



Town of Berwyn Heights

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Minutes Town Meeting June 14, 2017

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. Present were Mayor Cheryl Jewitt, Mayor Pro Tem (MPT) Jodie Kulpa-Eddy, Councilmembers (CMs) Patricia Dennison, Chris Rasmussen, and Gerald Shields. CM Shields arrived later due to Metro delays. Also present were Town Administrator (TA) Jessica Cowles, Chief of Police Kenneth Antolik, Code Compliance Supervisor Freddie Glass, Public Works Director Stevie Cox, Treasurer Michelle Rodriguez, Clerk Kerstin Harper, Recreation Council President Susan Jones and citizens.

Mayor Jewitt led the Pledge of Allegiance.

1. Minutes

Clerk Harper read a summary of the May 10 Town meeting minutes. On a motion by CM Dennison and second by CM Rasmussen, the minutes were approved 4 to 0.

2. Mayor's Report

Mayor Jewitt gave her monthly report. The County Council passed legislation to permit food trucks in designated locations. Two suspects in the slaying of a man, whose body was found on the Nevada Street trail, have been arrested. Berwyn Heights Elementary School (BHES) Principal Karen Singer has retired after 15 years at the helm. Mayor Jewitt met with Greenbelt Mayor Jordan about appealing SHA's decision not to commission a noise study along Kenilworth Avenue. Berwyn Heights has been designated an MML Banner City. The Council held an executive session on June 5 to discuss a real property matter.

3. Department Reports

Administration: MPT Kulpa-Eddy reported that Governor Hogan signed legislation that forgives the repayment of \$159,000 in income tax revenue the State had mistakenly paid out to the Town between 2010 and 2014. Berwyn Heights Elementary School (BHES) last day of school was yesterday. Prince George's County has appropriated funds in its FY 2018 budget for a storm water drain improvement project in Berwyn Heights necessary to address inadequacies that came to light during a June 2014 flash flood. The County also appropriated funds for a North County animal shelter. WSSC is in the process of proposing a new rate structure to determine the price for water usage, and has focused on two options that seek to address the inequities currently in existence between high and low volume users.

Treasurer Rodriguez gave the Treasurer's report for the month of May. Town Administrator Cowles reported that the Administration Department was busy preparing the FY 2017 budget amendments, closing out the FY 2017 budget, and planning Berwyn Heights Day. TA Cowles has been working on preparing an update of the Council's strategic plan action items scheduled for the upcoming worksession.

Code Compliance: CM Rasmussen thanked Mayor Jewitt for working with Greenbelt to appeal SHA's denial of the Town's request to conduct a noise study on Kenilworth Avenue, which is necessary to evaluate whether a sound barrier is needed. He expressed the opinion that WSSC's proposed rate restructuring is nonsensical as it would not incentivize water conservation and would lead to an increase in rates for everyone. Further, the Town's storm drain system does not cover all the streets that need them, resulting in some residents draining water into the streets in violation of County code. The Town might ask the County to look into extending the storm water system.

Code Supervisor Glass reported the code statistics for the month of May. Sixty-three code citations were issued, mostly for tall grass and yard waste violations, as well as 13 rental licenses, 6 building permits, and 5 dumpster permits. CM Rasmussen pointed out that building permits are up significantly from last year, and help offset a decline in fine revenues. In response to questions, Mr. Glass said that many vacant homes are for sale and they are being monitored for clean lot violations.

Parks and Recreation, Education and Civic Affairs: CM Shields said that he strongly supports improvements to the storm drain system, important from an emergency management perspective. He continues to work on the classification of Town organizations and is looking into Greenbelt's model.

Public Works: Director of Public Works Cox reported that his crew installed new landscaping at the Town Center and around Town prior to Berwyn Heights Day, has refitted public fountains with backflow preventers and will be installing water bags on newly-planted trees. The summer refuse collection schedule is in effect until Labor Day. Refuse should be set out by 6:30 a.m. Director Cox will be sworn in as the Vice President of the Municipal Public Works Officials Association at the MML convention and is reviewing applications for a vacant crew member position. He also announced the trash collection schedule for the week of July 4.

Director Cox then answered questions about the damaged 'stop for pedestrians' sign posted in the intersection of Pontiac Street and Edmonston Road, and repairing the Pop's Park drinking fountain.

Public Health and Safety: Chief Antolik reported that 2 suspects in the May 3rd homicide have been arrested and are being held without bond. The victim died from trauma to the body and was left in the wooded area along the Nevada Street trail. Further, Detective Unger graduated from the FBI leadership school, Corporal Krouse attended officers' field training, and Officer Ramirez resigned to join the City of Greenbelt's police department.

Chief Antolik gave the police activities report for May. There were 2 Part I offenses, excluding the May 3rd homicide, which appears in the M-NCPPC crime report. This amount is lower than the 5-year average of 5.6. The year-to-date total is 19, as opposed to 24.4 for the 5-year average.

