



Town of Berwyn Heights

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Minutes Worksession January 12, 2015

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. Present were Mayor Cheye Calvo, Mayor Pro Tem (MPT) Jodie Kulpa-Eddy and Councilmembers (CMs) Patricia Dennison, Chris Rasmussen and Anthony Schreiber. Also present was Town Administrator (TA) Jessica Cowles, and Clerk Kerstin Harper.

1. Mayor

Announcements: Longtime Berwyn Heights resident Dave McCaffrey passed away on January 10. He is remembered for being an active participant in the Boys & Girls Club and other Town activities.

Calendar: Adoption of the Clean Lot Ordinances is planned for the February Town meeting. A meeting of the Commercial District Management Authority (CDMA) will need to be scheduled to appoint board members, notify businesses of changes to Ordinance 134 and discuss economic development.

Minutes: On a motion by MPT Kulpa-Eddy and second by CM Dennison, December 1 worksession minutes were approved 5 to 0. On a motion by MPT Kulpa-Eddy and second by CM Dennison, December 15 worksession minutes were approved 5 to 0. The December 10 Town meeting minutes were distributed.

Department Reports: MPT Kulpa-Eddy reported that the Council was invited to attend an open house of the Parkdale High School Robotics Team on January 20. Last year, the Council helped sponsor the Team's participation in a national robotics championship. CM Schreiber reported that Public Works has switched to collecting bulk trash on Mondays and Tuesday. CM Rasmussen reported that he recently completed the permitting requirements for a kitchen renovation. Further, Kevin Simpson, Code Supervisor since June 2014, tendered his resignation. He is working with TA Cowles on a transition plan. His last day will be January 23. The departure and possible restructuring of the Code Supervisor position will be discussed at a January 26 worksession. CM Dennison reported that she met with TA Cowles to discuss the FY 2016 Parks & Recreation budget.

Mayor Calvo reported that the recently-hired 8th police officer, Ben Hollowell, has started to work. Police Clerk Camille Carter has resigned to take up another position in North Carolina. Chief Antolik has begun the recruitment of a replacement. Senator Pinsky held his annual town hall meeting at Lamont Elementary School.

Citizen Comments: Mayor Calvo received comments on tree parts left on public property by Pepco contractors, delays with leaf collection at the end of December, and a Baby Jesus figure stolen from a Christmas display on Seminole Street.

Clean Lot Ordinance amendments: Mayor Calvo asked TA Cowles to review the most recent changes to Ordinance 107, Clean Lot and made further changes as follows:

Section 4 E - Debris: This newly-added definition was approved as an umbrella term for all types of refuse that might accumulate on private property, including "garbage," defined in subsection G, and "litter," defined in subsection I. Garbage, constituted of "putrescible animal, food and vegetable waste," was considered for a shorter or "time sensitive" enforcement process.

Section 4 H - Invasive Species: The word "ecological" was stricken from the definition as it is implied in "environmental" harm caused by invasive species.

Section 4 N - Public Nuisance: The definition was relabeled "Hazard" and rewritten to describe a "condition, situation or action that is unsafe, threatens public health and welfare, or causes environmental harm."

Section 4 Q - Vacant Property: The definition was revised to mean a "residence that is not occupied by the property owner or a tenant on a habitual basis for the purpose for which it was designed and lawfully permitted."

Section 7 - Notice of Violations and Penalty of Violations: It was proposed to reorganize this Section in the following manner: 1) Retain subsection A, which describes the content a violation notice must contain; 2) Retain subsection C, and relabel as subsection B, to describe how a violation notice is to be served; and 3) Create a new section or subsection to combine all schedules for enforcement of different violations in a table format to eliminate duplication throughout this section.

Section 7 D - Vacant Properties: It was agreed that the same maintenance standards apply to vacant properties as for other properties. However, an accelerated enforcement schedule will be available to abate violations more quickly.

Commercial Clean Lot Ordinance: TA Cowles said that she imported most of the changes from the residential Clean Lot Ordinance to the Commercial Clean Lot Ordinance.

Section 6 - Definitions: It was agreed that all definitions be aligned with those in Ordinance 107, including in subsections B - Accessory Structures, and C - Agent.

Section 7 - Violations: With regard to subsection D, which prohibits the storage of junked and non-roadworthy vehicles on properties zoned C-O, C-S-C, D-D-O, or M-X-T, Prince George's zoning ordinance needs to be checked to determine if the storage of such vehicles is allowed on properties zoned I-1 Light Industrial. Businesses along Balley Avenue are all zoned I-1. It was agreed to refer to zoning codes in the generic "commercial," "mixed use," and "industrial" designation to avoid potential conflicts with the soon to be revised Prince George's zoning ordinance.

Section 10 - Notice of Violation and Penalty for Violation: It was agreed to substitute the narratives versions of enforcement schedules with a table. However, the current schedules need to be reviewed to come up with a simpler system.

FY 2016 budget goals: Mayor Calvo said that the Council usually gives the Town Administrator guidance in January on items that should be taken into account when drafting next year's budget. He proposed the Council review employee salaries generally, and senior level salaries particularly, to ensure they are competitive with surrounding jurisdictions. The resignation of the recently-hired code supervisor signals that the pay for this position was probably not high enough. At the same time, the

Council may want to rethink how it awards merit pay and perhaps give greater consideration to the importance of a particular position or employee.

