



# Town of Berwyn Heights

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

## Minutes Town Meeting June 10, 2015

The meeting was called to order at 8:00 p.m. Present were Mayor Jodie Kulpa-Eddy, MPT Chris Rasmussen and CMs Patricia Dennison and Anthony Schreiber. Also present were Town Administrator (TA) Jessica Cowles, Chief of Police Kenneth Antolik, Treasurer Suzan Lape, Clerk Kerstin Harper, Prince George's County Clerk of the Court Representative Sherilyn Williams, NW/EP members and citizens.

MPT Kulpa-Eddy led the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **1. Mayor Calvo's resignation Letter**

Clerk Harper read Mayor Calvo's resignation letter: "As you know, I have recently accepted a new professional opportunity that presents new obligations that will not allow me the time and ability to continue to serve as our towns' mayor. Therefore, I write to formally inform you that I will resign my position as mayor of the Town of Berwyn Heights effective 8:00 p.m. on June 10, 2015..."

### **2. Swearing-in of Mayor and Mayor Pro Tem**

MPT Kulpa-Eddy said when a mayor resigns the Town Charter mandates that the Mayor Pro Tem becomes Mayor. Therefore, she will step into the Mayor's position, and CM Rasmussen agreed to serve as Mayor Pro Tem for the remainder of this Council's term.

Sherilyn Williams, Executive Assistant of the Clerk of the District Court of Prince George's County, performed the swearing-in of Jodie Kulpa-Eddy as Mayor, followed by the swearing-in of Chris Rasmussen as Mayor Pro Tem.

### **3. Introduction of Code Supervisor**

MPT Rasmussen introduced Freddie Glass, who previously worked as a code officer for the City of Bowie and the Town of North Brentwood. He started to work for the Town of Berwyn Heights on May 13 and brings extensive code enforcement experience to the job. The Town is happy to have him.

Mr. Glass thanked the Councilmembers and staff for their support and said that he is looking forward to working for this community.

#### **4. Minutes**

Clerk Harper read a summary of the May 13 Town meeting minutes. On a motion by CM Dennison and second by MPT Rasmussen, the minutes were approved 4 to 0.

#### **5. Treasurer's Report**

Treasurer Lape gave the Treasurer's report for the month of May.

#### **6. Mayor's Report**

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy said that she and this Council plan to carry out the goals and priorities the Council set for itself last summer, as best as possible. Residents should rest assured that there will not be a dramatic shift in direction after Mayor Calvo's resignation.

She reported that the Prince George's County Council adopted a budget slightly smaller than what County Executive Baker requested. It includes a 4% increase in the County real property tax rate instead of the 15% increase requested, plus a 1% increase in the telephone tax and a 2% increase in the hotel tax. The additional revenue generated will largely be used to fund educational improvements in Prince George's County Schools. It will also enable the County to forgo furloughs of its employees that would otherwise have taken place.

The Town Council took a position on the County budget opposing the tax increases after hearing mostly negative comments from residents. The Town Council was also concerned about the absence of a clear program of how the additional money would be spent. As part of adopting its budget, the County Council commissioned a Blue Ribbon panel to study the County's long-term structural deficit and will perform an audit of PGCP's budget to provide a better accounting of how educational funds are spent.

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy said that the FY 2016 Town budget was passed at the May Town meeting. Today the FY 2015 budget amendments will be adopted. Expenditures are on track and revenues are slightly less than projected. However, 2 income tax disbursements have not yet been received and disbursements for the emergency generators and Safe Routes to School sidewalks project are expected to come in FY 2016.

The Town Council vacancy was announced in the June Bulletin and interested residents are requested to send in a letter of interest, resume and financial disclosure by June 19. The Charter allows 45 days to fill a vacancy. It is hoped that a candidate will be selected in July and can be introduced at the July Town meeting. At the end of June, the Council will attend the annual MML conference to take part in workshops and training covering all aspects of municipal government.

#### **7. Department Reports**

**Administration:** Mayor Kulpa-Eddy reported that the Administration Department was busy preparing bid packages for the emergency generators and Safe Routes to School sidewalks projects. There was a lot of interest from contractors in the pre-bid conference, and it is hoped that the Town will receive a number of bids from which to make a selection by the end of the month.

**Code Compliance:** MPT Rasmussen thanked the Council for placing their trust in him and selecting him as Mayor Pro Tem. He will work with the Council on advancing the agenda laid out by the 46th Town Council. In Code news, Supervisor Glass is reminding homeowners that Prince George's County is requiring all rental homes to have carbon monoxide detectors installed. This is one of the health and safety provisions the Code Department will be enforcing as part of its rental licensing program. Mr. Glass can answer any questions about proper installation of the smoke detectors.

MPT Rasmussen also thanked his colleagues for funding a consultant to help the Town put together an urban forest plan. TA Cowles has identified a few possible consultants and is exploring whether there are other municipalities interested in sharing the cost. As suggested at a previous Town meeting, there will be opportunities for residents to pitch in with cleaning up green spaces and planting new trees. The Baltimore Sun on June 4th carried an article about *Baltimore Green Space*, a city non-profit that is cleaning up patches of urban forest to turn them into parks for people to enjoy. This could serve as a model for Berwyn Heights. He will encourage TA Cowles to look into working with this or similar groups.

**Parks and Recreation, Education and Civic Affairs:** CM Dennison announced the upcoming Volunteer Appreciation Dinner and Town-wide Yard Sale.

