

*Wilmington City Council
Wilmington, Delaware
March 20, 2025*

City Council met in regular session with remote participation on the above date at 6:00 p.m., President Ernest M. Congo, II presiding.

The opening prayer was done by Mariaelena Rivera, Deputy City Clerk.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by City Council.

ROLL CALL

The following members responded to the Call of the Roll: Council Members Owens, Darby (virtual)*, Oliver, Harlee, Willauer, McCoy, Field (virtual)*, Bracy, Cabrera*, and Council President Congo. Total, nine. Absent with leave, Council Members Johnson and Hackett. Total, four.

President Congo acknowledged the presence of New Castle County Register of Wills, Ciro Poppiti.

SUSPENSION OF THE RULES

Upon a motion of Council Member McCoy, seconded by Council Members Harlee, Oliver and Owens, the Council suspended the rules in order for Mayor John Carney to present his Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Address. Motion prevailed.

President Congo requested Council Members McCoy and Spadola to escort Mayor John Carney into Council Chambers.

President Congo gave Mayor Carney the floor.

MAYOR'S FISCAL YEAR 2026 BUDGET ADDRESS

I want to take a moment and thank the people of Wilmington who entrusted me with this responsibility. I promise to work hard every day to serve all of you.

To President Congo, and all members of City Council, thank you for inviting me and I look forward to working together for the people we are all privileged to represent. To the members of my leadership team, I am honored to serve with you.

Introduction

Seventy-two days ago, I was sworn into office alongside City Council. I promised then to build on the progress Wilmington has made over the past several years. And to make sure that progress is felt in every neighborhood. Since then, I have spent time in almost every neighborhood in the city. And I have heard from our fellow

residents, about the challenges they're facing. I have met with members of Council, and heard what your priorities are for the people we both represent. It is clear to me that Wilmington continues to show resilience and grit. Working together to rebuild from Hurricane Ida. Bouncing back from the once in a lifetime COVID-19 pandemic. Learning from the challenges brought to light by the Black Lives Matter demonstrations. Wilmington not only weathered these difficult moments. We are coming out stronger than ever before. And with a renewed sense of hope and purpose.

In the past few years, our city has seen investment like no other time in recent history. Unprecedented funding flowed in from the federal government under President Biden. From state government when I was your Governor. And from the private sector, thanks to the hard work of the Purzycki Administration and all of you. These investments have grown our business and entertainment districts. They've helped our city feel more vibrant and alive.

Now, with our support, partners like True Access Capital, Wilmington Alliance, and Westside Grows are putting an intense and needed focus on growing small businesses and commercial corridors across the city. We are seeing innovation and energy injected into our communities, from the ground up. Organizations across our city including Jumpstart Wilmington, Woodlawn Trustees, Habitat for Humanity, and the Wilmington Landbank are tearing down vacant and dilapidated homes, BUILDING NEW ONES, and making homeownership possible for countless city residents. Importantly, they're using small and minority-owned businesses to do the work.

With the support of millions of federal and state housing dollars, the Reach Riverside project is replacing the old and tired World War II-era public housing project with a new community of rental homes, and opportunities for home ownership. The residents of the East Side welcomed the opening of Maurice Pritchett Academy and will soon see a new and transformed People's Settlement. Our youth and families will experience new life in our public gathering spaces. We're making upgrades to Hicks Anderson Community Center and overhauling Helen Chambers Park. Barbara Hicks Park and Elbert Park in Southbridge are getting a much-needed refresh. And across our city we are improving our aging water/sewer infrastructure thanks to funds from our friends in state government. These investments mean real improvements to our environment.

The bottom line is this: Neighborhoods are rebounding, and receiving the attention they deserve. The budget we propose today will build on this progress. President Biden used to say, "Don't tell me what you value, show me your budget, and I'll tell you what you value." You will see my values reflected in my budget: a commitment to keeping costs down for city residents. And to lifting up every neighborhood in this city.

