



CITY OF MILFORD
CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

August 25, 2025

The City Council of the City of Milford met in the Joseph Ronnie Rogers Council Chambers in Regular Session on Monday, August 25, 2025.

PRESIDING: Mayor F. Todd Culotta

IN ATTENDANCE: Councilmembers Daniel Marabello, Madula Kalesis, Nadia Zychal, Michael Stewart, Danny Perez, Katrina Wilson and Jason James, Sr.

ABSENT: Councilmember Lori Connor

STAFF: City Manager Christopher Coleman, Chief Cecilia Ashe, and
City Clerk Katrina White

COUNSEL: Solicitor Gregory Morris, Esquire

Public Comment

Solicitor Morris read the rules of public comment.

Julie Morris, 74 Cedar beach Road, Milford, DE 19963, expressed concerns about the potential reappointment of members to the Board of Adjustment and referenced a recent application involving a property on Truitt Avenue as evidence of what she referred to as a "dereliction of duty". She stated that the Board of Adjustment granted 32 separate variances for the Truitt Avenue development, despite the Planning Commission having denied the project. She argued that this action undermines the city's zoning code and shows a pattern of "rubber-stamping" developer requests.

She asserted that the board's actions contradict the city charter, which states that variances should only be granted in cases of "peculiar and unusual circumstances" to prevent hardship.

Ms. Morris also stated that the chairman of the Board of Adjustment gave VIP NASCAR tickets to the mayor, which she reported to the Delaware Office of Public Integrity. Morris noted that an investigation into this matter is still pending. She concluded by saying that reappointing the current members would reward this pattern of behavior, which she believes violates zoning standards and disregards public interest.

Trish Marvel, 6525 Shawnee Road, Milford, DE 19963, expressed concerns about a communication gap between the city council and Milford residents, particularly regarding

changes to development projects. She described a pattern where development projects, such as a planned 12-unit subdivision changing to 39 units and the project involving the new Dollar General store on Rehoboth Blvd that had significant alterations that residents were not adequately informed about.

She felt that the public is often put in a position of making decisions without having enough information, and that this forces citizens to do their own research to understand what is happening. She expressed that the current communication methods, noting that while yellow-staked signs are posted, they are often taken down, and the key details of projects are not effectively shared with the community. She suggested exploring new communication methods, such as an insert in the mail, to keep residents better informed.

She concluded by stating that this communication gap puts the city council in a difficult position to make important decisions and leaves residents feeling left out of the process, ultimately missing an opportunity to bridge the divide with the community.

Call to Order - Mayor F. Todd Culotta

Mayor Culotta called the meeting to order at 6:39 pm.

Roll Call

Roll Call showed that there were eight members present. Councilmember Connor was not present.

Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

The invocation was given by Councilmember Wilson followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of the Agenda

Councilmember Zychal made the motion to approve the agenda. Councilmember Kalesis seconded.

Yes Daniel Marabello, Madula Kalesis, Nadia Zychal, Michael Stewart, Danny Perez, Katrina Wilson, and Jason James

The motion carried. 7-0

Approval of Previous Minutes

Councilmember Wilson made the motion to approve February 24, 2025, meeting minutes. Councilmember Zychal seconded.

Yes Daniel Marabello, Madula Kalesis, Nadia Zychal, Michael Stewart, Danny Perez, Katrina Wilson, and Jason James

The motion carried. 7-0

Councilmember Kalesis made the motion to approve April 28, 2025 Meeting minutes. Councilmember Zychal seconded.

Yes Daniel Marabello, Madula Kalesis, Nadia Zychal, Michael Stewart, Danny Perez, Katrina Wilson, and Jason James

The motion carried. 7-0

Councilmember Wilson made the motion to approve August 11, 2025 meeting minutes.
Councilmember Stewart seconded.

Yes Daniel Marabello, Madula Kalesis, Nadia Zychal, Michael Stewart, Danny Perez, Katrina Wilson, and Jason James

The motion carried. 7-0

[2025 02 24 - Council & Workshop Minutes](#) 

[2025 04 28 Council Minutes](#) 

[2025 08 11 Council Minutes](#) 

Recognition

There was no recognition.

Public Hearings/Comments/Final Determination

Solicitor Morris read the rules of Public Hearing.

