating that he believed the city would have raised those concerns at the time.

Dr. Hodge requested that the city reimburse the organization for the remaining funds it had already expended pursuant to its agreements. He stated that if the city could identify a specific expenditure that did not comply with required procedures or applicable federal regulations, it was the city's responsibility to withhold reimbursement for that expenditure; however, he did not believe general concerns or suggestions of noncompliance were sufficient.

Finally, Dr. Hodge disputed concerns regarding the sustainability of the program. He stated that Howard Stafford was prepared to begin the workforce development program once the physical space was completed. He also reported that the organization had received a commitment that afternoon for approximately \$350,000 from another source, which he declined to identify, as well as approximately \$100,000 in DuPont funding. He stated that sufficient funding was available to continue the program once the physical space was completed in accordance with the Becker Morgan designs and the contract.

Responding to Mr. Boggerty, Dr. Hodge stated that the contractor had stopped work pending payment and that the organization expected the city to reimburse approximately \$30,000. He noted that they were unable to give Ms. O'Brien updates because no work had occurred since the demolition.

Responding to Mr. Boggerty, Dr. Hodge stated that they would proceed with the work when the promised \$350,000 became available and noted that the city still owes them \$30,000.

Mr. Boggerty emphasized the need to use available resources to advance rehabilitation and community services and stated that he had reached a decision.

Responding to Ms. Arndt and following clarification from Ms. O'Brien, Dr. Hodge acknowledged that none of that allocation had been reimbursed. A separate \$22,700 had been reimbursed for program activities.

Responding to Ms. Arndt, Dr. Hodge stated that there had been frequent email exchanges but no construction progress to report after demolition stopped. He noted that he was out of town for part of June, and all of July and August. He explained that there was nothing to report on.

Ms. O'Brien clarified that monthly reports were contractually required and that her outstanding request concerned the reimbursed shelter operations project, including an annual report needed for closeout to HUD by September 9.

Dr. Hodge stated that he did not recall the request but accepted that she had the email.

Mr. Anderson asked that the closeout information be provided the next day.

Responding to Dr. Sudler, Dr. Hodge stated that, at Ms. O'Brien's request, he had sent an explanation describing the advice from Ms. Harvey, the quotations obtained, and the decision to use the contractor recommended by DDP. He believed he had received an acknowledgment indicating the matter was resolved.

Ms. O'Brien responded that procurement requirements had been reiterated multiple times and that her June 11 request for an additional quotation had not received a response. She stated that only alternating pages of the executed contractor agreement were submitted. The pages received called for a \$52,004.04 deposit, while the submitted check was \$44,504.04, with no explanation of the \$7,500 difference. She stated that she had never heard Ms. Harvey say three quotations were unnecessary. Her understanding was that purchases above \$10,000 required three quotations and projects above \$50,000 required sealed bids or an RFP. When Dr. Hodge referenced the grant's \$40,000 amount, Ms. O'Brien identified the overall project as \$178,000.

Mr. Anderson explained that, following Mr. Rocha's recusal, only five of the committee's eleven members were available and the committee could not conduct further business or vote. He stated that the applicant had been permitted to respond, so both positions were recorded.

Due to there being a lack of quorum, the Committee was unable to take action.

Mr. Anderson moved for adjournment of the Parks, Recreation, and Community Enhancement Committee meeting, hearing no objection the meeting adjourned at 8:09 p.m.

Mr. Rocha reentered the meeting at 8:11 p.m.

SAFETY, ADVISORY, AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

The Safety, Advisory, and Transportation Committee met with Chairman Boggerty presiding.

Adoption of Agenda

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

Update on Safety Concerns on East Loockerman Street (Jason Lyon, Assistant City Manager)

Mr. Jason Lyon, Assistant City Manager, reported on the temporary closure of the eastbound entrance to East Loockerman Street near Burger King. The closure began in July following the committee's earlier direction. Notices had been hand-delivered to affected residents and posted on social media. The affected area included East Loockerman Street and nearby connections to Division Street and involved more than 100 residents.

Mr. Lyon reported that the Police Department's speed study showed substantially lower traffic volume, a four-mile-per-hour reduction in the 85th-percentile speed, and a six-mile-per-hour reduction in the highest recorded speed. He described those reductions as significant on a street with a 25-mile-per-hour limit. Staff had not received complaints about access to residents' properties, but some residents questioned emergency access.

