



Town of Berwyn Heights

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MAYOR
Amanda M. Dewey

COUNCIL MEMBERS
Jodie A. Kulpa-Eddy (Mayor Pro Tem)
Christopher S. Brittan Powell
Jason W. Papanikolas
Ethan D. Sweep

Worksession Minutes October 18, 2021 | 7:00 p.m.

This meeting was held by videoconference due to the ongoing COVID-19 health emergency and was broadcast on Berwyn Heights cable TV channels and streamed on the Town website. Residents could comment by calling (301) 474-9570 or e-mailing Mayor Dewey at adewey@berwynheightsmd.gov

Call to Order

Mayor Dewey called the meeting to order at 7PM. Present were Mayor Amanda Dewey, Mayor Pro Tempore Jodie Kulpa-Eddy, Councilmember Chris Brittan-Powell, Councilmember Jason Papanikolas, and Councilmember Ethan Sweep. Also present were Town Manager Laura Allen and Town Clerk Melanie Friesen.

1. Announcements

Mayor Dewey opened by letting everyone know that there was a time sensitive agenda item added to the meeting in regard to the County Council redistricting proposal and will be discussed later. She reminded everyone of the GoVax clinic with the Police Department on Halloween. She also mentioned the options available for following along with Town Zoom meetings in a variety of languages.

2. Approval of Agenda

MPT Kulpa-Eddy moved to approve the agenda. CM Sweep seconded. After no discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

3. Discussion Items

a. ARPA Funding/Strategic Planning Meetings in-person/virtual

Mayor Dewey began by thanking residents who filled out the surveys. TM Allen as part of her staff report reminded Council that the Town is receiving \$2.6 million from the American Rescue Plan Act and that staff put together a survey to gauge interest on areas of allowed usage. TM Allen reviewed the nature of the 75 survey responses and the areas of approved usages that received the highest support: notably Stormwater/Drainage, Hazardous Duty Pay for Eligible Employees, Housing Assistance and Health/Mental Health Assistance. She asked for Council input on Community Meetings to engage the community further on ARPA funding and strategic planning. She stated that she is engaging with an

outside organization to facilitate the meeting and hopes to hold the community meetings in the first two weeks of November, with meetings planned to be around 90 minutes each. Mayor Dewey opened the floor to Council to engage the question of in-person meetings. There was considerable discussion over location of the in-person meetings, including concerns about location, limitations based on maximum occupancy, time and day of meetings, as well as Covid concerns. Ultimately, Council settled on having 2 in-person meetings, to be held on Nov 4 and 8, with a virtual meeting taking place during the Worksession on November 15. Council then reviewed the survey results for areas of focus. CM Brittan-Powell asked that a focus be placed on social networking for Covid-like times and thanked residents for thoughtful comments. Mayor Dewey highlighted childcare as an area that the survey brought up, but she was unsure what support in that area would look like. She also asked what vaccine support would look like when the Town didn't get engagement in vaccine support efforts when they were offered. MPT Kulpa-Eddy noted that what stood out to her was the interest in housing, utility, and small business assistance, as those are more urgent needs and support would need to be implemented quickly. She also needed more information as to whether or not these are needs that residents are requesting for themselves or if they are needs that are being requested on the behalf of others. Mayor Dewey identified that aid for these areas already exists and that identifying who needs help in order to connect them with assistance has been a challenge. Mayor Dewey asked what avenues of communication would be best to connect residents to resources. CM Brittan-Powell suggested partnering with other towns. He also expressed the desire to engage on the subject of learning loss that has occurred and the possibility of utilizing seniors as tutors. CM Sweep reminded Council that ARPA guidance states the Town should not create a long running program with the money because the funding will expire. CM Brittan-Powell engaged the idea of a Dog Park. Council discussed this item in some length. CM Sweep asked where residents are getting their Town information, so that the Town can focus communication on successful methods.