Ordinance 2025-12 Electric Rules and Regulations

Suzannah Frederick, Cash Operations & Revenue Supervisor, stated that Ordinance 2025-12 was introduced to update the city's electric tariff in response to House Bill 62, which was designed to provide greater protection for consumers against large electric companies. She explained the key changes to Milford's electric tariff. The city's policy now prevents disconnections when the temperature is forecast to be 35 degrees or below, or when the heat index is 95 degrees or higher. This expands the previous temperature ranges. Another change is that the notice period for service termination has been extended from 9 days to 14 days. The city also uses its RAVE 911 system to make calls to customers after 5 p.m., an existing practice that complies with the new requirements. She also reported that the city will continue to follow the state's code for medical necessity, which allows customers to get a temporary stay on disconnection if a doctor completes an application. Customers are still required to make good-faith payments during this time.

Julie Morris, 74 Cedar Beach Road, Milford, DE 19963 asked about the fee to have electricity turned back on after a disconnection. She pointed out that in the past, a physical visit by a crew was required to reconnect power, justifying the fee. However, with new technology, she believes the process has become a simple button push, and she questioned whether the new regulations would address or change this fee.

Cash Operations & Revenue Supervisor Frederick stated that the administrative fee is a flat \$50 charge, and would not change. She clarified that the fee is not for the physical act of turning the power on but for the administrative work involved in the disconnection process, such as sending notices and making calls. She also noted that the city offers payment plans for customers. However, if a customer breaks a payment arrangement, they are not eligible for a new one for 12 months. The city encourages customers to communicate with staff and also provides a list of resources, such as the Delaware State Service Center and Catholic Charities, that can help them with their utility bills.

Councilmember James made the motion to approve the update to Ordinance 2025-12, Electric Rules and Regulations. Councilmember Wilson seconded.

Yes Daniel Marabello, Madula Kalesis, Nadia Zychal, Michael Stewart, Danny Perez, Katrina Wilson, and Jason James

The motion carried. 7-0

[2025 12 #2 Appendix B Electric Rules & Regulations Amendment 1](#) 

Ordinance 2025-14 Carlisle Lane, LLC/Preliminary Major Subdivision

Director Pierce reviewed Ordinance 2025-14 and the Preliminary Major Subdivision application for Carlisle Lane, LLC. He stated for the record that a FEMA letter of map change, a letter of map amendment, will be required prior to final major subdivision approval to correct the location of the 100-year floodplain. There is a grading plan that's provided in the packet that shows that they are proposing to do no disturbance, no filling of land, no removal of land, and they're not constructing any structures within the floodplain. There is a mapping error on the FEMA maps. The letter of map amendment would be a submission to FEMA to correct the floodplain maps that are online and in his office.

Director Pierce reported that the Planning Commission reviewed the application at their August 19, 2025, meeting and recommended denial upon a vote of 4-1. The Planning Commission also took individual votes on each of the waiver requests and the cash-in-lieu option. For the pavement with reduction, the Planning Commission voted to approve that waiver upon a vote of 3-2. For the right-of-way width reduction, the Planning Commission voted 4-1 to deny. For allowing lots to be platted in the 100-year floodplain, the Planning Commission voted 4-1 to deny. For allowing the platted lots to be platted in the 25-foot wetland buffer area, the Planning Commission voted 5-0 to deny. For the spacing of the street trees, the Planning Commission voted 5-0 to approve and for the cash in lieu of open space request, the Planning Commission voted 3-2 to deny.

Ed Ide, Engineer, 5819 Underwoods Corner Road, Smyrna, DE 19977, spoke on behalf of the applicant and explained the project. He stated that due to site challenges, including wetlands, a flood zone, and a steep slope, the project required multiple variances and waivers. The

project team believes these requests are reasonable and do not negatively impact the community.

Mr. Ide explained that the 32 variances granted by the Board of Adjustment and the waivers from the Planning Commission were necessary to make the townhome design viable. He emphasized that these did not increase the project's density, which remains at 8.7 units per acre, well below the code's allowance of 12 units per acre. He further explained that despite a portion of the property being in a 100-year floodplain, no buildings would be constructed within the flood zone or the wetland setback area.

