



Town of Berwyn Heights

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Minutes Worksession May 16, 2016

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 p.m. Present were Mayor Cheryl Jewitt, Mayor Pro Tem (MPT) Jodie Kulpa-Eddy and Councilmembers (CM) Maria Robles and Patricia Dennison. CM Chris Rasmussen had an excused absence. Also present were Town Administrator (TA) Jessica Cowles, and Clerk Kerstin Harper.

1. Mayor

Announcements: Berwyn Heights Day was a great success thanks to the help from many volunteers. Mayor James Walls, Jr., aged 39, of District Heights passed away unexpectedly. Berwyn Heights will send a condolence letter. The BHES PTA will hold a fundraiser at Chipotles tomorrow. CM Robles will publicize the particulars.

Calendar: A “Jean McConnell Senior Center” dedication ceremony was proposed to take place on June 22 during the volunteer appreciation dinner. TA Cowles will confirm. The date for the July 5 worksession was confirmed. A date for the employee appreciation lunch was not set as TA Cowles is exploring the possibility of giving employees a whole day instead of a half day off on Christmas or New Year’s Eve.

Minutes: On a motion by CM Robles and second by MPT Kulpa-Eddy, the April 18 worksession minutes were approved 3 to 0 to 1, with CM Dennison abstaining. On a motion by CM Robles and second by MPT Kulpa-Eddy, the May 2 worksession minutes were approved 3 – 0 – 1, with CM Dennison abstaining.

Department reports: Mayor Jewitt reported that she is overseeing the Police Department as well as the Public Works Department until CM Dennison has been sworn in. As both Chief Antolik and Interim Public Works Director Kenneth Hall are on vacation this week, Sergeant Moroney and Foreman Juan Thorpe are filling in acting directors.

MPT Kulpa-Eddy announced that Prince George’s County is conducting a survey to gauge interest in constructing an animal shelter in this part of the County. She asked that the survey be posted on the Town website as it will only be open until May 18. There is also a survey on aging she would like to forward to the Senior’s Club. Delegate Alonzo Washington will host a table talk at the Greenbelt Café

this Saturday, May 21, 11 a.m. All interested constituents are invited to participate.

CM Robles announced opportunities to earn community service hours at an upcoming *clean-sweep* litter pickup event in Chillum this Saturday and an invasive plant removal at White Marsh Park in Bowie, also this Saturday. Mayor Jewitt said that the Council was provided the weekly police report and that she will meet with Chief Antolik on Friday. She also noted that the entire Public Works staff worked during Berwyn Heights Day and thanked them for their efforts to make the day a success.

Citizen comments: MPT Kulpa-Eddy received comments about Pepco tree consultants, who are contacting home owners about trees that may need to be trimmed or cut down in the future. She hopes the Town can get some clarity on what plan is being followed. TA Cowles said that she will meet with Pepco representatives and ride with them through Town next Tuesday to get a better sense of the scope of the project that is being planned. This project affects a different feeder than those discussed and approved by the Council in April. She will then share what she has learned with the Council at the next worksession and discuss permit requirements the Council may want to impose on Pepco in connection with this project. In response to CM Robles, TA Cowles explained that the State's Public Service Commission authorizes Pepco to perform tree trimming around powerlines and would likely mandate a remedy in the event a tree was taken down in error.

Mayor Jewitt received a question as to the time frame allowed for swearing-in a councilmember after an election. This question was forwarded to the Town attorney.

Priorities of the 46th Council update: Mayor Jewitt said that she asked for an update on status of the priorities adopted by the 46th Town Council to gain an understanding of which priorities require completion. As background TA Cowles provided a document listing the 46th Town Council priorities and their stages of completion. Councilmembers were requested to share which priorities they are working on.

MPT Kulpa-Eddy explained that a couple of Council priorities were initiated but remain unfinished, e.g., marketing Berwyn Heights, which was championed by former Mayor Calvo, and developing a comprehensive street plan. Another priority, formalizing Town policies, was not initiated. However, she has made an informal list and as department head for Administration plans to push this effort forward. In addition, the list includes Town Council agenda items that are not top tier priorities; items to be addressed that require cross departmental coordination; and items that can be addressed within a particular department. She took charge of Election Ordinance revision, website upgrade and would like to pursue new street lighting for dark areas.

Mayor Jewitt noted that as an FBI employee she will recuse herself from any actions related to the possible FBI relocation to Greenbelt Station, which has been promoted by Berwyn Heights with the Four Cities Coalition. CM Robles said that revision of the Rental Housing Ordinance should be pursued by the 47th Town Council. Code Supervisor Glass has done some background work but no formal proposals are ready as yet. She recommended that CM Rasmussen take on this priority as the future head of the Code Department. MPT Kulpa-Eddy said finding a permanent location for a police station has been a top concern for the Public Health & Safety Department but the effort has not progressed past discussions.