Mr. Lyon stated that the alternate emergency route could add approximately one to two minutes to response time. Staff had considered bollards and an automatic gate but were concerned about cost and mechanical reliability. Staff proposed replacing the temporary barrier with a Do Not Enter sign allowing emergency and authorized vehicles. He stated that Police, Fire, and Public Works

representatives agreed that this was an efficient and economical approach and that unauthorized entry could be enforced.

Staff recommended approving the installation of a Do Not Enter/Emergency and Authorized Vehicles Only sign.

Responding to Mr. Rocha, Mr. Lyon stated that he did not have information regarding the number of emergency responses that occurred during the trial but that he would research it.

Mr. Rocha expressed doubt that drivers would honor a sign and favored retaining a barrier while protecting emergency access.

Mr. Lewis stated that residents continued to report speeding concerns and that an earlier Do Not Enter sign had been disregarded. He believed the barrier had made a difference and questioned whether police could provide adequate enforcement if it was removed. He suggested that a camera might be needed if staff relied on signage.

Dr. Sudler proposed signs on both sides of the entrance, camera enforcement, and substantial fines. He suggested a \$500 first-offense penalty and a higher penalty for subsequent violations as a stronger deterrent.

Mr. Lyon stated that other traffic-calming measures, such as chicanes, were unsuitable because the road was narrow. He reiterated the estimated emergency-route delay and noted that cameras would involve cost and administration. Staff would need to research the authority to increase fines.

Chief Thomas Johnson stated that he believed the city could adopt a local traffic ordinance and establish a penalty but was uncertain whether digital technology could lawfully be used to enforce a prohibited-entry violation. He distinguished that issue from specifically authorized red-light and speed enforcement and offered to verify whether officers could issue violations based on video.

Mayor Christiansen stated, based on his personal experience as a firefighter rather than on behalf of the Fire Chief, that Division Street had long served as a rapid eastbound response route from the downtown fire station. He believed it could offer an easier route into the neighborhood, particularly for larger apparatus, and supported continuing the successful restriction while considering emergency access. He emphasized that time remained critical in emergency responses.

Responding to Mr. Lewis, Chief Johnson stated that officers could include the location in routine enforcement, but the available frequency would probably be insufficient to produce a substantial behavioral change.

Responding to Mr. Lewis, Mr. Lyon offered an initial estimate of approximately \$1,000 to \$2,000, depending on the approach, and stated that he would return with a more specific assessment regarding a permanent curb or barrier.

Ms. Arndt supported exploring a prominent sign and substantial posted fine but cautioned against a permanent obstruction that could prevent traffic diversion during an emergency at U.S. Route 13 and Division Street.

Mr. Rocha clarified that he favored a gate or other barrier that could be opened when needed.

Dr. Sudler suggested a remotely operated arm similar to a railroad crossing gate.

Mr. Boggerty cautioned that other neighborhoods had similar concerns and that closing roads throughout the city could create emergency-access challenges.

Mayor Christiansen stated that fire apparatus and ambulances were equipped with Opticom devices and suggested exploring whether that system could operate a gate.

Dr. Sudler discussed potential infrastructure funding, including the proposed Capital Area Municipal Sustainability Act, state legislators' community transportation funds, and county support. He encouraged strengthening coordination with Kent County to help address infrastructure needs and reduce the burden on City residents.

Mr. Anderson recommended retaining the existing arrangement while staff researched the alternatives, stating that the current solution was working and that further evaluation did not need to be rushed.

Sarah, Clara, and Irma Bell, East Loockerman Street, described feeling safer riding bicycles and walking their dogs since the closure and asked that the road remain closed.

Mary Bell, East Loockerman Street, thanked Council and stated that speeding resumed when the barrier was temporarily moved. She supported retaining the barrier while exploring a gate, heavier fines, or enforcement technology.

Robert Bell, East Loockerman Street, reported reduced traffic and speeding, supported emergency-access technology, and raised privacy concerns regarding license plate readers.

Terry Sipple, Dover, supported conspicuous signs, camera enforcement, and strong penalties.

