



# Town of Berwyn Heights

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## Minutes Town Meeting May 13, 2015

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. Present were Mayor Cheye Calvo, Mayor Pro Tem (MPT) Jodie Kulpa-Eddy, CMs Patricia Dennison, Chris Rasmussen and Anthony Schreiber. Also present were Town Administrator (TA) Jessica Cowles, Chief of Police Kenneth Antolik, Treasurer Suzan Lape, Clerk Kerstin Harper and residents Trinity Tomsic, Mike Attick, Cheryl Jewitt, and Ron Shane.

Mayor Calvo led the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **1. Hearings**

**Town Budget:** Mayor Calvo gave an overview of the proposed FY 2016 Town budget. The overall budget totals \$2,879,000, including transfers to reserves and capital expenditures. The operating budget is approximately \$2.6 million reflecting a 1% increase over the FY 2015 budget. The budget maintains the real property tax rate of 53 cents per \$100 of assessed valuation, with 3 cents dedicated to road repairs. The personal property tax rate is \$1.325 per \$100 of assessed valuations, or 2.5 times the real property tax rate. The budget is supported by a substantial increase in income tax receipts and more modest increases in real and personal property tax receipts.

On the expenditure side, the budget is largely flat with only a few changes in selected line items. Salaries generally remain at FY 2015 levels, reflecting senior staff with less seniority, on the one hand, and vacancies filled, on the other. Employee benefits overall are flat due to modest increases in health insurance rates and lower pension contributions. This budget also sets aside \$29,000 in a salary pool that will fund any merit increases and cost of living adjustments (COLAs), plus other salary adjustments as deemed necessary.

The FY 2016 budget will be the last in a series of tight budgets that resulted from the 2008 crash of the real estate market. With the impending reassessments, real property tax revenues are expected to rebound. The Town came through these difficult years in good shape thanks to a clear plan on how to adjust spending and use reserves. One adjustment was to annually pull \$50,000 from the surplus for operating expenses, which will be continued in FY 2016.

Despite the difficult revenue picture, the Town has accumulated a \$500,000 surplus, and an additional \$1.6 million set aside in various reserves while remaining debt free. This puts the Town in a strong position for the future and for addressing some deferred investments, such as road repairs.

Administration: MPT Kulpa-Eddy gave an overview of the Administration Department budget. This budget has four major activities: Mayor & Council, Administration, Municipal Building and Town Center. With the exception of an increase in Council stipends taking effect this year and funding for the next Town Council election, the Administration budget is flat. However, additional capital expenditures have been authorized to hire a consultant to update the personnel manual, to upgrade the Town website and to help fund a Four Cities promotional video to attract the new FBI headquarters.

Code Compliance: CM Rasmussen said that the FY 2016 budget appropriates \$109,000 for the Code Compliance Department, which amounts to a little less than a 1% increase over the FY 2015 budget. The Code Compliance Department this year purchased a code tracking system, which will entail \$4,000 in annual maintenance costs but is expected to yield operational efficiencies. Hence part-time staff hours have been reduced by 2 hours per week. The budget also anticipates an increase in revenue from fees and fines and appropriates more money for the code supervisor's salary, who just started working today.

The Town Council also appropriated \$15,000 for a planning exercise to assess Berwyn Heights' tree canopy and determine how best to preserve existing trees, educate home owners on tree maintenance, and advise the Town on tree planting and revising the Urban Forest Ordinance.

Parks and Recreation: CM Dennison said that the Parks & Recreation budget remains largely unchanged. The biggest line item is Berwyn Heights Day where the help of many volunteers keeps the cost down.

Public Works: CM Schreiber said that it is the Public Works Department's mission to maintain a clean and well-functioning Town by providing regular trash and recycling pickups and maintaining roads, walks and right-of-ways. As the Town does not grow in area or road miles, the budget has remained fairly consistent from year to year. The FY 2016 DPW budget totals \$683,000 as opposed to \$672,000 in FY 2015, with approximately half of the budget going to salary-related expenses.

