

"I want to thank the residents of Wilmington who came out in unprecedented numbers to voice their concerns over the possibility of ending the current residency requirement for City of Wilmington employees. Your voices were heard and because of that, a five-year residency requirement still exists. I would also like to thank those Council members who listened to our constituents and voted to keep residency intact. I believe that the eight of us did what we were elected to do, to take the lead from our constituents and vote accordingly.

I disagree with the misleading and disrespectful press release issued by Mayor Purzycki and feel it was uncalled for and extremely divisive. I do not believe that our residents deserve that from their elected officials.

Last year the Mayor came to me over concerns about the City's staffing shortage and how it was affecting our ability to provide city services to our residents. I immediately wanted to be a part of the solution. His suggested remedy was to relax residency, thereby giving the City a greater applicant pool to fill these positions. I was on board. I wanted our residents to receive the services they pay for with their tax dollars. However, after I had more conversations with members of the public, City staff, and Council members it was apparent that the Mayor has not taken the necessary steps to make sure that Wilmingtonians, those who voted us into office and pay our salaries, were even made aware of the staffing shortage. For me, that was concerning. The Mayor had stated that there were 100 staff openings, however, there are only 22 vacancies listed on the City's website.

I believe the Mayor has consistently used fear tactics in promoting his agenda to end residency. Efficient trash pick-up is one example. There are only two positions posted for sanitation workers and I find it difficult to believe that we can't find two people in our City who would want to be sanitation workers. Additionally, the Mayor has used public safety as a concern to end the residency requirement. Currently, our police academy is at an all-time low of seven cadets; however, the Mayor did not mention that the County and State police department academies are also at all-time lows. As a matter of fact, the County Police Department is offering a \$25,000 sign-on bonus. Per capita, the Wilmington Police Department is one of the largest in the Country. We need to work together to figure out how to rebrand our police department, internally to its officers, and externally, to our community. Until we do this, we will continue to struggle with filling our academy. The same can be said for other departments across the City. We have to work together to figure out how to incentivize new and current employees because surrounding cities are doing just that. We have taken steps in this direction, but we are not there yet. Although policing is not the answer to lowering crime, I realize it is of extreme importance to our community. We have over 300 dedicated and hard-working police officers in our department and we have to be open to a better way of making sure that there is a greater and friendlier presence across our City.

Mayor Purzycki was also misleading when he said that Council members didn't have an opportunity to speak because of the lengthy public comment portion of our meetings. This is not true. I gave every Council person the chance to give reasons why they supported or didn't support the residency requirement. Some chose to comment, and some chose not to.

Lastly, the most disturbing part of Mayor Purzycki's press release was his use of the term "mob." There were over 10 hours of public comment and hundreds of public speakers, and the Mayor chose to handpick a few individuals who were outspoken to paint the entire process, and those who participated, as "mob-controlled." That is very disappointing coming from a man who was elected to listen to his constituents' concerns. It has not gone unnoticed that Mayor Purzycki was unable to relate to people who just want their family members, friends, and themselves, to be a part of the City's workforce. Many people who spoke during public comment have witnessed firsthand how Governments have historically overlooked people of color. Wilmington is 70% Black and Hispanic. In my eyes, this was yet another attempt from the leader of our government, Mayor Purzycki, to bypass our capable and willing Wilmingtonians from accessing job opportunities which ultimately can lead to generational wealth and decrease the wealth disparity in the City of Wilmington.

To his credit, under his tenure as the Executive Director of the Riverfront Development Corporation, the riverfront has been transformed into one of the premiere riverfronts on the East Coast. That same energy is needed to develop the citizens of Wilmington so that our entire City can grow and thrive. The talent is already here in Wilmington. However, the Mayor has not used this opportunity to do a press release regarding staffing.

I would like to announce to Wilmingtonians and those interested in relocating here, that the City of Wilmington is currently hiring and to call the Department of Human Resources at (302) 576-2460 or the City Jobs Hotline at (302) 571-4666 to apply, or you can reach me by calling our City Council office at (302) 576-2140.

To view and apply for current vacancies listed on the City of Wilmington's website, visit <https://www.wilmingtonde.gov/government/city-departments/human-resources/apply-for-city-employment>