



# Town of Berwyn Heights

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

## Minutes Town Meeting December 11, 2013

The meeting was called to order at 8:00 p.m. Present were Mayor Cheye Calvo, Mayor Pro Tem (MPT) James Wilkinson, CMs Rose Almoguera, Patricia Dennison, and Jodie Kulpa-Eddy. Also present were Town Administrator (TA) Edward Murphy, Chief of Police Kenneth Antolik, Clerk Kerstin Harper and citizens. Treasurer Suzanne Lape had an excused absence.

Mayor Calvo led the Pledge of Allegiance.

### 1. Minutes

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

### 2. Treasurer's Report

TA Murphy gave the Treasurer's report for the month of November as Treasurer Lape was absent.

### 3. Mayor's Report

Mayor Calvo reported that the December 7 Tree lighting had the greatest attendance yet. There were many more families with young children than in previous years. This is a testament to an ongoing baby boom. The Town has seen a 7% increase in population since the 2010 census. Next year, the Town will have to find a larger venue or make arrangements to accommodate more people. Mayor Calvo also thanked Phil Ventura for the musical accompaniment, and the Seniors and Recreation Council for hosting the event. He appreciated that the Marines were present to collect toys for tots.

Mayor Calvo continued that during the last month Berwyn Heights as well as neighboring cities have experienced a rash of burglaries. The police are giving these crimes top priority and is coordinating with Greenbelt and Prince George's County police to solve them. Most burglaries happen after dark and residents are encouraged to install motion detecting or other lights on their properties to discourage burglars. Police are happy to check out a home to give advice on how to make it more secure. Residents are also requested to be attentive to anything unusual happening around them and report any suspicious persons to the police.

Last week, the Council had its annual legislative dinner with its State and County delegates. The focus was on restoration of Highway User Revenues (HUR) and Governor O'Malley's last year in office. The Council also thanked the State delegates for their help in securing grants for emergency generators, the Pop's Park playground renovation and a sidewalk for the 8900 block of 63rd Avenue.

Next week, the Council will begin to discuss the FY 2015 budget, focusing on broad goals and priorities before getting to the specifics in February and March. As this is the second year of the triennial assessment, the Town will not see any increases in real property tax revenues. Thanks to an increase in income taxes and good financial planning, the Town remains in a relatively strong position. Residents are welcome to give input on the budget.

Next year, will be an election year, with the Town Council election taking place on May 6. Residents who want to run for Town Council must file their petition of candidacy and financial disclosures by March 4. Forms and information are available at the Town office. The Town also conducts a supplementary voter registration, valid only for the Town election. Residents, who are members of the military and registered to vote in states other than Maryland, may want to take advantage of this opportunity. Residents are encouraged to become a candidate and come out to vote.

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

**Administration:** CM Almoguera reported that TA Murphy met with the electrical engineers to discuss the placement of the emergency generators. The final plans will be sent to the Town next week and then submitted for a permit from Prince George's County. The permit approval process takes approximately 4 to 8 weeks and installation of the generators is not likely to occur until spring.

**Code Compliance:** CM Kulpa-Eddy gave advice on dealing with lead paint, which is still found in many of Berwyn Heights' older homes built before 1978 when the use of lead paint was banned. Lead paint is hazardous mostly when it is deteriorating and starting to chip, flake or chalk or when dust is created during home remodeling work. It is particularly dangerous to small children as it can impact the development of their neurological system. The best prevention for lead poisoning is to eliminate exposure. This can be done by leaving lead paint that is in good condition undisturbed, by separating remodeling areas from living areas, and by keeping children away from areas with lead paint. Rental home owners need to be aware that they may not use lead paint on interior walls when renovating. More information can be found at Maryland's Department of the Environment (MDE) lead poisoning prevention program website.

#### ***Parks and Recreation, Education and Civic Affairs:***

CM Dennison reported that the well-attended Tree Lighting event featured children's crafts, snacks, a visit from Santa Claus and lighting up the Christmas tree. She thanked Phil Ventura for again providing the musical entertainment. CM Dennison and Kulpa-Eddy attended the Prince George's County Municipal Association (PGCMA) legislative dinner, where they were briefed on the Association's legislative priorities. The enrollment at Berwyn Heights Elementary School (BHES) increased by 20 students in the last month and now stands at 465. After the holiday she plans to set up an informal meeting of the Education Advisory Committee (BHEAC) to discuss developments that impact Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) and education at BHES.

**Public Health and Safety:** Chief Antolik reported that the police have stepped up patrols and joined with Greenbelt and Prince George's County police to respond to a recent increase in burglaries in Town. The police have also been issued updated emergency notification lists of seniors and residents with disabilities in case they need help. Then Chief Antolik gave the police activities report for November. There were 10 Part I offenses: 4 burglaries and 6 larcenies - which is slightly above the 5-year average of 9. The year to date total is 58, which is below the 5-year average of 84. In addition, 177 citations were issued, plus 415 speed camera citations, most of them on Greenbelt Road. Officer Duck is working with the school to ensure that the speed camera citations are issued during school hours. Chief Antolik concluded with holiday safety tips and wished everyone happy holidays.