**Public Health and Safety:** Chief Antolik gave the police activities report for May. There were 9 Part I offenses, including 2 assaults and 7 larcenies. This is higher than the 5-year average of 5.8. However, the year-to-date total of 26 was still lower than the 5-year average of 28. Chief Antolik reminded residents not to leave valuables in their cars. Thefts from vehicles account for most of the larcenies taking place in Berwyn Heights. The police also issued 250 State and Town citations and 117 speed camera tickets, all on Greenbelt Road. In the coming weeks the officers will complete much of their annual in-service training.

In response to CM Rasmussen, Chief Antolik said that an arrest has been made in a recent theft at a Berwyn Heights pharmacy. The incident is linked to a pharmacy theft ring responsible for a number of thefts in Prince George's County. The matter is still under investigation by the FBI and Prince George's County police.

**Public Works:** CM Schreiber reported that Juan Thorpe was named employee of the month for working additional hours to help out with a driver shortage in the department and various mechanical breakdowns. He also attended a conference of the mid-Atlantic Public Works Association with Director Lockley, where they took part in workshops and viewed exhibits of new equipment.

CM Schreiber encouraged residents to dispose of any bulk trash left from the Town-wide yard sale at the upcoming tipping day on June 25. However, no trash will be collected on Friday, June 26, nor any subsequent Fridays. This represents the switch to the consolidation of the second weekly trash collection on Thursdays. In the upcoming weeks, Public Works will focus on repainting street markings, repairing pot holes and pruning overgrowth in the Town right-of-ways.

## **8. Committee Reports**

**Green Team:** CM Rasmussen said that the Green Team had a very successful rain barrel workshop.

**Historical Committee:** Clerk Harper said that the Historical Committee was hosting a board meeting of the Anacostia Trail Heritage Association (ATHA) meeting tonight.

**Neighborhood Watch/Emergency Preparedness:** NW/EP Co-Chair Ron Shane reported that the Berwyn Heights CERT team participated in a regional disaster drill at the Cheltenham fire training grounds. As a result, Berwyn Heights NW/EP will stage a regional, night-time disaster drill in September. A number of teams from around the D.C. area will participate and learn what equipment the Town has and how it can be used. Volunteers are needed to participate in the drill or act as victims. In other news, Co-Chair Joan Hayden is organizing a CPR class, which is open to all.

**Recreation Council:** CM Dennison announced that the Recreation Council is hosting a concert of the Susan Jones Quartet at Lake Artemesia on July 9.

## **9. Unfinished Business**

**Ordinance 165-B - 2nd Reading & Adoption of FY 2015 Budget Amendments:** Clerk Harper read the Ordinance. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy explained that the budget amendment reconciles a number of unplanned expenses and receipts throughout this fiscal year. This includes funding for demolitions of 2 blighted properties, a new Public Works dump truck, new radios for the Neighborhood Watch/ Emergency Preparedness (NW/EP); the correction of a budgeting error in speed camera revenue; and receipts of additional Greenbelt Station compensation money, and a Green Team grant for rain barrels. It also distributes COLAs and merit increases to the departments.

MPT Rasmussen noted that the Town will front the money for the 2 homes scheduled to be demolished this summer, but expects to get money back from the tax sale of these properties. CM Schreiber moved, and CM Dennison seconded to approve the FY 2015 budget amendment. The motion passed 4 to 0.

## **10. New Business**

There was none.

## **11. Citizens Discussion**

Ron Shane, 57th Avenue, had an addendum to the NW/EP report. A CERT training will take place on August 1 and 2, with a focus on teens but open to all. Those interested in the training should contact Mike Attick.

CM Schreiber reported that resident Pat Blankenship had a complaint about the building materials stored by the sidewalks contractor at the corner of Ruatan Street and 56th Avenue. He forwarded the matter to TA Cowles, who made sure this was taken care of. In response to CM Rasmussen, Mayor Kulpa-Eddy said that the material stored there is used to build up the substrate for sidewalks where needed. It will be removed once the sidewalks are completed.

Phil Ventura, 57th Avenue, congratulated Mayor Kulpa-Eddy on becoming Mayor. He also suggested the Town consider planting some fruit trees as part of the Urban Forest initiative.

Further, he commented that, while the sidewalks project was an overall success, some mistakes were made, resulting in unnecessary expenses. He also thought that the Town abused its right-of-way prerogatives during the sidewalks construction and should have been more respectful of the rights of property owners, who own the sidewalks after completion.

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy clarified that the Town right-of-way is Town property, although homeowners are responsible for the maintenance. It is used for purposes that serve the community as a whole, be it water and sewer lines, utility lines or, as in this case, sidewalks. The Town obtained easements from property owners wherever sidewalks had to be laid on private property. She agreed that the Town should work with property owners when Town projects affect private property.

Mike Attick, 62nd Avenue, congratulated Mayor Kulpa-Eddy on becoming Mayor. He said that she is likely to bring a kinder and gentler approach to governing the Town but is by no means a 'pushover.'

Eddie Daffron, Seminole Street, also congratulated Mayor Kulpa-Eddy and reminded residents to watch out for children in the streets after school goes on summer break. He also announced that National Night Out will be held on August 4. Volunteers are needed and donations are greatly appreciated.

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy concluded by introducing her mother Dorothy Kulpa and aunt Adeline Vciechowski, who came from Wisconsin to attend the swearing-in.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:07 p.m.

Signed: *Kerstin Harper, Town Clerk*