



# Town of Berwyn Heights

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## Minutes Town Meeting December 9, 2015

The meeting was called to order at 8:00 p.m. Present were Mayor Jodie Kulpa-Eddy, Mayor Pro Tem (MPT) Chris Rasmussen, CMs Patricia Dennison, Maria Robles, and Lynn White. Also present were Town Administrator (TA) Jessica Cowles, Chief of Police Kenneth Antolik, Treasurer Michelle Rodriguez, Clerk Kerstin Harper and citizens.

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy led the Pledge of Allegiance.

### 1. Minutes

Clerk Harper read a summary of the November 18 Town meeting minutes. On a motion by CM Dennison and second by CM White, the minutes were approved 5 to 0.

### 2. Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Rodriguez gave the Treasurer's report for the month of November. She explained that General Fund receipts for November show a negative balance because the Metroland receipts in the amount of \$25,000 were transferred from the General Fund to a SECU account.

### 3. Mayor's Report

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy announced upcoming closures of the Town offices during the Christmas and New Year's holidays and reported on a number of meetings she and the Council attended. On November 30 the Council met with State and County representatives for the annual legislative dinner. The delegates were thanked for their help in securing funding for the emergency generators now being installed, and the Safe Routes to School sidewalks. On December 1, she met with Congressman Steny Hoyer's staff to discuss how best to promote Greenbelt Station as the future site of the FBI headquarters. Hoyer's staff was supportive of the efforts being made to show Greenbelt Station as the better location for the FBI headquarters and were happy to receive copies of the FBI promotional video produced by the Four Cities Coalition.

On December 7, Mayor Kulpa-Eddy attended Councilmember Danielle Glaros' breakfast for elected officials and was given a preview of the next County budget as well as the PGCPs budget. Both budgets will likely feature tax increases. Ms. Glaros encouraged municipal leaders to pursue collaborative projects and to help support Parkdale High School. On December 8,

several Councilmembers attended the Prince George's County Municipal Association (PGCMA) legislative dinner, where PGCMA priorities were discussed. These included involvement of the municipalities in the Prince George's County zoning regulations rewrite, body camera standards, better cooperation with Pepco on tree trimming, and location of medical marijuana businesses. With the assistance of the Maryland Municipal League, Prince George's municipalities will again lobby for the restoration of Highway User Revenues, which were drastically cut back during the recession.

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy continued with announcements of upcoming meetings, including presentations of the GSA's draft environmental impact statement for the three proposed FBI headquarters locations; a meeting with Stuart Eisenberg with the Hyattsville Community Development Corporation at the December 21 worksession and a presentation by Aaron Marcavitch on the latest initiatives of the Anacostia Trails Heritage Area (ATHA) at the February 2016 Town meeting. She met Mr. Marcavitch earlier tonight at an information meeting about the proposed Beltway interchange at Greenbelt Station, where he inquired about the possibility of a bikeway route connecting across the Beltway.

Lastly, residents are invited to give input on the budget process that will begin after the New Year and to take note of the upcoming Town Council elections. The Bulletin will carry information about the election process.

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

**Administration:** MPT Rasmussen said that he will not be able to perform the promised weigh-in for the *Lose It to Win It* campaign, because he came here directly from work and has no scales. He plans to do it at the January Town meeting.

MPT Rasmussen reported that the Priority 1 Sidewalks projects has been completed and came in about 2.6% over budget, mainly due to additional project management expenses and tying in of driveways located on steeply sloping front yards. At the last worksession, the Council approved spending an additional \$16,000 for upgrades to the Town's computer network as recommended by its new IT consultants. The upgrades will improve security, connectivity between workstations and efficiency and transparency of communications. The Council also approved a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a study of the Town's urban forest and producing a set of recommendations on how to better manage the tree canopy. Lastly, he congratulated the TA Cowles on the Michigan State Spartans, her Alma Mater's football team, making it into the playoffs.

**Code Compliance:** CM Robles said that she also attended Councilmember Glaros' breakfast with municipal leaders. As a newly-appointed councilmember, she found the interaction enlightening and productive. CM Robles reported that the Code Department followed up on a number of vehicle-related violations. She reminded residents that cars may not be parked on grass or other unpaved surfaces, and must be covered with a fitted cover if they are inoperable or lack valid tags. Residents should also store building materials in an orderly manner in accordance with the Clean Lot Ordinance.

**Parks and Recreation, Education and Civic Affairs:** CM Dennison said that tree lighting event was wonderful. She announced that the judging of holiday decorations will occur between December 20-30, and a meeting to re-establish the Education Advisory Committee (EAC) will

take place tomorrow. The EAC was responsible for reopening the Berwyn Heights Elementary School and advocated for better school options beyond the elementary school. At its January 5 meeting, the Recreation Council will discuss the lineup of community events for 2016 and invites any interested resident to participate. The Green Team will hold an arts & crafts event on Saturday, February 6.

