

Village of Ardentown
Ardentown, DE 19810

Established 1922
Incorporated 1975

The special meeting of the **January 2026** Village of Ardentown was convened at 7:34 pm on **Tuesday, January 20, 2026**, in person at The Candlelight Theatre. Melissa Parsonson, Town Chair, presiding.

In Attendance:

1. Jessica Riggleman	6. Uttam Shanbhag	9. Mhairi Craig	14. Oliver Gutsche
2. Maureen Gordon	7. Sofia Hogan	10. Annie Gutsche	15. Brian Patterson
3. Raymond Duffy	Shanbhag	11. Elaine Schmerling	16. Esther Golton
4. Lisa Wilson Riblett	8. Cody Palmer	12. Mariane Pione	17. Melissa Parsonson
5. Allen Riblett	(new resident)	13. Michael Pione	

Town Chair – Melissa Parsonson (Committee Co-Chair):

Delmarva Power Easement Access & Tower Replacement Oversight

Purpose of Meeting

The primary purpose of the meeting is to discuss concerns regarding Delmarva Power's ongoing electrical infrastructure access and tower replacement work within the easement and to determine an appropriate governance and oversight structure to ensure transparency, coordination, and resident communication.

Formation of an Ad Hoc Committee

Committee Purpose:

- Review and coordinate proposed access plans for tower replacement
- Serve as a centralized oversight and communication body
- Address resident concerns related to access, environmental impact, and site restoration
- Ensure transparency and adherence to agreed-upon scope of work

Concerns Prompting Committee Formation:

- Deviations from agreed scope of work by Delmarva Power
- Unauthorized or inadequately communicated tree cutting
- Lack of advance notice to affected residents
- Insufficient documentation of access plans, environmental protections, and restoration measures

Committee Structure and Membership

The committee will operate on an ad hoc basis for the duration of the tower replacement project.

Membership:

- Melissa Parsonson (Committee Co-Chair) (Town Chair)
- Lisa Wilson-Riblett (Committee Co-Chair) (Trustee)
- Annie Gutsche (Trustee)
- Stuart Craig (Trustee)
- Will Ryan (Community Representative; horticulture and landscape expertise)
- Ted Rosenthal (Legal Specialist)
- Bethany Rees (Public Works & Safety)
- Oliver Gutsche (Public Works & Safety)
- Other community members if there is an interest. We would like to keep the members to a limited and odd number.

Meeting Cadence:

- Regular meetings on the 1st and 15th of each month
- Additional meetings as needed based on Delmarva activity or resident concerns

• Since the committee has been formed, the committee has been in communication with Delmarva Power.

- The hope was that Delmarva would join the meeting today, but the date did not work for them. The committee has asked if Delmarva can join our next town meeting on February 9th. The committee is currently working on a Road Use & Restoration Management plan to mitigate damage to the village. The tower project and the lead remediation is still a substantial project that will be a huge disruption regardless of this plan.
- In the coming months, residents will be informed of any planned work, so if you see something outside of the information given to you, it is asked that you report it to one of the committee members.
- The survey done by the trustees has been completed. Please do not move the stakes and let the committee know if any have been moved and by whom if possible.

Trustee – Lisa Wilson Riblett (Committee Co-Chair)

22 Month Brief Summary

- April of 2024 – Delmarva announced that they were going to clear-cut a 30-foot swath between Brae Road and Sconset Road to accommodate the replacement of their transmission line, which includes 2 Delmarva towers and 3 poles that run through our Village.
- During the year and a half following that announcement, numerous people tried to get Delmarva to move the transmission line out of our Village. Delmarva would not agree to moving the transmission line. (Delmarva has a 999-year legal easement to have this transmission line through our Village.)

Planned Sequence of Remediation & Replacement Work:

1. Tree Work – winter 2026 (completed as of this time)
2. Soil remediation – winter 2026
3. New cement bases for the five new poles – spring 2026
4. New poles installed – fall 2026
5. Removal of old towers and poles – date?

Lead Remediation

- During the spring of 2024, when this transaction was just beginning, we had the soil tested around some of the towers and poles. The tests showed extremely high levels of lead in the soil from the old lead paint used on the towers and poles. As a result of our testing and protesting, by the fall of 2024, Delmarva agreed to enter into a Voluntary Cleanup Program. They have signed a legally binding contract with DNREC to remediate the lead in the soil.
- As of this time, we are still awaiting the final plan as to how this remediation will take place. This month, Delmarva is supposed to report to DNREC the details of this remediation work, including the full lateral excavation extents and details of how this will be accomplished. The soil is to be dug up and removed and replaced with residential-grade soil. It is important to picture how this will impact the areas and leaseholds around the five towers and poles. If the lateral excavation extends 5 feet? 10 feet? 20 feet?
- Delmarva reps have agreed to have an Open House to share the details with leaseholders about this process. We are constantly asking for a date and time for this meeting, and we will share that with you as soon as we receive that information.

Towers & Poles – Replacement in 2026

Work Sequence for 2026:

1. Stake where five new poles will be placed – complete
2. New cement bases for the five new poles – spring 2026
3. New poles installed – fall 2026
4. Removal of old towers and poles – date?

Details of upcoming work:

- The placement for the five new poles has been marked with a wooden stake. The five stakes are very near the existing towers and poles.
- The first tower at Harvey Road (#6833-7) will have a 6-foot concrete circle base installed this spring, and the pole, which will be installed in the fall, will be a 125-foot monopole. The present tower has a 24-foot square base. I do not know the height of the present tower.
- The next three poles (#6833-8/9/&10), that run between Brae and Sconset Roads, will have a 3-foot concrete circle base installed this spring; the monopoles that will be installed in the fall will be 90 feet to 105 feet tall. (90/105/105)
- The last tower at the bottom of Brae Road in the woods (#6833-11) will have a 6-foot concrete circle base installed this spring, and the pole, which will be installed in the fall, will be a 90-foot monopole. The present tower has a 24-foot square base. I do not know the height of the present tower.
- The work in the spring to install the concrete bases is supposed to take between 2 and 3 days, per pole, if no rocks are encountered, or a week or so if there are rocky conditions.
- The work in the fall to install the poles is supposed to take about 3 days for each pole, given no complications.
- The wires will be replaced by attaching the old wires to the new wires and pulling them overhead.
- The removal of the old towers and poles will happen after the new poles are up and running. This important part of the transaction has not been settled, and we need to continue to be vigilant on this last construction part.

Other

- There are still a lot of important parts to this transaction with Delmarva that Ardentown needs to carefully navigate. For example, the Village is presently working to protect our small, narrow roads from large, heavy equipment, and we are working on exactly how Delmarva will access each of the towers and poles.
- We have a lot of work yet to do to help protect our Village as best as we can from this behemoth that is Delmarva.
- The next year is going to be very difficult and horribly disruptive, especially to our people who live near the towers and poles.
- No matter how much we plan, it is not going to be an easy, seamless transaction. We can expect lots of hurdles, and we will just have to address each one as they arise.
- Please stay alert and be careful around construction equipment and the workers when this begins.
- If you see something concerning, please let the ad hoc committee members know.
- It is important that we all try to be as patient and kind as we possibly can during this upcoming, challenging year.

Meeting adjourned at 7:59 pm.,

Respectfully submitted by Jessica Riggleman, Secretary of Ardentown