



Town of Berwyn Heights

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

Minutes Town Meeting October 11, 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. Also present were Town Administrator (TA) Jessica Cowles, Chief of Police Kenneth Antolik, Code Compliance Supervisor Freddie Glass, Treasurer Michelle Rodriguez, Clerk Kerstin Harper, Green Team and Recreation Council Member Diana Agonoy, Berwyn Heights Historical Committee (BHHC) Chair Debby Steele-Snyder and citizens.

Mayor Jewitt led the Pledge of Allegiance.

1. Minutes

Clerk Harper read a summary of the September 13 Town meeting minutes. On a motion by CM Dennison and second by CM Shields, the minutes were approved 5 to 0.

2. Mayor's Report

Mayor Jewitt noted that the Council held an executive session at the October 2 worksession regarding a personnel matter. During that same worksession the Council declined to approve the acquisition of a Humvee and decided to return it to the Defense Logistics Agency. The Mayor and Council received numerous comments on the matter, both for and against, which were appreciated. Mayor Jewitt said she ended up not endorsing the acquisition because the Humvee has a turret for the use of a machine gun, which conflicted with the civilian purpose of the vehicle. The turret would have been difficult and expensive to remove. She is now looking forward to a Council discussion on obtaining another type of emergency vehicle.

Mayor Jewitt said the September 26 emergency management workshop, hosted by the Town of Berwyn Heights and organized by TA Cowles, was a great success. This opinion was shared by representatives from 25 different Prince George's County municipalities, agencies and community organizations who were in attendance. She recently graduated from the Academy of Excellence in Local Government, which offers training for municipal officials during MML conferences and, starting tonight, will attend the MML fall conference in Rockville.

3. Department Reports

Administration: MPT Kulpa-Eddy announced a number of upcoming meetings. On October 12, a Parkdale High School College & Career Fair will be hosted by County Councilmember Dannielle

Glaros. On October 16, 17 and 23, Prince George's County will hold "snow summits", where anyone can obtain information on the County's snow clearing operations. On October 16 and 18, WSSC will hold a second round of hearings on new a rate structure for water usage that the agency has been ordered to develop because the current rates have been ruled unfair to high volume users.

Starting on October 14, a number of meetings on the environmental impact of a proposed SMAGLEV train are scheduled to take place. Governor Hogan has expressed concern about any routes that would go through densely populated residential areas, which Berwyn Heights shares. Prince George's County will hold a series of listening sessions on the Zoning Rewrite Comprehensive Review Draft starting on October 25 and comments due by December 15. The Town Council is likely to take this up at an upcoming worksessions. A Four Cities meeting is scheduled for October 25 in Greenbelt. Lastly, MPT Kulpa-Eddy invited feedback on the Town's revised Emergency Operations Plan (EOP), which is available on the Town's website and in the Town office.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Rodriguez gave the Treasurer's report for September, and announced that Town employees recently completed defensive driving and CPR/ First Aid training. A flu clinic for employees and any residents who wish to obtain a flu shot will be held on November 8.

Town Administrator's Report: TA Cowles congratulated Treasurer Rodriguez on obtaining her Academy for Excellence in Local Governance certification. She then reported that the main event in September was a very productive 6-hour emergency management workshop facilitated by Texas A&M staff, and attended by 48 high-level representatives from 25 different Prince George's municipalities and government agencies. The afternoon portion featured two table-top exercises on responding to a major snow storm and a health emergency. A number of things learned from the workshop were incorporated into the new EOP, which will be reviewed at the upcoming worksession and is up for adoption at the November Town meeting.

TA Cowles said another important accomplishment was the submission of the Sustainable Communities Designation application. The final product was the result of good cooperation between Administration staff and a workgroup representing the Town Council, the Town's commercial district and several civic organizations. The Department is also working on the final phase of the FY 2017 audit, employee performance evaluations and the recruitment of a new Public Works director.

In response to a question, TA Cowles said that she expects to receive an initial response on the Sustainable Communities application by the end of October.

