



Town of Berwyn Heights

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Town Meeting Minutes January 13, 2016

The meeting was called to order at 8:00 p.m. Present were Mayor Kulpa-Eddy, CMs Patricia Dennison and Lynn White. Mayor Pro Tem (MPT) Chris Rasmussen and CM Maria Robles had an excused absence. Also present were Town Administrator (TA) Jessica Cowles, Chief of Police Kenneth Antolik, Treasurer Michelle Rodriguez, and Clerk Kerstin Harper.

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy led the Pledge of Allegiance.

1. Minutes

Clerk Harper read a summary of the December 9 Town meeting minutes. On a motion by CM White and second by CM Dennison, the minutes were approved 3 to 0.

2. Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Rodriguez gave the Treasurer's report for the month of December 2015.

3. Mayor's Report

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy gave a State of the Town address. She said that 2015 saw many changes on the Town Council and in staff. Former Mayor Calvo and CM Schreiber resigned to pursue job and educational opportunities that did not leave time for service on the Town Council. Luckily, their seats were filled by two residents, CMs Robles and White, who learned the job quickly. In addition, there was turnover in the leadership of the Code Compliance and Public Works Departments, but both are now under competent direction from Code Supervisor Freddie Glass and DPW Acting Director Kenneth Hall.

Despite the turnover, the Town Council and staff were able to finish several big projects. Five years in the making, the sidewalks project was finally completed and people appreciate them and the new bus stops and benches that came with it. The bikeways project is nearly done, with all bike racks and repair stations installed and construction on the emergency generators project has begun and should be finished by spring. On the legislative side, the Council was able to revise the Election Ordinance in time for the next election in May 2016. By the end of the term, she hopes to have all the priorities of the 46th Town Council checked off.

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy said the recent real property reassessments are showing an increase in home values of around 9.5% for residential properties and around 16% for commercial properties after a drop of 27% in 2010 and another 17% in 2013. This will generate more real property tax revenues, unless the Council decides to adjust the tax rate to yield the same amount of revenue as this year. With the upcoming FY 2017 budget process, directors have

been asked to submit both, a hold-the-line budget option and a budget with a 5% increase in spending. Residents are welcome to give input.

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy further noted that there are further delays in repairing the pedestrian bridge, which was damaged by a construction crane last April, and may not re-open until April 2016. Other projects scheduled for this spring include a personnel manual update and continued IT improvements. Residents are requested to keep the stormwater drains clear so as to facilitate runoff from melting snow and spring rains. Problems with a stormwater drain can be reported to the County's Office of Highway Maintenance at 301 499 8523.

Among the big projects the next Town Council will have to tackle is the renovation of Town streets in the wake of the WSSC water main replacement project, scheduled to conclude in 2017. Coming up with a plan and options for financing the resurfacing is likely to take up a good deal of time. They will also need to monitor the impact of the Greenbelt Station development on Berwyn Heights, particularly in terms of traffic, public safety and public schools. Lastly, Mayor Kulpa-Eddy thanked her fellow councilmembers and Town staff for solving problems and working together in a positive, cooperative fashion.

4. Department Reports

Administration: TA Cowles gave the Administration Department report as MPT Rasmussen was absent. She said that the Department is finishing up a couple of capital projects, which are the Safe Routes to School sidewalks and the emergency generators. The generators should be operational in late February. The Department has also released a request for proposals for the Urban Forest Initiative and expects to receive proposals by the end of next week. She and Treasurer Rodriguez are working on wrapping up the 2015 audit and working with the directors on preparing the FY 2017 budget. By the end of February, the Department expects to receive both a real property tax and an income tax disbursement, the two largest sources of revenue for the Town, as well as a Highway User Revenue payment.

Code Compliance: TA Cowles gave the Code Department report, as CM Robles was absent. She said that the Code Department has worked closely with the County's Department of Permitting, Inspections and Enforcement (DPIE) in processing two condemned properties. The owners of the 58th Avenue property have contacted the Town about rehabilitating the house and are making progress in returning it to habitable condition. The Cunningham Drive property has been reviewed by the County's Office of Law and approved for demolition, which is expected to occur in the next few weeks. The Code Department is also reviewing the Rental Housing Ordinance and creating a version with proposed changes, as well as working with the County to improve service delivery of the call-a-bus.