David Suiters, East Loockerman Street, emphasized children's safety, described longstanding speeding concerns, and favored an operable gate rather than an immovable barrier.

Jeremy Schneider, East Loockerman Street, described a serious crash near his home, reduced speeding, and increased neighborhood activity since the closure. He asked that the current barrier remain while options were considered.

Anthony Wilson, East Loockerman Street, stated that the closure had improved safety for his children and allowed him to run in the neighborhood, and described a recent police response in which vehicles arrived by different routes within a short interval.

Bonnie Pennington, Dover, described speeding and school-bus safety concerns on Kirkwood Street and requested equivalent attention to other neighborhoods.

William G. Faust Jr., Dover, suggested lower-cost alternatives, such as weighted barrels or posts with a brightly marked chain that emergency personnel could unlock.

Regan Coder, 406 Kings Highway, supported the barrier and suggested neighborhood-watch assistance and cameras.

Dawn Mejia, Dover, acknowledged previously using the street as a shortcut, stated that the barrier had changed her driving behavior, and reported increased two-way traffic in the alley behind Edgehill.

Jeanie Anderson, Dover, supported similar neighborhood benefits elsewhere in the city.

Belinda Main, Dover, supported retaining the barrier and requested broader traffic-safety measures, consistent enforcement, and attention to other affected streets.

Mr. Anderson moved to recommend continuing the current safety arrangement, have staff review the options discussed, and bring them back to the committee. The motion was seconded by Mr. Rocha and unanimously carried.

Loockerman Plaza Pedestrian Improvements Update (Paul Moser, DelDOT, and Jason Lyon, Assistant City Manager)

Mr. Jason Lyon, Assistant City Manager, introduced Mr. Paul Moser, Professional Engineer, DelDOT Active Transportation and Community Connections, for an update on the pedestrian improvements discussed in April. Mr. Moser commended the city for initiating the East Loockerman Street trial and stated that a four-mile-per-hour reduction in 85th-percentile speed was meaningful.

Mr. Moser explained that the Dover/Kent County Metropolitan Planning Organization had brought the Loockerman Plaza project to DelDOT. The area's high pedestrian use and connectivity needs gave it a strong ranking. The concept focused on slowing traffic, providing formal midblock crossings, improving transit access, connecting sidewalks, and making the Federal Street crossing clearer and safer. Proposed pedestrian-activated rectangular rapid flashing beacons would improve drivers' awareness and yielding.

Mr. Moser described a crossing connecting the library area to Federal Street, curb extensions to shorten crossing distances and improve sightlines, and a bus boarding area consistent with DART's preference for boarding in the travel lane. The concept included additional green space, an extended median crossover, and a curb extension near the library to make the crossing more visible.

Mr. Moser described extending the median island near the church to accommodate a six-foot walkway with a grass buffer, adding crossings along the plaza and at Federal Street, and providing a crossing near the coffee shop beyond the PNC Bank entrance. He proposed a No Left Turn

restriction at the bank crossover. Fully closing that crossover by extending the medians would exceed the project's current scope and budget.

Mr. Moser expected access to be maintained through partial closures, flaggers, parking restrictions, and temporary closure of a median crossover as needed. The project remained at the concept stage, so a construction schedule was not yet available. He stated that any closure would be coordinated with the city.

Mr. Anderson thanked the presenters and stated that the concept reflected his understanding of the earlier discussion, including the requested crosswalk serving City Hall.

Ms. Arndt asked that materials fit the historic downtown setting and stated that asphalt would not be appropriate there. She also expressed concern that a bus boarding in the lane would stop traffic and preferred maintaining the ability for vehicles to maneuver around it.

Mr. Moser stated that there might be sufficient width for vehicles to pass a stopped bus, but he would confirm that. He explained that in-lane boarding was preferred by DART and could avoid parked vehicles obstructing accessible loading. He asked for city preferences on brick or concrete sidewalks. DelDOT generally favored concrete for accessibility but could accommodate brick in recognition of the historic setting.

Responding to Mr. Rocha, Mr. Moser stated that there was adequate room. He anticipated impacts to approximately two spaces near the library, potentially reducible to one, and approximately three spaces near the bus boarding area where parking could interfere with transit access. He stated that tree limbs would be trimmed as necessary and that the city would likely be responsible for long-term maintenance. The grass buffer could also be adjusted to address clearance.