CM Schreiber continued that the Town Council authorized the purchase of a new 27 cubic yard trash truck from the vehicle replacement reserve to be taken into service in October and a 1 ton, dump truck to be taken into service in August. The new trash truck will help transition to a 3-day refuse collection schedule which will be implemented starting June 26. The new schedule consolidates the second weekly trash collection on Thursday, leaving Friday open for other jobs.

Police: Mayor Calvo said that the Police Department budget is almost flat. A modest 1% increase over FY 2015 reflects the merit increases and COLAs the Council approved last year, which have roll-up costs in FY 2016. The budget also continues the practice of funding the purchase of 1 new police vehicle each year. This year, a second police vehicle will be purchased from the Public Safety Taxing District budget. The budget also reflects an anticipated 20%

increase in police fines, some of which will be derived from a new \$60 fine for failing to display a license plate in the front and rear of a vehicle for which two license plates are required.

Mayor Calvo further noted that one of the capital expenditures the Council authorized is a \$30,000 investment in an economic development study. The money is to be used to hire a consultant to perform a market analysis of the Town's commercial sector and develop a vision of what the future commercial corridor should look like.

At 7:56 p.m., Mayor Calvo opened the public hearing. Without any comments, the hearing was closed at 7:57 p.m.

***Public Safety Taxing District Hearing:*** Mayor Calvo said this budget is funded by a 10 cents tax on real property and a 15 cents tax on personal property levied on businesses in the Town of Berwyn Heights. The PSTD operating budget totals \$72,800, which funds one police officer. The capital budget totals \$34,800 and periodically funds a police vehicle. A small deficit in the operating budget is covered made up by money pulled from a PSTD reserve.

At 8:00 p.m., Mayor Calvo opened the hearing on the PSTD budget. With no comments, the hearing was closed at 8:01 p.m.

## **2. Minutes**

Clerk Harper read a summary of the April 8 Town meeting minutes. On a motion by CM Dennison and second by MPT Kulpa-Eddy, the minutes were approved 5 to 0.

## **3. Treasurer's Report**

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

## **4. Mayor's Report**

Mayor Calvo announced that this will be his last Town meeting as he will be resigning after serving as Mayor for 11 years. Looking back on his tenure, he said he had just completed his university degree when he filed for candidacy on the Town Council. But he had been interested and active in government and public service since being a member of the student government of Parkdale High School.

When he began his tenure as Mayor, he had big ideas for improving the Town government. Although he and his fellow Councilmembers accomplished many things, he found that the Town changed him more than he changed the Town. The people and the community he served for so long have shaped him profoundly, and he believes made him a better person. People that don't usually speak up or come to meetings have turned to him with their problems or shared their opinions when he stopped by their homes campaigning. For this majority that goes quietly about their lives he has tried to steer a middle course, and disregard occasional criticism from one side or another.

Mayor Calvo noted that the different Councils with which he has worked have shared longstanding core values. He is confident that these values will continue to guide the Council's work after he has left. These include:

1. Fiscal responsibility, which aims to make spending decisions on what the Town can afford while maintaining reserves to be prepared for potential economic downturns;

2. Long-term planning, which calls for identifying shared priorities that guide the Council's work for the near and longer-term future. Recently, the Council's priorities have focused on investments in amenities that make Berwyn Heights an attractive place to live.
3. Modesty, which means recognizing the Town's limited resources in offering government services, while engaging volunteers to get some things done.
4. High standards, which means being responsive to citizen comments and alert in exercising oversight over government operations to ensure continued quality of service.
5. Efficiency, which is the search for new and better ways to do things and offer Town services in a cost-effective way.

Mayor Calvo concluded that while he is sad to leave, he believes councilmembers and staff will continue to work together to provide the quality services residents have come to expect. He thanked the Town for allowing him the opportunity to serve, and residents for sharing their lives with him.

## **5. Department Reports**

**Administration:** MPT Kulpa-Eddy said that the Council plans to carry out the goals and objectives it set for itself after the last election. Mayor Calvo knows how to get in touch with the Council and his feedback will be welcome. She then reported that she and TA Cowles attended a meeting of the State of Maryland's Board of Public Works to answer potential questions about the emergency generator project that might come up at the Board's budget hearing. It so happened that the Board adopted the budget without changes and before she and TA Cowles could enter the room to offer input. In other news, the Administration Department has been focused on planning two demolitions of blighted properties.

