



# Town of Berwyn Heights

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## Minutes Town Meeting February 11, 2015

The meeting was called to order at 8:00 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, and Clerk Kerstin Harper.

Mayor Calvo led the Pledge of Allegiance.

### 1. Minutes

Clerk Harper read a summary of the January 14, 2015 Town meeting minutes. On a motion by CM Dennison and second by MPT Kulpa-Eddy, the minutes were approved 5 to 0.

### 2. Treasurer's Report

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

### 3. Mayor's Report

Mayor Calvo said that the Town Council will start its budget process with TA Cowles presentation of the proposed FY 2016 budget. The Council anticipates another difficult budget in this last year of lower real property assessments. This budget will be affected by deep cuts in the State's budget as Governor Hogan attempts to address the long-term structural deficit he inherited. Education will see some of the largest cuts and raise education costs in Prince George's County and other jurisdictions with high minority populations. Prince George's County is facing its own structural deficit and is cutting expenditures even in this fiscal year, as income tax revenues are coming in far below budget. Mayor Calvo commented that these problems are the result of the State and County having applied short term budget solutions designed to get them through the next fiscal year.

Mayor Calvo continued, in contrast to the State and County, Berwyn Heights' fiscal outlook is much brighter. Having spoken to assessors and finance officers, he has learned that the central parts of Prince George's County, which have already been reassessed, saw increases of around 23% in residential real property values and 15% in commercial real property values. There is a good chance that Berwyn Heights and northern Prince George's County will see a similar increase next year. Another piece of good news is that Governor Hogan has added \$19 million to

the initial \$7 million in Highway User Revenues (HUR) for municipalities, which is a little more than municipalities received this year.

Mayor Calvo said another set of issues that will be important in the next budget cycle is regional cooperation among municipalities, especially where economic development is concerned. The initiative for economic development in the Route 1 corridor has largely come from municipalities, and he will ask the Council to set aside money in the FY 2016 budget to hire a consultant to develop a vision for the commercial district.

In other news, Mayor Calvo met with PGCPS and M-NCPPC staff to discuss options for putting play equipment for older children on the school grounds. New Carrollton joined the Four Cities Coalition in financing an FBI video to promote Greenbelt Station as the site for the future FBI headquarters. Discussions have been initiated between County Councilwoman Danielle Glaros and municipal leaders, whose communities send students to the school, about how to best support Parkdale High School. Mayor Calvo thinks Parkdale is better than its reputation, but like most other schools in northern Prince George's County, it is over-enrolled. This is in contrast to schools in the central and southern tier of Prince George's County, which have excess capacity.

Lastly, Mayor Calvo noted that a couple of elderly residents on Seminole Place were rescued from a house fire by courageous neighbors who happened to walk by. Public Works employee Juan Thorpe also helped when he arrived at the scene.

#### **4. Department Reports**

**Administration:** MPT Kulpa-Eddy announced that the Four Cities Coalition has received a grant to offer free spay and neuter services to low income residents. Applications are available at the Town office or can be downloaded from Greenbelt's website at [www.greenbeltmd.gov/spayneuter](http://www.greenbeltmd.gov/spayneuter).

MPT Kulpa-Eddy continued a series of reports on the different functions of the Administration Department. As provided in the recently adopted Ordinance 121, Powers & Duties, the Town Administrator is charged with ensuring that all regular and special meetings of the Town Council are noticed and recorded in compliance with the Maryland Open Meetings Law. The minutes of Council meetings and other related records are made available to the public in conformance with the Public Information Act and can be accessed on the Town website. For those interested in the history of Berwyn Heights, the Historical Committee will exhibit the handwritten minutes of the Berwyn Heights Association, the forerunner of the Town government, at its upcoming Presidents' Day event.

**Code Compliance:** CM Rasmussen reported that TA Cowles has put together a plan to manage the Code Department with an interim supervisor and part-time staff following the departure of Code Supervisor Simpson. The vacant position has been advertised by Novak Consultants and applications are available from the Town website. It is hoped that a new supervisor will have been hired by mid-May.

