

The regular meeting of the **November 2025** Village of Ardentown was convened at 7:35 pm on **Monday, November 10, 2025**, in person at The Candelight Theatre. Melissa Parsonson, Town Chair, presiding. A quorum was present.

In Attendance:

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|----------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Jessica Riggleman | 11. Jay Demsey | 21. Art Cohen | 31. Alison Wakelin |
| 2. Melissa Parsonson | 12. Joe Painter | 22. Lisa Wilson Riblett | 32. Dela Muhlenberg |
| 3. Mhairi Craig | 13. Gerald Marcus | 23. Shari Phalan | 33. Stuart Craig |
| 4. Maureen Gordon | 14. Hillary Daye | 24. Elaine Schmerling | 34. Elise Kidd |
| 5. Annie Gutsche | 15. Bethany Reese | 25. Susan Kaye | 35. Susan Poole |
| 6. Jill Emery | 16. Allen Riblett | 26. Marian Pione | 36. Cindy Cohen |
| 7. Dan Emery | 17. Janet Cosgrove | 27. Michael Pione | 37. Will Ryan |
| 8. Marc Morfei | 18. Oliver Gutsche | 28. Peter Slattery | 38. Ray Seigfried (Guest) |
| 9. Betty Ann Themal | 19. Steve Cohen | 29. Janna Scheflen | |
| 10. Suzanne Cherrin | 20. Cathy Cohen | 30. Mary Ann Patterson | |

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Minutes for the September 2025 meeting and the October 2025 special meeting are approved as submitted.

OLD BUSINESS:

● **Delmarva Litigation and Related Updates:**

- **Delmarva Lawsuit Filed.** Delmarva has formally filed a lawsuit against the Village of Ardentown. The complaint references the September 2025 meeting minutes and alleges that the Village is violating the 14th Amendment by restricting access to the utility easement. While the complaint does not explicitly request the rescinding of the voltage reduction request, it is understood that Delmarva aims for rescission of both the The Transmission Line Structure Ordinance (Ardentown Ordinance #2025-02) and the Preservation of Historic Character Ordinance (Ardentown Ordinance #2025-01).
- **Concerns Regarding Village Ordinances.** It was noted that the recently enacted ordinances impose penalties exceeding what is allowed under Ardentown's Charter (maximum \$100 fine). The Transmission Line Structure Ordinance (Ardentown Ordinance #2025-02) was described as difficult to enforce and these actions were meant to further encourage communication with the company following several prior outreach attempts by Lisa and the ad hoc committee. To prevent litigation, we should consider rescinding and revisiting the Preservation of Historic Character Ordinance (Ardentown Ordinance #2025-01), and the future potential ordinance will exclude utilities.
- **Media Attention.** The News Journal may publish, or may have already published, an article concerning the situation.
- **Environmental Update.** DNREC is currently working on lead remediation activities.
- **Future Access and Village Impact.** There is uncertainty regarding how Delmarva may access the Village or the easement in the future as the legal process evolves.
- **Potential Legal Costs.** Per the lawsuit, Ardentown could be held responsible for Delmarva's attorney fees. It was noted that such language is standard in many legal filings.
- **Comments from Representative Ray Seigfried.** Ray Seigfried referenced a handout created by resident Steve Cohen (not created by town leadership) summarizing aspects of the lawsuit. Key points included: (1) Ardentown operates under a charter establishing a unique form of government, (2) the two ordinances in question may conflict with state law, (3) the Public Service Commission, not municipalities, governs and regulates utility companies, (4) building codes have been delegated to New Castle County and should be considered in decision-making, and (5) legal costs could be significant.

- **Upcoming Hearing.** The Town Chair has a telephone hearing scheduled for November 18.
- **Questions Regarding Legal Counsel.** A resident asked whether counsel was consulted during the drafting of the ordinances and whether counsel is responsible for the language used. Ardentown’s attorney, Ted Rosenthal, reviewed the ordinances prior to approving them and advised that the risks associated with the ordinances outweigh the potential benefits and recommended that they be rescinded.

MOTION: THE TRUSTEES MOVE THAT THE VILLAGE OF ARDENTOWN ORDINANCE #2025-02 “TRANSMISSION LINE INFRASTRUCTURE” (CONCERNING VOLTAGE) BE RESCINDED.

Motion seconded.

Vote: 34 in favor, 0 opposed, 2 abstained. **Motion passes.**

MOTION: THE TRUSTEES MOVE THAT THE VILLAGE OF ARDENTOWN ORDINANCE #2025-01 “PRESERVATION OF HISTORIC CHARACTER” (CONCERNING HEIGHT RESTRICTIONS) BE RESCINDED.

