

**TOWN OF ELSMERE
PENSION COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
November 12th, 2025
COUNCIL CHAMBERS
6:30 p.m.**

Call to Order: Chairman Neal Strauss called the meeting to order at 6:30pm.

Pledge of Allegiance:

Moment of Silent Prayer for Those Wishing to Do So:

Roll Call:

CHAIRMAN	NEAL STRAUSS	PRESENT
SECRETARY	NICOLAS GOMEZ	PRESENT
MAYOR	JOANN PERSONTI	PRESENT
COUNCILWOMAN	JANE MCDANIEL	PRESENT
COMMITTEE MEMBER	SCOTT ALLEN	PRESENT
COMMITTEE MEMBER	VACANT	
COMMITTEE MEMBER	VACANT	

Chief of Police, Laura Giles – Present
Town Manager, Steven Martin – Present
Finance Director, Valarie Strzempa - Present
Attorney, Tim Snyder – Present

Public Comment:

Laura Giles, Pensioner and Chief of Police for the Elsmere Police Department, located at 11 Poplar Ave, stated that at the October Council meeting, the Original Police Pension actuarial was presented. She stated that Parker relayed that the Town needs to start giving more than \$35,000. Chief Giles stated that she requested the last 10 years of deposits into the Pension and that she reviewed what she had from Insurance Commissioner’s Office. Chief Giles explained that we get two checks per year and then the money from the Town gets put into the plan. She stated that this year she changed her budget, so instead of \$60,000, she upped it to \$80,000 because they are getting more money from the Insurance Commissioner’s Office. Chief Giles reviewed the deposits that were provided to her by the Town Manager, and she stated that there are some deposits that aren’t shown and duplicates from different years. She is requesting to sit down with the Finance Director and requested that moving forward, the Pension Committee receive emails when the checks are received and deposited into the account from the Insurance Commissioner’s Office in March and December. Chief Giles requested that an email be sent when the Town contribution is deposited into the Police Pension account. She explained that this way, we don’t have to keep going back and forth and we know how much is getting deposited into the account each year and it should

be based off of calendar year. Chief Giles stated that when Parker's report comes out and he reports a certain amount, the Town can come back and correct him to show what was put in. She stated this way we know how much was put into the account. Chief Giles continued, stating this is good banking and errors will be caught early. She asked the Committee if they would like to review what she has for deposits that are missing.

Town Manager Steven Martin stated that he found out that First State Trust can provide an account activity report, which he will use to check the numbers with the actuarial.

Chief Giles stated that she wants to know what was deposited and she knows that money is taken out to pay the pensioners. She explained that she wants to know when the checks are coming because there was one year that if she didn't say something we would have never known a check wasn't received from the Insurance Commissioner's Office.

Town Manager Steven Martin replied that this has happened more than once.

Chief Giles stated she wants to make sure the account is being watched, and the Finance Director will tell the committee when the check comes. She stated that there is a check that came in for 2025 for \$43,681.78. This check came in March, but the form that was provided to her shows there is a check for \$46,538.65 and this check was from June 12th.

Finance Director Valarie Strzempa stated that those reports are by fiscal year.

Chief Giles replied no not according to this report that she has in front of her.

Finance Director Valarie Strzempa stated that the check Chief Giles is looking at would have been a late March check. She continued that one side of the report is money coming in and the right side of the report is money going out.

Chief Giles stated that she is looking at the bottom of the report, and we shouldn't get another check until December.

Finance Director Valarie Strzempa agreed another check will come in December or in January because they usually pay late.

Chief Giles stated that there are duplicate numbers deposited in 2021 and then the same in 2022 which she doesn't believe to be true. She stated that she sees a \$20,000 check that she can't identify.

Finance Director Valarie Strzempa stated they can only put the cash that is coming in, or the audit would be wrong.

Chief Giles stated that she understands, but it can't go out for two years, in 2021 and 2022 because the numbers aren't adding up.

Chairman Neal Strauss stated that the Town Manager, Finance Director, and Chief should all sit down and review this.

Town Manager Steven Martin stated that the report provided does show the employer contribution.

Chief Giles stated that as a pensioner and as the Police Chief she wants to see when money is going in.

Chairman Neal Strauss stated that he spoke to the Town Manager about other ways of doing this every year and states he suggested that at budget time, the Town put in their contribution, and the money is given in checks, then when the checks come, they just get put into the general fund.