Problem

This year, we face major budgetary challenges with no easy solutions. Over the past few years Wilmington has been the beneficiary of an unprecedented infusion of state and federal money. If you read the news, I think it's fair to say those

days are over. Our projections show that wage tax revenue growth is not keeping up with the increases in costs to provide many of our vital city services.

At the same time, residents are seeing increased costs on basic items including high electricity bills. This is a math problem. Costs continue to rise faster than our revenues can keep up. My goal is to more efficiently manage the operations of city government.

Property Reassessment

Clearly, the most difficult challenge for us and for all Wilmington property owners is property reassessment. It's confusing and complicated. Over the last year, New Castle County was required by the courts to reassess the value of every property in the county – for the first time in forty years. We are still working with the County to determine whether these new values are consistent and fair across our city. We have to use these new assessed values in setting a property tax rate this year. And we have chosen to lower our tax rate to stay revenue neutral. However, even though the tax rate will be decreased, some people will still see their tax bill go up and others will see it go down based on the new assessment. Unfortunately, this is beyond the city's control.

Our goal is that residents are paying their fair share and nothing more. What IS within our control, is ensuring that we don't compound the problem. That's why I made it a priority to balance our budget WITHOUT seeking additional property tax revenues with the recent reassessment. To ease the transition, we will be offering a one-time one-year tax assistance program. While the details are being finalized, I have directed my team to develop a comprehensive plan. I believe – and I know City Council agrees – reassessment should not place an undue burden on our taxpayers. Particularly those with lesser means.

And I look forward to sharing the plan with you as we move forward.

Utility Costs

We also know that Delmarva's electricity bills are hitting city residents hard. The recommendation approved by the city's Utilities Citizens Advisory Board to raise water and sewer taxes by nine percent would make the problem even worse. That's why my budget does not adopt their recommendation completely. Instead, my budget includes a lower, six and half percent water and sewer rate increase and a six percent increase to stormwater rates. The typical residential customer will see an increase of four dollars and sixty-six cents to their monthly bill. Wilmington residents will still feel the effect of rising utility costs, but we did everything we could to minimize the pain.

Budget Priorities

There is a tradeoff though, to keeping a lid on property tax and utility cost growth. It means we have only limited funds to make new investments in the city. As a result, we've kept new spending in this budget to a minimum by focusing on a few key priorities. During my campaign we knocked on eleven thousand doors and talked to Wilmington residents about what matters most to them. What I heard is this: People care MOST about public safety. They want their neighborhood and communities to be safe. They want to see clean streets and parks for their families and children.

And they want a City that is responsive to their needs and that delivers services effectively. In this budget, we have proposed items that focus on the priorities I heard at the doors in your districts.

Public Safety

It starts with ensuring children, parents, and seniors feel safe in their neighborhoods. So, this budget contains increases to help our law enforcement officers do their jobs. We are laser-focused on recruitment and retention. A major part of that is ensuring our officers are trained and supported. To that end, we are entering into a new agreement for dedicated training space. This supports our goal of having quality police engagement. This budget calls for \$115,000 to continue our license plate recognition program. This program, started under the American Rescue Plan, has proved invaluable. And that federal funding is going away.

Over the past year, this system has helped law enforcement officers track down criminals, respond to Amber alerts, and return missing persons to their families. Our public safety data shows we are trending in the right direction. And that is a good thing. We see an eighty percent decline in shooting incidents over the last five years. And a sixty-seven percent decline over the last year. But while these numbers are promising, let me be very clear: one shooting is one shooting too many. I want to take a moment to reflect on the tragic news we had last week.

Today, our detectives are working to solve the horrific shooting of a 16-year-old. No community, no family, and NO PARENT should have to bear the loss of their child – let alone to a senseless act of gun violence. That should inspire our efforts. We are committed to aggressively beating back gun violence in our city.