b. MML Conference Reports

MPT Kulpa-Eddy attended sessions including the Academy Graduate Workshop on “The Role of Local Government in Driving Economic Prosperity”, which was more focused on larger communities who have the amenities. However, she did find that the segment on community branding to be interesting. She asked TM Allen if Code Compliance was in regular contact with businesses. TM Allen replied that they are; they update businesses regularly and the ARPA surveys were sent to business via a blast email. MPT Kulpa-Eddy updated on MML's legislative priorities, which continue to include HURs and getting local municipalities the ability to set up their own police accountability boards rather than rely on the Counties. She attended a session on maintaining mental health in difficult times and wanted everyone to know that they are not alone in feeling stressed. Resources were presented during the session that she hoped would be made available in a sharable format. She attended the “Large Cities” forum where vaccine mandates were discussed along with the opioid litigation

settlement and ARPA projects. Lastly, she attended a Lobbying 101 session which was intended to show how to best approach projects that could benefit from State legislation support.

CM Papanikolas reported that Sustainable Maryland will be launching two new certifications in the next year, one on historic preservation and the other on transportation. He attended a session on cyber awareness. Take away would be that cyber updates are ARPA eligible. Additionally, Maryland's Department of Information Technologies has put together a cyber guide for counties and municipalities that will be due out in December and should give some resources for smaller communities. He attended the "Small Town" Forum which focused heavily on parking, including issues with EV chargers. It also focused on retention and the challenges of small police forces. He also attended the roundtable on Accessible Communities and how to adapt to an aging population.

c. Vaccine Requirement

TM Allen reviewed that in January of 2021 Council established a vaccine incentive policy that did encourage some employees to get vaccinated. She estimates that about 85% of Town employees are now vaccinated. She's been in conversation with both the Town Attorney and other local municipalities. She has provided a sample policy and reiterated that it is legal for the Council to require vaccination. She highlighted two notable exceptions to the policy: (1) a medical exemption which would be in line with the Americans with Disabilities Act, which has clear guidelines, noting that with small municipalities it can be challenging as accommodations are not as accessible. For example, accommodations such as moving someone from a front-line job to a back-office job may not be available. The other exception is (2) a religious exemption, which is a less clear set of guidelines, but that this exemption does not seem to be a high occurrence in local governments. She would be working with the Town Attorney to develop procedures to follow for this exemption. She asks Council to determine if they are supportive of committing staff time to prepare a policy? What kind of timing would the Council consider for the policy? Finally, what information is needed by Council, are there specific issues Council would like addressed and would vaccination be a condition of employment in the hiring process.

Mayor Dewey asked for a temperature read on if a policy is needed, and if so, timing of the possible mandate. MPT Kulpa-Eddy asked what OSHA is going to be requiring. TM Allen reported that local governments aren't subject to OSHA, but rather the Maryland version, MOSHA. MPT Kulpa-Eddy suggested that hearing more about what MOSHA might require could be helpful. CM Papanikolas stated that we should at least look at what a mandate would contain, but not dedicate a significant amount of time to it until at least the first of the year. CM Sweep stated he'd be in support of staff pursuing a policy now, because the first of the year starts the budget season and it's a very busy season. MPT Kulpa-Eddy also expressed concern that mandate could create retention issues among Town staff. Mayor Dewey expressed that the current climate of the Police Department is vaccine positive in general, not just in regard to the Covid vaccine.

CM Brittan-Powell wanted confirmation that this is not a leading-edge issue, which TM Allen confirmed stating the Town would not be leading in this issue, but rather would possibly be in the first 1/3 of Maryland municipalities to implement a policy. CM Brittan-Powell asked if a “boiler plate” policy would be available for the Town to copy. TM Allen expressed confidence that the Town Attorney would be capable of writing a sound policy. Mayor Dewey summarized there is interest in pursuing this policy, now. MPT Kulpa-Eddy confirmed that, with the provision that if MOSHA were to indicate that they are developing a policy for release in the next few months, that the Town wait for their policy. Mayor Dewey opened the floor for additional concerns. MPT Kulpa-Eddy raised the question about testing, who pays and if the employee gets time off for testing. CM Brittan-Powell asked if we currently require new employees to be vaccinated and if that could impact hiring.