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy noted that the Greenbelt Station development is likely to impact the schools in the area and encouraged residents to participate in the EAC to ensure Berwyn Heights' concerns are considered.

**Public Health and Safety:** Chief Antolik began with a report from the Berwyn Heights Volunteer Fire Department (BHVFD). The Department received a \$300,000 grant from FEMA for recruitment and retention of volunteers. It funds a part-time administrative position, tuition reimbursement and minor station repairs. The BHVFD has applied for a grant to help fund the replacement of its heavy rescue vehicle, which has over 300,000 miles on it. The Department is also looking into remodeling its current fire station, as its staff and apparatus continues to grow. Another option is to build a new station closer to Kenilworth Avenue.

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy added that the Fire Department is still selling Christmas trees, which is a major fundraiser for them. She thanked them for donating the tree that was lit during the tree-lighting celebration. She also noted that Santa will come around on a fire truck on Christmas Eve to greet the residents.

MPT Rasmussen asked what Chief Antolik thinks about a combined Police and Fire Services building. Chief Antolik said he would love it. He said that the current police station does not have emergency power and uses a landline and the officers' cell phones to communicate during power outages. Flashlights are used for emergency lighting. He believes that computers will continue to operate with the new system upgrades implemented by the new IT vendor.

Chief Antolik continued with the police activities report for November. He said a case of vandalism that occurred late on Halloween Night was solved. Arrest warrants were served to 3 of the 4 perpetrators. One turned himself in. In November, there were 9 Part I offenses, exactly the same as the 5 year average. Year-to-date Part I offenses numbered 71, which is slightly above the 5 year average of 66.8. The police officers also wrote 176 municipal and state citations and issued 4 speed camera tickets, all on Greenbelt Road. Chief Antolik provided holiday safety tips and reminded residents not to drink and drive. The Sober-ride program again offers free cab rides during the holidays, which can be requested by dialing 1-800-200-8294. He concluded with a recitation of slightly altered version of *'Twas the Night Before Christmas*.

MPT Rasmussen asked if Chief Antolik can explain the problem with the new intersection of Greenbelt Road and the Greenbelt Station parkway that was mentioned by a resident at the last Town meeting. Chief Antolik said the problem is with east bound lanes, where the left lane unexpectedly becomes a left turn lane. Drivers who don't know this may be forced to stop and try to merge back into the adjacent lanes to continue on Greenbelt Road. Nothing can be done at this point without spending a lot more money. He will keep a tally of the accidents that may happen there.

**Public Works:** CM White said that the Public Works Department is catching up on loose leaf collection since it has returned to full staffing. She advised residents to take note of changes in the trash collection schedule over the holidays, which are advertised in the December Bulletin.

## **5. Committee Reports**

**Green Team:** No report.

**Historical Committee:** Clerk Harper reported that the Historical Committee is discussing whether to feature oral histories it has collected over the years at its next event. Former Councilmember Ahrens has made them useable by converting them from VHS tapes into a digital format.

**Neighborhood Watch/Emergency Preparedness:** Mayor Kulpa-Eddy reported that the NW/EP is working on putting together a dog walkers program. This program is intended to be a mobile extension of the Neighborhood Watch program and would encourage dog walkers to report anything out of the ordinary that they might see in the neighborhood. She has spoken with Chief Antolik about it, who said the police would welcome additional eyes and ears in the community. The next meeting is on January 6, at which the Committee will elect next year's officers.

**Recreation Council:** No report.

## **6. Unfinished Business**

There was none.

## **7. New Business**

There was none.

## **8. Citizens Discussion**

Patrick Ward, Ruatan Street had several questions and comments. He asked whether wood piles must be stored 6" above the ground. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy confirmed this. He asked if the Town has any recommendations on trees that are suitable for planting in the Town. MPT Rasmussen recommended he consult with the Green Team or check the websites of Sustainable Maryland and the Maryland Department of the Environment for advice. Mr. Ward continued that his gas lines were breached twice during the WSSC water main replacement work. It was a major inconvenience to wait for Washington Gas to come out and repair the damage. Chief Antolik noted that the gas lines were mismarked by Miss Utility. The Police were standing by when repairs were made. Lastly, Mr. Ward asked if there are any regulations on parking in the street during snow storms. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy informed that there is no prohibition but the Town strongly encourages residents to stay off the roads where possible. In the past, there has been a temporary allowance for cars parked on unpaved surfaces. This makes it easier to get the streets cleaned more quickly. Mr. Ward suggested the Town ask residents to park on one side of the streets to facilitate plowing. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy said it has been discussed but the problem is in communicating this to the residents.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:07 p.m.

Signed: *Kerstin Harper, Town Clerk*