TA Cowles added that a couple of storm water projects could be priorities for the 47th Town Council.

Last year, Prince George's County undertook a hydrological study of the Town's storm drains, which found many stormwater pipelines to be inadequate to handle major rain storms. This year an engineering study is planned in preparation for replacing parts of the old system. The County has also approached the Town about possible storm water mitigation projects funded from a storm water fee levied on taxpayers. An economic development initiative was funded by the 46th Town and carried forward to the 47th Town Council. Some approaches to economic development were identified in a discussion with Stuart Eisenberg of the Hyattsville Community Development Corporation last December, but have not been acted upon. The initiative might be pursued in the context of Route 193 streetscape improvements laid out in a 2013 Greenbelt Station and Rt. 193 Corridor Sector Plan Amendment.

In response to Mayor Jewitt, TA Cowles elaborated that an option to collocate a new police station with the Berwyn Heights Volunteer Fire Department (BHVFD) in an expanded public safety building was also discussed but will have to be explored further. Updating the Town Charter to reflect revised Town boundaries has recently emerged as a priority and will require solving the overlapping boundaries conflict in the Greenbelt and Berwyn Heights Charters first. Improving outreach to the non-English speaking community was in part addressed by hiring Spanish speakers in the Police and Administration Department. It also reflects an older desire to welcome all new residents to Berwyn Heights and acquaint them with the Town and government services available. The new website in part addresses the need, especially if a translation function were to be added. Attracting new businesses to Berwyn Heights will likely require the expertise of an economic development consultant, who can evaluate the potential of combining and developing real estate parcels.

47th Town Council priorities: CM Robles outlined projects she would like to start as head of the Parks & Recreation Department. These include: 1) seeking MML banner city status, hopefully with the help of councilmembers and Town staff; 2) establishing a shadowing program for high school students and opportunities to earn community service hours with the Town government; 3) holding a quarterly workshops hosted by Town organizations on topics of interest; 4) inventorying the Town's recreational facilities; and 5) collecting demographic information on Town residents to redesign outreach programs. These initiatives will be discussed and vetted with Town staff and Town organizations.

MPT Kulpa-Eddy asked if a date for the planned strategic planning workshop has been set where priorities for the next term would be discussed. TA Cowles said the workshop would probably be in the early fall but a specific date has not been set. She plans to invite three consultants to submit proposals for hosting the workshop and preferred dates could be added to the request for proposals.

In response to Mayor Jewitt, TA Cowles explained that amending the Charter to revise Town boundaries will require a conversation with the City of Greenbelt about a disputed parcel of land at the northeastern corner of the Town. She has already talked with Greenbelt's City manager about taking up the issue and believes it can be resolved. MPT Kulpa-Eddy added the Town also needs to make sure that all necessary legal steps were taken with regard to the annexation of the Branchville Road properties.

Mayor Jewitt concluded that the priority list should be revised to include tonight's comments and then adopted by the entire Council. She stated that her priorities include the repairing Town streets, moving the police station to a Town-owned property and starting a visioning process for improving the commercial corridor along Greenbelt Road.

MML convention: The Council agreed that CM Dennison will be the flag bearer for the parade of flags, with MPT Kulpa-Eddy as a backup; that Fager's Island will be the venue for a dinner of the Town's MML attendees with Shark on the Harbor as a backup; and that PGCMA breakfast reservations will be made for all attendees.

2. Administration

FY 2016 budget amendment: MPT Kulpa-Eddy said that no changes were made to the amendments since the introduction at the May 11 Town meeting. The amendments take account of several unanticipated expenses that occurred during the fiscal year, including a Public Works truck, overtime incurred during a snow storm, and accumulated leave paid upon an employee's retirement. Some of the expenses will be reimbursed later. Unless there are further changes, the amendments will be adopted as is at the June 8 Town meeting.

Four Cities letter: TA Cowles said that Greenbelt provided a slightly revised version of a Four Cities letter on the FBI headquarters relocation. MPT Kulpa-Eddy explained that this letter protests the lessening of a requirement that the future headquarters be located at or near a Metro station. This places the two contending sites in a better position to be awarded the project, although they are a couple of miles removed from a Metro station and would require a shuttle to bring employees using public transportation to their place of work. The letter seeks to refocus the General Services Administration (GSA), which is evaluating the sites, on sustainability and access to public transportation, as originally set forth in the executive order to relocate the FBI headquarters.

With the exception of a grammatical correction, the Council did not recommend any changes to the letter and will sign it when Greenbelt circulates the final version.

District Heights condolence letter: Mayor Jewitt requested the Town send a condolence letter to the Town of District Heights on the unexpected passing of Mayor James Walls, Jr., and provided a draft letter for review. The Council agreed to send the letter as drafted.

Nothing was discussed under **3. Code Compliance, 4. Parks and Recreation, 5. Public Safety, and 6. Public Works**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:44 p.m.

Kerstin Harper, Town Clerk