**Code Compliance:** CM Rasmussen said that Mayor Calvo's resignation was one more life event in addition to his mother's passing and his starting a new job that occurred during the last month. He has learned a lot about local government and this community since serving on the Council with Mayor Calvo and wished him luck in his new job.

In Code Compliance news, he reported that the new Code Supervisor Freddie Glass started his job today and will be formally introduced at the June Town meeting. He brings years of valuable experience as a code officer in North Brentwood and Bowie to the job. The Code Department's part time staff is appreciated for stepping into the breach when the previous supervisor left.

Lastly, he noted that the Town of Indian Head in southern Prince George's County recently elected a 19-year-old as mayor, and wished him good luck.

**Parks and Recreation, Education and Civic Affairs:** CM Dennison reported that Berwyn Heights Day was a big success and thanked all those who organized and contributed to the event. She also congratulated Mayor Calvo on his new job and thanked him for all he has done for the Town.

**Public Health and Safety:** Chief Antolik congratulated Mayor Calvo on his new job. He then gave the police activities report for April. There was only 1 Part I offense, as opposed to the 5 year average of 4.8. The year to date total comes to 17, notably lower than the 5 year total of 23.2. The police also issued 222 citations and 201 speed camera tickets, all on Greenbelt Road. Officer Yomira Ramirez continues her training and is doing well patrolling.

Mayor Calvo said that it has been a pleasure and a privilege to work with Chief Antolik and to see him grow into the role of police chief. The Berwyn Heights Police Department under the Chief's leadership is a model of a small town police department and has been a source of pride whenever he has spoken about policing matters elsewhere.

**Public Works:** CM Schreiber reported that Gary Stanton has been chosen as the employee of the month for the second month in a row. He has put in long hours when the Department was short staffed, providing critical help with Berwyn Heights Day preparations. Further, Public Works recently added 2 new full time employees. Dannielle Banjoman was hired in April to fill the hybrid Administrative Assistant/ Crewman II position and Marvin Plummer was hired more recently as a Crewman II. A Crewman II does have a valid driver's license, while a Crewman I does not. A Crewman III and above has a CDL license. The Department is still looking for a full-time crewman and a part-time crewman.

CM Schreiber reminded residents that trash cans should be no larger than 45 gallons, and not exceed 50 lbs. in weight. Large appliances generally require a fee to be picked up, said fee to be paid at the Town office, which then schedules a pickup date. Lastly, Tipping Day is on Thursday, June 25, followed by a Friday with no trash pickup.

CM Schreiber concluded saying that he moved his growing family from a beautiful house in Bowie to a home in Berwyn Heights intended as a rental property because he likes the community. Mayor Calvo had a lot to do with that and he thanked him for his service.

## **6. Committee Reports**

**Neighborhood Watch/Emergency Preparedness:** NW/EP Co-Chair Ron Shane thanked Mayor Calvo for his service. He said that they have not always seen eye-to-eye, but the Town is in great shape which he attributes to Mayor Calvo's leadership. Mr. Shane reported that the NW/EP had a good month of engaging with the community. The 2<sup>nd</sup> annual wine-tasting was a success. Five Maryland wineries were represented, and the event raised a considerable sum of money. During Berwyn Heights Day, the Committee was stationed nearer to the action at Sports Park and had many more visitors stopping by than in years past. Further, NW/EP completed the purchase of 10 new radios, which will work on the frequency used by the Public Works Department. Lastly, a CERT training class will be held at the Fire Services Building on May 16. The next meeting will be held on June 3.

## **7. Unfinished Business**

**Ordinance 169 - 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading & Adoption of FY 2016 Town Budget:** Clerk Harper read a summary of the Ordinance. MPT Kulpa-Eddy moved to adopt it. CM Dennison seconded. Mayor Calvo said that the outlines of the FY 2016 budget have been covered under the hearings but it should be noted that the Council made a minor change relating to the cable TV reserve based on an error recently discovered by TA Cowles. He congratulated TA Cowles on a good first budget while learning the fine points of the Town's budget format and process. He has no doubt that she will produce excellent budgets in the future. As a last piece of advice, Mayor Calvo said to beware of the good economic times when revenues start to increase. Most budget problems are created on the way up when elected officials feel no longer constrained in their spending decisions and often overspend. With no further comments, the Council voted 5 to 0 to approve the FY 2016 budget.

