



# Town of Berwyn Heights

5700 Berwyn Road  
Berwyn Heights, MD 20740  
Tel. (301) 474-5000  
Fax (301) 474-5002

## Minutes Worksession July 7, 2014

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m. Present were Mayor Cheye Calvo, Mayor Pro Tem (MPT) Jodie Kulpa-Eddy and Councilmembers (CMs) Patricia Dennison, and Chris Rasmussen. CM Anthony Schreiber had an excused absence. Also present was Clerk Kerstin Harper.

### 1. Mayor

**Announcements:** Former Prince George's County Executive Wayne Curry, 63, died at his home on July 2. He was elected as the first African American County Executive in 1994 and served two terms until 2002. CM Dennison's neighbors Neil and Sarah Zyak had a baby boy on July 4th.

**Calendar:** The date for the employee appreciation lunch was confirmed for July 18. The Maryland Municipal League conference will take place early from September 11-13.

**Minutes:** On a motion by MPT Kulpa-Eddy and second by CM Dennison, the June 16 worksession minutes were approved 4 to 0. The June 11 Town meeting minutes were distributed.

**Department Reports:** Mayor Calvo reported that he continues to receive inquiries about June 10 flash flood that damaged homes of many Town residents. He spent a lot of time trying to coordinate the restoration of power among residents, Pepco and the County. All residents now have their power back. He also is working to schedule a meeting with County officials to better understand what happened with the storm drain system, as well as a public meeting with County officials and WSSC representatives at which residents can comment and ask questions. While the County will not compensate residents for damages, the meeting may be a starting point for making improvements to the system that will prevent similar problems in the future.

Mayor Calvo further reported that WSSC has recently started to do work on Natasha Drive without notifying the Town. Chief Antolik and Director Lockley are attempting to find out what is being done. It would be useful for the Town to know how the County handles WSSC permitting so that it can deal more effectively with WSSC contractors. TA Murphy informed him that he plans to be back next week. He has devoted considerable time at home working on the sidewalks and emergency generator projects, as well as the storm drain system. The 63rd Avenue sidewalks require a temporary easement from the Berwyn Presbyterian Church, which must be approved by the larger Presbytery, it is hoped by the end of the summer.

Mayor Calvo said that there was a regional power outage last Thursday, which affected most of the homes in Town. Pepco responded quickly and most residents had power back within a couple of hours. He commended officers Krouse and Thompson for collecting information on who was affected and checking with seniors. Lastly, the Town Administrator position has been advertised and applications have started to come in.

CM Rasmussen reported that new Code Supervisor Kevin Simpson started to work today. He was welcomed by Town staff and given a tour of the Town with Chief Antolik, CM Rasmussen and Mayor Calvo, which was appreciated. Tomorrow he will meet with Mr. Simpson privately to have a more detailed conversation about the goals and objectives for his first year. As Mr. Simpson takes on some of the code patrols and rental inspections, the hours of the part-time officers will be cut back. Management of the Code Department is likely to be in a state of flux until a new town administrator has been hired. CM Rasmussen plans to meet with MPT Kulpa-Eddy and discuss her past experience with the Code Department.

CM Dennison reported that the Volunteer Appreciation dinner went well thanks in part to the help she received from Administrative Assistant Odoi. Upcoming dates to remember include August 26 when students return to school and September 27, the Lake Artemesia concert.

MPT Kulpa-Eddy reported that she spoke with SHA representatives about the Kenilworth Avenue project at the MML conference. She learned that the renovation of the Pontiac Street intersection will begin after the completion of the concrete work on culverts, gutters and the bridge at Paintbranch Parkway, anticipated by the end of July. Completion of the entire project is expected for October this year. She will forward the information to the Public Works Department so they can keep an eye out for the construction crews.

CM Rasmussen asked if the renovation includes the wavy pavement on Edmonston Road approaching the intersection. Mayor Calvo said it is not included because that is the Town's responsibility. Those sections of road should get concrete pads because they can better withstand the bus traffic. It might be worth looking into whether the Town could piggyback onto SHA's project.

Mayor Calvo noted that the Council officially appointed Adrian Lockley as a full director of the Public Works Department at the June 16 worksession.

***Citizen comments:*** MPT Kulpa-Eddy said she received comments on the flooding and last week's power outage, which she heard was related to the roof that blew off the Enclave onto Route 1 and a downed tree on Greenbelt Road. NW/EP was prepared to open the Senior Center. Mayor Calvo said, in addition to comments on flooding and the power outage, he received comments on the hockey rink, where usage has picked up. Rink users do not always have a permit and are parking in front of residents' homes on Osage Street. The police is monitoring the traffic on that block, and may check whether rink users have a permit, which can be obtained from the Boys & Girls Club.