Code Compliance: Code Supervisor Glass gave the Code activities report for September. A total of 46 code violations, 5 building permits and 5 dumpster permits were issued. Seven new rental properties were licensed and two reverted to single family homes, for a total of 212 rental properties. The Department's count of vacant homes was 9.

CM Rasmussen reported that he met with TA Cowles and Code Supervisor Glass to discuss several important Code issues, including: 1) how the Clean Lot Ordinance is working 1/ ½ years after being revised, particularly the enforcement of violations regarding accessory structures, invasive species and abandoned vehicles; 2) the circumstances under which the Town might revoke a rental license;

and 3) improving coordination between the Code and Public Works Departments in enforcing refuse disposal violations.

CM Rasmussen elaborated on conclusions that arose from the meeting. The Town's efforts to improve residents' recycling and refuse disposal habits should focus on 3 areas: 1) education; 2) enforcement; and 3) equipment (the 3 "E"s). Administration and Public Works would primarily handle the educational efforts by publicizing information about the Town's refuse disposal rules and leaving notices at properties with refuse violations, while Code would be responsible for enforcement. He also suggested the Council consider updating and combining Ordinance 117 – Refuse Collection with Ordinance 107 – Clean Lot to create a single property maintenance ordinance.

CM Rasmussen further noted that TA Cowles and the Code Department are working with a group of property owners on Ruatan Street, who have joined forces in eradicating a large stand of bamboo. To assist with the disposal of bamboo, the waiving of the Town's dumpster permit fee is being considered. Lastly, he thanked Mayor Jewitt and Chief Antolik for bringing attention to the need for an emergency utility vehicle, which the Humvee was intended to meet. He is looking forward to a broader discussion about the mission of the Police Department and the vehicle fleet needed to accomplish that mission.

Parks and Recreation, Education and Civic Affairs: CM Shields reported that he attended an extreme emergency drill at a recent CERT conference. He reminded residents of an October 13 Paint 'n Sip fundraiser, a November 8 flu vaccination clinic, and filling out and returning a recycling bin survey published in the last Bulletin by October 27. He also encouraged residents to provide feedback on the proposed MAGLEV train routes, either online or at an upcoming meeting. He expressed the opinion that only the straightest routes should be considered for this type of high-speed train. Lastly, he announced that the Maryland Defense Force will celebrate its 100th anniversary with a parade at the Baltimore Armory on October 21, in which he will participate. Anyone interested may come out to watch.

Public Health and Safety: Chief Antolik gave the police activities report for September. There were 6 Part I offenses in September versus the 5-year average of 7.8. The year to date total is 44 as opposed to the 5-year average of 48.8. The Police also issued 195 municipal and state citations and 18 speed camera tickets.

Chief Antolik advised residents not to drink and drive following the Paint & Sip fundraiser. Officers will be out patrolling. Over the last month, BHPD officers have been monitoring certain streets for speeding and running of stop signs. The average recorded speed was 26-27 mph, for which tickets are generally not issued. However, vehicles running stop signs will be cited. He concluded with providing Halloween safety tips.

In response to a question, Chief Antolik said that Berwyn Heights Police offer free home security reviews. Interested residents should call the Police Department at 301-474-6554. CM Rasmussen commented at length on the police report, including the number of speeding tickets and stop sign violations issued, the amount of commuting miles driven in police vehicles, and the challenges of dealing with Halloween trick or treaters.

Mayor Jewitt congratulated Chief Antolik on his 27th anniversary of serving in the Berwyn Heights Police Department. She advised that common sense safety rules also apply at the upcoming Halloween Trunk or Treat event, especially around the fire pit.

Public Works: TA Cowles reported that the Public Works crew continues to install crosswalks around Town, and has corrected roadway speed limit markings around Berwyn Heights Elementary School. Public Works hours of operations remain at 6:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. to avoid interfering with peak commuting times; the November Bulletin will feature recycling and refuse disposal reminders, to be followed by a mailer to every household in December; loose leaf collection will be in effect from November 1 to the end of December; and Public Works staff will assist with setting up for Trunk or Treat and with electronics recycling on October 28.

