



# Town of Berwyn Heights

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## Minutes Worksession June 15, 2015

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 p.m. Present were Mayor Jodie Kulpa-Eddy, Mayor Pro Tem (MPT) Chris Rasmussen, and Councilmembers (CMs) Patricia Dennison and Anthony Schreiber. Mayor Calvo had an excused absence. Also present was Town Administrator (TA) Jessica Cowles, Code Supervisor Freddie Glass, Clerk Kerstin Harper and residents Ricardo and Herminio Portales and Mike Attick.

### 1. Mayor

**Announcements:** None.

**Calendar:** An additional worksession was added for June 25 to award the contracts for the emergency generators and Safe Routes to School projects. The employee appreciation lunch was scheduled for July 17, 1 p.m. at the Town Center. The next Four Cities Coalition meeting in Berwyn Heights was confirmed for Wednesday, July 29, 7:30 p.m.

**Minutes:** On a motion by MPT Rasmussen and second by CM Dennison, the May 18 worksession minutes were approved 4 to 0. On a motion by MPT Rasmussen and second by CM Schreiber, the June 1 worksession minutes were approved 4 to 0.

**Department reports:** CM Schreiber reminded residents to leave parking spaces for WSSC contractors on the streets where water main work is occurring. Signs have been put up and letters mailed to notify them. The Public Works Department will repair potholes through July. Residents are requested to bring any potholes in their neighborhood to the Department's attention. With the Town-wide cleanup on June 25, DPW is starting the new trash collection schedule, which moves Friday's trash collection to Thursday. Director Lockley is back on the market looking for a hybrid crewman/ administrative assistant after accepting Ms. Banjoman's resignation.

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy reported that the County on June 8 began a hydrological study of Berwyn Heights' stormwater system to determine if it is adequate for handling heavy rain storms. The study was commissioned following widespread flooding of low-lying streets and homes during last year's June 10 rain storm. TA Cowles was asked to make sure that the locations they want to focus on are correct. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy also reported that producer Bill Cornett has started to film scenes of Berwyn

Heights for a Four Cities promotional video. He took many pictures and footage of Berwyn Heights Day and is looking for other attractions to capture as well as people to interview. Residents can call the Town office to offer ideas.

**Citizen discussion:** Mayor Kulpa-Eddy said that she received the comment related to the County's study of the stormwater system, and a comment on the Maryland Smart Energy Communities grant the Town received to upgrade the HVAC systems in the Town Center and the Town office. It was suggested to consider insulating the walls of the Town Center instead of installing a more powerful system, which may achieve the same effect. TA Cowles noted that inspectors from the Maryland Energy Administration and the University of Maryland will visit the buildings within the next month to evaluate the conditions and recommend the best energy saving solutions. The walls were insulated on the inside during the recent renovation of the Love room.

MPT Rasmussen received a comment regarding an unpermitted home improvement project on Ruatan Street, which he checked on with Code Supervisor Glass. A stop work order was issued. He also noticed how many double wide driveways have been constructed in the Town and reminded residents that they need a permit and/ or a variance from the County for this. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy added that she also received comments about the grass in the Seminole Street right of way not being cut and the dumpsters still posing a problem with overflowing trash. The Town may have to contact the property owner again to make sure these problems are taken care of.

**Variance request, 6216 Quebec Place (discussed out of order):** TA Cowles explained that the owners of 6216 Quebec Street requested a variance to increase the size of their driveway from 8' x 20' to 20' x 40'. The proposed location of the driveway conflicts with Section 27-120 (c) of the Prince George's Zoning Ordinance, and a variance requires input from the Town. The owners made an attempt to attend the last meeting to explain the project but there was a miscommunication about entering the Council Chamber. The County's Zoning Board deferred their hearing to give the owners another chance to discuss the project with the Town Council.

Since the last discussion of the matter, she and Code Supervisor Glass visited the property, measured it, and spoke with the home owner. The existing driveway is 40' long and 10,' larger than indicated on the site plan submitted with the variance application. The owner would like to expand the driveway width to 15' to add a walkway to the front entrance. She and Code Supervisor are recommending that:

- The new driveway shall not be wider than 14,' including the walkway.
- The additional four feet of width shall be permitted in the area between the existing driveway and the dominant tree in the front yard. The driveway shall not encroach on the property line shared with 6214 Quebec Street.
- The driveway and any connecting walkways shall be constructed of pervious pavers.
- The new driveway shall utilize the existing curb cuts on Quebec Street and the existing curb cuts shall not be enlarged.
- The dominant tree in the front yard of 6216 Quebec Street shall be protected from harm during driveway construction and preserved to the best of the homeowners' ability.
- A maximum of one commercial vehicle and trailer may be parked in the driveway at any given time. Any commercial vehicle and trailer parked in the driveway shall be in compliance with all Town ordinances.

The Council sought clarification on several points. TA Cowles explained there are no variances on record for the double-wide driveways of two adjacent properties. Curb cuts may have been already in

place to accommodate the wider driveways at these addresses. Other double-wide driveways are usually located in front of the home, and in some cases lead to an extension in the back yard. However, this is not an option here. It is also recommended that the old driveway be demolished and rebuilt in its entirety as the existing driveway is in bad shape and consists of a patchwork of different materials. The additional cost of using pervious pavement for the new driveway has not been determined and depends largely on the type of pavement used. In terms of aesthetics, pavers that allow grass to grow in between would be preferable. As far as is known, there are no County standards as to the degree of perviousness a driveway must have, although there are limitations on how much of a property may be covered by impervious materials (30% per PGC Zoning Ordinance Section 27-442(e) (Table II).