Parks and Recreation, Education and Civic Affairs: CM Dennison said that the Recreation Council has started planning for Berwyn Heights Day and is putting out the word for volunteers. The Education Advisory Committee has been reconstituted and will next meet on January 14. Upcoming events include a Re-gifting Party on January 23, and a bat-themed craft event on February 6. She then announced the winners of the holiday decorating contest: 5804 Rutan Street was chosen as best decorated house, 8502 Paxton Court as best decorated yard, and 8708 60th Avenue as best overall.

Public Health and Safety: Chief Antolik gave the monthly report on behalf of the Berwyn Heights Volunteer Fire Department (BHVFD). Ladder Truck Company 14 was named busiest in the County with 1,117 runs in 2015 while the BHVFD rescue squad handled a total of 6,110 runs overall. At the January meeting, President Hurley appointed a Rescue Squad Committee, which will design and develop specifications for a new Heavy Rescue Squad. They will be ready when the Department is notified about a grant award that will help pay for the vehicle.

Chief Antolik continued with the monthly police activities report for December. There were 5 Part I offenses, 2 burglaries and 3 larcenies, as opposed to the 5 year average of 4.8. Year to date, Part I offenses numbered 78, which is somewhat higher than the 5 year average of 72. The police also issued 171 state and municipal citations and 234 speed camera tickets. The police are in the process of solving a December 23, 2015 burglary on Berwyn Road, where several musical instruments were stolen. Some of the instruments were recovered from a Guitar Center in Virginia, where they had been pawned.

Chief Antolik also highlighted developments in the last 10 year period. Serious crimes declined significantly after 2010, when they hit a high with 139 Part I offenses, and are holding steady with annual rates ranging between 60-80. Last year, Iris Cruz was hired as new police clerk, and Thomas Hollowell and Yomira Ramirez as police officers. Officers attended training and conferences to maintain their certifications. Looking forward, the Department is working on a policy for body cameras and plans to continue regular meetings with community groups, i.e. NW/EP, Seniors, and Berwyn Heights Elementary School, as well as with affiliated agencies.

Public Works: CM White reported that 2015 saw many changes in the Public Works Department. A new interim director, Kenneth Hall, was hired as well as several new employees. Several vehicles were surplused to make room for a new trash truck and dump truck. Last month, the crew patched potholes, installed a radio in the new trash truck and emergency lighting in the trucks designated for snow plowing. The Department is now working on its FY 2017 budget and is planning improving service delivery and possibly launching a beautification initiative.

5. Committee Reports

Historical Committee: Clerk Harper, who chairs the Historical Committee, said that the Committee is planning an event that will feature a series of oral histories with Town residents, which will take place sometime later in spring. The Committee is also working on its next street marker, which will feature the Berwyn Heights Association. In the course of researching the topic, a few interesting photos from 1920 were found and published in the January Bulletin and on the BHHC website.

Neighborhood Watch/Emergency Preparedness: Mayor Kulpa-Eddy reported that the NW/EP Committee elected new officers at its last meeting. Merrill Weinrich and Mike Attick were elected co-chairs, Helen Weinrich Secretary and Shirley Attick Treasurer. On February 6 and 7, a CERT training course will be held at the Landover Public Safety Complex through the Prince George's Office on Homeland Security. People may call Mike Attick for more information and to register. The next meeting will be on February 3.

Recreation Council: CM Dennison said that the President of the Recreation Council, Tim Tormoen, will attend the next worksession and discuss Berwyn Heights Day plans. There is a need for volunteers to help with planning and organizing the event, as some long-serving members have retired. Residents are welcome to attend the worksession and share their ideas.

6. Unfinished Business

There was none.

7. New Business

There was none.

8. Citizens Discussion

TA Cowles noted that Administration Department will have a party for Darlene Erickson on January 28, to honor her 25 years of service.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:51 p.m.

Kerstin Harper, Town Clerk