



# Town of Berwyn Heights

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## Minutes Worksession January 23, 2017

### **Executive Session (6:00 p.m. – 6:50 p.m.)**

On a motion by CM Dennison and second by CM Shields the Council went into executive session to discuss a personnel matter. With the matter discussed, CM Dennison moved and CM Shields seconded to end the executive session.

### **Regular Meeting**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. Present were Mayor Cheryl Jewitt, Mayor Pro Tem (MPT) Jodie Kulpa-Eddy and Councilmembers (CMs) Patricia Dennison, Christopher Rasmussen and Gerald Shields. Also present were Town Administrator (TA) Jessica Cowles, Chief Kenneth Antolik, Public Works Director Stevie Cox, Code Compliance Supervisor Freddie Glass and Clerk Kerstin Harper.

#### **1. Announcements**

Mayor Jewitt will attend her first Mayor's conference on February 2 – 4 and will give a full report at the following worksession. A Four Cities Coalition meeting will take place in College Park on January 25 and is open to the public.

#### **2. Minutes**

There were none.

#### **3. Department Reports**

Mayor Jewitt thanked Chief Antolik for his timely updates on Part I offenses. MPT Kulpa-Eddy announced a February 1 community meeting in Riverdale hosted by County Councilwoman Glaros in Riverdale to connect refugees and recent immigrants with resettlement and social service organizations. She had attended a January 19 PGCMA meeting in Forestville held in their administration building that is undergoing remodeling. Forestville managed to obtain grant funds for the remodeling and to build a new police/public works department nearby. PGCMA members discussed House bill HB 418-17 that would give municipalities the authority to regulate fences. The Council may want to consider if it wants to support the bill.

MPT Kulpa-Eddy also noted that she has located information about how the Council should interact with Town organizations, a topic the Council discussed at the last worksession. Guidelines for Council Conduct are set forth in Ordinance 124, which includes a section on interacting with committees.

CM Rasmussen reported that two people testified at the last Town meeting in favor of continuing to allow the renting of rooms to just one tenant in an owner-occupied home without requiring a rental license. It is a way for residents to earn a little extra income while helping out friends who, by their presence, provide additional security in this living arrangement.

CM Rasmussen said he received an email from a resident asking if the adoption of Ordinance 120 amendments would affect a rental license that has just been renewed. TA Cowles advised that regulations in the Ordinance normally become effective 3 months after adoption and must be complied with on the effective date. The same resident also asked if the rental license fee might be reduced because more homes would fall under the definition of a rental home in the revised Ordinance, and thus generate more revenue.

CM Rasmussen further reported that Public Works foreman Luis Cardenas attended the last Green Team meeting for the first time and was very helpful. DPW has installed two new dog waste stations and will begin landscaping around the Town Center in 4 to 6 weeks. The Green Team is looking into setting up a used clothing recycling station as a fundraiser and is checking out possible locations. CM Rasmussen informed the Green Team that the Shade Tree Board is being reconstituted and invited them to join. He also asked the Green Team to think about ways to educate residents about the value of the urban forest and tree maintenance.

CM Shields reported that he sent out a brief questionnaire to Town organizations asking them about their structure and funding sources. His purpose was to gain an understanding of how the Town might work together better with Town organizations and how organizations may support each other. The Education Advisory Committee said that it would be willing to help review educational grant requests, but as yet there are no procedures. MPT Kulpa-Eddy explained that the Council has wanted to adopt standard operating procedures for handling a broad range of grant requests that may be received from residents, community organizations, and school groups. CM Shields further stated that he continues to work on a survey of residents and will gladly accept the pro-bono help offered by a resident who works on survey design professionally.

#### **4. Citizen comments**

Mayor Jewitt received comments in support of the “owner plus one” exemption from rental licensing, a thank you for installing additional pet waste stations, and a commendation of the Public Works Department for engaging with a resident on leaf collection.

Mike Attick commented on misuse of pet waste stations; a Prince George’s County grant program for inside-the-Beltway communities, which funded the Forestville Town Hall; on Ordinance 124 – Code of Conduct being disregarded by former Councils; how the Town gets its weather reports; DPW employees opining about being called up on a Saturday for snow removal duties; and a PTA fundraiser for College Park Academy, a public charter school that is supported by the University of Maryland.