Chief Giles disagreed and stated it should be based on calendar year and not fiscal year.

Town Manager Steven Martin stated he will sit down with the Chief and then he will report back to the Chairman about the conversation and what discrepancies there were.

Chief Giles agreed and stated moving forward she would like the Finance Department to provide notification when checks are received and deposited, which should be by the 31st of the month received. She stated that when we meet again in March, we should have a report to know when the checks and the Town contribution have been deposited.

Chairman Neal Strauss stated that this report should be provided every 6 months.

Town Manager Steven Martin stated he will do another report on the contributions with that report as well.

Mayor Joann Persontti asked if the amended copy of the actuarial has everything accounted for.

Town Manager Steve Martin stated yes.

Approval of Minutes:

1. Minutes from the May 15, 2025, Pension Committee Meeting.

ACTION: A motion was made by Mayor Joann Personti to approve the minutes May 15, 2025, Pension Committee Meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Jane McDaniel

VOTE: 4 – 0 Motion carried

Review of Financial Activity Occurring Since Last Committee Meeting:

1. Monthly Statement of Accounts.
2. Monthly Payment Reports.

Chairman Neal Strauss stated that he would like to add the monthly reports to the email they will receive.

Town Manager Steven Martin stated that he will need to figure that out since they are over 30 pages. He stated that he could do a synopsis of each pensioner for the month with how much they get paid, including the activity from First State Trust.

Chairman Neal Strauss questioned when the payments come in from the State.

Chief Giles stated March and December.

Finance Director Valarie Strzempa stated if they don't mess up the payment, historically they are late.

Chairman Neal Strauss asked if there were any questions on the financial activity.

Old Business:

None

New Business:

1. Appointment of New Member:

- a. Nicholas Gomez

Chairman Neal Strauss stated that Nicholas Gomez was selected by the Mayor and Council and welcomed him to the committee. He asked if Nicholas has any questions, to let him know and made him aware that the committee meets a few times a year.

Committee Member Nicholas Gomez stated that he has several questions but is trying to absorb all the information he can. He stated he is a silent observer and that there are a lot of moving parts that he is trying to figure out.

Chairman Neal Strauss stated that luckily, it is not how is used to be with the Town running the

Pension and the police officers were on it. He stated that they used to make their own investments. Chairman Neal Strauss stated it's a lot easier now because the officers are on the State plan. He stated that there is an old plan that he, Chief Giles and a few other officers are on and is a closed plan that no one else can join and it is just money movement to pay the pension checks. He stated the money is moved to DELRIP and is combined with the State of Delaware money for the State plan because they have good investors. Chairman Neal Strauss explained when we discuss the numbers in the next part of the meeting, that money is in DELRIP and is moved to First State Trust so they can cut the checks.

2. Items for the Elsmere Police Pension.

- a. Authorization and Approval to pay First State Trust for the 4th Quarter 2025 and 1st and 2nd 2026 Quarter Asset Based Fees, Distribution of checks fees and Distribution of cash.

Chairman Neal Strauss stated from January of 2026 to June 2026, the pension payment amount will be a total of \$168,173.60. There will be a fourth quarter 2025 assessed base fee which is \$1,625.00. He stated from October 1, 2025, to December 31, 2025 there is a disbursement fee of \$63.00 for the fourth quarter and for the first quarter is the same base fee of \$16.25 and the disbursement fee of \$63.00. Chairman Neal Strauss stated the service charges that we pay are \$3,376.00 and combine that to the \$168,173.60 pension payment that will be moved to DELRIP to First State Trust, totaling at \$171,549.60. Chairman Neal Strauss requested Committee Member, Nicholas Gomez receive a copy of the reports.

Town Manager Steven Martin stated he will forward copies.

- b. Authorization of the amount of money which needs to be transferred from DELRIP to First State Trust to cover expenses from January 1, 2026, through June 31, 2026.

ACTION: A motion was made by Mayor Joann Personti to transfer \$171,549.60 from DELRIP to First State Trust to pay the pensioners from January of 2026 to June of 2026 which will include all the assessed fees and payments. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Jane McDaniel

VOTE: 5 – 0 Motion carried

- c. Appointment of Committee Secretary.

Chairman Neal Strauss stated that at this time, we do not have a committee secretary and asked if anyone would want to take that position.