He denied claims of a parking shortage, noting that the project provides the required 2.5 parking spaces per unit and additional overflow parking. In lieu of a dedicated recreational area, the developer plans to pay a fee of \$55,084.75 to the city. He said that the natural wetlands and stormwater management areas would serve as a form of scenic open space and concluded by asking for the city's approval, stating that the project is in line with the comprehensive plan and provides a more desirable outcome for the community than an apartment complex.

There was a lengthy discussion focusing on the number of waivers and variances needed for the project. The applicant states this is the ninth iteration of the plan, with a focus on minimizing waivers. They explain that the variances are minor, primarily related to setbacks and lot coverage, rather than major issues like density or height. The maximum lot coverage in the R3 zone is 60%, but a specific lot (Lot 33) required a variance to be approved at 66%. The applicant explains the design was a result of trying to work with the limitations of the land while providing desirable front and backyards.

The proposed road, Lilac Lane, will be 30 feet wide, which is wider than the existing Truitt Avenue (measured at 22-27 feet). To manage space, parking will be designated on only one side of Lilac Lane. The project's parking plan meets the code requirement of 2.5 spaces per unit, with spaces provided in garages, driveways, and additional overflow and alley spots. A council member raised concerns that homeowners may not use their garages for parking, and a family with teenagers could have more than the allotted spaces, leading to an overflow of vehicles on the street.

Another council member expresses significant concern about the impact on Truitt Avenue, noting the road is already narrow and difficult to navigate. The applicant states that a traffic study was not done but explains they chose the townhouse plan (39 units) over a higher-density apartment option (72 units) specifically to mitigate traffic impact.

The applicant confirms that grading for the project will not occur in the floodplain. While the project received a variance to grade within the wetland buffer, no structures or lots can be platted in that area. A brief legal question was raised and answered regarding whether the sale price of a home is a valid factor for approving a waiver. Solicitor Morris stated it is not a deciding factor for a vote.

The discussion turned to affordable housing. It was clarified that "affordable housing" is not the same as "low-income housing," and is typically defined by a person spending no more than 30% of their income on housing. A council member expresses that the previously mentioned \$300,000 sale price for the townhouses may not constitute affordable housing.

Jennifer McSorley, 208 Truitt Avenue, Milford, DE 19963, spoke in favor of the development that borders her backyard. She stated that this was her first council meeting and that she came to learn and express her concerns about the environment, safety, her neighborhood, and the future of Milford.

Ms. McSorley acknowledged that she read a significant portion of the 140-page plan, but that her technical background was limited. She stated her trust in the council, boards, and city experts to make the best decisions for the community's safety and the environment. She voiced her support for the development because she wants Milford to continue to thrive, grow, and create jobs. In closing, she requested that the city employees and developers ensure the project adds to the neighborhood and the city while prioritizing safety, balance, and environmental factors.

Daniel Bond, 105 North Street, Milford, DE 19963, a long-time resident of Milford since 1991, spoke in favor of the project and about his experience in revitalizing the historic downtown area. He and his wife own and operate the Towers Bed and Breakfast and have been for 33 years.

Mr. Bond has a history of renovation and development in the North Milford Historic District. He has purchased and renovated nine buildings, all of which are on the National Register of Historic Places. He also built eight townhouses and one new house, which in total provide 31 new residences and seven commercial spaces within three blocks of downtown.

He is currently working on rehabbing the old Carlisle Firehouse to create 15 handicapped-accessible apartments, noting that this would be one of the few places in the city to offer this type of housing. He is collaborating with Independent Resources Incorporated, an organization that provides services to the handicapped, to populate the building.

The meeting experienced technical difficulties.

Julie Morris, 74 Cedar Beach Road, Milford, DE 19963, spoke in opposition to the project and states that the 32 granted variances weren't a true hardship but to maximize profits. She expressed that the proposal includes "cash in lieu" instead of providing actual open space,

which goes against the city's comprehensive plan for livable neighborhoods and denies future families playgrounds and recreation areas.

She highlighted a community petition against the development, which has over 400 signatures. She explained that a major concern is the impact on local schools, which are already at "crisis levels." The high school is over capacity, and the new middle school, while a temporary solution, will not be enough to handle the rapid growth. She states that overall enrollment is increasing 3-6% annually, which is an unsustainable rate that the school district cannot keep up with in terms of building schools, hiring teachers, and funding services.