Motion seconded.

Vote: 27 in favor, 2 opposed, 3 abstained. **Motion passes.**

- **ArdensReady:**

- **Open House Event.** Marianne reported that ArdensReady held an open house on November 2, with more than 100 residents and visitors attending. The event was viewed as a major success. **Background on ArdensReady.** The volunteer group was formed over a year ago as part of an initiative to support residents before, during, and after unexpected disasters such as major power outages or hazardous material spills. While such events have fortunately not occurred in recent years, the goal is for ArdensReady to supplement—not replace—the assistance provided by federal and state agencies. Ordinary government services may become overwhelmed during emergencies, and ArdensReady aims to help fill those gaps. **Open House Presentations and Activities.** Presentations at the open house included: self-defense skills and demonstrations, emergency CPR instruction, techniques for managing excessive bleeding, Narcan training for temporary opioid-overdose reversal, and resources for seniors provided by the University of Delaware. **Community Leadership and Volunteer Recruitment.** Ardentown is the first of the Ardens to have this program available for its community. ArdensReady is actively seeking additional volunteers.

TREASURER’S REPORT:

Checking Account:	Starting Balance	\$	22,877.58
	Income		0.00
	<u>Expenses</u>		<u>22,575.30</u>
	Current Balance	\$	302.28
Savings Account:	Starting Balance	\$	5,299.53
	<u>Income</u>		<u>0.09</u>
	Current Balance	\$	5,299.62
Total Checking & Savings		\$	5,601.90
Accounts Receivable		\$	9,000.00

Municipal Street Aid	\$	27,330.85
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Arden Building & Loan	\$	19,019.89
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Unrestricted Net Assets	\$	33,621.79
Restricted Net Assets	\$	27,330.85

Expenses	\$	22,575.30	Income	\$	0.00
Trash		6,337.80			
Tree Grant Expense		9,000.00			
Restoration		672.50			
Snow Contract		800.00			
Admin		115.00			
Salaries		1,200.00			
Donations		4,450.00			

ARPA Final Project Report

Grant Award:	\$110,219.70
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Project List

Pettit Green Rain Gardens	\$	17,803.50
Web Conferencing Equipment		2,083.28
Loreley Swail		15,000.00
Green Aeration		1,525.00
Sconset Swail		12,500.00
Glen Steps		14,645.00
Herny George Rain Garden		10,206.00
Woodland/Orchard		24,080.00
Open Space		7,530.99
Municipal Services		4,845.93

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- **Archives (Arden Craft Shop Museum):** Nothing to report.
- **Assessment:** The committee proposed to the trustees, for their consideration, a singular change to the calculation of Land Rent for the upcoming bill in March 2026. The proposal is for the county and state tax liability for Ardentown's Non-Leased land, such as for the greens, the woods, and the paths, to be shared equally among Leaseholds and not base the calculation on lot size. One of the reasons for the proposal is because we all have the same opportunity to use and enjoy the common lands.
- **Audit:** Nothing to report.
- **Budget:** The budget committee met to create a tentative 2026 budget for the November Town Meeting. The committee consists of Cindy Cohen, Stephanie Lombardo, Oliver Gutsche, Hillary Daye and Alison Wakelin (chair).

INCOME unrestricted	2025 Passed	2025 Partial	Variance	2026 Proposed
Comcast/Verizon Cable	3100	2976.62	-123.38	4,000
Interest AB&L	750	750	0	750
Transfer from Trust	13500	13500	0	13,500

INCOME restricted

Forest Grant	0	0	0	9,000
TEDI Grant	0	0	0	11,822.61
Donations	5000	5000	0	5,000
TOTAL INCOME	22350	22226.62	-123.38	44,072.61

COSTS	2025 Passed	2025 Partial		2026 Proposed
Town Secretary Salary	1000	500	-500	1000
Website Maintenance Salary	600	300	-300	600
Town Treasurer Salary	400	0	-400	400
Administrative Costs	1200	695.89	-504.11	1200
Subtotal Administrative Costs	3200	1495.89	-1704.11	3200
Playground Committee	250	0	-250	15,000
Registration Committee	100	0	-100	100
Memorial Garden	300	0	-300	300
Assessment Committee	300	0	-300	300
Community Planning Committee				
Internship	200	0	-200	200
Committee Expenses	300	0	-300	300
Public Works Committee				
Paths and Natural Areas	5600	3495.37	-2104.63	5,600.00
Signs	500		-500	500
Snow Removal	5500	5775	275	5500
Generator	0	15000	15000	1000
Subtotal Committees and Works	13050	24270.37	11220.37	28,800
DLLG Annual fee	525	0	-525	525
ACRA	1000	0	-1000	1000
Arden Library	400	0	-400	400
Arden Page	800	0	-800	800
Arden Craft Shop and Museum	850	0	-850	850
Buzz Ware Village Center	1400	0	-1400	1400
			0	
Subtotal Memberships & Donations	4975	0	-4975	4975
TOTAL EXPENSES	21225	25766.26	4541.26	36,975

- **Buzz Ware Village Center**: Nothing to report.