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy noted that in recent years the Council has taken a stand on several variance requests that placed conditions on driveway expansions consistent with what is proposed tonight. Stormwater mitigation has been an important consideration in these decisions.

Mr. Portales asked if he could rebuild the new driveway with regular concrete because the proposed pervious pavers would likely not last very long if commercial vehicles were being parked on them. TA Cowles said that would be contrary to the requirement that storm water runoff be mitigated. The Council agreed to the following as acceptable alternatives: 1) two concrete tracks where wheels would go and pervious pavers or gravel in between the tracks; 2) gravel surface only; and 3) rain barrels or rain garden as offsets.

CM Rasmussen moved and CM Schreiber seconded to approve the variance within the framework proposed by TA Cowles and Supervisor Glass. After further discussion, the motion was amended to require Mr. Portales to remove the old driveway in its entirety and construct a new driveway and walkway so that its impervious surface area does not exceed that of the existing driveway. The project should incorporate one of the stormwater management best practices mentioned above. The details can be worked out with TA Cowles and Supervisor Glass. The motion passed 4 to 0.

At 8:10 p.m., the Council took a 10 minute break.

***Town Council vacancy update:*** TA Cowles said that the Town has received one application for the vacancy and 2 inquiries. The deadline for submitting applications is this Friday, June 19, leaving 2 weeks for the Council to review the applications before conducting interviews and make a selection at the July 6 worksession.

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy encouraged fellow Councilmembers to reach out to any residents they think would be a good fit and invite them to submit applications. It was agreed to compile a list of identical questions each candidate will be asked during the interview, which will be part of a packet of information on the candidates prepared by TA Cowles. TA Cowles clarified that the Council is not obligated to appoint a candidate, in the event there is only one, if he or she is deemed unqualified. This would trigger a special election.

***Parkdale High School funding request:*** Mayor Kulpa-Eddy explained that the Council received an email from a Parkdale High School math teacher inquiring if the Council would consider helping to fund a visit of a group of minority students to New York City to be introduced to the business community and make contact with potential mentors. The teacher had contacted County Councilmember Danielle Glaros who forwarded the request to all communities whose students attend Parkdale High School. The request is for \$10,900.

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy said, in addition to reviewing this funding request, she would like the Council to develop a framework of standard criteria to consider such funding requests in the future. This would help the Council to make consistent decisions and let applicants know ahead of time whether they would be eligible for funding. She would also like to determine an amount of money that might be set aside for such requests.

In discussions, the Council made the following points: The Council regards this trip and the program it is part of as a worthy undertaking. However, the request came in on too short a notice and too late for an appropriation of funds. The money in the public relations line item for this fiscal year has been spent. The Town generally focuses its philanthropic efforts on Berwyn Heights residents. No Berwyn Heights student is a member of this group. On a motion by CM Schreiber and MPT Rasmussen, the funding request was turned down. TA Cowles was asked to inform the Parkdale Teacher with an explanation of the reasons for denial. TA Cowles was also asked to begin drafting a framework for awarding philanthropic donations.

Nothing was discussed under **2. Public Safety** and **3. Public Works**.

#### **4. Administration**

***Procurement update on emergency generators and Safe Routes to School sidewalks:*** TA Cowles said that pre-bid conferences for the two projects have been held. There was a lot of interest in the emergency generator project and 6 bids have been received. Upon going out to bid a second time, TA Cowles advertised through e-Maryland Marketplace, which generated more responses than advertising in the newspaper. The engineers are evaluating them to ensure they conform with all requirements. For the SRTS project, 2 contractors were present but more bids are expected by the June 18 deadline. TA Cowles is confident that the bids will be within or below budget and the Town will consider the lowest bidder first. The Council will meet on June 25 to award the contracts for both projects. In response to Mike Attick, TA Cowles said the emergency generator project includes an upgrade to the electric panels.

***Performance evaluations:*** TA Cowles informed the Council that this year she plans to follow the performance evaluation process currently in place. But the process is likely to undergo substantial changes with an overhaul of personnel policies by a consultant in the next fiscal year. TA Cowles is making a few changes to the existing evaluation forms and guidelines to account for changes in the organizational structure of the Town government implemented last year. The updated guidelines and forms will be distributed to the department directors by the end of June, who will have to complete them by the end of July before they are reviewed by the Town Administrator and the councilmember/department heads in August. The evaluations of the department directors and code supervisor will be completed by Councilmembers by early September, and a merit increase and COLA discussion is scheduled for late September.

***Bikeway plan update:*** Clerk Harper provided an update on the signage plan for the grant-funded bikeway improvement project. She reviewed a list of the most important changes, including the content of a welcome message and map on the interpretive signs, and content and location of wayfinding signs. The Council was requested to approve the revised versions of interpretive signs incorporating previous comments so that all signs can be purchased before the end of the fiscal year.

The Council made a few edits. CM Dennison then moved and MPT Rasmussen seconded to approve

the bikeway signage plan. The motion passed 4 to 0.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:51 p.m.

Signed: *Kerstin Harper, Town Clerk*