#### **5. Action Items**

There were none.

#### **6. Discussion Items**

**Strategic plan action items:** TA Cowles explained that some of the long range goals identified during a strategic planning workshop last fall still require action plans to implement them. She has prepared a worksheet for the Council to flesh out the remaining strategic issues, which include Town aesthetics,

economic development, and some aspects of community engagement. First, however, Chief Antolik, Code Supervisor Glass and Public Works Director Cox have been asked to help brief the Council on steps already taken to achieve the goals for which action plans were developed.

Strategic Issue 1 – Acquire Improved Facilities for Departments – Improve Facility Adequacy: Short of adding to or remodeling the Town’s current buildings, good progress has been made to implement stopgap measures to improve facility adequacy by using existing space more efficiently. To that end, storage areas have been cleaned out and space created for Town organizations to store supplies, and some files have been purged, while electronic archiving for the remaining files will be explored.

Improve Facility Security: Senior staff has explored stopgap measures to improve facility security through better security systems and procedures. Public Works Director Cox reported that he and Chief Antolik have worked together to inventory the security needs at Town buildings. They recommend the following stop-gap improvements:

- New security cameras and recording systems that can store more video footage and allow for remote monitoring. This is especially useful at the Town Center to monitor the activities associated with party rentals, community events and meetings;
- Higher fencing and an electronic gate at the Public Works yard;
- Electronic keycards for all Town buildings. These keycards can store information about keycard usage and limit access to specified buildings and rooms;
- Shared schedule of community events, meetings, and party rentals. This would help DPW staff with setup and cleanup of events, and allow the police to check on events.

Other short-term security measures include:

- Trimming of trees and shrubs around the Town Center to improve visibility (completed);
- New office access system (in progress);
- Employee training for de-escalating confrontational customers and responding to active shooter situations offered through LGIT and State agencies (added).

The long-term goal of relocating the Town’s police station into a Town-owned facility will require an architectural and engineering study of the Town Hall and Town Center, as one option. TA Cowles and Director Cox are researching the cost of such a study for the purpose of funding it in the FY 2018 budget. Local and state representatives have been consulted about available grants and bond bills, without much success.

Strategic Issue 2 –Create System to Bring Roads up to Standard: The first objective is to conduct a needs assessment for the Town’s roads. TA Cowles and Director Cox are working on a cost estimate for the purpose of funding a road analysis in FY 2018. The drafting of an RFP for the study is in progress. Once the Council approves it, a vendor should be selected by the end of May, and the study completed by end of December 2017. The roads analysis will serve as the basis for a plan to repair all Town streets. This plan should be useful in coordinating street repairs with utilities’ maintenance schedules of water, sewer and gas lines, and avoid having newly-paved streets re-opened. While utilities do not appear to have a multi-year plan for upgrading their infrastructure, the Town has identified contacts they can work with on coordination.

In response to Councilmembers, TA Cowles said that MML is working on finding ways to improve communication between municipalities and utilities regarding road work, but she is not aware of a bill in the General Assembly to mandate it. WSSC has agreed to resurface the entire width of those streets

where they have replaced water mains. Further, full-breadth resurfacing will be a permit condition for any future underground utility work in the Town. The Town commissioned a road analysis a couple of years ago, but with a vendor who also performs road repairs. It is deemed advisable to obtain a roads assessment from a vendor not invested in making repairs.

Strategic Issue 3 - Community Building - Improve Communications: TA Cowles will work with CM Shields and staff to research best practices in other communities on how to communicate with and engage constituents. A survey to better understand the communication preferences of Berwyn Heights residents and businesses will be completed by mid-February 2017, with findings presented in April.

Increase Resident Participation in Town Activities: CM Shields has begun to work with Town organizations to identify best practices on how to engage residents. A formal survey on residents' and businesses' main concerns about governmental programs and community activities will be drafted and presented to the Council for input and possible funding by the end of March. Strategic issues identified by the Council during the workshop should be covered in the survey. A resident has offered his expertise in survey design to assist. The survey is expected to be carried out by the end of June 2017.

Other ideas for improving community engagement include: recruiting multi-cultural, multi-generational ambassadors; publishing promotional materials in Spanish and possibly other non-English languages frequently spoken; and expanding the Town's presence at local schools.