Mr. Moser proposed a public workshop tentatively on November 10, potentially at the library. Preliminary plans would be sent to Mr. Lyon for review and could incorporate feedback about materials and maintenance. The goal was to complete design in early 2027, with possible construction in late 2027, subject to funding, inflation, and other potential delays.

This item was informational; committee action was not required.

Mr. Boggerty moved for adjournment of the Safety Advisory and Transportation Committee meeting, hearing no objection the meeting adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE, FINANCE, AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

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

Adoption of Agenda

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

Get Work Foundation Presentation – Youth Sports and Community Center Feasibility Study Proposal (Dante Daniel, Chief Operating Officer, Terez Trott, Chief Executive Officer)

Mr. Terez Trott, Chief Executive Officer and Co-Founder, and Mr. Dante Daniel, Chief Operating Officer, Get Work Foundation, presented a request for up to \$50,000 from the economic development fund for an independent market, financial feasibility, and economic-impact study of a youth sports and community center. They emphasized that the request did not approve construction, debt, operations, a site, or a particular building. The study could recommend proceeding, changing the concept, phasing development, relocating, or stopping.

Mr. Trott stated that the study would test demand, assess responsible operations, compare potential sites and facility sizes, estimate costs and economic benefits, and identify realistic funding options. He described a community survey with 609 responses, including 597 Delaware residents. Nearly 96 percent supported exploring the center, and nearly 90 percent indicated that their households would likely use it. Youth recreation was the highest priority, with safety, after-school activities, health and wellness, and workforce development also identified. He acknowledged that a community survey did not substitute for a feasibility study.

Mr. Trott discussed an increase in Kent County juvenile arrests and clarified that arrests were not a count of unique young people and did not establish that the absence of a sports center caused crime or that a center would reduce it. He presented supervised activities, mentorship, leadership, employment pathways, and other supports as elements worth evaluating within the city's broader prevention efforts.

Mr. Trott described a year-round concept that could include sports courts, indoor turf, training, ice activities, education, workforce programming, wellness, and virtual golf. The study would identify which uses and scale were sustainable. He stated that recurring tournaments might bring visitors to hotels, restaurants, retailers, and entertainment businesses, while emphasizing that youth sports were not being equated with NASCAR. He cited state sports-tourism spending and grant programs as examples of an economic development opportunity, with no guarantee of funding.

Mr. Daniel described planning scenarios in the proposal, including an illustrative established-facility scenario of sixteen tournaments, approximately 14,000 visitors, and roughly \$3 million in annual activity. He stressed that those figures were scenarios rather than forecasts or guarantees and that an objective study was needed. He acknowledged the city's deficit, budget reductions, and increased revenue measures and stated that the proposal sought to explore new activity without increasing residents' taxes.

Mr. Daniel identified potential state sports-tourism and community redevelopment funding, as well as USDA community-facility opportunities. He cited DE Turf and Dover's existing sports-related visitor activity and described an interest in bringing recurring tournaments to Dover. He referenced Spooky Nook in Pennsylvania as a case study in the proposal, while explaining that the study would determine what was realistic locally.

Mr. Daniel described a possible relationship among the Dover Mall area, Bally's, and Delaware State University (DSU), intended to create an economic and community hub rather than separate activities. He reported meeting with DSU President Tony Allen about indoor turf, internships, retaining graduates, and possible University land near Sam's Club. A convention component for University events had been discussed as a potential condition of that collaboration. He stressed that those ideas remained subject to feasibility review.

Mr. Daniel stated that the foundation had met with three potential consulting firms and selected a preferred advisor based on expertise in market demand, feasibility, economic impact, and operations, prior Delaware work, and a proposed flat \$50,000 fee. He anticipated a study lasting approximately twelve weeks. He stated that the resulting study would be public and available to other parties, rather than reserved for the foundation.

Mr. Daniel described prospective investor discussions involving an emerging basketball player and his family, New Balance, and Klutch Sports. He stated that an independent study and evidence of city support would strengthen future discussions. He also described a backpack, clothing, and sneaker distribution event undertaken with New Balance as part of youth and community engagement. Those discussions were presented as potential opportunities rather than committed project financing.

