



# Town of Berwyn Heights

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## Minutes Town Meeting July 13, 2016

The meeting was called to order at 8:00 p.m. Present were Mayor Cheryl Jewitt, Mayor Pro Tem (MPT) Jodie Kulpa-Eddy, Councilmembers (CMs) Patricia Dennison, Chris Rasmussen, and Maria Robles. CM Dennison arrived 10 minutes late. Also present were Town Administrator (TA) Jessica Cowles, Treasurer Michelle Rodriguez, Clerk Kerstin Harper, Chief of Police Kenneth Antolik, Detective Daniel Unger, Officer Yomyra Ramirez, and citizens.

Mayor Jewitt led the Pledge of Allegiance.

### 1. Minutes

Clerk Harper read a summary of the June 8 Town meeting minutes. On a motion by MPT Kulpa-Eddy and second by CM Robles, the minutes were approved 4 to 0.

### 2. Treasurer's Report

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

### 3. Mayor's Report

Mayor Jewitt reported that she will meet with County Councilwoman Dannielle Glaros this Friday to talk about various issues affecting the Town. An Order by the County Executive implementing a new incident chain of command that gives County fire fighters command at the scene of a fire or accident went into effect on July 1. A stay of the Order requested by Berwyn Heights and other cities was not granted. The volunteer companies plan to appeal.

The Town signed a contract with a new contractor to complete a punch list of defective items from the sidewalks project. Work will begin on July 25. Further, the aging air conditioning system in the Town Center will soon be replaced. The compressor of the unit serving the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor recently failed leading to the cancellation of weekend events. The unit serving the Senior Center is more than 15 years old. The Maryland Energy Administration (MEA) will contribute \$13,000 in funding toward the replacement of both units, leaving around \$20,000 to be paid by the Town. The Police Department is getting ready for National Night Out, held on August 2 from 6 to 9 pm.

Mayor Jewitt said she enjoyed attending her 1<sup>st</sup> MML convention in Ocean City. She attended a number of workshops and took advantage of networking opportunities at the Mayors' Luncheon. She was surprised to learn that some towns do not have a town administrator or manager nor a police force and other important staff.

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

**Administration:** MPT Kulpa-Eddy reported that she had the honor of again being the Town's flag bearer at the MML convention. She participated in workshops on emergency preparedness, fraud prevention, and strategic planning among others. She also attended a public hearing on CB 04-240, which increases the size of the County Council from 9 to 11 members by adding two at-large seats. Sitting County councilmembers would be eligible to run for an at-large seat. Most speakers expressed concern that this is essentially an "end-run" around term limits voters have repeatedly upheld. The County Council will vote on the legislation on July 19 and, if passed, the legislation will be on the ballot in the November election.

Last Night, MPT Kulpa-Eddy attended a town hall meeting by the Maryland-National Capital Parks and Planning Department on the rewrite of Prince George's 50-year-old zoning ordinance. Citizens present said they were pleased with how the rewrite process has been handled. A number of citizens advocated for loosening the requirements on bee-keeping and hen-housing in residential zones. Several people expressed unhappiness about an unrelated proposal to build a 25 story apartment building at the corner of Kenilworth Avenue and Cherry Hill Road in Greenbelt.

In Administration Department news, MPT Kulpa-Eddy reported that the railings for the steps leading to Berwyn Presbyterian Church have been approved and will be installed shortly. The Council and senior staff are in the process of reviewing a revised employee handbook that was in need of updating. WSSC today opened a fire hydrant at Seminole Street and 62<sup>nd</sup> Avenue to flush the pipes. The water will be shut off this evening.

**Code Compliance:** CM Rasmussen commented that he can understand adding two at-large positions to the County Council, but not making sitting Councilmembers eligible to run for them. As has been pointed out, this is in clear contradiction to voters' wishes, who have consistently voted not to extend the current term limits of County councilmembers. He also stated that it may not be a bad thing to build a luxury apartment complex in this vicinity, which may attract a Trader Joe's or other desirable business to locate here.

CM Rasmussen thanked TA Cowles and the Town's tree consultant Sav-A-Tree for completing an inventory of trees. It will provide an independent baseline for evaluating Pepco's tree trimming and removal plans in Berwyn Heights. The Town continues to invite citizens' comments on Pepco's vegetation management plan, which can be sent to TA Cowles.

In Code news, CM Rasmussen reported that a property on Seminole Place, which is in the process of being rehabilitated after a fire damaged it, has become a target for vandalism. Last week, a shed on the property caught fire in what may have been a case of arson. The Code and Police Department are working with the home owner and neighbors to secure the property. It may be useful to review the Clean Lot Ordinance for ways to prevent a property from remaining in a state of disrepair for long periods and thus become a public nuisance. The Code Department received complaints about a dog on Goucher Drive that jumps the fence and attacks other dogs.

The Council may want to think about taking up the Animal Ordinance, which has not been updated in a while.