***Flash flood assistance criteria:*** Mayor Calvo said that the Town has collected between \$6,000-7,000 in donations to help those whose homes were damaged by the recent flash flood. The question for the Council to decide is how to distribute the funds. He has given the matter considerable thought and proposes some initial guidelines:

1. Residents should make a request for assistance;
2. Assistance should be based on the costs incurred to repair the damage;
3. Ability to pay for the damage should be considered by means of an income threshold.

CM Rasmussen added that consideration should be given to whether a resident's basic needs are met, in particular, food, shelter and clothing. Mayor Calvo said the only case he knows of where some basic things were needed is a family that lost the contents of their daughter's basement bedroom. This family has been taken care of and received donations of a new bed and mattress as well a set of new clothing financed by Police Department donations. The family, in turn, took care of the public relations and told the Gazette about the generous assistance they received.

MPT Kulpa-Eddy mentioned location and family size as possible criteria. However, location was ruled out because flooding occurred all over Town, while family size is another measure of an income criterion. Home owners who do not live in the Town were also ruled out as recipients, as they are most likely landlords that did not suffer directly. But tenants, who live in a damaged house, will be eligible.

Mayor Calvo sought input on what should be asked on an assistance request form. He proposed name and address of the applicant, number of occupants of the damaged home, whether they have requested, but been denied private insurance coverage, and what was lost. He further proposed that losses must exceed a defined minimum threshold (\$5,000), before assistance will be considered. The form also needs to gather income information to establish an income threshold for assistance. Some residents are likely to opt out because of that.

At 8:11 p.m., the Council took a 5 minute break.

***Flash flood assistance criteria, continued:*** CM Rasmussen said he still thinks that an independent authority should handle the distribution of funds because there are so many complicating factors. However, a third party may not be as efficient in processing the assistance, and it may be useful to establish a template for similar issues in the future.

Mayor Calvo said that he would like to explain the process at an upcoming citizens forum. He likes the idea of compensating everyone whose electricity was shut off for the cost of hiring an electrician. This would use up approximately half of the collected money. Beyond that, he proposed to use a formula, such as is used to determine subsidized housing eligibility, to establish an income threshold to distribute the remaining funds. He believes the Section 8 Housing formula qualifies those making less than 80% of the median area income for subsidies, while taking number of household members into account. Other qualifications to receive assistance could include having sustained at least \$10,000 in damages and at least \$6,000 spent out of pocket.

MPT Kulpa-Eddy recommended using a formula that takes the location and number of household members into account. The Council should also set some dates by which an application must have been submitted. Further, she would like to give consideration to those who have not yet spent \$6,000 but may have an estimate of the renovation cost. Mayor Calvo preferred dealing only with money spent, which is easiest to document. But credit card expenses would be eligible.

Mayor Calvo summed up what constitutes a framework: Those who suffered flood damage must meet the above criteria and submit an application by the end of July. Documentation as to income and

damages can be submitted later. He will get the word out to those who are on the current list of residents affected by the flooding.

***Town Council priorities:*** Mayor Calvo said that he would like the Council to review the list of priorities established at previous worksessions and sort them into Council priorities and departmental priorities. MPT Kulpa-Eddy recalled that at the beginning of last term, the Council established 5 categories for priorities and provided the background document. The Council then sorted the list of priorities into the following categories:

1. Town Council Priorities

- Hiring of a new Town Administrator
- Comprehensive road repair plan
- Completion of priority 1 sidewalks
- Completion of emergency generators

2. Town Council agenda items

- Reshaping Code Department
- Increasing composting to reduce refuse disposal
- Upgrading agenda packets
- Overhaul personnel manual, council rules and Election Ordinance

3. Departmental Priorities

- Street lighting in dark areas
- Regulating oversized homes (with PGCMA and County zoning office)
- Attracting new businesses
- Amenities and programs for local schools
- Permanent location for police and fire departments
- Dog park
- Outreach to ethnic communities
- Acceptance of credit cards

4. Multi-departmental Priorities

- Town-wide shade tree plan
- Improve outreach through website, BHTV and social media
- Strategies for modernizing Town housing stock

5. Strategic Priorities

- Marketing Berwyn Heights

In discussion, Mayor Calvo said that previous Councils all coalesced around a theme. The 45th Council was focused on the interests of young families and improving facilities that are attractive to them. He asked for ideas of what the theme of this Council might be. Personally, he would like to focus on marketing Berwyn Heights, hopefully with an FBI headquarters coming to Greenbelt Station, and on economic development. CM Rasmussen suggested the theme of "repositioning Berwyn Heights for the future" and becoming a "destination community." This could include improving housing stock, economic development and setting up a shade tree plan to start. Mayor Calvo replied that Berwyn Heights is not likely to become a destination in itself, but could be part of a larger revitalized Route 1 corridor. This might include College Park, Riverdale Park, University Park and Hyattsville, which might be marketed as a "parks district." He suggested building on these ideas at future worksessions.

