



Town of Berwyn Heights

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Town Meeting Minutes March 9, 2016

The meeting was called to order at 8:00 p.m. Present were Mayor Jodie Kulpa-Eddy, Mayor Pro Tem (MPT) Chris Rasmussen, Councilmembers (CM) Patricia Dennison, Maria Robles, and Lynn White. Also present were Town Administrator (TA) Jessica Cowles, Officer Ben Hollowell, Treasurer Michelle Rodriguez, Clerk Kerstin Harper and citizens.

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy led the Pledge of Allegiance.

1. Minutes

Clerk Harper read a summary of the February 10 Town meeting minutes. On a motion by CM Robles seconded by CM Dennison, the minutes were approved 5 to 0.

2. Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Rodriguez gave the Treasurer's report for the month of February.

3. Mayor's Report

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy announced that the Council held an executive session on December 21, 2015 regarding a personnel matter and a legal matter; and on February 1, 2016 regarding a legal matter. She noted that the March calendar published in the Berwyn Heights Bulletin mistakenly showed March 16 as the date of another Town meeting. No meeting will be held on that date.

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy further announced that CM White, one of the six candidates who filed papers to run in the May 3 Town Council election, has withdrawn her nomination. The candidates still running are: Patricia Dennison, Cheryl Jewitt, Jodie Kulpa-Eddy, Chris Rasmussen and Maria Robles. Their candidate profiles will be published in the April Bulletin. The Town offers residents, who maintain their domicile in another state, the opportunity to register to vote in the Town election only. Supplementary registration takes place at the Town office throughout the month of March during regular business hours and on March 28 from 7–9 pm.

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy said that the Maryland General Assembly and Prince George's County are working on their budgets. Nothing specific affecting Berwyn Heights has been noted in the State of Maryland's proposed budget. The proposed Prince George's County FY 2017 Budget may include a recommendation for a 4.7% spending increase, taxi service accessibility upgrades and perhaps going to a once-a-week trash pick-up for those that use the County service. The County budget must be adopted on or before June 1st. Those speaking at the County's Town Hall Budget Hearing last night strongly supported keeping their local schools open, which is not something the County Council controls. That decision is made by the School Board, and just as a reminder—our District 2 Board representative, Lupi Grady, will

be at the March 21 Worksession. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy mentioned the PGCPS audit will not be ready by the time the budget has to be approved this year, and that may leave many questions from last year still unanswered

The Town's proposed budget of \$3,013,400 was presented by TA Cowles at the March 7 worksession, which includes small increases for most of the Town's Departments. Due to the recent reassessment, if rates remain constant, real property tax revenues are expected to go up by around 9% this year, which would allow the Town to balance the budget without making withdrawals from surplus to fund operations. The FY 2017 budget proposes to keep the existing real property tax rate of 53 cents per \$100 of assessed valuation, including the 3 cents road tax, and to decline acceptance of a constant yield tax rate. A summary of the proposed budget and tax rates will be published in the April Bulletin and a public hearing will be held during the April Town Meeting. Residents are encouraged to provide input and participate in the process.

4. Department Reports

Administration: MPT Rasmussen reported that the installation of the emergency generators has been completed, but they still need to be tested. The Safe Routes to School sidewalks in the 8900 block of 63rd Avenue are also almost complete. The Town recently received two proposals for the Urban Forest initiative he has championed. At its March 7 worksession, the Council accepted the low bid from Savatree Consultants and approved an additional \$5,000 for the consultancy initially funded at the level of \$15,000. They will create an urban tree inventory and develop a tree management plan for the Town.

MPT Rasmussen said that the Town Council attended a special Four Cities meeting with the University of Maryland (UMD) President Wallace Loh on February 25 and discussed the development plans on Route 1. Currently under construction is more student housing and a large hotel complex across from UMD's main entrance. MPT Rasmussen said that universities have a big economic impact on the surrounding communities and the potential to generate growth and innovative projects and that the Town should consider a closer alliance with UMD.