- **Community Planning:** Considering more forward planning on the future responsibilities of the community planning. Community center just down the road
- **Memorial Garden:** The Memorial Garden continues to be a work in progress. During the fall season, several maintenance and improvement activities were completed - (1) Tree and Shrub Maintenance: some of the smaller suckling trees along the Harvey Rd fence line were removed to allow for better afternoon sunlight in the garden, on the opposite side of the garden, an overgrown shrub received initial trimming, with additional trimming planned, several low-hanging branches were trimmed back (2) Professional Tree Work: work was completed by the Kendall Company to trim trees along one side of the garden. Branches will naturally tend to grow inward toward the garden and will require periodic maintenance (3) Ground Maintenance: in early October, the garden grounds were aerated, grass seed was applied, and the area was fertilized (4) Fence Repairs: work is ongoing to repair and replace sections of the split-rail fence, including several posts and rails (5) Budget: the committee has spent \$284.38 from the current budget to date (5) Burial Plot Inquiries: The committee was contacted by two families regarding burial plots within the Memorial Garden. Looking Ahead: The committee is considering outreach for community donations to fund a second bench for the garden.
- **Playground:** We should know about the grant within a few weeks from DNREC. There's also a 2026 community reinvestment grant available, but we won't be able to apply for that until January 2026.
- **Public Works & Safety:**
 - **Oliver Gutsche: Roads**
 - It was noted that Municipal Street Aid funds are limited and would cover only approximately 100 yards of roadway, while the Village has significantly greater needs. Current priorities include addressing two collapsed stormwater pipes—one near Sconset Road and another near Miller/Orchard Road—as well as repairing multiple potholes throughout the Village.
 - The committee is in the process of obtaining quotes for “Reminder: Slow Down” signs to promote safer driving within the Village.
 - Plans are underway to repaint the speed bump in front of Will's house to improve visibility and safety.
 - **Elaine Schmerling reported on the following Paths & Restoration work:**
 - Sunnyside – Ron finished his 3rd grant-funded day cutting down more dead ash trees on and closest to the main N-S trail and better chopping up some of the downed trees. Walkers beware, there are still more ashes to fall, many felled trees not chopped well, and more trees and limbs fall every storm. We just finished planting and caging almost 40 new native trees as required under the grant. We also caged a few seedlings, and added some spicebushes. We even watered, and now with cooler temps and rain this past weekend, they should be fine! We also located and fixed cages (replaced and/or lifted 7' deer netting) for 32 trees we planted last fall. It's been a tremendous undertaking here, clearing and pulling back invasives from the trees.
 - TEDI Grant Application - Will and Bethany are working out a more detailed plan for the state, to get money up front for contractor to put a deposit on all the trees to plant & cage March-May [165 more trees - 58 each in Sunnyside and The Glen (mostly for gap areas from dead ashes), 34 off Chestnut (incl 10 willows at sunny bend in creek) and 15 at the Old Mill area. Included supplies for caging and some planting by contractor, Advanced Ecology.]
 - Ardens Vegetation Mapping and Surveying (ARPA-funded) project - Still working on the ARCGIS system...already set up for Beech trees. I requested a category for tree plantings...work in progress.

- Ad-hoc Deer Committee - We are proceeding w/the deer plan as discussed and majority approved at the last town mtg. Date is after Thanksgiving and early Dec.
- **Registration:** Town Meeting Refreshments & Social Time: Refreshments were provided by the Registration Committee: Mhairi Craig, Maureen Gordon, Hillary Daye, Jessica Riggelman, and Cindy Cohen. Committee Work: At our October 26 2025 meeting, we reviewed Committee duties, as per the Ardentown By-Laws; reviewed the current List of Ardentown residents; revisited our Welcoming process for new Leaseholders and residents; and scheduled our meeting dates for 2026. Registration Committee Meeting Dates for 2026: To be held two weeks prior to each town meeting, on a Sunday afternoon at 3:00 pm, at Cindy & Steve Cohen's: January 25, 2026; April 26, 2026; August 30, 2026; and October 25, 2026. Resident changes: Will Ryan and Ksenia Dynkin have purchased Harry & Betty Ann Themal's home at 2308 East Mall; Bob Andress & Lon Sullivan have purchased 1511 The Mall from Ronald Rosenbaum's estate; Juliana Lee has purchased 1705 Harvey Road from Karen Ames' estate. If you see these new residents, please reach out and welcome them to the neighborhood. If you know of any new residents in Ardentown, please let the Registration Committee know.