In conclusion, she states that the application is flawed because it violates the city's comprehensive plan, relies on improper variances, and will negatively impact the community by failing to provide open space and further straining an already overwhelmed school system.

Trish Marvel, 6525 Shawnee Road, Milford, DE 19963 spoke in opposition to the project. She stated that she agreed with Ms. Morris. She stated that the project's original plan was for 10-12 "affordable" townhouses. The project has since changed significantly, which she believed is the reason for the numerous variances. She explained that the term "affordable housing" has become meaningless because the advertised price point, around \$300,000, is not truly affordable. A mortgage payment for such a property would be over \$3,000 a month, which she said is out of reach for many. She applauds the Planning Commission for its recent decision, arguing that the waivers are not a hardship to the developer but will likely become a hardship to the people living near the development, who will be left to deal with problems like flooding after the developer has left.

She expressed a belief that the townhouses are already being looked at by investors and will likely become rentals. This is a concern, as she mentioned that over half of the homes in Milford are already rentals, which means there are fewer homeowners than renters. She concluded by reiterating that the change in the project's scope is the root cause of all the variances, and that the community will be left to deal with the consequences.

City Clerk White read a letter from Tom Chilton, 38 Meadow Lark Drive, Milford, DE 19963.

[Letter - Tom Chilton](#)

Matthew Feindt, 4330 Big Stone Beach Road, Milford, DE 19963, said he wanted to give clarification to some comments that were made during public comments. He explained that his initial plan, starting 15 years ago, was to build apartments. However, after seeing the issues with rentals through his plumbing business and his own rental properties, he decided to develop townhouses for purchase. He stated that many good renters, including some of his own tenants, want to buy a home they can afford. He challenged Mrs. Marvel's claim that a \$300,000 mortgage would result in a \$3,000+ monthly payment. He stated that at a 7%

interest rate, a \$300,000 mortgage with no down payment would be less than \$2,000 a month. He then contrasted this with the current rental market, pointing out that some three-bedroom apartments rent for \$1,900 a month. He argued that his project is an attempt to provide homeownership opportunities to people who are already paying high rents. He also explained that he cannot provide \$200,000 housing because the numbers "don't work" due to construction costs.

He went on to explain that the project started as two parcels of land and was expanded to five over the past three and a half years to make better use of "dilapidated ground." He also stated that his engineer could have planned for up to 72 apartments on the property, which would require the same open space and parking considerations as the current proposal. He believes the current plan is a better option for the community.

Mr. Feindt concluded by urging the City Council to vote based on what they believe is best for the entire community, not on what is being said by a few individuals. He acknowledged that the current proposal might not be approved and that he would go "back to the drawing boards."

Councilmember Wilson expressed concerns about affordable housing and has concerns about the traffic on the street.

Councilmember Zychal has similar concerns and suggested that council schedule a workshop to go over the details of the project.

Councilmember Kalesis also expressed concerns about affordable housing and stated that low-income housing is needed. She believes that parking will be an issue. She would like the discussion to be tabled.

Councilmember James stated that he thinks that the density needs to be looked at and thinks tabling the discussion is a good idea.

Councilmember Stewart asked who the townhomes would go to and who would be able to afford them.

Councilmember Perez stated that there are issues and agrees there needs to be a workshop scheduled. He has concerns about parking and emergency vehicles accessing the street.

Councilmember Marabello stated that he didn't want to make the wrong decision and thinks a workshop would be good before making a decision.

Councilmember Zychal would like to include in the discussion the idea of how others can escape the cycle of poverty.

Solicitor Morris stated that the council could one of three things, accept the application, reject the application or table it to give themselves more time to consider what's being presented. He explained that if that's something the Council is considering, and they're going to be

asking for more information from the applicant, they would have to reopen the public hearing before council.

Councilmember Marabello made the motion to table this and come up with a reasonable time to discuss this in more depth. Councilmember Wilson seconded.

Yes Daniel Marabello, Madula Kalesis, Nadia Zychal, Michael Stewart, Danny Perez, Katrina Wilson, and Jason James

The motion carried. 7-0

[Carlisle Lane - Packet](#) 

Communications & Correspondence

City Clerk White announced the September SCAT meeting on September 3, 2025.