The presenters described development in phases: feasibility analysis; stakeholder and investor engagement; possible construction over two to three years; operational planning and staffing; and program development. They expressed a preference for exploring the Dover Mall area and envisioned a community center during the week and revenue-producing tournaments on weekends. Programs could draw on local expertise in barbering, information technology, wellness, social work, and other fields. They reiterated that the city's requested investment was for a third-party study and that the foundation did not seek to receive or control the study funds.

Dr. Sudler commended the preparation, acknowledgment of the City's fiscal constraints, and attention to youth social and emotional needs. He encouraged the presenters to attend the October 7 Mayor's Blue Ribbon Opioid Use Disorder Task Force meeting and explain how the concept might align with youth prevention and remediation priorities. He stated that local or state opioid funding could be another avenue to explore but did not commit the task force to funding the request.

Joshua Pritchett, age ten, supported the center as a place for sports, school support, mentoring, and belonging, and described traveling outside Dover for tournaments.

Ramar Prince Jr., age eleven, supported the center as a place for opportunities to learn teamwork, discipline, responsibility, and leadership.

Responding to Mr. Boggerty, Mr. Daniel stated that other facilities existed, but that access and hours did not fully meet youth needs. He emphasized the presenters' Dover roots, the desire to revitalize local activity, and the need to let an independent consultant evaluate the concept. He stated that city participation could strengthen applications to other funders.

Mr. Lewis commended the presentation but reiterated that available funding remained the central issue. He encouraged an economic development application meeting the established criteria.

Responding to Mr. Lewis, Mr. Daniel stated that the intent was to provide accessible programming for youth and underserved residents, with age-based charges and other financial details to be evaluated through the study. He stated that DSU's resources were committed to other facilities and described collaboration involving land and shared facilities rather than an immediate funding commitment.

Mr. Daniel added that the foundation believed the proposal met multiple economic and community development criteria and that previously reserved Garrison Oak funds had been retained for economic development rather than transferred to cover the general fund deficit.

Responding to Ms. LaChelle Paul, Mr. Daniel stated that staffing levels depended on the study's findings, but that security, custodial, and other positions, as well as workforce training, were envisioned. When she asked about opioid prevention, he welcomed a holistic approach incorporating drug prevention, mental health, workforce development, and partnerships with organizations that needed a place to deliver services.

William Holden, Dover, supported local sports opportunities for children and potential business activity from tournaments, including photography, vendors, food service, and cleaning.

Mike Conway, co-founder of a soccer venture with Dr. Jackson, described his experience in professional and youth soccer and offered to assist with programming, events, partnerships, and introductions to prospective sponsors. He clarified that no teams or sponsors were already committed.

Damar Miller, Capital Park, supported additional youth programming and offered barbering mentorship and skills training.

Responding to Bonnie Pennington, Mr. Daniel stated that the proposal addressed persons of all abilities and described plans to discuss partnerships with an autism-focused organization.

Mr. Trott added that special events were also envisioned.

Rosetta Brickhouse, an educator and former DSU facilities employee, supported the concept's sports, economic, and workforce opportunities and offered assistance.

Larry Harvey, supported the potential for visitor spending and local business activity, citing his family's experience traveling for youth sports.

Mr. Anderson stated that a feasibility study had value, but the economic development application process was closed. He suggested that staff explore combining this request with other similar proposals, including a swim center, into a city-owned study that participating organizations could use. He stated that a shared study could reduce duplication and taxpayer expense.

This item was informational; committee action was not required.

Dr. Sudler moved to recommend referring the proposal back to staff for review. The motion was seconded by Mr. Boggerty and carried, with Mr. Garfinkel voting no.

Mr. Boggerty took over as chair at 10:54 p.m.

Proposed Resolution No. 2026-12 – Implementing Recommendations of the Independent Investigation and Review Conducted by 21CP Solutions (Councilman Anderson)

Mr. Anderson presented Proposed Resolution No. 2026-12 as a measure concerning administration and city procedures, rather than a judgment about particular individuals. He referenced Council's Charter responsibilities and stated that the recommendations came from the independent 21CP Solutions review. The proposed resolution would direct staff to develop implementation measures within sixty days, allowing consideration of the needs of different departments, particularly the Police Department.

