Town of Henlopen Acres
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BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
BUDGET MEETING MINUTES

The Board of Commissioners of the Town of Henlopen Acres held a **Budget Meeting** on **Friday, June 13, 2025, at 10:00 a.m.** virtually, and in person at Town Hall, 104 Tidewaters, Henlopen Acres, Delaware.

Present:

Joni Reich	Mayor
Richard Thompson	Commissioner
John Staffier	Commissioner
Jeffrey Jacobs	Commissioner
Beatrix Richards	Commissioner
Tim Hidell	Commissioner
Tiffany Derrickson	Commissioner
Glenn Mandalas	Town Solicitor
Anna Fagan	Town Manager
Andrea Harpster	Town Clerk

1. **Call to Order**

   The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m.

2. **Public Comment**

   No public comment

3. **Items related to 2025 Board of Commissioners Election**

   Mayor Joni Reich explained that terms are expiring for Commissioners Jeffrey Jacobs and Richard Thompson and that the election will be held on Saturday, August 30th. Town Manager Anna Fagan will lead the discussion regarding the items related to the election.

   a. **Review of election calendar**

      Ms. Fagan presented the election calendar to the Commissioners, including the required notices and the information they must contain, voter registration deadlines, and absentee ballot deadlines.

      One major milestone is the deadline to file for candidacy. Once this deadline passes, the Commissioners will ratify the eligibility of candidates at their

Quarterly Meeting on July 11th. Due to the requirements of the Town Charter, the Quarterly Meeting will be recessed and, if anyone files between the recess and 4:30 pm that day, the Board will reconvene to ratify their eligibility.

b. Review and approval of appointment of three members to the Board of Elections

David Kaplan, Julia Marx, and Nathalie McGregor were nominated to the Board of Elections by Mayor Reich. Gina Wade and Sarah Sunderland were nominated as alternates.

Review and approval of appointment of three Election Officers

Forrest "Joe" Wade, Sallie Jones, and Freddie Noland were nominated as election officers by Mayor Reich.

Motion:
Richard Thompson made a motion to approve the appointment of the eight individuals as presented. Tim Hidell seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

c. Removal of registrants from the voter roll

A list of seventeen individuals for possible removal from the voter roll was presented to the Board of Commissioners to review. There are three different bases for disqualification. The first is, if someone has passed away, second is, if someone has moved and the third is if they have not voted in the last 2 municipal elections.

The Town will reach out to the inactive voters before they are removed, to give them the opportunity to indicate that they would like to remain on and then, if they do not respond and do not vote in the next municipal election they will be removed.

Motion:
Mr. Hidell made a motion to remove the first four names of the inactive list and then to put into effect the notification process of the individuals listed as inactive from #5-17. Beatrix Richards seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

4. Review and possible action on proposed budget for Fiscal Year July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026

The proposed budget reflects an operating expense increase of $172,000, primarily due to payroll-related expenses, health insurance rate hikes, and a $50,000 building inspector expense for AECOM services. Property tax revenue was kept consistent with the previous year at $475,000, leading to a deficit of $191,740 in the initial proposal. Adjustments were made to reduce the deficit to $126,357, including increasing construction permit fees for projects over $50,000 from 2.75% to 3% and removing a proposed part-time Code Enforcement Officer position.

Construction fees were increased to 3.5% for projects costing over $50,000, raising an additional $50,000 in revenue and reducing the deficit further. The town benchmarked its fees against neighboring municipalities, ensuring competitiveness while remaining in the upper third of fee structures. The increase in construction fees was justified as a significant revenue source, second only to property taxes, and was deemed necessary to cover town expenses related to construction activities.

Motion:
Tiffany Derrickson made a motion to adopt the budget with the revision to the zoning fee from 3% to 3.5% on all builds over 50,000 dollars. John Staffier seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

5. **Adoption of Tax Rate, Water Rates, and Fee Schedule**

The final tax rate was set at 18 cents per $100 of assessed value, representing 50% of the county's full assessed value, with an average property tax increase of $600 per parcel annually.

Business license fees were revised, with fees for businesses with six or more employees set at $175 and for businesses using trucks over 26,000 pounds at $275.

Water connection fees were updated, including a $500 fee for new connections and a $150 fee for reconnections after major construction.

Temporary structure fees were increased from $50 to $75, and permit extension fees were capped at $16,000 per three-month extension.

Notary services were reinstated for residents at no charge, while fax services were removed due to lack of use.

Motion:
Jeffrey Jacobs made a motion to adopt the tax rate and proposed fee schedule for the upcoming fiscal year. John Staffier seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

6. **Items related to Chapter 114, Trees**

    a. **Review and discussion of Public Hearing held on May 23, 2025**

The public hearing held on May 23rd at the Beach Club was well attended. It was also available to live stream via YouTube. Resident comments were mixed between support and opposition. Following the hearing, the comment period was open for an additional week. It closed on Friday, May 30th at 4:30 p.m. The Town had almost 100 residents either return their comment form or provided long form comments.

b. Review and discussion of public comments received on Draft Amendments to Chapter 114, Trees, of the Town Code

Resident feedback on the tree ordinance proposals was split, with 50% supporting canopy preservation and 50% opposing it, citing concerns about property rights and overreach. Commissioners expressed concerns about community division and the need to balance environmental goals with fairness to residents. The discussion emphasized the importance of trust and respect for residents while addressing the long-term need to protect the town's tree canopy

c. Discussion and possible action on Amendments to Chapter 114, Trees to establish restrictions on the removal and maintenance of canopy trees in setback areas on private property and to increase the minimum tree density related to construction

Three proposals were discussed regarding tree preservation: the original proposal, a revised proposal by Mr. Staffier and Mr. Jacobs, and a revised proposal by Mayor Reich. No action was taken on the proposals.

Mr. Hidell departed the meeting at 12:08pm.

d. Discussion and possible action on extending the Moratorium on severely cutting back, topping, damaging, or removing canopy trees in certain residential lot setback areas within the municipal limits of the Town of Henlopen Acres

Motion:
Mr. Jacobs made a motion to adopt the ordinance to extend the moratorium to September 30, 2025, with the understanding that any requests that come to the Town Manager for removal of trees will be reviewed under the redlined ordinance circulated to residents, maintaining strict protection during the interim period. Ms. Richards seconded the motion. All those present voted in favor. Mr. Hidell was absent.

The extension was deemed necessary to provide time to refine a possible final proposal, and for staff to prepare for implementation and address resident concerns effectively.

7. **Executive Session for the purpose of Discussion of Potential Litigation, in accordance with 29 Del. C. § 10004(b)(4), and Discussion of Personnel Matters in which the names, competency and abilities of individual employees are discussed in accordance with 29 Del.C. § 10004(b)(9).**

   Motion:
   Mr. Staffier made a motion to go into executive session. Ms. Derrickson seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

   Motion:
   Mr. Thompson made a motion to come out of executive session. Ms. Richards seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

8. **Review and possible action on matters discussed in Executive Session**

   Motion:
   Mr. Jacobs made a motion to approve the actions discussed in the Executive Session. Ms. Richards seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

9. **Any other business that may come before the Commissioners**

   No other business

10. **Adjournment**
    The meeting was adjourned at 1:44 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Andrea Harpster, Town Clerk