The police also issued 153 state and municipal citations and 59 speed camera tickets, all on Greenbelt Road. He reminded everyone not to leave children or pets in a car by themselves because cars heat up very quickly in the summer and can lead to the death of those left inside. Berwyn Heights officers are instructed to break the windows if they find a child or pet unattended in a locked car.

Chief Antolik responded to questions on the vacant position left by Officer Ramirez' departure, and the May 3rd homicide.

Committee Reports

Green Team: There was no report.

Historical Committee: Clerk Harper reported that several Committee members visited the Laurel Museum and explored the historic walking tour. In response to a question, she said that currently there are no plans to record an oral history of the Town's museum.

Recreation Council: Recreation Council President Susan Jones announced that the Town-wide yard sale will be held on June 17 and a Jazz concert at Lake Artemesia on July 6. The band is her own Susan Jones Quartet, starring guest guitarist Jan Knutson. Ms. Jones also reported that Berwyn Heights Day was a success despite the bad weather. She heard from several people that they liked the street festival format. The Recreation Council may do this again if it gets more positive feedback on this point. Additionally, it has been suggested the Town host more live concerts in the summer, instead of having bands perform on Berwyn Heights Day. Residents are encouraged to contact her with their input. The next meeting will be held on July 11.

4. Unfinished Business

Ordinance 171-A – 2nd Reading and Adoption of FY 2017 Budget Amendments: Clerk Harper read a summary of the Ordinance. Mayor Jewitt opened a public hearing at 8:09 pm and invited residents' comments while she gave an overview of the budget amendments. There were no comments and Mayor Jewitt closed the hearing at 8:11 pm. On a motion by CM Dennison and second by CM Shields, the Ordinance was adopted in 5 to 0 vote.

Neighborhood Watch/Emergency Preparedness (discussed out of order): MPT Kulpa-Eddy reported that NW/EP is addressing some of the comments on the standard operating procedures for the emergency trailer made at recent Council worksessions. At the same time, the updating of the Town's emergency operations plan is moving forward. National Night Out is coming up on August 1 and the Wine Festival may take place in August or September.

5. New Business

Resolution 06-2017 – 1st Reading & Adoption of Greenbelt Station Parkway MOU: Clerk Harper read the Resolution. Mayor Jewitt explained that this Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the City of Greenbelt, the Greenbelt Station Developers and Prince George's County relieves Berwyn Heights of any responsibility to maintain a 40' section of the Greenbelt Station Parkway that lies within the Town's boundaries. Greenbelt assumes responsibility for the maintenance of the roadway and the County is responsible for maintenance and repair of the bridge.

Michael German of Woodlawn Developers gave an update on the development. He said that the development has been successful, with 275 of 505 planned single family units sold and around 70% of constructed apartments rented. In response to questions, he replied that the short Parkway section in question remains within the boundaries of the Town of Berwyn Heights. However, it is accessed from Route 193, a State road, which leads to the development located in the City of Greenbelt. Greenbelt will assume responsibility for maintaining the roadway and Prince George's County for the structural elements of the bridge. The developers are planning to build sidewalks along Branchville Road where possible, as well as hiker-biker paths into the development from Branchville Road and Cherrywood Lane.

On a motion by CM Dennison and second by CM Rasmussen, the Greenbelt Station Parkway MOU was adopted in a 5 to 0 vote.

6. Citizens Discussion

Mike Attick, 62nd Avenue, commented on the rule not to allow citizen comments at worksessions, the non-attendance of Councilmembers at BHES' end-of-the-year party, the Town website's Twitter announcement of the May 3rd homicide, the damaged 'stop for pedestrians' sign at the intersection of Pontiac Street and Edmonston Road, and the lack of a budget spreadsheet for Ordinance 171-A adopting the FY 2017 budget amendments. He also asked if any steps have been taken to repair the leaky roof of the emergency trailer and to provide access to the storage shed. He was told that the roof was checked but probably will require more substantial repairs than caulking, as well as mold remediation. New keys for the shed have been made and will be issued to all Town organizations that store supplies in it.

Mayor Jewitt responded to Mr. Attick's comment regarding citizen comments at worksessions. She said worksessions are intended for the Council to work on the Town's business, while Town meetings provide a forum for citizens to comment and interact with the Council. In addition, citizens can call or email each Councilmember at any time. Contact information is provided in the Bulletin and on the website.

Phil Ventura, 57th Avenue, commented that the presence of department directors at Town meetings is helpful because they can answer some questions Councilmembers may not be able to answer. Further, he commented on the 'stop for pedestrian' signs as road hazards for drivers, especially at the Berwyn Road bridge where it is difficult to pass when cars are parked on both sides.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Signed: *Kerstin Harper*, Town Clerk