Mayor Jewitt noted that TA Cowles is reporting for Public Works because she is the acting Director until a new director has been recruited. CM Rasmussen noted that the September recycling rate was 23% and the landfill diversion rate 32%.

4. Committee Reports

Green Team: Diana Agonoy reported upcoming events for the Green Team and the Recreation Council. The Green Team completed the Town's recertification in the Sustainable Maryland program and the next meeting will be held on October 18. The Recreation Council is hosting the annual Trunk or Treat event, this year co-hosted with College Park, and has recruited the Girl Scouts to help with roasting s'mores at the fire pit. Also coming up are a Town Clean-up day on November 4, Tree-lighting on December 2, and Toys for Tots collection, which concludes on December 15.

TA Cowles explained the difference between the Sustainable Maryland, Certified program and the Sustainable Communities program is that the former promotes green policies at the local level through the University of Maryland Environmental Finance Center and MML and latter provides access to economic development funds for eligible municipalities, corporations and organizations through the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development. Mayor Jewitt invited Ms. Agonoy to attend the ceremony for Berwyn Heights' Sustainable Maryland recertification at the upcoming MML conference.

Historical Committee: Newly-elected Chair Debby Steele Snyder gave the report. The Historical Committee continues to work on its oral history program. It has purchased new recording equipment and is busy interviewing as many current and former residents as possible. A fall reception on November 12 will feature the unveiling of a historic walking app, produced by the M-NCPPC's GIS section. All are invited to attend and learn how to use the app, which can be downloaded to one's smartphone.

Neighborhood Watch/Emergency Preparedness: Co-Chair Mike Attick announced that seats at the upcoming Paint 'n Sip fundraiser are almost sold out. However, anyone may come to watch and enjoy a glass of wine with their neighbors. He thanked Mayor Jewitt for attending recent NW/EP meetings, which are held every first Wednesday of the month. The Committee is in need of new members to carry out all its responsibilities, and is focusing on recruiting volunteers.

Recreation Council: Reported under Green Team.

5. Unfinished Business

There was none.

6. New Business

There was none.

7. Citizens Discussion

Mayor Jewitt received a comment about an unfriendly dog being allowed to run off-leash, adding that she is concerned about a number of dogs barking for long periods. She received 2 phone calls thanking the Council for taking up the problem of increased rat sightings and improper disposal of trash. She also noted that Berwyn Heights residents received an election notice for College Park's City Council election on November 7 because the notice was mistakenly sent to the entire 20740 zip code.

CM Rasmussen received another comment about bringing goats to Berwyn Heights to help control invasive species. He then asked MPT Kulpa-Eddy to clarify the relationship between NW/EP and the CERT team. MPT Kulpa-Eddy explained that the Neighborhood Watch started up in the 1990s and added an emergency response function after the 9-11 attacks and the College Park tornado. Prince George's County similarly started to gear up after 9-11, offering community emergency response training to help prepare citizens throughout the County for emergencies. The NW/EP members who took the training then formed the Town's CERT team, which last year became a 501 (c) 3 organization. The Paint 'n Sip event raises money for the CERT.

CM Shields received one comment from a citizen who was glad the Council decided not to acquire the Humvee.

Phil Ventura, 57th Avenue, announced while playing his accordion that he will provide musical accompaniment at the Paint 'n Sip fundraiser. Anyone without plans for Halloween is invited to stop by his home, where many trick or treaters are expected.

Mike Attick, 62nd Avenue, commented that Berwyn Heights may want to check with the City of Greenbelt if they would accept leaves collected here. Currently, the Town takes them to College Park, but is charged a fee. He also commented on the grass at the school property exceeding the 10" height allowed by Berwyn Heights code, on the Town's plans to assist homeowners to dispose of bamboo, on the appropriate size of recycling bins, on the status of issuing a Berwyn Heights ID for CERT members, and the possibility of NW/EP not participating in Halloween patrols.

Debby Steele-Snyder, Pontiac Street, commented that the 5900 block of Pontiac Streets gets very busy with trick or treaters, who get in the way of pass-through traffic and commuter buses. She suggested increasing police presence in this block.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:47 p.m.

Signed: *Kerstin Harper*, Town Clerk