CM Rasmussen reported that he was in a tornado warning when attending a conference in Minnesota and urged residents to take such warnings seriously. Lastly, he noted that the Council voted to approve improvements to two footpaths, which require the removal of 6 trees. He, too, voted for the improvements because alternatives to save the trees were too expensive or impractical.

***Parks and Recreation, Education and Civic Affairs:*** CM Robles reported that her first visit to the MML convention was very instructive. She obtained interesting information on aging populations, inclusive communities and downtown revitalization. Further, she met with the Town's school board representative, Lupi Grady. They discussed how Ms. Grady could best assist the Town with education issues, and improve coordination among the Education Advisory Councils of the Four Cities Coalition. CM Robles also met with a playground vendor, who had an exhibit at the MML conference, and asked for preliminary proposals on how to transform under-utilized recreational facilities in the Town. She plans to make a presentation to the Council about recreational facilities at a future worksession.

***Public Works:*** CM Dennison reported the refuse collection statistics for the month of June. She also said that the first round of interviews for a Public Works director has been completed.

***Public Health and Safety:*** Chief Antolik reported for the Berwyn Heights Volunteer Fire Department (BHVFD). During the summer months, vehicle fires are at their peak and drivers are urged to take the following precautions: Keeping a fire extinguisher in the vehicle; refraining from smoking, and maintaining vehicle electrical and fuel systems. In case of smoke or flames coming from the vehicle, drivers should pull over, shut off the ignition and exit the car, then call 911.

Detective Sergeant Unger gave the police activities report for June. There were 3 Part I offenses, as opposed to the 5-year average for June of 5.2. The year-to-date total was 28, as opposed to the 5-year average of 31. The police issued 157 speed camera tickets, all on Greenbelt Road, and 225 state and municipal citations. Detective Unger asked residents to remain alert for suspicious activities and report them to the police. Examples of suspicious activity include: a person in street clothes running; unidentified people carrying property; or door-to-door vendors without a permit from the Town. When reporting suspicious persons please have a description of their appearance and what they were doing.

Detective Unger gave a brief update on National Night Out plans. Featured attractions include a moon bounce, music with a DJ, free food and drink, exhibits, demos, and a dunk tank. Volunteers are still needed. Students can earn community service hours. Mayor Jewitt said that she will volunteer for the dunk tank and challenge any former councilmembers to volunteer with a contribution of \$10 to a charity of BHPD's choosing. CM Robles asked what a vendor's permit looked like. Detective Unger explained that a vendor's permit is a photo ID with "Berwyn Heights Police Department" stamped on it. He will bring one to show at the next Town meeting. CM Rasmussen spoke briefly about the killing of 5 Dallas police officers on July 7, 2016.

Officer Yomira Ramirez reported that she is planning a new event, Coffee with Cops, to take place on August 27, 9:00 a.m. at the Town Center. This event will provide public safety information for Berwyn Heights residents and especially seeks to reach out to the Spanish-speaking community. More information will be made available at National Night Out or by contacting her at 301-474-6554.

## **5. Committee Reports**

**Education Advisory Committee:** CM Robles announced that the EAC will meet on July 21 at 7:00 p.m. in the Council chambers.

**Green Team:** The Green Team will have a booth at National Night Out with activities and information. They will also participate in a BHES garden cleanup on Saturday, August 6 at 9:00 a.m., with a rain date of August 12. Volunteers are welcome and should bring their own tools. On Berwyn Heights Day, the Green Team earned \$243 from the sale of Butterfly Weed plants.

**Historical Committee:** The BHHC will have a table at National Night Out with exhibits and giveaways.

**Neighborhood Watch/Emergency Preparedness:** NW/EP will man the grills and serve the food on National Night Out and welcome any help from volunteers. At the last meeting, the Committee met with the County's CERT liaison, James Morrow, and discussed how coordination with local CERTs can be improved. A County-wide CERT meeting is scheduled for August 27. The next NW/EP meeting is on September 7, 7:00 p.m.

**Recreation Council:** The Recreation Council will hold an Ice Cream Social on Tuesday, September 20 at 6:30 p.m. They are also seeking new volunteers with fresh ideas. Interested residents should attend the next meeting on September 6, 7:30 p.m.

## **6. Unfinished Business**

There was none.

## **7. New Business**

There was none.

## **8. Citizens Discussion**

MPT Kulpa-Eddy said she received comments about the repaired section of the Metro pedestrian bridge. While this section looks and feels different from the original section, having been made with different materials, she was assured that the engineering is sound and the bridge is safe. Berwyn Heights has been promised a seat at the table when the replacement of the bridge is discussed in 3 to 5 years from now.

Mayor Jewitt said she received a comment from a resident who is happy about a tree that is to be removed on her property that grows close to the power lines.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:02 p.m.

Signed: *Kerstin Harper, Town Clerk*