Attorney Tim Snyder asked if anyone knew what the secretary's job was and explained that it is to record the minutes and transcribe them. He stated Katherine would do this nominally.

Town Manager Steven Martin stated that the secretary would proofread the minutes and make sure they are signed.

Committee Member Nicholas Gomez stated that he would step up.

Chairman Neal Strauss stated Committee Member Nicholas Gomez has accepted the position and has been appointed as the Pension Committee Secretary for the Town of Elsmere. He thanked him for taking this position.

d. Update of Actuarial Report 2025.

Chairman Neal Strauss asked if the Actuarial Report he has was the updated one.

Town Manager Steven Martin stated yes.

Chairman Neal Strauss stated that he reviewed the Actuarial and there is a 51% liability. He asked what the average is.

Attorney Tim Snyder stated that for public plans, there are no ERISA rules regarding contributions that need to be made. He stated 50-60% funded pay the benefits as they go and if everyone is getting their benefits, the percentage doesn't really matter.

Mayor Joann Personetti stated that there was a period that Council didn't receive the Pension Meeting minutes and they used to. She stated that for the last three years we have been at this level of 50-52%, this isn't something new. Mayor Joann Personetti stated that it may be a good idea for Council to consider increasing the contribution and have a discussion of what can be done next budget year. She stated that she agrees with the recommendation to increase the funding of this plan and stated that this consideration will be in the budget discussion.

Chairman Neal Strauss stated that the plan did go up, and the market value is better than last year.

Mayor Joann Personetti stated that she has seen the previous recommendations to hold steady because of market fluctuations.

Chairman Neal Strauss stated back in 2019, the rate was around 72% and that it was much higher right before COVID. He stated the plan gained \$300,000 several years ago and that really helped, but then there was a loss. Chairman Neal Strauss stated back in 2019, the Council put a large contribution in at \$317,353. He stated that back in the 90's before there was a Secondary Pension Plan, there was a contribution of \$450,000 and there have been a few years when the Town has made bigger contributions. Chairman Neal Strauss stated this year, the contribution was around \$170,000. He stated there have been some COLA increases.

Attorney Tim Snyder stated there is a \$130,000 decrease in liability because people are being paid out and no new benefits are being accrued. He stated the long-range rate of expected return is 5.15%, which seems low.

Chairman Neal Strauss stated that at one point, the rate was higher and felt this was a little off kilter.

Town Manager Steven Martin stated it was mentioned that the pension plan wanted a more conservative stance.

Attorney Tim Snyder stated 8% is a high discount rate and a lot of public plans are reducing discount rate. He stated that by reducing the discount rate from 8% to 7% the liability goes up to \$420,000.

Chairman Neal Strauss stated there have been many thoughts of how to fund this plan and medical was taken away. He stated funding will be talked about with the budget.

Mayor Joann Personti stated that salary increases must be determined and then what more could be put toward the plan. She stated that she has accepted the fact that there will be tax increases for the next couple of years.

Chairman Neal Strauss asked if there was anything that can be done with the VAC and tickets as far as adding to the cost.

Chief Giles stated that they can't add that, but she has thought about upping the fines since they make their own fee schedule. She wishes the DMV would agree to not giving points on tickets because people will pay the ticket amount, they just don't want points.

Chairman Neal Strauss asked when the budget starts getting put together.

Town Manager Steven Martin stated in February.

Mayor Joann Personti stated that Council usually gets a budget packet about mid-May.

Chairman Neal Strauss stated that the Town got about \$135,000 from the State with \$170,000 already in there, which means that \$35,000 came from the Town.

Chief Giles stated that this year, the plan has already gotten \$43,681 with one check. She stated Parker didn't document that the Town gave \$35,000 and she stated that this alarms her.

Town Manager Steven Martin stated that he will destroy the original actuarial and will verify the actuarial to the First State Trust documents with how much the Town gave.

Chairman Neal Strauss said that the first actuarial that was received had clerical errors of not showing money.

Town Manager Steven Martin stated that this is why he has the other report, so the Committee will know exactly what the employer's contributions are.

Chief Giles requested that this report be provided to everyone.

Town Manager Steven Martin stated that he will provide a report of contributions to the Committee every time they meet.

Chief Giles stated that the \$35,000 Town contribution should go into the account before December 31st.

