



Town of Berwyn Heights

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Minutes Worksession November 16, 2015

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. Present were Mayor Jodie Kulpa-Eddy, Mayor Pro Tem (MPT) Chris Rasmussen, Councilmembers (CMs) Patricia Dennison, Maria Robles and Lynn White. Also present were Town Administrator (TA) Jessica Cowles, Clerk Kerstin Harper, and Prince George's County Department of Public Works & Transportation (DPW&T), Office of Highway Maintenance officials and consultants.

1. Mayor

Announcements: Mayor Kulpa-Eddy congratulated the cities of College Park and Greenbelt on their recent elections. Patrick Wojahn is the new mayor of College Park. Greenbelt re-elected their incumbents.

Calendar: December 10 was set as the date for a Berwyn Heights Education Advisory Committee meeting.

Minutes: On a motion by CM Robles and second by CM Dennison, the October 19 worksession minutes were approved 5 to 0. On a motion by CM White and second by CM Robles, the November 2 worksession minutes were approved 5 to 0.

Department reports: Mayor Kulpa-Eddy reported that the General Services Administration (GSA) released its draft environmental impact statement for the three locations competing for the new FBI headquarters. Public informational meetings will be held in early December with the opportunity to provide written comments. Further, Director Lockley is no longer in the service of the Town. CM White added that former Greenbelt Public Works Director Kenneth Hall has been appointed as interim DPW director and has taken charge of the operations.

MPT Rasmussen reported that the new IT vendor started the conversion of the Town's computer network to Microsoft Windows OS. Additional fixes and new equipment are needed, which will entail more expenses. MPT Rasmussen participated in the Town-wide cleanup last Saturday, which focused on Edmonston Road and the commercial district. TA Cowles added that the demolition of two condemned properties continues to move forward. All utilities have been shut off. Now, the Prince George's County Law Office has to sign off on the demolition. She is making inquiries about moving

this project to a higher priority level.

CM Dennison reported that the Town is seeking to re-activate the Berwyn Heights Education Advisory Committee (BHEAC) and has set an exploratory meeting for December 10, 2015. The first item of business may be to define its mission and organizational framework. CM Dennison will reach out to the PTAs to seek their participation.

Citizen comments: Mayor Kulpa-Eddy received a comment regarding the reconstruction of the WMATA pedestrian bridge, which is delayed by manufacturing problems. The bridge may not open until late January. She also received a comment about the deteriorating asphalt of 56th Avenue at the T-ball field. MPT Rasmussen received a notice about a December 9 information meeting regarding the redesign of the Beltway interchange at Greenbelt Metro station.

Hydraulic study presentation: Mayor Kulpa-Eddy welcomed representatives of Prince George's County for a presentation of a study of the Town's storm water drainage system. The study was undertaken to determine the cause of the severe flooding that occurred in the low-lying areas of Berwyn Heights during the torrential rains of June 10, 2014. Vernon Stinnett, Chief of the Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPW&T), provided some background. He said the Town's stormwater system was constructed by WSSC between 50-70 years ago to meet the needs of a less densely populated community. It was transferred to the County in the 1980s, which is now maintaining it. The County hired WBCM Engineering consultants to study the Town's storm water system. They video-inspected the drains and visited all properties that reported the most serious flooding.

WBCM project manager Jerry Carlson gave an overview of the findings. Video inspection found the drains to be in good condition with only minor debris accumulation. The whole system was cleaned in 2009 as part of a regular 5 year rotation. The main problem is that the two largest systems do not meet current standards and are not big enough to handle major (10-year) rain storms, defined as 5.4" of rain in a 24 hour period. Some existing pipes that are 48" in diameter should be upgraded to 72" to handle peak flows. In addition, inlets are generally undersized and need maintenance. Some inlets on private property were blocked.

To alleviate flooding problems in the short term, it is proposed to add inlets where needed and remove blockages from existing inlets, as well as from the overland flow paths, as identified by the County engineers. Residents can help by reporting problems to the County and allowing inspectors to access their property. Problems can be reported by calling 3-1-1, or online, by submitting a service request at Prince George's County Click 311.