Mr. Anderson stated that the city's handbook and practices should be consistent with its ethics provisions and other existing requirements. He believed the recommendations could be implemented through a resolution because the ordinances were not themselves deficient; the concern was their interpretation and application. He urged public consideration of the recommendations.

Mr. Lewis moved to release the complete 21CP report for public transparency.

Mr. Anderson stated that the City Solicitor had advised that releasing the report, particularly without redactions, would violate legal protections, including the Law-Enforcement Officers' Bill of Rights. He urged members to follow counsel's advice.

Mr. Lewis moved to release the full report of 21CP for public transparency. The motion was seconded by Mr. Garfinkel.

Mayor Christiansen referenced accusations made during the previous evening's meeting alleging that he and Chief Johnson had violated ethical standards. He stated that the matters had been investigated numerous times, including by the Department of Justice, internally, and through an investigation for which the city paid approximately \$50,000.

Mayor Christiansen reminded Council that the terms and conditions of Chief Johnson's employment had been approved by Council following a recommendation from a committee consisting of city staff and members of Council. He emphasized that he took his responsibilities seriously and stated that he received weekly accountability reports regarding the Chief's activities, including detailed emails concerning his work product.

Mayor Christiansen stated that he believed the resolution before Council was premature and concurred with Councilman Lewis that the public had a right to know the contents of the investigative report. He stated that he had nothing to shield from the report and insisted that, before Council acted on the resolution, the city had an obligation to the public and to those investigated to release the report.

He emphasized his belief in transparency, stating that if he had done something wrong, he should be held accountable, but if he had not, he should not be held responsible for wrongdoing. He further stated that Council should not question the Chief regarding matters related to the terms of his employment because Chief Johnson reported directly to him. Mayor Christiansen accepted responsibility for the terms under which the Chief was hired and for his performance of those duties.

Mayor Christiansen reiterated that the city had paid for the investigative report and maintained that transparency should prevail. He stated that he had nothing to hide and had acted within the confines of the employment agreement recommended by the committee and subsequently presented to and approved by a previous Council. He believed the city had an obligation to maintain those standards for the current Chief and stated that future employment terms could be changed after Chief Johnson's tenure if Council wished to do so.

Mayor Christiansen also recalled that Council had discussed the matter in Executive Session approximately two or three times roughly two years earlier and that no action had been taken at that time. He concluded by reiterating that, in the interest of transparency, the investigative report should be released to the public because the public had ultimately paid for it.

Dr. Sudler thanked the Mayor for supporting transparency and asked whether Chief Johnson also agreed to release, expressing concern that the city and residents could face litigation.

Mr. Anderson raised a point of order, stating that the Chief was represented by counsel and should not be questioned about the matter without his attorney present, and that counsel had objected.

Mayor Christiansen recommended tabling the resolution for additional consideration while reiterating that he supported release of information concerning him on advice of his attorney.

Ms. Arndt stated that she had no objection to transparency but recalled the City Solicitor advising against release. She would not support the motion without revisiting that advice.

Vonderlear Smack, Dover, requested release of the investigative findings and supporting materials to the fullest extent legally permitted, with redactions and explanations for any lawful withholding. She asked for the contract, invoices, total cost, a release date, opportunities for public questions, and a public progress report on implementation. She stated that proposed policy changes did not explain which allegations were substantiated or why recommendations were made.

LaChelle Paul, Dover, similarly requested lawful redaction and disclosure so residents could assess how the proposed resolution related to the investigation's findings.

Dr. Sudler asked whether the Solicitor could be contacted before a decision.

Mr. Boggerty noted that this would require a pause and that the hour was late.

Mr. Anderson referred to legal advice concerning a FOIA appeal and stated that privileged advice could not be discussed publicly without an appropriate executive session.

Mayor Christiansen cautioned Council to proceed carefully and suggested that the matter be tabled until additional information could be obtained. He reiterated the importance of transparency and stated that he had no objection to the information being made public.

