



# Town of Berwyn Heights

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

## Worksession Minutes February 1, 2016

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. Present were Mayor Jodie Kulpa-Eddy, Mayor Pro Tem (MPT) Chris Rasmussen, Councilmembers (CMs) Patricia Dennison, Maria Robles and Lynn White. Also present were Town Administrator (TA) Jessica Cowles, Chief of Police Kenneth Antolik, Code Supervisor Freddie Glass, and Clerk Kerstin Harper.

### 1. Mayor

**Announcements:** Good luck to the citizens of Iowa, who are caucusing tonight.

**Calendar:** No changes were made.

**Minutes:** On a motion by CM Dennison and second by CM Robles, the January 4 worksession minutes were approved 5 to 0. The January 13 Town meeting minutes were distributed.

**Department reports:** Mayor Kulpa-Eddy announced the County Executive Baker will hold listening sessions on the FY 2017 budget on February 4 in Largo, and on February 9 in Laurel. MPT Rasmussen reported that TA Cowles received a response from UMD to an inquiry about Berwyn Height residents being allowed to use the UMD shuttle bus. The terms of the agreement are under discussion. CM Robles reported that the Code Department received an appeal to a code citation, which is being reviewed.

**Citizen comments:** Mayor Kulpa-Eddy received many comments on the snow clearing operations, as did other councilmembers.

**Snow emergency response:** Mayor Kulpa-Eddy said that the blizzard that would drop up to 2 feet of snow in the D.C. region began Friday afternoon and lasted through Sunday morning. The Town closed at 1 p.m. on Friday and did not reopen until Wednesday the following week. During the storm, 3 public works employees were working through Friday and Saturday plowing snow. They were pulled off the road for a while on Friday night, when it got too dark and difficult to plow, but resumed once it turned light. The goal was to keep the main traffic arteries passable and to have an emergency lane open on every street in Town.

The snowstorm raised questions about what could be done better the next time. While the Town suspended the prohibition against parking vehicles on unpaved surfaces in one's yard to get them off the road, the Town might also consider making one side of a street 'no parking' to be able to safely plow it more quickly, similar to the County's requirement. However, this would mean that the Town would have to tow vehicles that do not follow the rule. Another problem was the failure to clear snow off sidewalks in front of private properties. The Town

may need to better educate residents about their responsibilities. Public Works also did not immediately plow some sections of Town and left those residents stranded, raising the question whether DPW has pre-determined routes for clearing the snow.

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy said that the County was very proactive in snow preparations and kept everyone updated about the weather forecast, snow emergency centers and who could be contacted for help. Pepco was helpful as well and provided information about their snow emergency response. The Town is now filing for reimbursement for snow-related expenses from FEMA. Reimbursement can amount to 75% of total expenses.

In discussion, the following recommendations on improving the Town's snow emergency response were made:

1. Keep residents informed about snow procedures through social media, email or the website.
2. Establish pre-determined plowing routes.
3. Remind residents about clearing the sidewalks. Currently, only businesses are required to clean sidewalks of snow.
4. Remind residents to clear around fire hydrants.
5. Make snow shovels available to young people who want to help shovel driveways.

***Small business revolution grant:*** Mayor Kulpa-Eddy said that CM White with input from her, TA Cowles and Clerk Harper submitted an application for a small business revolution grant on January 28. This \$500,000 grant is made available by Shark Tank and Deluxe Corporation to a chosen small town for a main street makeover. Berwyn Heights would apply the funds to improve the streetscaping along Greenbelt as well implement a business promotion program. Finalists will be announced and voted on by a panel of judges during Small Business Week, May 1-7, 2016.

Nothing was discussed under **2. Parks and Recreation**

### **3. Public Safety**

**FY 2017 budget request:** Chief Antolik presented his FY 2017 budget request. He began with an overview of the Police Department's mission, values and organization. He noted that BHPD has an experienced workforce of 8 full time and 1 part time officers. Two officers are retired from Prince George's County Police and 1 from Internal Affairs. The force includes 1 Detective with U.S. Marshall status, 1 civilian clerk and 2 police aides. All officers received the required firearms training, and designated officers also received DUI and Terrorism Task Force training.

Chief Antolik gave a report of crime trends, arrests served, and citations issued. In the last 10 years, serious crime reported to the FBI in the Uniform Crime Report has gone down by 42% since 2006, and in 2015 amounted to a total of 78 Part I offenses. The most common crimes are larcenies, burglaries and assaults. There were no homicides and one rape during this period. In the last 5 years, citations issued approximated 2,300 per year, but the emphasis shifted from State to Town citations. During the same period, arrests made came to between 13 and 28 per year, with a total of 26 arrests in 2015.

Goals for FY 2017 include updating the BHPD General Orders and Standard Operating Manual to include a new policy on body cameras, developing a self-hosted in-service training program, and continue strengthening police-community partnerships and outreach programs. New initiatives include adding body cameras, more 'all hands on deck' occasions, such as the first day of school and Halloween, adding foot patrols and implementing litter enforcement.