**Ordinance 170 - 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading & Adoption of FY 2016 Public Safety Taxing District Budget:** Clerk Harper read a summary of the Ordinance. On motion by MPT Kulpa-Eddy and second by CM Dennison, the FY 2016 PSTD budget was adopted in a 5 to 0 vote.

**Ordinance 134 – Adoption of Commercial Clean Lot Ordinance Amendments:** Clerk Harper read the adopting language of the Ordinance. CM Schreiber moved to adopt it. CM Dennison seconded. Mayor Calvo explained that the Council spent a long time finalizing the amendments to this Ordinance, which applies clean lot standards to businesses in Berwyn Heights' commercial and industrial district. The amendments echo the revisions in the residential Clean Lot Ordinance which were adopted in March. In addition, a problem with storage of junked cars in the industrial district has been addressed, and repeat violations are dealt with more strictly.

MPT Kulpa-Eddy added that the Commercial Clean Lot Ordinance differs from the residential in some respects. For example, bamboo and invasive plants are prohibited, and time frames for correcting repeat violations are shorter. With no further comments, the Ordinance amendments were adopted in a 5 to 0 vote.

**Ordinance 119 - 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading & Adoption of Traffic & Parking Amendments:** Clerk Harper read a summary of the Ordinance. CM Schreiber moved to adopt it. CM Dennison seconded. Mayor Calvo explained that Chief Antolik during his budget presentation proposed that the Town adopt a regulation already existing in State law that requires vehicles to display license plates in the front and rear. To do so, the Traffic & Parking Ordinance needed to be amended to add this requirement. The revenue from citations will come to the Town, as this is not a moving violation. With no further comments, the Ordinance amendments were adopted in a 5 to 0 vote.

## **8. New Business**

**Resolution 03-2015 – Adoption of Traffic & Parking Fine Schedule:** Clerk Harper read the Resolution. MPT Kulpa-Eddy moved to adopt it. CM Dennison seconded. Mayor Calvo noted a correction in the last paragraph, then explained that the Resolution adopts a \$60 fine for failure to display a license plate in front and rear of a vehicle for which 2 license plates are required. With no further comments, the Resolution was adopted as corrected in a 5 to 0 vote.

**Ordinance 165 B – 1<sup>st</sup> Reading & Introduction of FY 2015 Budget Amendments:** Clerk Harper read the Ordinance. CM Schreiber moved to introduce it. CM Dennison seconded. Mayor Calvo explained that every year the Council has to go through a process of reconciling the actual revenues and expenditures in a fiscal year with what was budgeted. In some cases, this simply means shifting money between line items, as is the case with the distribution of merit increases and COLAs from the miscellaneous budget to the departmental budgets. It also accounts for any grants received, adjusts money spent from surplus, and fixes an accounting problem with speed camera revenue, among other issues. With no further comments, the FY 2015 Budget amendments were introduced in a 5 to 0 vote.

## **9. Citizens Discussion**

Cheryl Jewitt, Natasha Drive, thanked Mayor Calvo for his outstanding service on behalf of her family. She moved to Berwyn Heights in 2004 and can honestly say that he is the best Mayor she has known.

Mike Attick, 62<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, asked why 'no parking' signs were put up on the east side of 57<sup>th</sup> Avenue in front of the Town Center. Mayor Calvo said this was done because the sidewalks were bumped out into the street making the roadway narrower. MPT Kulpa-Eddy added that the homeowners on the east side of 57<sup>th</sup> Avenue didn't need on-street parking as much as residents on the west side because they have larger driveways. Mr. Attick said that there were complaints from some participants of the *Active Shooter* workshop about having to park on the other side and walk through traffic. He concluded by thanking Mayor Calvo for his service.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:18 p.m.

Signed: *Kerstin Harper, Town Clerk*