



Town of Berwyn Heights

5700 Berwyn Road
Berwyn Heights, MD
20740 Tel. (301) 474-5000
Fax (301) 474-5002

Minutes Worksession November 20, 2017

Executive Session (3:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.)

Personnel matter

Regular Meeting

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. Present were Mayor Cheryl Jewitt, Mayor Pro-Tem (MPT) Jodie Kulpa-Eddy, Councilmembers (CMs) Patricia Dennison, Christopher Rasmussen, and Gerald Shields. Also present were Town Administrator (TA) Jessica Cowles and Clerk Kerstin Harper.

1. Action Items

Four Cities letter – Route 1& Edgewood Rd interchange: TA Cowles said that the City of College Park requested the support of the Four Cities for improvements at the intersection of Route 1, Edgewood Road and the Capital Beltway off-ramp, which is heavily congested during rush hours. The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) identified the area as a candidate for safety improvements in 2014, but canceled the project because data showed that crashes occurred on the main line of I-495, rather than the Collector Distributor Lanes at the College Park exit. College Park is asking MDOT to resume a modified project. TA Cowles has not found any potentially negative impact on MDOT projects located near Berwyn Heights that might result from resuming the Route 1 project.

Mayor Jewitt indicated she has no further objections to signing the letter, and asked for a motion to take the matter from the table. CM Shields so moved. MPT Kulpa-Eddy seconded. The motion passed 5 to 0. CM Rasmussen moved and CM Dennison seconded to approve Berwyn Heights signing the letter of support. The motion passed 5 to 0.

Four Cities letter – I-270, I-495 and I-295: TA Cowles provided the Council with an MDOT fact sheet on the proposed Interstate widening projects, as well as a 2012 study on the proposed widening of the BW Parkway (MD-295). She could not locate a 2012 letter by Berwyn Heights opposing the project. Mayor Jewitt said that she is not in favor of signing a Four Cities letter opposing all three widening projects and would like to see a draft letter first. CM Shields agreed. CM Rasmussen he would not support a blanket opposition to all widening projects. MPT Kulpa-Eddy said she would sign on to opposing the widening of BW Parkway because it may result in increased traffic on Greenbelt Road, as well as widening of I-495 for the purpose of building toll lanes, as this may displace plans to get a full I-495 interchange at Greenbelt Station.

MPT Kulppa-Eddy moved and CM Dennison seconded to table a decision until a draft Four Cities letter is available. The motion passed 5 to 0.

Four Cities letter – MAGLEV train: Mayor Jewitt said that the City of Greenbelt has asked the Four Cities to sign a letter, not yet provided, opposing the proposed construction of a MAGLEV train. Two of the MAGLEV routes (J and J-1 alignment) would follow the BW Parkway and pass through Greenbelt. Although the plans call for the tracks to be underground in this area, Greenbelt fears negative impacts from vibration, noise and accessory structures. She is inclined not to sign onto this letter. MPT Kulppa-Eddy said that Berwyn Heights might see impacts from the train. Further, no Prince George's community would benefit because the closest stop would be Union Station. CM Shields said he would not want Berwyn Heights to sign the letter because he favors a high-speed public transportation option between D.C. and eventually NY City. The most problematic routes have already been taken off the table.

CM Shields moved and CM Dennison seconded to table a decision until a draft Four Cities letter is available.

2. Discussion Items

Town organizations policy update: CM Shields provided an updated version of the proposed Town organization policy. It would set up 3 tiers of Town organizations: Recognized Organizations, Groups and Clubs. To obtain recognition status an organization must meet a series of 14 requirements. If they are met, the organization may apply for recognition status from the Town Council and, if approved, becomes eligible to request Town funding through the budget process. The policy also sets forth procedures for requesting and managing these funds.

In discussion, the Council debated the merits of requiring background checks of members of a Recognized Organization. The provision had been included to protect children from possible abuse. However, some volunteers in Town organizations have voiced opposition to the requirement, and organizations which provide services for children already have procedures in place to deal with the risk of abuse. The Council agreed to remove the requirement from the policy, and instead seek advice from the Town attorney as to whether the Town can stipulate that it will not assume liability in this case.

A provision that a Club have at least 7 members was discussed and discarded because it requires a definition of what constitutes membership, which differs from one organization to the next. The question was raised why this requirement should only apply to Clubs. The Council agreed to drop the distinction between a Club and a Group, and differentiate only between Recognized Organizations and Groups, where Groups would be less regulated. The definition of a Recognized Organization should include a stipulation to comply with all applicable non-discrimination policies.