In terms of the FY2017 budget, which comes to \$667,600, Chief Antolik presented an option for a 5% increase, as requested by the Council. The increase would fund 2 promotions to corporal, costing \$6,950; 1 promotion to Sergeant costing \$3,844; and 3 tablet computers for use in vehicles costing \$9,000; for a total increase of \$26,702 or 4%. He is also proposing to purchase 1 new police vehicle that would be financed from the capital operating budget.

In response to questions, Chief Antolik explained that travel expenses budgeted at \$300 cover only taxi fees, metro fares and mileage at the rate of 31.5 cents per mile, usually in connection with conferences and training. Longer distance travel is paid out of *Dues & Conferences* and *Training & Seminars* appropriations. Expenses for National Night Out are proposed to be increased by \$200 in the 5% increase budget option. No increase is budgeted for body cameras, which were purchased with grants in prior years. Storage options of the camera footage are being explored with the new IT vendor. Currently, footage is stored on a dedicated laptop.

Types of events covered by ‘all hands on deck’ might include 9/11 anniversaries and National Night Out. Overtime would be paid on those occasions. To increase interaction with the community, he plans to hold “meet and greets”, where residents would be able to talk directly with officers and say what activities and programs they would like to see. To connect with the Spanish speaking population, BHPD has 2 officers and the police clerk that can communicate in Spanish. Most officers understand enough Spanish to deal with perpetrators. Educational video clips about BHPD in Spanish are another idea considered for engaging Spanish speakers. The uniform appropriation was raised by \$2,000 to purchase new body vests, which have gone up in cost. Officer Krause has been tasked with studying the costs and benefits of adding a police dog to the department, which will determine whether he will make such a proposal to the Council.

***Code Compliance FY 2017 budget request (discussed out of order):*** Code Supervisor Freddie Glass presented his FY 2017 budget request. He said that it is the mission of the Code Compliance Department to maintain a good quality of life through the enforcement of Town Ordinances. Currently, the Department employs 3 staff, including 1 full time supervisor, 1 part time code clerk and 1 part time code officer to perform the core functions of the Department:

- Licensing and inspections of rental homes, comprising about 200 homes or 20% of the Town’s housing stock;
- Monitoring residential and commercial properties for proper maintenance;
- Issuing permits for new construction, dumpsters and portable storage units (PODs);
- Operating the Call-a-bus.

Supervisor Glass continued with accomplishments of the previous year and goals for FY 2017, which include developing better strategies to deal with vacant and historical properties, improving collaboration with DPIE on zoning enforcement, and assembling an ideal part-time staff.

Mr. Glass noted that the Town recently renewed its Call-a-bus agreement with the County and is looking into obtaining a newer bus with better fuel efficiency. In response to questions, he said that the current bus has a wheelchair lift. He will check with the Seniors Club if this is a feature they require. If not, a smaller bus might be an option. The Call-a-bus is available on weekends if a reservation is made beforehand. The bus is available for use by Town organizations once they sign an MOU with the Town and designate a driver.

Supervisor Glass said that the FY 2017 budget is mostly flat. The 5% increase budget option has an additional \$5,000 to add 5 part-time hours per week and an additional \$500 for *training & seminars*. In response to questions, Mr. Glass said that the increase in staff hours is needed

for Clean Lot enforcement which picks up in spring when grass begins to grow again. The code tracking software is working out well and helps with documenting the previous history of individual properties. Maintenance of the Comcate system costs a little less than \$5,000 per year. Comcate has the capability to track business licenses, but this is not planned for FY 2017. Business licensing is under the purview of the Administration Department.

In response to MPT Rasmussen, TA Cowles said that code revenues are not shown in the departmental budget as departments do not have the ability to generate revenues that sustain their operations. All departments are funded largely from the tax revenues of the Town. Projections on revenues from fees and fines will be included in the Town Administrator's proposed budget.

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy said she believes that the rental license fee is designed to cover the cost of the rental licensing program. Projected increases in the program, such as might result from the planned revision of the Rental Housing Ordinance, e.g. staff time or new equipment, should also be included in the budget request. In general, department directors are requested to budget as close to their actual expenditures as possible. This helps the Council understand the true cost of services and make better budget decisions.

Nothing was discussed under **4. Public Works.**

#### **5. Administration**

**Bulletin cover:** The following items were approved for the March Bulletin cover: spring theme and supplemental voter registration. MPT Rasmussen commented on the utility of information and overall quality of the Bulletin

TA Cowles was asked to renew the invitation to School Board Member Lupi Grady to attend a Council meeting and provide information on the PGCPs budget, capital improvement plan, and the districting of students from the Greenbelt Station. She should also be invited to the next Education Advisory Committee (EAC) meeting.

#### **6. Code Compliance**

Discussed earlier on the agenda.

#### **7. Executive Session (9:05 p.m. - 9:15 p.m.)**

On a motion by CM Dennison and second by MPT Rasmussen, the Council went into executive session to discuss a legal matter. With matter discussed, CM Dennison moved and MPT Rasmussen seconded to close the executive session.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:16 p.m.

*Kerstin Harper, Town Clerk*