Councilmember Marabello announced that the next children's play would open on the upcoming Friday and is titled School Villain. There will be a Friday, Saturday, and Sunday Matinee at the Milford Second Street Players.

[SCAT Sept 3 2025 - Lewes Invitation](#) 

Unfinished Business

New Business

Reappointments:

Planning Commission

Board of Adjustment

Tree Preservation & Advisory Council

Parks & Recreation Advisory Board

City Clerk White stated that Eric Johnsen had resigned from the Tree Preservation and Advisory Board and there was an opening for anyone interested in becoming a part of the board. She advised that they would need to submit an application through the city website.

Councilmember Wilson made the motion to reappoint Jim Purcell to the Planning Commission. Councilmember James seconded.

Yes Daniel Marabello, Madula Kalesis, Nadia Zychal, Michael Stewart, Danny Perez, Katrina Wilson, and Jason James

The motion carried. 7-0

Councilmember Wilson made the motion to reappoint David Sauls to the Planning Commission. Councilmember James seconded.

Yes Daniel Marabello, Madula Kalesis, Nadia Zychal, Michael Stewart, Danny Perez, Katrina Wilson, and Jason James

The motion carried.

Councilmember Wilson made the motion to reappoint Brendon Warfel to the Board of Adjustment. Councilmember James seconded.

Yes Daniel Marabello, Madula Kalesis, Nadia Zychal, Michael Stewart, Danny Perez, Katrina Wilson, and Jason James

The motion carried. 7-0

Councilmember Wilson made the motion to reappoint Timothy Metzner to the Tree Preservation and Advisory Board. Councilmember James seconded.

Yes Daniel Marabello, Madula Kalesis, Nadia Zychal, Michael Stewart, Danny Perez, Katrina Wilson, and Jason James

The motion carried. 7-0

Councilmember Wilson made the motion to reappoint Ronny Baltizar-Lopez to the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board. Councilmember James seconded.

Yes Daniel Marabello, Madula Kalesis, Nadia Zychal, Michael Stewart, Danny Perez, Katrina Wilson, and Jason James

The motion carried. 7-0

[Boards & Commission Term Expiration Dates 2](#) 

Authorization/Bayhealth Fiber Lease Agreement

Senior Accountant Lou Vitola reviewed the renewal agreement.

Councilmember Wilson made the motion to approve the Bayhealth Fiber Lease Agreement. Councilmember Zychal seconded.

Yes Daniel Marabello, Madula Kalesis, Nadia Zychal, Michael Stewart, Danny Perez, Katrina Wilson, and Jason James

The motion carried. 7-0

[BayHealth-Milford - Fiber Agreement Milford](#) 

[Exhibit A - Hospital Route](#) 

[Exhibit B - Fiber Specs](#) 

[Exhibit C - Demarcation](#) 

Authorization/Sewer and Water Agreement/Lands belonging to Laura Quintero-4 Lexington Drive County Tax Parcel 3-30-11.00-163.00

Planning Director reviewed the application that was included in the packet.

Councilmember James made the motion to authorize the mayor to sign the Sewer and Water Agreement. Councilmember Wilson seconded.

Yes Daniel Marabello, Madula Kalesis, Nadia Zychal, Michael Stewart, Danny Perez, Katrina Wilson, and Jason James

The motion carried. 7-0

[SEWER AND WATER AGREEMENT - QUINTERO - 4 LEXINGTON DR - 081925 Rev2](#) 

Authorization/Annexation Plan of Services/Revocable Trust of Pamela Davis Thompson/2 Brandywine Rd

Director Pierce explained the Thompson application.

Councilmember James made the motion to authorize the mayor and the City's Engineer to sign and execute the Plan of Services Agreement. Councilmember Stewart seconded.

Yes Daniel Marabello, Madula Kalesis, Nadia Zychal, Michael Stewart, Danny Perez, Katrina Wilson, and Jason James

The motion carried. 7-0

[Plan of Services - 081525](#) 

Adjournment

Councilmember Marabello made the motion to adjourn. Councilmember Stewart seconded.

Yes Daniel Marabello, Madula Kalesis, Nadia Zychal, Michael Stewart, Danny Perez, Katrina Wilson, and Jason James

The motion carried. 7-0

Mayor Culotta adjourned the meeting at 8:59 pm.