

The regular meeting of the **February 2026** Village of Ardentown was convened at 7:33 pm on **Monday, February 9, 2026**, in person at The Candlelight Theatre. Melissa Parsonson, Town Chair, presiding. A quorum was present.

In Attendance:

- | | | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Jessica Riggleman | 9. Dan Emery | 17. Marian Pione | 25. Esther Golton |
| 2. Gerry Warak | 10. Jill Emery | 18. Melissa Parsonson | 26. Hillary Daye |
| 3. John McCormick | 11. Steve Cohen | 19. Stuart Craig | 27. Cindy Cohen |
| 4. Allen Riblett | 12. Joe Painter | 20. Oliver Gutsche | 28. Janna Scheflen |
| 5. Maureen Gordon | 13. Lee Painter | 21. Gayle Lafferty | 29. Peter Slattery |
| 6. Judy Glenn | 14. Lisa Wilson Riblett | 22. Marc Morfei | 30. Dela Muhlenberg |
| 7. Edmond Bischoff | 15. Annie Gutsche | 23. Cortney Hayflinger | |
| 8. Alison Wakelin | 16. Michael Pione | 24. Colin Consavage | |

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Minutes for the November 2025 meeting and the January 2026 special meeting are approved as submitted.

TREASURER’S REPORT:

All materials have been submitted to the Audit Committee for the 2025 audit, with the exception of Evergreen Services. Payment was received from the Trustees as part of the town budget for the current year. Accounts receivable are expected in connection with the TEDI Grant. Implementing an official quarterly financial report is recommended, the snow budget will likely be exceeded. Steven Cohen requested a one-page report for ARPA funding, and Peter Slattery will share the report submitted to the U.S. Treasury and bring copies to the next meeting.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- **Archives (Arden Craft Shop Museum):** An “Afternoon with the Artist” event was held on 2/8/26 and had a strong turnout despite freezing weather conditions.
- **Assessment:** Nothing to report.
- **Audit:** Materials for last year’s audit were received this evening, and the audit will be scheduled and completed in a timely manner.
- **Budget:** Alison proposed the 2026 budget as follows:

Village of Ardentown: Proposed Budget 2026				
INCOME unrestricted	2025 Passed	2025 Actual	Variance	2026 Proposed
Comcast/Verizon Cable	3100	3710.19	610.19	4,000
Interest AB&L	750	753.45	3.45	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	2,500
Carried over from 2025				1,028

TOTAL INCOME	22350	22963.64	613.64	42,600.29
COSTS	2025 Passed	2025 Actual	Variance	2026 Proposed
Town Secretary Salary	1000	1000	0	1000
Website Maintenance Salary	600	600	0	600
Town Treasurer Salary	400	400	0	400
Administrative Costs	1200	855.89	-344.11	1200
Subtotal Administrative Costs	3200	2855.89	-344.11	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	20,018.52	14,418.52	5,600.00
Signs	500	0	-500	500
Snow Removal	5500	5775	275	5500
Generator	0	15000	15000	1000
Subtotal Committees and Works	13050	40793.52	27743.52	28,800
DLLG Annual fee	525	525	0	525
ACRA	1000	1000	0	1000
Arden Library	400	400	0	400

Arden Page	800	800	0	800
Arden Craft Shop and Museum	850	850	0	850
Buzz Ware Village Center	1400	1400	0	1400
Subtotal Memberships & Donations		4975	0	4975

TOTAL EXPENSES	21225	48624.41	27399.41	36,975
Non-Discretionary Items				
	2025 Initial	Received	Spent	Balance
Municipal Street Aid	16320.42	11010.43	0	27,330.85
American Rescue Plan Act	17479.92		17479.92	0
Trash Evergreen	1676.41	37000	52,535.22	-13,858.8 1
Memorial Gardens Account	1025.95	0	284.38	741.57

MOTION: TO APPROVE THE FISCAL YEAR 2026 TOWN BUDGET AS SUBMITTED. Motion seconded.

Vote: All in favor. **Motion passes.**

- **Buzz Ware Village Center:** Operations continue to run smoothly with strong support from committee members, staff, and sponsors; renovation funds will be used to replace ceiling tiles in Room 3 while preserving and modernizing historic lighting; DNREC grant funding has been approved for the Emergency Resilience Hub with solar panel and roof removal to be rescheduled, battery delivery expected soon, and full installation targeted for late February/early March alongside office optimization planning; the Awakened Heart lease has been renewed with discussions planned for Wilmington Sudbury School and Arden Building and Loan leases; private rentals and government use remain steady as efforts continue to strengthen rental income; and programming includes an Introductory Yoga Class on 2/12/26 at 5:00 PM led by Tapan Mallik, with potential for ongoing sessions and additional details available via the Page and BWVC website.
- **Community Planning:** The committee met last week to close out items from last year, discussed new speed limit signage, revisited previously deferred topics related to Delmarva chicken concerns and potential use of the building across from Ivy Gables, and noted that donations to the Claymont Food Pantry were appreciated with plans to continue the food drive, particularly for coats, hats, blankets, and new socks.
- **Memorial Garden:** Chris Monson has expressed interest in being re-elected.
- **Playground:** The committee met over the weekend, received an \$8,000 matching grant (50%) for swings requiring \$4,000 in in-kind contributions or labor (approximately 50 hours), reviewed manufacturer options targeting a \$15,000 budget for swings and safety materials, noted interest in adding additional equipment, is seeking volunteers and future grant opportunities including a Community Investment Grant application, and Ray has indicated he may help with part of the match pending confirmation.
- **Public Works & Safety:**
 - **Roads & Stormwater:** The roads budget is \$27,000, which is insufficient to address all needs and will require prioritizing the most critical repairs, including approximately 40 yards of roadway, while two stormwater pipe breaks under PWS responsibility may also draw on these funds; a proposal has been requested from Rich Cropper to assess pipe issues pending improved weather conditions, and there is an outstanding question regarding repairs to the rain garden on Henry George Green where drainage issues persist.