***Four Cities agenda items:*** Mayor Calvo suggested looking into partnering with neighboring municipalities to install solar panels on municipal buildings. He has heard from a contractor, who

would install 50,000 square feet of solar panels on municipal roofs, which Berwyn Heights cannot provide on its own. In return, the contractor would sell electricity at a discounted fixed rate. This could potentially reduce the Town's electricity costs by \$10,000.

Other topics proposed included: 1) multi-city road surface analysis contract; 2) Route 1 pedestrian safety update; and 3) how to address storm drain issues. There will also be a discussion of an animal shelter for the Route 1 corridor and development updates.

Nothing was discussed under **2. Parks and Recreation, 3. Public Safety, and 4. Public Works.**

## **5. Administration**

**CDBG certification of agreement:** Mayor Calvo explained that Prince George's County notified the Town on July 23 that it must sign an agreement by June 30 to be eligible for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding, and certify the agreement by a vote of the Town Council. He was able to sign the agreement by the deadline. But the Council has not been able to certify it yet and needs to do so at the upcoming Town meeting. In recent years, the Town has not qualified for the funds, which are mostly used to finance road repairs. However, it may qualify for CDBG economic development funds to rehabilitate its industrial district along Ballex Avenue and Branchville Road, for which it once submitted an application.

The Council agreed to pass a resolution at the Town meeting certifying the agreement.

**Bulletin cover:** The following items were selected for the August Bulletin cover: theme and headline - National Night Out; announcement - back to school. In response to CM Rasmussen, Mayor Calvo explained that the cover is driven by an annual events cycle, but changes if there are special news or schedule changes.

## **6. Code Compliance**

**Code supervisor first year goals:** Mayor Calvo asked the Council to review a list of first year goals for the Code supervisor, based on a document that synthesizes a list of goals composed by Novak Consultants and MPT Kulpa-Eddy. CM Rasmussen said that he will discuss the goals with Code supervisor Simpson when he meets with him tomorrow. For purposes of tomorrow's discussion, he would like more clarity on the lines of authority in the reconfigured Code Department.

Mayor Calvo replied that the role of the Council regarding their departments is policy and oversight. Day-to-day operations are now supervised by the Administration Department in the expectation that resources will be shared and efficiencies realized because the Administrative and Code offices are located in the same building. For example, the Administrative Assistant can help with customer service for the Code Department, and the Code Department may at some point take on business licensing or variance requests, currently carried out by Administration staff.

CM Rasmussen asked about the significance of the long title of the department: *Code Compliance, Construction and Transportation*. He was told that construction probably refers to the issuance of building permits, while transportation means responsibility for the call-a-bus program. The program, which has fallen out of use, is intended to provide rides for seniors living within a 7 mile radius from the Town with a bus provided by Prince George's County.

In reviewing the year one goals, the Council agreed that Mr. Simpson needs to: 1) develop a system for reporting periodically to the Council what goes on in his department; 2) set up a code violation tracking system, which probably means acquiring and learning new software; 3) learn the laws and procedures governing Berwyn Heights code enforcement; 4) tighten the process for rental licensing and inspections; 5) address the problem of repeat violations; 6) review and streamline internal procedures and organization; 7) work with the Public Works Department to enforce trash regulations; and develop an community outreach program to inform residents about the Code Department.

MPT Kulpa-Eddy said that this is a long list of goals and may take longer than one year to accomplish. CM Rasmussen said that he would like to get some feedback from Mr. Simpson and possibly revise the list at the next worksession. Mayor Calvo said he would like to have Mr. Simpson come to a worksession in the near future and get his input. It may be beneficial to get a fresh look at the code enforcement process and have him report back on what he sees as the biggest problems. In particular, he would like Mr. Simpson to review the Clean Lot Ordinance and suggest how repeat violations might be addressed in a more efficient fashion.

CM Rasmussen asked to what extent the Code supervisor will be evaluated on accomplishing these goals. Mayor Calvo said that it depends on what goals are ultimately agreed to. But he would think that the first 3 to 4 goals should be implemented in the first year. The code violation tracking system is one of those essentials. CM Rasmussen also asked what leeway Mr. Simpson has in scheduling his employees. Mayor Calvo said he will have authority to set their hours within the framework of the Code staffing budget. Very soon, he will have to determine a work schedule for his staff.

It was agreed to revisit the goals after CM Rasmussen has discussed them with Mr. Simpson.

#### **7. Executive Session (9:41 p.m. - 10:40 p.m.)**

On a motion by MPT Kulpa-Eddy, and second by CM Dennison, the Council went into executive session to discuss two personnel matters. With matters discussed, MPT Kulpa-Eddy moved and CM Dennison seconded to end the executive session.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:41 p.m.

Signed: *Kerstin Harper, Town Clerk*