In the long term, Prince George's County needs to conduct a feasibility study (proposed to be funded in the FY 2017 budget) to serve as the basis for upgrading the system. The system could then be redesigned and permits obtained, which can take between 3 to 4 years. Construction would be funded through the County's capital improvement plan (CIP).

In response to questions about the project's implementation, Gwendolyn Clerkley, Associate Director of DPW&T's Office of Highway Maintenance, said DPW&T is responsible for commissioning and paying for the feasibility study. The study will determine costs of the upgrades and the impact of the improvements on Indian Creek. Storm water pipes directly affecting Indian Creek will require a federal permit and can take 3 to 4 years. Short-term improvements will begin within the next 2 months. The Town can help educate its residents about maintaining storm drains, by keeping leaves and trash out of

the gutters, and allowing County employees to enter on their property to repair and maintain the inlets. Ms. Clerkley will follow up with TA Cowles about the feasibility study.

Legislative dinner agenda: For the annual legislative dinner with the Town's State and County representatives, the following agenda items were proposed: introduction of new Councilmembers, updates on major projects, County tax differential formula changes, plans to make Route 1 and Route 193 more pedestrian friendly, the hydrologic feasibility study and stormwater system improvements, State legislation to regulate utilities' vegetation management activities, and discussing how the Democratic state legislature might work constructively with the Republican governor, and vice versa.

At 8:25 p.m., the Council took a 5 minute break.

Nothing was discussed under **2. Parks and Recreation, 3. Public Safety, and 4. Public Works.**

5. Administration

Ordinance 109 revisions: Mayor Kulpa-Eddy said that tonight is the last opportunity to make changes to the amended Election Ordinance before adoption at the November Town meeting. She offered several grammatical corrections and a couple of substantive changes.

Section 6 F – Write-in Candidates: add the phrase “if forms were filed and determined to be acceptable” to the provision qualifying write-in candidates to have their names posted inside and outside the polling station on Election Day.

Section 7 C – Tallying Votes: Under tallying of paper ballots, clarify that provisional ballots, which are tallied separately from all other ballots, are sent to the County's Board of Elections for certification.

Urban Forest initiative: MPT Rasmussen said that the FY 2016 budget has funding for a study of the Town's tree canopy to produce a plan on how to best preserve the urban forest. But he thinks it may be better to wait with taking any steps, such as reconstituting a shade tree board, because the winter season could make an assessment of the tree canopy difficult. TA Cowles said that there are other pieces of a study that could be performed during the winter months, such as an educational campaign and developing a maintenance plan. If a request for proposals is posted in December she expects that proposals would be received by the end of January or early February.

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy said she thinks it is important to have a board or committee in place to carry out any policy recommendations a study might produce. The Green Team might be considered for this role. MPT Rasmussen said he hopes that the study will generate interest among residents and motivate them to join a new board. He does not want to put the Green Team in a position to make hard calls on whether private trees should be felled or not. This may compromise its ability to carry out its core mission. The Green Team might delegate a member to serve on a tree board, as might the Town's Public Works Department, which currently carries out much of the tree maintenance work. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy suggested that the Public Works Department could be designated to execute the recommendations if no residents volunteer to form a board. MPT Rasmussen agreed but said he would prefer to recruit residents that have an interest in the preservation of trees.

It was agreed that the Town would solicit residents to serve on a re-established shade tree board through the Bulletin and Town website, starting in January 2016, while TA Cowles will write an RFP for consultants to carry out a study. In conjunction with the study, a review of Ordinance 122 – Urban

Trees needs to be undertaken to include private trees in a regime for maintaining the urban canopy.

Nothing was discussed under **6. Code Compliance.**

7. Executive Session (9:02 p.m. – 9:55 p.m.)

On a motion by MPT Rasmussen, seconded by CM Dennison, the Council went into executive session to discuss a personnel matter. With matter discussed, MPT Rasmussen moved and CM Dennison seconded to end the executive session. The motion passed 5 to 0.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:56 p.m.

Kerstin Harper