Strong Neighborhoods

And investing in our Parks and Recreation Department is essential to this effort. We need high-quality places for our children and families to play and enjoy. Our parks must be safe havens. That's why we are requesting four million dollars for Parks capital improvements, which we plan to use toward much-needed upgrades to parks all over our city.

We are committed to improving Canby Park, Herman Holloway, Barbara Hicks, Helen Chambers, Judy Johnson, Eastlake Park and more. We will also be creating a master plan for Brown Burton Winchester Park to ensure that this gem in the Northeast reaches its full potential. Our community centers MUST be a hub for resources, recreation, and academic enrichment.

That's why we're renovating the popular boxing arena at Hicks Anderson Community Center and making necessary improvements to the swimming pool there. Making the most of the summer months and after-school time is critical for our youngest learners. That's why we are investing \$158,000 to expand the number of summer youth workers, raise their pay, and continue to fund the two program supervisors.

Our investment in Maurice Pritchett Academy demonstrates to the community our commitment to the education of our children. And that commitment will continue to be one of our highest priorities. I have asked Jim Simmons a career educator and former public-school principal and former councilman and Parks director Kevin Kelly to developing a strategy for the City of Wilmington's role in education.

I am determined to ensure that Wilmington, and Wilmington residents, remain the leading voice in the effort to improve city schools.

Poverty

We are also increasing our support for the community food program. We know it is hard to do well in school or make positive contributions to your community when you don't know where your next meal is coming from. Homelessness is also a growing problem that affects the whole city. We are seeing an increase in our unhoused population and street homelessness is out of control. And tonight, I will sign an executive order establishing a taskforce to make recommendations on how the city should address the rise in homelessness here.

Today, many residents and senior homeowners are not able to keep up with rising repair costs for their aging properties. That means these residents are often forced to abandon their homes entirely and that leads to vacant properties. That is why in this budget we have included two million, five hundred thousand dollars for neighborhood stabilization. These funds will go to support the city's plans to renovate our aging housing stock and launch a pilot program focused on alleyway clean-up and tree removal. Reversing years of decay and the lack of investment will not be easy, but it is my commitment to all of you. We will lift up all neighborhoods and make Wilmington a better place for our residents and a better place to do business.

General Budget Information

For Fiscal Year 2026, we are proposing a two-hundred, one-million-dollar general fund budget. This is only a four percent from last year. Over half of that increase comes from necessary changes to the way we deliver emergency medical services.

Emergency Medical Services

For years, the Wilmington Fire Department was responsible for ambulance services. Then for the last several decades, basic ambulance services have been provided in Wilmington by third-party entities at no cost to the City. Our current third-party provider, St. Francis, is no longer able to meet the needs of the city. So we need a new solution. And it will cost money to start. My budget would place Emergency Medical Services in the Fire Department. The new service will cost four million dollars to get started. In future years, we expect the cost to go down. And we will largely pay for this with revenue from ambulance fees that insurance companies, Medicare, and Medicaid will now pay to reimburse the city. We look forward to working with Council to make this critical lifesaving service a reality.

Other City Services

Overall, this budget includes a modest four-point six percent increase. These are the funds needed to provide the basic services our residents expect. This budget also includes three million, two hundred thousand dollars in wage increases for city employees. The proposal also includes an increase of one million, two hundred thousand dollars to cover the cost of the mandated position review process. This year we were proactive in addressing the critical needs identified across our government workforce.

And this enables us to fill hard to staff positions and ensures we continue to have the best and brightest working for the city. And an additional one million, eight hundred thousand dollars to pay for rising health care costs. Something being experienced by every employer in our state.

Vision for the future

The goals of my budget are clear. It seeks to capitalize on our strengths, shore up our vulnerabilities, and invest in the future. And it does it while keeping costs down for residents, and spending taxpayer dollars responsibly.