Chairman Neal Strauss asked if a monthly line-item list is given at every council meeting.

Town Manager Steven Martin stated yes.

Chairman Neal Strauss stated that this should be seen then.

Chief Giles stated that she wants to make sure contributions are being counted for by calendar year.

3. Items for the State of Delaware County/Municipal Police Pension Plan

a. None

Chairman Neal Strauss asked when the employer rate contribution increase amounts are determined.

Chief Giles stated that they come out right before the budget in April or May.

Finance Director Valarie Strzempa stated that a preliminary will be provided in March, and then a final will be given closer to the budget.

4. Items for the Town of Elsmere Employee Retirement Plan.

a. None

Chairman Neal Strauss stated that there was some discussion about putting in a match for the employee plan, but he understands that there are negotiations.

Mayor Joann Personti stated that everything is frozen.

Attorney Tim Snyder asked if anyone was participating in this plan.

Chairman Neal Stauss stated yes.

Finance Director Valarie Strzempa stated yes, there are three employees participating.

Chairman Neal Strauss stated that he had been trying to implement a match, but he and the previous Mayor did not agree on this issue.

Review of Reports:

- a. None.

Statements Submitted by Committee Members:

Chairman Neal Strauss asked Attorney Tim Snyder if he is still planning on retiring at the end of the year.

Attorney Tim Snyder stated that he will be done at the end of the year.

Chairman Neal Strauss asked if he would find somebody to take his place at his firm.

Attorney Tim Snyder stated that there isn't anyone at his firm that does what he does and there isn't anyone in the State of Delaware either. He stated that the Town would have to get someone from Philadelphia or Baltimore, but he will give us some recommendations.

Chairman Neal Strauss asked if he would give us some recommendations and that he still wants to have an attorney because they didn't have one for a while.

Mayor Joann Personti asked if she understood correctly that most public plans are funded between 50-60% and if there was any reason for the Town to be alarmed.

Attorney Tim Snyder stated no, but everyone wants to have their plan funded so there is some concern that it is underfunded. He stated that if there is no money in the plan, you can tax to pay the benefits, and this is how most municipalities operate to fund the plan as best as they can.

Chairman Neal Strauss stated not to be morbid, but when there is no one left in this plan, the funds will get transferred back to the Town.

Town Manager Steven Martin stated another report he will provide to the Committee is the DELRIP balance.

Chairman Neal Strauss stated that another way to keep a savings in the Pension Plan is to have the Town assist with the administration fee for the pension and create a budget line to pay for the checks and fees. He stated this way, the money in DELRIP is for the Pension alone.

Mayor Joann Personti stated that she was under the impression that a portion of the Town's contribution is dedicated to cover the administrative fees.

Finance Director Valarie Strzempa stated that it is her understanding as well and all the contributions, from the Town and State of Delaware, go directly to First State Trust.

Chairman Neal Strauss stated that transfer the amount of fees from DELRIP to First State Trust to pay the admin fees, so money is coming out. He asked if the Town's contribution of \$35,000 is going toward the administrative fees.

Town Manager Steven Martin stated that this is news to him, and this is the way we have done it since he was hired. He stated that he will research that.

Attorney Tim Snyder stated that First State is only charging \$6,500 a year and the reimbursement cost is \$63.

Finance Director Valarie Strzempa stated that \$171,000 is only half a year and isn't being contributed annually.

Chairman Neal Strauss stated that if the Town could contribute just a little more per year it would pay for a little more, which that would help but either way, there is a chance it can be lost depending on the market.

Public Comment:

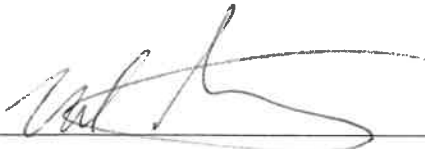
None.

Adjournment:

ACTION: A motion was made by Mayor Joann Personti to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Jane McDaniel.

VOTE: 5 – 0 Motion carried

These minutes summarize the agenda and other issues discussed at this meeting. Votes are recorded accurately. The audio tape(s) of this meeting will be available at Town Hall for a period of two years from the date these minutes are approved. The audio tapes may be reviewed at Town Hall by appointment and in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.



**NEAL D. STRAUSS
CHAIRMAN**



**NICHOLAS GOMEZ
SECRETARY**