TRUSTEES REPORT:

- **Annie Gutsche** – NCC Reassessment: A court decision at the end of October upheld the property tax rates set by New Castle County. Currently, New Castle County plans to have final tax bills online on Nov. 20th, with paper bills in the mail by Dec. 1. A bill that extends the payment deadline from Nov. 30 to Dec. 31 has passed the Senate and will be heard in the House on Thursday. Once the Trustees receive the bill from New Castle County, we will be able to send out the Senior Tax Adjustments. Finally, a reminder that if you receive a supplemental tax bill (for example, after you have made improvements to your house), please do not pay it. Drop it off in the Trustee's mailbox, or with one of the Trustees, and the Trust will pay the bill.
- **Stuart Craig** – Ivy Gables: Many of you have noticed that Ivy Gables started some work on the Carriage House. That work is not in the spirit of the contract and what the Trustees and Ivy Gables had previously agreed to; we are working on resolving this with Ivy Gables.
- **Lisa Wilson Riblett** – Tree Update: Unfortunately, all of the ash trees on the East Coast have been infected with an emerald ash borer. Unless consistently treated, these trees are dying. This year, Ardentown, along with Arden and Sunnyside, was able to get a matching grant for ash tree removal, allowing Ardentown to remove 9 of them. Infected ash trees quickly become very dangerous and can fall without warning. If you walk through Sunnyside, Elaine can show you the situation with large fallen ash trees everywhere. Nine native trees have been bought to replace those cut down. We hope this matching grant will be available again next year, since more ash trees need to come down. Removing trees is expensive, and while it's not our preference, safety requires it in this situation.

TOWN CHAIR REPORT: Melissa Parsonson reported the following -

- The Village Charter is outdated, and the Governance Committee expressed interest in pursuing amendments to modernize it. Potential updates include authorizing the distribution of meeting minutes and invites via email, increase the fines incurred for ordinances (current and future) as well as potentially removing the description of ad hoc committees as they are included in the bylaws.

NEW BUSINESS:

- **Canned Food Drive:**
 - The Village will continue collecting canned and shelf-stable food items at each meeting, with cereal and Parmamilk noted as high-need items. Residents were also informed that monetary donations may be more

impactful, as the Claymont Community Center can purchase significantly more food through the Food Bank than individuals can typically buy at retail prices.

ELECTIONS:

- **Assessment Committee** – 1 positions up for Sept 2025: Janet Cosgrove (Chair)
 - Janet Cosgrove has been unanimously re-elected to the assessment committee for the Sept. 2025 - Sept. 2027 terms.
- **Community Planning Committee** – 3 positions up for Nov 2025: Edmond Bischoff, Peter Slattery, Melissa Parsonson
 - Peter Slattery and Melissa Parsonson have been unanimously re-elected to the community planning committee for the Nov. 2025 - Nov. 2027 terms.
 - Edmond Bischoff was not at the meeting and the vote is deferred to February 2026 for the Nov. 2025 - Nov. 2027 term.
- **Town Officers** – 2 positions up for Nov 2025: Jessica Riggleman, Town Secretary and Peter Slattery, Town Treasurer
 - Jessica Riggleman has been unanimously re-elected as town secretary for Nov. 2025 - Nov. 2027 terms.
 - Peter Slattery has been unanimously re-elected as town treasurer for Nov. 2025 - Nov. 2026 terms.
- **Upcoming February 2026 Elections:** Archives Committee, Memorial Garden Committee

GOOD & WELFARE:

- Chris Monson's birthday is today
- Peter Slattery's daughter just got braces
- Bethany is interested in outdoor Holiday decorating contest
- ACRA pancake breakfast will be postponed 10 AM 11/16/25 and Beverly Fleming makes the best pancakes. We are looking for volunteers to stir the batter.

Meeting adjourned at 9:05 pm.,

Respectfully submitted by Jessica Riggleman, Secretary of Ardentown