TA Cowles said the Town Attorney advises that religious groups may not be excluded from becoming a Recognized Organization, as this policy does. Further, the Town's insurance carrier, Local Government Insurance Trust (LGIT), offers a Tenant-User Liability Insurance Program (TULIP), under which Town organizations can obtain liability insurance for themselves, although they must pay for it. An insurance requirement might only be applied to Recognized Organizations or groups, which hold events where alcohol is served or other risk-prone activities are conducted.

TA Cowles was asked to obtain clarification if religious groups would qualify for Town funding, if partisan organization are eligible for recognition, and to provide the resolutions and ordinances that served to establish some Town organizations.

PRECA aide introduction (added item): CM Shields announced that Stephen Isler, Goucher Drive, was selected as the assistant to the Parks, Recreation, Education & Civic Affairs (PRECA) Department. He asked him to introduce himself.

Mr. Isler said he moved to Berwyn Heights about 3 years ago and has been teaching in Prince George's County schools for more than 5 years. His background is in communication, budgets and fundraising. He responded to the advertisement for the recreation aide in the Bulletin because he felt the position matched his skills and interest in building a strong community.

Recycling bin survey results: CM Shields reported the recycling bin survey yielded some surprising results. The question "What would encourage you to recycle more?" had 37% respond "more education," and only 27% "bins with wheels," while the majority, or 42%, said they would not want to pay an additional \$50 in taxes for recycling bins with wheels and attached lid. He thought more people would want the bins with wheels based on the comments he received.

The Council agreed that most residents would probably favor bins with wheels if the Town were to pay for them out of current taxes. The Town currently provides residents with recycling bins that cost around \$20 per unit, but have no wheels. The Town might charge residents who want a \$50 bin with wheels \$30 to make up the difference. A compelling reason for the Town to invest in wheeled recycling bins for all households would be a transition to the automated pickup of bins. However, this is not planned for the near future. It was agreed to resume deliberations and make a decision on recycling bins at the next worksession.

Priorities for ordinance revision: The Council agreed to take up ordinance revisions in the following sequence: Ethics Ordinance, mandated by the State; Animal Ordinance; and Clean Lot Ordinance, possibly in combination with the Refuse Ordinance to create one Property Maintenance Ordinance.

PGCMA legislative dinner attendance: MPT Kulpa-Eddy will attend the dinner.

3. Minutes

On a motion by CM Shields and second by MPT Kulpa-Eddy, the October 2 worksession minutes were approved 5 to 0. On a motion by CM Shields and second by CM Dennison, the October 16 worksession minutes were approved 5 to 0.

4. Announcements/ Department Reports/ Citizen Comments

Mayor Jewitt announced that the Council completed the interviews for the Public Works director and will make an announcement at a later date; that Chief Antolik completed the interviews for the police clerk; that the street sweeper will be in Town this week; that NW/EP completed the inventory for the emergency trailer; and that the Historical Committee held a fall reception at which a new historic walking tour app was unveiled. She also reported that she had a meeting with Code Supervisor Glass, TA Cowles and CM Rasmussen to talk about improving communication about code issues. Lastly, long-time resident Gloria Archibald passed away.

MPT Kulpa-Eddy attended the last PGCMA meeting, at which M-NCPPC Planning Coordinator Chad Williams provided an update on the PGC zoning rewrite, which will inform a letter of comment on the comprehensive review draft she is preparing for the Council. Another presentation was given by the Training Group, which offers computer and office training for municipalities; and the Mayor of Bowie, G. Frederick Robinson, stopped by to report that a marijuana dispensary will be opening in Bowie. Further,

several MML employees will leave by the end of the year. MPT Kulpa-Eddy received a citizen comment asking about a schedule for leaf pickup.

CM Rasmussen reported that in the meeting with Code Supervisor Glass and TA Cowles, they strategized about how to best deal with a resident who has accumulated thousands of dollars in fines, using the code compliance model. They also discussed bamboo issues and leaf collection. Further, he participated in the inventory of the emergency trailer last Friday, which produced a comprehensive list of supplies that will be entered into a database for continuous updating.

CM Dennison reported that Public Works is busy with leaf pickup and a new director is in the process of being hired. CM Shields reported that the Town held a flu shot clinic on November 8. A PRECA aide has been hired and is assisting him draft the Town organizations policy. A copy has been sent to all organization contacts. He received 2 citizen comments, one opposed to the background check provision in the organization policy, and another on the timely posting of updates to policy documents the Council is working on.

6. Town Council Schedule

The Council reviewed the calendar. No changes were made.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Signed: *Kerstin Harper*, Town Clerk