We have so much going for us here in Wilmington. So much to be proud of. So much to celebrate. At the beginning of this school year, and for the first time in decades, Wilmington students entered a brand-new school. The dilapidated Rodney Reservoir has been demolished and is being converted into a beautiful new park that reflects the vision of the surrounding community. Incyte Corporation is moving into the old MBNA building on Rodney Square, potentially bringing as many as 800 new employees to the City over the next several years. We are supporting small and minority businesses through our economic development fund. This work furthers the goals outlined in the City's disparity study. HBCU Week continues to provide unprecedented opportunities for our young people with over twenty-three million dollars awarded to almost four thousand students so far and another sixty-four million dollars committed for future years.

Let me end where I began, which is to thank the people of Wilmington for giving me the incredible opportunity serve you, here in the city I love so much. As your mayor, I promise to build on our momentum, and to lead with hard work, and enthusiasm for the task at hand.

Thank you very much.

MINUTES

After reading a portion of the minutes of the March 6, 2025 City Council Meeting, upon a motion of Council Member McCoy, seconded by Council Members Harlee and Owens, it was moved they be accepted as written. Motion prevailed.

TREASURER'S REPORT

The following Treasurer's Report for March 6, 2025 was read into the record by City Clerk and upon a motion of Council Member McCoy, seconded by Council Member Oliver, the Report was received, recorded and filed. Motion prevailed.

Note: The Treasurer's Report is included herein as an insert from Page 7 to Page 9.

City of Wilmington



DaWayne Sims
City Treasurer

Treasurer's Report March 20, 2025

Cash - Ledger Balance (as of 03/19/2025):

General	M & T Bank	\$ 11,850,200.00
Payroll	M & T Bank	\$ 1,551,195.19
Law Department Court Costs	M & T Bank	\$ 4,552.07
Total Petty Cash	M & T Bank	\$ 25,811.06
Police - Evidence Found (Currency)	M & T Bank	\$ 1,215,028.95
Police & Fire Remembrance	M & T Bank	\$ 12,844.49
Police Department Discretionary	M & T Bank	\$ 16,476.46
Rent Withholding Escrow	M & T Bank	\$ 22,287.97
Grant-in-Aid	M & T Bank	\$ 112,760.87
Community Development Block Grant	M & T Bank	\$ 1.00
Capital Projects	M & T Bank	\$ 1.00
Total Cash on Hand		\$ 14,811,159.06

Cash Equivalents & Investments (as of 03/19/2025):

Account Type & Fund	Institution	Investment Type	Number of Days	Interest Rate	Interest Receivable	Investment Amount
LIQUIDITY:						
General	M&T	Overnight Repo	Daily	3.25%	\$ 2,358.40	\$ 26,647,264.85
General	TD	High Yield Checking	13	3.56%	\$ 17,091.70	\$ 13,295,187.08
General	TD	High Yield Checking	13	3.56%	\$ 9,806.15	\$ 7,627,946.19
General	TD	High Yield Checking	13	3.56%	\$ 2,627.03	\$ 2,043,501.10
SUB-TOTAL:						\$ 49,613,899.22
Account Type & Fund						
Police & Fire Remem.	WSFS	CD	6/23/2025	3.92%	\$ 449.31	\$ 27,320.51
General	TD	CD**	3/21//2025	4.25%	\$ 109,861.99	\$ 31,019,854.60
General	TD	CD*	3/19//2025	4.25%	\$ 34,420.36	\$ 9,718,688.50
SUB-TOTAL:						\$ 40,765,863.61
RESERVE:						
General ¹	PNC	T-Bills	4/10/2025	4.30%	\$ 69,800.00	\$ 19,967,200.00
SUB-TOTAL:						\$ 19,967,200.00
RESTRICTED:						
Capital Project	TD	CD**	3/19//2025	4.25%	\$ 2,894.22	\$ 817,190.49
Capital Project	TD	CD**	3/19//2025	4.25%	\$ 79.65	\$ 22,488.00
Capital Project	TD	CD**	3/19//2025	4.25%	\$ 22,281.23	\$ 6,291,171.41
Water/Sewer	PNC	T-Bills	4/10/2025	4.30%	\$ 55,200.00	\$ 15,786,300.00
State Bonds Proceeds-FY23	TD	CD**	3/19//2025	4.25%	\$ 6,234.52	\$ 1,760,334.92
People's Settlement	TD	High Yield Checking	13	3.56%	\$ 15,426.67	\$ 12,000,000.00
State Bonds Bill FY24	TD	High Yield Checking	13	3.56%	\$ 4,262.95	\$ 3,316,033.32
State Bonds Bill FY25	TD	High Yield Checking	13	3.56%	\$ 2,371.16	\$ 1,844,460.02
SUB-TOTAL						\$ 41,837,978.16
Total Investments						\$ 152,184,940.99
Total Cash on Hand						\$ 14,811,159.06
Grand Total						\$ 166,996,100.05