In response to a question from MPT Wilkinson, Chief Antolik said that the recent burglaries reflect a regional trend that affects Berwyn Heights, and to a greater degree its neighbors in College Park/ Berwyn, and Greenbelt/ Franklin Park. The police believe these burglaries are being committed by a group of criminals and they have identified at least one suspect. Detective Unger is checking pawn shops and Craig's List for items known to have been stolen.

**Public Works:** MPT Wilkinson reported that he spoke with PGCPs CEO Maxwell regarding the Greenbelt Middle School sidewalk project, to provide GMS students a safe route to school. Currently they walk through the Greenbelt bus depot driveway. He has been told that the construction office is moving forward and is in the process of getting design specifications.

MPT Wilkinson reminded residents that, come January 1, they can no longer dispose of yard waste in plastic bags. Acting Director Lockley is working to come up with a schedule for loose leaf collection. With limited staff, the schedule has to take into account the simultaneous operation of the old leaf collection machine, which has a smaller capacity, and delays resulting from bad weather. Public Works has delivered large load of compost to the community garden, which is going to be applied this weekend. Public Works also treated the streets for a couple of minor snow events, which kept the roadways clear. Residents are reminded to clear sidewalks in front of their homes from snow. Snow should not be shoveled into the street but onto the property, and to the right of the driveway, where passing snow plows will not push it back into the driveway.

## **5. Committee Reports**

**Green Team:** Mayor Calvo reported that the Green Team has scheduled a community garden maintenance kickoff event for the coming Saturday. They will spread the mulch delivered by Public Works over a layer of newspapers to kill the weeds over the winter. Anyone interested in participating can call a member of the Green Team or just come out this Saturday to help. The community garden is located on the Tecumseh Street right of way between 58th and 59th Avenue.

**Neighborhood Watch/Emergency Preparedness:** CM Kulpa-Eddy reported that a First Aid, CPR and AED training session will be held on December 21 at the old County 911 Center in Landover. Interested residents can contact Ernest Walker at 301-780-8179 to reserve a spot. At the last meeting, the NW/EP tested a couple of CB radios as part of its search for a better communication device. The results were mixed. The Committee appreciates any advice about this technology. The next meeting will take place on Thursday, January 2, 2014.

## **6. Unfinished Business**

### ***Resolution 10-2013 amending Ordinance No. 117 - Refuse Collection, 2nd Reading &***

**Adoption:** Clerk Harper read the Resolution. Mayor Calvo explained that the amendment of the Ordinance was triggered by a change in the rules at the County's yard waste facility, which will no longer accept yard waste in plastic bags starting January 2014. Yard waste will have to be placed into paper bags or trash cans designated for yard waste. The loose leaf collection in November and December remains unaffected. At 8:53 p.m., Mayor Calvo opened the hearing.

John Biddle, Berwyn Road, commented that he enjoyed the convenience of purchasing the plastic bags at the Town office at a very low cost, and is sorry to see it go. He has used paper bags but finds them unwieldy, not holding as much and hard to close. He hopes the Town will follow through on the offer to provide reduced cost paper yard waste bags at the Town office to help with the transition.

Denys Voaden, Edmonston Road, said the Town did a good job getting the word out about the change in the rules but wondered if the County gave a reason for the change. If the reason is an environmental concern, it should be noted that the manufacture of paper entails a greater environmental burden than plastic. Mayor Calvo said he thinks the reason for the change is that shredded plastic from the bags is mixed with the mulch made from the yard waste, degrading its quality. Further, residents do not have to use paper bags but can use an old trash can identifiable as a yard waste container. TA Murphy added that the County yard waste facility received complaints from neighboring property owners about shredded plastic pieces being blown into their yards. MPT Wilkinson said that property owners using a trash can to dispose of yard waste should keep it separate from regular trash, which is picked up on the same day but by a different truck.

Phil Ventura, 57th Avenue, asked if the Ordinance could be modified to drop "commercially available" from the description of yard waste containers so as not to exclude containers residents may obtain from sources other than a hardware store or other business. For example, he made his yard waste container from an old steel drum. Mayor Calvo said that a self-made container would be acceptable as long as it is clearly identifiable. The Town is not likely to be a stickler about whether it is commercially available or not. With no further comments, Mayor Calvo closed the hearing at 9:03 p.m.

On a motion by MPT Wilkinson, and second by CM Almoguera, the Council voted 5 to 0 to approve the yard waste amendment to Ordinance No. 117.

## **7. New Business**

There was none.

## **8. Citizens Discussion**

Phil Ventura commented that, when using an old trash can for yard waste, residents should remember to drill holes in the bottom so that water can drain out. He also asked if residents could use the old yellow recycling containers for yard waste disposal. Mayor Calvo said residents who have kept those are using them for recycling only. He would not want to confuse the matter by allowing them to be used for yard waste disposal.

John Biddle says that he likes following Town news on TV and in the Bulletin. However, he wonders about the summarized *Police Beat* in the Bulletin. How much information is deleted to make it a summary? Mayor Calvo replied that Clerk Carter, who assembles the information, tries to keep the *Police Beat* to one page, which is mainly a cost consideration.

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

Signed: *Kerstin Harper, Town Clerk*