d. Response to County Council District 3 change

Mayor Dewey reviewed the plan that was provided to the County by the Redistricting Commission. The proposed map made limited changes to District 3, which Berwyn Heights is a part of. However, on Wednesday, Oct. 13th a new map was presented by the County Council that is different than the map that was developed as part of the Commission’s public process. This new map removes College Park from District 3 and adds Greenbelt in. She reiterated that this new map was not subject to the public comment period and that not even all members of the County Council had seen it prior to being asked to vote on it. The Mayor of College Park has written a letter to the County and asked the Town of Berwyn Heights to sign on. CM Papanikolas expressed that he had a strong reaction to the County’s “late night shenanigans” and that he would be in support of sending a letter in opposition. CM Sweep pointed out that there are several districts that are changing and that he would be in support of signing a letter or writing one of our own. CM Brittan-Powell expressed that we should be proud of the representation that Berwyn Heights has had in fighting the corruption of years past and that allowing this new map to go forward would be returning to a previous time. MPT Kulpa-Eddy expressed that she is upset about the process and agrees with signing on to the letter. She also expressed the need to get the attention of the two at-large members of Council. She’d support signing the letter from College Park and then following up with a Berwyn Heights specific letter. Mayor Dewey encouraged each council member and any interested residents to follow up with individual letters as well.

4. Department Reports

Mayor Dewey shared she had the honor of swearing in the new police officer Brandon Wright. There was also the annual Berwyn Heights Police Department meeting, where new police legislation and equipment needs were discussed. She expressed gratitude for the BHPD being leaders in implementing new legislation. She also shared that the tennis courts and the basketball courts will be repaired and gave thanks to Prince George’s County Public Schools CEO Monica Goldson and District 2 board member, Joshua Thomas to ensure that this happens. The Thriving Earth Exchange invasive species and

tree canopy project is seeking volunteers. Please email Mayor Dewey to get on the list. She reviewed other upcoming events including the Prince George's County Municipal Association meeting, Trunk or Treat, and the Police Department's vaccine clinic.

MPT Kulpa-Eddy reviewed the Boys and Girls Club fundraiser in association with 2Fifty BBQ, the Berwyn Heights Historical Committee meeting and their walking tour of Berwyn Heights, the Rec Council "Trunk or Treat" and house decorating contest, and the Berwyn Heights Education Advisory Committee meeting, which is still seeking volunteers.

CM Papanikolas reported that there are no updates from Code Compliance.

CM Brittan-Powell shared that he understands that some of the land near the tennis/basketball courts is Town Property and asked to have confirmation of that. He also encouraged residents to go to the Prince George's County Council website to get the emails of Councilmembers and contact them in regard to the redistricting map.

Additionally, that regarding Administration, there are no new updates.

CM Sweep reminded people to move their car from the street if they see the street sweeper. He also highlighted the Greenbelt Electronics Recycling event.

5. Resident & Community Comments

Mike Attick called to express his concerns that the Community meetings could be conducted in the 90 minutes proposed. He also asked for an email list of County aid requests so that he can ask county officials about it. Mayor Dewey replied that she would send him a copy of the survey and the results. Mr. Attick asked if draft minutes could be published in the e-newsletter. Mayor Dewey suggested that if minutes have been approved during a Council meeting, a link could be provided to those minutes in the following e-newsletter. He also commented on the redistricting process and that people should reach out to Councilmember Hawkins who might be willing to change his position.

Adjournment

CM Sweep moved to adjourn the meeting. CM Brittan-Powell seconded. After no discussion, the motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:18PM.

CORRECTION: during the meeting the Maryland Occupational Safety and Health Division of Labor and Industry was referred to MOSHA when the proper acronym is MOSH.

Respectfully Submitted: Melanie Friesen, Town Clerk