¹ Budget Reserve

*Restricted use. Per ARPA US Treasury Guidelines

** Investments undergoing renewals

DocuSigned by:

DaWayne Sims 3/20/2025

DaWayne Sims, City Treasurer

CITY TREASURER'S OFFICE

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City of Wilmington



DaWayne Sims
City Treasurer

Treasurer's Report - Pensions I March 20, 2025

Cash - Ledger Balance (as of 03/19/2025):

Pension Payroll	M & T Bank	\$	44,194.21
Retiree Healthcare	M & T Bank	\$	228,163.73
Police Pension	M & T Bank	\$	116,441.55
Fire Pension	M & T Bank	\$	436,423.90
Non-Uniform Pension Act of 1990-Plan 3	M & T Bank	\$	207,243.51
Non-Uniform Pension Plan 2	M & T Bank	\$	12,880.00
Old Non-Uniform Pension - Plan 1	M & T Bank	\$	1,592.81
Total Cash on Hand		\$	1,046,939.71

Cash Equivalents (as of 03/19/2025) & Investments (Market Value as of Mar 14, 2025)

Account Type & Fund	Institution	Investment Type	Maturity Date	Interest Rate	Interest Receivable	Investment Amount
LIQUIDITY:						
Fire Pension III	TD	CD	3/24/2025	4.25%	\$ 3,852.91	\$ 1,019,888.86
SUB-TOTAL:						\$ 1,019,888.86
RESERVE:						
Pension Trust	Rhumblin (S&P 500)					\$ 112,515,287.00
Pension Trust	Earnest Partners					\$ 17,283,473.00
Pension Trust	Dodge & Cox					\$ 9,297,077.00
Pension Trust	WCM Global Fund					\$ 8,910,926.00
Pension Trust	MFS Low Global					\$ 9,491,431.00
Pension Trust	Fidelity Total Intl. Index					\$ 28,411,667.00
Pension Trust	GQG Emerging					\$ 4,483,466.00

DocuSigned by:

DaWayne Sims 3/20/2025

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DaWayne Sims, City Treasurer

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City of Wilmington



DaWayne Sims
City Treasurer

Treasurer's Report - Pensions II March 20, 2025

Investments (Market Value Mar 14, 2025)

Account Type & Fund	Institution	Investment Type	Maturity Date	Interest Rate	Interest Receivable	Investment Amount
RESERVE:						
Pension Trust	Clarion Lion					\$ 9,395,404.00
Pension Trust	Morgan Stanley					\$ 7,752,152.00
Pension Trust	JP Morgan					\$ 16,843,127.00
Pension Trust	LM Capital Core					\$ 34,193,912.00
Pension Trust	Rhumblin Core					\$ 30,073,544.00
Pension Trust	Fidelity Bond Index					\$ 9,697,414.00
Pension Trust	Money Market					\$ 6,060,532.00
Pension Trust	OPEB Trust Fund					\$ 36,096,002.00
SUB-TOTAL						\$ 340,505,414.00
Total Investments						\$ 341,525,302.86
Total Cash on Hand						\$ 1,046,939.71
Grand Total						\$ 342,572,242.57

