



Contact Information:

City of Lewes

Ann Marie Townshend, City Manager (atownshend@ci.lewes.de.us)

Theodore Becker, Mayor (tbecker@ci.lewes.de.us)

(302) 645-7777

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LEWES MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL TO CONSIDER POTENTIAL CHARTER CHANGES

Proposed Changes to Address Relationship between the City and the Board of Public Works

[Lewes, Delaware, December 4, 2019] – The Mayor and City Council of Lewes will meet on Tuesday, December 10, 2019, at 5:00 p.m., to discuss possible changes to the charters of the City of Lewes and the Board of Public Works of the City of Lewes. The purpose of the proposed changes is to consolidate the Charter for Board of Public Works into the City of Lewes Charter, to increase accountability, transparency and efficiency of the City’s utility services. The proposed changes will also better allow the City of Lewes to manage development outside of the City through annexation to safeguard the City’s resources and decrease sprawl. These changes will be seamless to taxpayers and ratepayers. There will also not be any changes in the utility rates, personnel, or budget as a result of the proposed changes.

In June 2019, Mayor and City Council passed an ordinance requiring properties outside of the City annex or sign a pre-annexation agreement in order to connect to water and sewer utilities operated by its Board of Public Works. The ordinance protects City taxpayers while helping to ensure the City’s utilities do not exceed capacity or fuel over-development. The ordinance also codified a long-standing policy by the Board of Public Works to require annexation or a pre-annexation agreement to connect to utility services. The Board of Public Works in turn filed a lawsuit against the City in July 2019, claiming absolute independence from the City and, that it does not otherwise need to follow the ordinance. This suit is currently pending in Superior Court.

At its December 10 meeting, Mayor and City Council will consider the proposed charter changes and whether to seek approval from the Delaware General Assembly so that, if enacted, future disputes with the Board of Public Works are avoided. To that end, the Mayor and City Council will seek public comment and input on this important issue at the meeting. The meeting will take place in City Council Chambers located in City Hall at 114 E. Third Street in Lewes.