CM Rasmussen also pointed out that the groundhog saw his shadow bringing 6 more weeks of winter. Very cold weather is in fact forecast for next week. Residents are reminded that all homes using oil or gas furnaces are now required to have carbon monoxide detectors on all

levels. On a lighter note, he hopes that the Council will be able to address the issue of livestock next year so that he might be able to have pygmy goats graze in his back yard.

***Parks and Recreation:*** CM Dennison reported that she has been busy preparing for the PRECA budget presentation at the next worksession and welcomes all public input. CM Dennison also announced upcoming events, including a community potluck and Lake Artemesia walk sponsored by the Green Team as part of its Lose it to Win it campaign. On February 14, the Boys & Girls Club will hold registrations at the community center. Coaches will be on site to answer parents' questions.

The BHES garden team continues to plan many interesting student activities under the tutelage of parent Therese Forbes and Green Team coordinator Trinity Tomsick. The BHES PTA is also has new T-shirts for sale, which were designed by student Joshua Thomas, and is collecting box tops as fundraisers. The Recreation Council has started to plan for the next Berwyn Heights Day, which will feature all the favorite activities of recent years.

***Public Health and Safety:*** Mayor Calvo noted that the residents which suffered a house fire last week did not have a smoke detector, illustrating the importance of having working smoke detectors.

Chief Antolik announced that the Department hired a new clerk, and will formally introduce her at the next Town meeting. He then gave the police activities report for January. There were a total of 6 Part I offenses as opposed to the 5-year average of 7. The officers also wrote 137 state and municipal citations and issued 299 speed camera tickets, all on Greenbelt Road. The speed camera in front of the school has been moved to Edmonston Road.

***Public Works:*** CM Schreiber commended Juan Thorpe for his assistance in getting the residents whose house was on fire to safety. He also congratulated Mr.Thorpe on his recent promotion to chief foreman. The Department so far has been lucky with winter weather, and has an ample supply of salt in stock should snow come to the Washington region. Further, Director Lockley is working with WSSC to replace a number of broken covers to its water lines. Mayor Calvo added that Public Works staff has also installed the new 'no parking' signs on 57th Avenue the Council recently approved.

## **5. Committee Reports**

***Neighborhood Watch/Emergency Preparedness:*** MPT Kulpa-Eddy announced that a 2-hour active shooter workshop will be held on March 14 at the Town Center, sponsored by the Emergency Preparedness Committee and the Prince George's County Homeland Security Department. On April 24, the NW/EP will hold another wine tasting event at the Town Center.

## **6. Unfinished Business**

***Ordinance 107 - Clean Lot and Ordinance 134 - Commercial Clean Lot Amendments:*** Mayor Calvo said that the Council has made a lot of progress updating the ordinances. Initially, it was hoped that the residential Clean Lot Ordinance would be adopted tonight but there are a few more changes to be made. MPT Kulpa-Eddy moved and CM Rasmussen seconded to postpone consideration of the Clean Lot Ordinances to the March Town meeting. The motion passed 5 to 0.

## **7. New Business**

**Resolution 01-2015 - Adoption of Comcast Settlement Agreement:** Clerk Harper read the Resolution. CM Schreiber moved to adopt it and CM Dennison seconded. Mayor Calvo explained that, as a member of the Prince George's Intergovernmental Network (I-NET), the Town is represented by an I-Net negotiating team in the ongoing effort to negotiate a new franchise agreement with Comcast, Inc. While the negotiations are at an impasse, the parties agreed to an interim settlement whereby Prince George's County and its municipalities agree not object to the Time-Warner merger with Comcast in exchange for some concessions I-Net has sought, including more flexibility in the use of PEG funds. Meanwhile, the parties continue to operate under the 1999 Comcast franchise agreement.

With no further comments, the Resolution was adopted in a 5 to 0 vote.

**Purple Line letter of support:** Mayor Calvo explained that this matter was brought up at the last Four Cities Coalition meeting. The Four Cities agreed that now is a good time to confirm their support for the Purple Line as Governor Hogan is reviewing funding for the project. This also gives newly elected Councilmembers a chance to take a stand on the matter. CM Schreiber moved and MPT Kulpa-Eddy seconded to confirm the Town's support for the Purple Line and sign the Four Cities letter to the Governor. The motion passed 5 to 0.

## **8. Citizens Discussion**

There was none.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Signed: *Kerstin Harper, Town Clerk*