Total Funds under Treasury Management:

Total Investments						\$ 493,710,243.85
Total Cash on Hand						\$ 15,858,098.77
Grand Total¹						\$ 509,568,342.62

¹ Excludes non-City funds held in trust on behalf of City employees (Mass Mutual)

DocuSigned by:
DaWayne Sims 3/20/2025
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DaWayne Sims, City Treasurer

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PUBLIC COMMENTS

At this time, President Congo opened up the floor for public comments and the following individuals spoke:

- Dora Williams
- April Taylor

LEGISLATIVE BUSINESS

Council Member Harlee presented and called for the first and second reading Ordinance No. 25-006 (Agenda #0019) entitled:

AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING A RATE OF TAXATION ON REAL PROPERTY AND THE TAXABLE PROPERTY OF PUBLIC UTILITIES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING ON JULY 1, 2025 AND ENDING ON JUNE 30, 2026

The above-referenced Ordinance was given two separate readings by title only and upon a motion of Council Member Harlee, seconded by Council Member McCoy, the Ordinance was received, recorded and referred to the Finance & Economic Development Committee. Motion prevailed.

Council Member Harlee presented and called for the first and second reading Ordinance No. 25-007 (Agenda #0020) entitled:

AN ORDINANCE TO ADOPT A CAPITAL PROGRAM FOR THE SIX FISCAL YEARS 2026 – 2031 INCLUSIVE

The above-referenced Ordinance was given two separate readings by title only and upon a motion of Council Member Harlee, seconded by Council Member McCoy, the Ordinance was received, recorded and referred to the Finance & Economic Development Committee. Motion prevailed.

Council Member Harlee presented and called for the first and second reading Ordinance No. 25-008 (Agenda #0021) entitled:

AN ORDINANCE TO ADOPT A CAPITAL BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026

The above-referenced Ordinance was given two separate readings by title only and upon a motion of Council Member Harlee, seconded by Council Member Oliver, the Ordinance was received, recorded and referred to the Finance & Economic Development Committee. Motion prevailed.

Council Member Harlee presented and called for the first and second reading Ordinance No. 25-009 (Agenda #0022) entitled:

AN ORDINANCE ADOPTING THE ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGET FOR THE FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING ON JULY 1, 2025 AND ENDING ON JUNE 30, 2026

The above-referenced Ordinance was given two separate readings by title only and upon a motion of Council Member Harlee, seconded by Council Member McCoy, the Ordinance was received, recorded and referred to the Finance & Economic Development Committee. Motion prevailed.

Council Member Harlee presented and called for the first and second reading Ordinance No. 25-010 (Agenda #0023) entitled:

AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND CHAPTER 45 OF THE CITY CODE REGARDING SEWER SYSTEM RATES AND CHARGES, WATER RATES AND CHARGES, AND STORMWATER RATES AND CHARGES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026

The above-referenced Ordinance was given two separate readings by title only and upon a motion of Council Member Harlee, seconded by Council Member McCoy, the Ordinance was received, recorded and referred to the Finance & Economic Development Committee. Motion prevailed.

PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Council Members and Council President spoke on the following: upcoming Community Clean Up Day on April 12 at various locations throughout the city, recently extended reassessment deadline of March 31, 2025, Roberto Clemente league registration and upcoming Budget Hearings and including but not limited to everyone was thanked for joining tonight's meeting and was encouraged to contact Council Office with any questions and/or concerns.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon a motion of Council Members Harlee and McCoy seconded by Council Members Owens and Oliver, Council adjourned at 7:10 p.m. Motion prevailed.

Note: More detailed information is reflected in the videotape of the March 20, 2025 City Council meeting at the following link:

<https://www.witn22.org/programs/#/?video=4264>

Attest: 
Akira Grenardo, City Clerk