Strategic Issue 4 – Town Aesthetics – Increase tree canopy and maintain species diversity: This is an issue for which no implantation plans have yet been made. It is proposed that the Green Team and Public Works coordinate with Pepco on a replanting plan around utility lines planned this spring. The Green Team, and the Shade Tree Board, if reconstituted, might be asked to help draft a mailer educating residents about tree maintenance for fall 2017. Public Works and the Shade Tree Board might be asked to develop a maintenance plan for Town trees based on SavATree's recommendations by spring 2018. Once a plan is at hand, an RFP should be issued to perform related tree pruning and removals. The possibility of hiring a Town arborist, perhaps on a shared basis with another municipality, or training a Public Works employee as an arborist should be explored.

Beautification efforts: Other ways to improve the aesthetics of the Town were discussed. These include signage, landscaping, and memorial trees. As there is funding for signage in the FY 2017 budget, Public Works has begun to replace the old "Welcome to Berwyn Heights" signs, which should be completed by May 2017. Re-installing welcome banners along Greenbelt Road might be explored as well utilizing events signs more frequently. New landscape beds could be installed in high-visibility public areas, as well as a grove of trees with a citizen of the year marker.

Strategic Issue 5 – Economic Development – Implement Greenbelt Metro and MD 193 Sector Plan: The 2013 Sector Plan was considered a good starting point for beautifying the Greenbelt Road commercial corridor and making it more pedestrian friendly. The following ideas for implementing improvements were proposed:

- Work with Greenbelt on advocacy for funding Greenbelt Road improvements with legislators;
- Explore availability of funding, possibly under a "main street" designation;
- Apply the Sector plan as the standard for planned improvements and redevelopment of commercial properties along Greenbelt Road;
- Explore the availability of grants for façade and signage improvements for businesses;
- Consider providing tax incentives to businesses for improvements;

- Consider joining with Route 1 communities and the University of Maryland on economic development efforts.

Hire Economic Development Consultant: Once the FBI headquarters location is decided, expected in March 2017, TA Cowles plans to consider options for hiring an economic development consultant in the summer of 2017. Funding could be allocated in the FY 2018 budget, and an RFP developed in early 2018.

TA Cowles asked the Council to set priorities for the 4 planned RFPs associated with the strategic plans. The following priorities were agreed to: 1) roads assessment; 2) architectural and engineering study for a Town Hall complex; 3) economic development consultant, moved up to 2), if FBI relocation to Greenbelt Station is announced; 4) tree maintenance. TA Cowles will adjust the timelines for implementing strategic goals in accordance with these priorities.

***Charter amendment on boundaries:*** MPT Kulpa-Eddy said that the Council wished to amend the Charter to include the 2005 annexation of Branchville Road properties and to cede a boundary overlap area in the 6300 block of Greenbelt Road to the City of Greenbelt. While the annexations are on file with the required State and County agencies, the Charter should be updated to avoid potential jurisdictional conflicts if the FBI headquarters are relocated to Greenbelt Station. The Council was provided a draft Charter Resolution with the revised Town Charter. It deletes Section 202 and leaves boundaries to be defined by Section 201, which references the documentation on file with State and local agencies as the legal description of the Town's limits.

TA Cowles described the boundary overlap area to be ceded, which is mostly SHA right-of-way and has not been maintained by either Berwyn Heights or Greenbelt. MPT Kulpa-Eddy asked for clarification as to whether any commercial property is impacted by the boundary re-alignment which might result in the loss of tax revenues. TA Cowles was asked to provide an aerial map of the area with the new boundary overlaid on top, and to check with the Town attorney on which publication may serve as a paper of general circulation in which the Charter amendment must be advertised.

***College Park Good Neighbor Day:*** CM Rasmussen said that the City of College Park, in partnership with the University of Maryland and M-NCCPC, holds a Good Neighbor Day each year, an opportunity for students and residents to participate in a community service project. Last year, participants removed invasive species at Lake Artemesia. He proposed to announce the date in the Bulletin and invite Berwyn Heights residents to join in. The Council agreed.

#### **Town Council Schedule**

The Council reviewed the calendar for the upcoming month. No changes were made.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:11 p.m.

Signed: Kerstin Harper, Town Clerk