Mayor Christiansen stated that the terms of Chief Johnson's hiring and accountability had been placed under his responsibility and that he accepted responsibility for those matters. He maintained that Chief Johnson had acted ethically regarding the concerns being raised.

Mayor Christiansen again cautioned Council to "tread lightly," noting his many years of experience with the city, and concluded by emphasizing that transparency was owed to the public.

Mr. Rocha supported disclosure but asked for the City Solicitor's reasons for withholding the report.

Mr. Anderson identified personnel matters, the Law-Enforcement Officers' Bill of Rights, and the absence of waived rights, while stating that other reasoning could not be discussed publicly. When the Clerk's Office clarified that the City Solicitor's official written response on the referenced FOIA appeal was not yet public, Mr. Anderson stated that it could not be disclosed in the meeting. He noted that any committee action would still require Council consideration.

Mr. Lewis reiterated that he wanted his request for full disclosure on the record and thanked the Mayor for supporting it.

Mr. Rocha asked for further legal advice about whether the report could be released with redactions. He stated that the resolution did not provide enough information for him to support forwarding it at that time.

Dr. Sudler requested clarification that the pending motion concerned release of the full report and was separate from the proposed resolution.

Ms. Arielle Rivera, Assistant City Clerk, read that Mr. Lewis moved to release the full report of the 21CP findings for public transparency. The motion was seconded by Mr. Garfinkel.

Responding to Mr. Rocha, Mr. Anderson explained that the resolution concerned adopting policy recommendations and that Council had read the report and could evaluate those recommendations.

Dr. Sudler emphasized public servants' responsibility for accountability and transparency and commended the Mayor's willingness to permit disclosure, while acknowledging that legal concerns remained.

Ms. Paul reiterated that the public had expected transparency from the independent investigation and needed the findings to assess the proposed policy changes.

Ms. Arndt recommended tabling the resolution and revisiting disclosure with the City Solicitor, including the possibility of redactions. She cautioned against acting contrary to legal advice.

Dr. Sudler asked Mr. Lewis to withdraw his motion so the city could first obtain advice about potential legal consequences. He suggested revisiting the matter promptly, potentially through a special meeting.

Mr. Lewis declined to withdraw the motion, stated that the issue had remained unresolved for too long, and called for a vote.

Mr. Lewis moved to release the full report of 21CP for public transparency. The motion was seconded by Mr. Garfinkel and failed by a roll call vote of two (2) yes (Rocha, Lewis) and six (6) no (Boggerty, Anderson, Arndt, Sudler, Shevock, Garfinkel), and three (3) absent (Hall, Pillsbury, Neil).

Ms. Arndt moved to table the Proposed Resolution No. 2026-12. The motion was seconded by Mr. Rocha and unanimously carried.

Mr. Anderson resumed as chair at 11:42 p.m.

Community Riverwalk Assessment Grant (Jason Lyon, Assistant City Manager)

Mr. Jason Lyon, Assistant City Manager, reviewed the proposal regarding the Community Riverwalk Assessment Grant.

Mr. Boggerty moved to recommend accepting the staff recommendation authorizing the City Manager to enter into an agreement with the Downtown Dover Partnership for the allocation of the applicable grant funding. The motion was seconded by Mr. Rocha.

Staff recommended authorizing the City Manager to enter into an agreement with the Downtown Dover Partnership for the allocation of the applicable grant funding.

Responding to Mr. Lewis, Mr. Lyon stated that the city could not receive EPA cleanup funding for the site because the city, as the owner, had caused the contamination.

Responding to Mr. Lewis, Mr. Lyon stated that no land would be conveyed under this proposal. He explained that DDP had received a multipurpose grant that could support two activities described in the proposal: a building assessment and abatement, and a conceptual plan for long-term use.

Mr. Boggerty moved to recommend authorizing the City Manager to enter into an agreement with the Downtown Dover Partnership for the allocation of the applicable grant funding. The motion was seconded by Mr. Rocha and unanimously carried.

Mr. Anderson moved for adjournment of the Legislative, Finance, and Administration Committee meeting, hearing no objection the meeting adjourned at 11:44 p.m.

Mr. Anderson moved for adjournment of the Council Committee of the Whole meeting, hearing no objection the meeting adjourned at 11:45 p.m.

Fred A. Neil
Council President