Other budget goals proposed included: 1) a dog park, for which Park & Planning has reserved some funds. The Town should explore if the funds can be used for purchasing land; 2) reserving funds for purchasing land to accommodate a police station; 3) possible reprogramming of IT resources; 4) purchasing 2 police vehicles, with 1 vehicle funded from the Public Safety Taxing District budget; 5) investment in preserving and renewing the Town's tree canopy by tapping into grant money for planting new trees, exploring the hiring of an arborist together with other small municipalities, and providing seed money to reestablish a tree board. Alternatively, an employee could be trained to become certified in tree care; and 6) new play equipment for older children either at Pop's Park or at the school behind the community center.

MPT Kulpa-Eddy asked TA Cowles to check with New Carrollton about increases in property values they may have seen as part of their reassessment. This may be an indicator of what Berwyn Heights can expect from its reassessment at the end of this year in terms of increased property tax revenues.

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

4. Public Works

Maryland Smart Energy Communities grant: TA Cowles said that Director of Public Works Lockley is working on a grant application from the Maryland Energy Administration (MEA) to earn the Smart Energy Community designation. He proposes to focus on the areas of 1) reducing the Town's electricity consumption by implementing energy efficient technologies in Town buildings and facilities; and 2) reducing petroleum consumption by making the Town's vehicle fleet more fuel efficient and rethinking how staff and materials are transported to job sites. Director Lockley is seeking approval for moving forward with the grant application, which is due on January 26.

The Council discussed the possibility of using hybrid and flex-fuel vehicles for police cruisers and segway's for the Code Department. TA Cowles said that Director Lockley ruled out including renewable energy in the grant request, as the Town does not currently use it. The Council agreed for Director Lockley to proceed as proposed. TA Cowles will review the application prior to submission.

5. Administration

Priority 1 sidewalks update: TA Cowles said that with the installation of sidewalks on 57th Avenue the roadway was narrowed making it hard for 2 vehicles to pass each other when cars are parked on both sides of the street. She asked whether the Council would want to make one side 'no parking'. The Council agreed to make the east side of 57th Avenue 'no parking'. The residents have been consulted and are amenable.

TA Cowles continued that sidewalks bids include 22 bus stop pads. So far, the Council has decided on 9 locations of where to install pads and benches. She asked if there was interest in cutting some pads from the project and use the money for other sidewalk-related expenses. The Council thought 22 pads and benches would probably not be needed, but 14 might be reasonable if benches were installed on both sides of the street in some places. A decision on the exact number of pads and benches was postponed.

TA Cowles informed that sidewalks construction was slowed by cold weather and that the contractors

skipped the 8600 block of Cunningham Drive because trees have to be removed and utility poles moved. Further, she is working with CP Johnson engineers to determine where things stand with respect to the 63rd Avenue sidewalks, which are funded through the federal Safe Routes to School grant and administered through State's Department of Transportation. She has not been able to find an agreement or MOU that has a time line for completing the project.

Emergency generators update: TA Cowles said that the Town went out to bid on the emergency generators for the Town Center last September. A pre-bid conference held in October attracted considerable interest but only 2 bids were submitted subsequently. The low bid came in at \$196,000 and the other at \$280,000. Both bids exceed the \$160,000 budget for the project. The question for the Council to decide is whether to negotiate for a lower price with the low bidder or go out to bid again.

CM Rasmussen asked if the Town has looked into procuring the generators separately from a contractor to install them, and whether this might save money. TA Cowles said the Town has not done that. Mayor Calvo said that the bids exceed his expectations of what the project would cost. Cost estimates the Town was given when it applied for a State bond bill to help fund the generators were in the range of \$136,000. He would like to know how much the Town has already spent on engineering and design, and in permitting fees to determine if the project might be dropped altogether. Alternatively, the Town might look into getting diesel powered generators instead, which are likely to be cheaper, or simplify the installation by supplying only one floor of the Town Center with power instead of both.

MPT Kulpa-Eddy favored going out to bid again or looking into simplifying the project. It appears that the Town did not reach out to the right group of contractors. Several were Verizon contractors that are busy with other projects, and a couple were uncomfortable with posting bonds for the project.

Bikeway grant: Clerk Harper gave an overview of a bikeway improvement project for which the Town received a \$20,000 grant last June. The grant was supported by the Anacostia Trails Heritage Area (ATHA) and fit into ATHA's plans to improve bikeways throughout this region. The goal is to make Berwyn Heights more bicycle friendly and connect it with other nearby communities, namely College Park, Greenbelt, Greenbelt Station, as well as Greenbelt National Park. Based on these parameters, Clerk Harper provided a map showing the proposed bike routes and points of interest in the Town.

Mayor Calvo said that this is a good start but that he would revise some routes and add others, including a connection to Greenbelt Middle School and the Indian Creek trail spur to Nevada Street. Further, he would like to consider the project in its totality, including the bike racks, bike repair stations and interpretative signs also funded in the grant. Clerk Harper was asked to provide a concept plan for all aspects of the project as well as copies of the grant budget.

Bulletin cover: The following items were approved for the February Bulletin cover: Presidents' Day theme; headlines for BHHC Presidents' Day event and Community Potluck Dinner; jumps for Clean Lot Ordinances adoption and budget presentations.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 10:28 p.m.

Signed: *Kerstin Harper, Town Clerk*