- **Paths & Restoration:** Ongoing work in Sunnyside includes repeated repairs to tree cages and assessment of plantings with six of the original twelve trees currently located, while the TEDI Grant has provided 50% upfront funding to procure trees for March planting, beginning with 58 trees in Sunnyside followed by additional plantings in the Glen, Chestnut area, and Old Mill area with volunteers encouraged to participate; additionally, the ARPA-funded Ardens Vegetation Mapping and Surveying project using the ArcGIS system is still being finalized and is expected to support upcoming tree-planting efforts and broader applications.
- **Ad-hoc Deer Committee** – The Deer Committee Final Report was shared and will be made available on the Town’s website.
- **Registration:** Town Meeting refreshments were provided by the Registration Committee (Mhairi Craig, Maureen Gordon, Hillary Daye, Jessica Riggelman, and Cindy Cohen); Cody Palmer moved into 1501 The Mall in December 2025 and residents are encouraged to welcome him and notify the committee of any additional new residents; the ACRA 2026–2028 Directory is being prepared for Spring publication with updates due by February 28 via the ACRA website or email; and the next Registration Committee meeting is scheduled for Sunday, April 26 at 3:00 PM at Cindy and Steve Cohen’s.

TRUSTEES REPORT:

- The 2026 Trustee budget was shared, land rent will not increase this year, and the emerald ash borer continues to significantly impact ash trees in the area; following last year’s matching grant from the Urban and Community Forest Service to remove and replace nine ash trees with native species, the Town plans to apply again this year to remove eight large and one small ash tree in the Glen with grant decisions expected by the end of March, and is also seeking recommendations for licensed and insured landscaping companies to assist with work beyond routine grass cutting.

TOWN CHAIR REPORT: Melissa Parsonson reported the following -

- See ‘NEW BUSINESS’

NEW BUSINESS:

- A broad update was shared covering community and legislative matters, including information on the ACRA neighborhood directory and the Joint Finance Committee timeline, advocacy efforts related to immigration and transportation concerns involving regional authorities, updates on correctional facility closures and their potential impact on families and employment, ongoing reassessment issues and related legislation, and confirmation that playground funding has been approved.
- The State has requested participation in Delaware Mosquito Control efforts, including potential aerial spraying if needed
 - **MOTION: TO AUTHORIZE THE TOWN TO CONTINUE PARTICIPATION IN THE DELAWARE MOSQUITO CONTROL PROGRAM, INCLUDING PERMITTING AERIAL SPRAYING IF DEEMED NECESSARY TO ADDRESS NUISANCE LEVELS OR PUBLIC HEALTH CONCERNS.** Motion seconded. Vote: All in favor.
Motion passes.
- Plans to update the town charter will move forward once the Delmarva-related issues are resolved.
- Community arts and cultural events, including the Delaware Scene Stealers festival (Feb 6–Feb 21), were highlighted along with resources for additional programming.
- A DNREC safety newsletter was shared, including a recall notice for “Angry Orange” spray and general winter safety reminders.
- The U.S. Census Bureau is conducting a boundary survey, which does not impact the town.
- It was noted that most roadwork funding comes from Municipal Street Aid, and there is potential to supplement funding through local taxation if needed.

OLD BUSINESS:

- **Delmarva Power:** The ad hoc committee continues to meet twice monthly and has reviewed a project map outlining access routes and placement of protective mats (7.5 x 13.5 ft and larger 20 ft mats) to support vehicles and minimize ground impact, with plans to meet directly with affected leaseholders; the

construction bidding process has not yet begun, poles will be galvanized steel rather than rust-colored due to durability concerns, the next meeting is scheduled for 2/16 at 7:00 PM via Zoom with invitations available upon request, and those interested in attending should contact Melissa at ardentown.chair@gmail.com for the Zoom link, with additional members welcome; The work will be done in 3 phases: Phase 1, in the spring, will be removal and replacement of the lead-contaminated soil near the poles and towers with new, uncontaminated soil. Phase 2's focus will be on installation of foundations for the new structures. Phase 3 will feature installation of the monopoles, removal of old structures and rewiring. Both Phases 2 and 3 are now scheduled to happen in the fall.

- **ArdensReady:** ArdensReady and Ardentown are continuing to develop emergency preparedness plans, with Candlelight prepared to serve as an emergency hub and additional initiatives currently in progress.

ELECTIONS:

- **Archives Committee**– 1 positions up for Feb 2026: Bev Bizup Hawkins (Chair)
 - Bev Bizup Hawkins has been unanimously re-elected to the archives committee for the Feb. 2026 – Feb. 2028 term
- **Community Planning Committee** – 1 positions up for Nov 2025: Edmond Bischoff
 - Edmond Bischoff was unanimously re-elected to the Community Planning Committee for the Nov. 2025 - Nov. 2027 term.
- **Memorial Garden Committee** – 1 positions up for Feb 2026: Chris Monson
 - Chris Monson has been unanimously re-elected to the Memorial Garden Committee for Feb. 2026 – Feb. 2028 term.

GOOD & WELFARE:

- Dela – thank you for canned food drive
- Thank you to William who set up the projector
- Mhairi and Stuart will be having another grand child (5 months pregnant)
- Jessica has a new mini dachshund named Beanie, please come say hi
- Today is Cortney's son Will's 16th birthday and he received his license today, be patient with him

Meeting adjourned at 9:11 pm.,

Respectfully submitted by Jessica Riggelman, Secretary of Ardentown