Code Compliance: CM Robles reported that rental licenses continue on a downward trend, meaning that more homes are owner-occupied. During the last month, there has been a slight increase in clean lot violations and home owners are requested to keep their properties clean and neat. The Call-a-bus has been repaired and is again available for use by Town organizations. The Code Compliance Department will soon publish a job opening for a part-time code officer, a position that was left unfilled after the departure of Kyle Snyder. Ms. Robles thanked Code employees for keeping up with the workload while being short-staffed.

Parks and Recreation, Education and Civic Affairs: CM Dennison reported that Game Night was well attended and that the Recreation Council is still seeking volunteers for Berwyn Heights Day.

Public Health and Safety: Officer Hollowell reported for Chief Antolik who was out sick. During the last month there were 2 robberies (at both 7/11 stores) and 4 thefts for a total of 6 Part I offenses in February, and 9 for the year to date. The 5 year average for February is 5.2, and 10.6 for the year to date. The police also issued 109 state and municipal citations and 363 speed camera tickets, 355 on Greenbelt Road and 8 on Pontiac Street. On March 15, County Councilwoman Glaros will host a public safety community chat at the West Lanham Hills Volunteer Fire Department.

Officer Hollowell also gave a brief report on behalf of the Berwyn Heights Volunteer Fire Department (BHVFD). The BHVFD responded to six working structure fires and two

complex vehicle extraction in February. It also participated in a smoke alarm check and installation drive in Hollywood and covered for the Hyattsville VFD during its annual awards banquet.

Public Works: CM White thanked the Council and the residents for the opportunity to serve on the Town Council. She decided to step down because she wants to spend more time with her son. In Public Works news, the crew worked on street repairs (potholes), building and fleet maintenance and prepared for another possible winter storm. Public Works also helped prepare the community garden for spring planting.

5. Committee Reports

Education Advisory Committee: CM Dennison reported that the EAC meets tomorrow, March 10 at 7 pm. CM White may step up to become co-chair of the Committee.

Historical Committee: Clerk Harper said that the BHHC continues to work on an oral history highlights video and that the Committee received a donation from former Councilmember Lofgren. He donated pole climbers used by the Berwyn Heights Association to repair street lights in the 1920s.

Neighborhood Watch/Emergency Preparedness: Mayor Kulpa-Eddy reported that the NW/EP's wine tasting even was postponed to Saturday, April 30 from 2 to 6 pm. Three wineries have agreed to participate so far. Entrance fee will be \$10/person.

Recreation Council: The Recreation Council seeks Berwyn Heights Day volunteers. Interested residents should contact the Recreation Council President Tim Tormoen or Administrative Assistant Yvonne Odoi.

6. Unfinished Business

There was none.

7. New Business

Resolution 01-2016 – Full Funding of Highway User Revenues: Clerk Harper read the Resolution. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy explained that this is a resolution requesting the Maryland Assembly to re-instate full funding of Highway User Revenues (HUR) which were severely cut during the recession. While municipalities were given one-time HUR grants in addition to formula-awarded HUR in the last couple of years, the revenue cannot be relied upon to make the large, multi-year investments in infrastructure that are needed to repair long neglected roads. MPT Rasmussen added that municipalities need predictable revenue streams to be able to make plans. CM Dennison moved and MPT Rasmussen seconded the motion to adopt the Resolution. The motion passed 5 to 0.

Resolution 02-2016 – Adoption of Inter-Municipal Bicycle Trails MOU: Clerk Harper read the Resolution. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy explained that this Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the municipalities in the Anacostia Trails Heritage Area (ATHA) sets up a work group to coordinate the development and maintenance of hiker-biker trails as an integrated system. The MOU does not impose any new financial burdens on participating municipalities, but the cities and towns are expected to delegate at least one, preferably elected, official to take part in the working group. MPT Rasmussen expressed reservations about the wording of the MOU. CM Dennison moved and CM Robles seconded to adopt the MOU. The motion passed 5 to 0.

8. Citizens Discussion

There was none.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:01 p.m.

Kerstin Harper, Town Clerk