



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 September 20, 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 (443) 646-3529 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 Ethan Sweep, Councilmember Chris Brittan-Powell, Town Manager Laura Allen, and Town Clerk Melanie Friesen. Councilmember Jason Papanikolas was absent, excused.

1. Announcements

Mayor Dewey gave an update on current Covid restrictions: masks are still required indoors regardless of vaccination status, at least through October 5th.

2. Approval of Agenda

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

3. Discussion Items

a. Introduction of Dr. Jeff Warren- Thriving Earth Exchange Volunteer Scientist

Mayor Dewey introduced Dr. Jeff Warren. Dr. Warren will be leading the science side of the Town's invasive species/tree canopy project. Dr Warren spoke briefly on how there is increased interest in studying urban systems as a part of climate change. He stated that he is excited to be a part of the project and improving the Town's tree canopy. MPT Kulpa-Eddy asked if he knew how many volunteers/citizen scientists would be needed for the project. Dr. Warren stated that it is still to be determined.

b. Council Priorities Update

TM Allen reported that the priorities were developed by Council through a variety of processes, including community input and meetings with the Town Manager. TM Allen reported the roadway repairs that had been identified have been completed. TM Allen has become aware of a grant program through the County that may be able to support the Walkable Bikeable recommendations and she is in the process of putting together a grant application. The County is interested in looking at all the Walkable Bikeable recommendations. This grant does not require a match but does require a resolution to accompany the grant. TM Allen reviewed the Don't Block the Intersection ordinance change that will go into effect on October 6, provided that it is not petitioned for

referendum. In terms of Recreation and Parks, TM Allen reviewed on-going support for Civic Organizations and the Town Center improvements that were approved on 9/15/21. For sustainability, there is ongoing support for the Green Team, the scientist has been selected for the Thriving Earth Exchange and they are finalizing a project plan with him and developing an approach and methodology. The Campus Community Connections project is also focusing on trees. TM Allen is asking for GIS mapping of the public trees. The Council adopted a balanced budget for fiscal sustainability. The Town has implemented a tree rebate program. Additionally, the composting program will continue. The final priority identified is Effective Communications. TM Allen is developing a communications policy. Translation services provided by the Police Department are receiving ongoing support. Software has been identified that should allow for the meetings to be close-captioned in Spanish. The Bulletin is mailed directly to all households in Town. There is an E-newsletter published twice a month. TM Allen then accepted questions from Council. MPT Kulpa-Eddy asked how long the roofing project on the senior center would take. TM Allen replied that it is weather dependent. CM Brittan-Powell asked TM Allen if the issues he raised in July had been addressed in the budget. TM Allen asked for clarification on the items and Mayor Dewey clarified that there was a discussion but not a vote to alter the Council priorities. TM Allen spoke to the "Space Study" idea. She stated that she has reached out to the architect under contract for the Police Department feasibility study and has spoken with Greenbelt employees who are working on their own Space Study. She believes the project would cost between \$10-15,000. There are different types of Space Studies and the Council would need to clarify their goals. Mayor Dewey stated that for the Council to amend their priorities, a Councilmember would need to write a justification proposal and bring it to the Council for consideration. MPT Kulpa-Eddy and CM Sweep agreed with Mayor Dewey that this process should be followed. CM Brittan-Powell asked about strategic planning. TM Allen replied that she is hoping to engage the community about priorities as part of the ARPA engagement process. If the Council is looking for a longer-range planning (greater than 2-3 years), they would need to engage a specialist. Mayor Dewey expressed excitement about the grant process for WBBH priorities. She asked for additional comments or questions. CM Sweep suggested that next year's priorities include being proactive on climate change instead of the reactive priorities as they exist.

c. Draft Annual Calendar

Mayor Dewey reviewed the purpose of the Annual Calendar which is to identify known conflicts to meetings in advance, in order to increase communication with the Town about when meetings will occur. TM Allen gave a review of the calendar dates and challenges. Council reviewed the dates and proposed the following changes: Ask the Rec Council if they are able to move the Jan. 4, 2022 meeting so Council is able to meet. Move the February 22nd to Feb 24. Council also recommended removing the September 6 and December 19th meetings. The July 5th meeting will be moved to July 11. Additionally, May 3rd will be added to the Calendar to highlight that it is Election Day.

d. Draft Purchasing Policy

TM Allen reviewed the Town's current Green Purchasing Policy. Staff is asking that Council adopt a policy that adopts current best practices in public sector procurement and codifies current procedures. TM Allen reviewed the proposed changes while highlighting that none of the current Green Purchasing Policy has changed. Changes proposed include competitive bidding, addressing professional services, authorizing

piggybacking contracting and cooperative purchasing, and prohibiting artificial division, which is the process of artificially breaking up a project so that it falls under the purchasing threshold, and subjects all Town purchases to the Town's Ethics Code. Purchases will require a purchase order prior to the purchase being made, with the exception of Credit Card purchases and payroll, health care related transactions, debt and utility services. TM Allen reviewed the Competitive Bidding process and how the process becomes more rigorous and formal as the prices increase. The policy does allow for Council to allow the Town Manager to enter into contracts for certain items and services without competitive bid. Examples include Real Estate, Motor Vehicle Purchases, Insurance and similar operational contracts. The policy also includes allowing for Requests for Qualifications (RFQ) which allows for flexibility for purchasing services instead of products.

Mayor Dewey asked for clarification on the differences between cooperative procurement and piggyback contracting. TM Allen replied that piggyback contracting is using another governmental entity's already competitively bid contract and asking the vendor to provide the same pricing to the Town. Cooperative procurement uses large nationwide organizations that issue contracts for large or multiple government agencies that allow the Town to be included in the purchase products at a "bulk" discount (example, police vehicles and trash trucks). MPT Kulpa-Eddy asked for clarification on Part D, paragraph 3 which refers to the Town Manager working with the Mayor per Section 609.1 of the Town Charter if three bids are not received. MPT Kulpa-Eddy and TM Allen had discussion on their understandings about the role of the Mayor in 609.1 and TM Allen agreed to seek clarification. MPT Kulpa-Eddy asked for further clarification on exceptions to the competitive bidding process. TM Allen explained that the clause allowing for the Town Manager to forego a competitive bidding process is not an authority being granted but rather an option that would require approval by the Town Council during a Public Town Meeting. MPT Kulpa-Eddy and TM Allen further discussed the exceptions. Mayor Dewey reiterated that the listed exceptions default to going through the competitive bidding process, but that by being listed as exceptions that they may be exempted from the process. MPT Kulpa-Eddy asked about section 10 of the policy, which grants the power to make exceptions to the Town Manager. She thought it should be stated that it gives the power to make exceptions to the Town Council. TM Allen agreed to change the language. CM Sweep asked that there be language added to the sustainability portion of the policy to prioritize alternative fuel sources, and prioritized purchasing vehicles that utilize alternative fuels. TM Allen agreed to make the changes requested and to seek clarification on the Charter question prior to the Town Meeting on Oct. 13, 2021.

e. MML Fall Conference Discussion

Mayor Dewey introduced the discussion that several members of Council will be attending the Fall MML Conference. CM Brittan-Powell asked about the safety measures being taken at the Conference. Mayor Dewey responded that MML is not requiring masks or vaccines. She reported that the Conference center is in Howard County, a county that does not have a mask requirement, and that the Hotel does not have a mask requirement for either guests or staff. This was brought up at the most recent PGCMA meeting with MML. Mayor Dewey stated that she feels uncomfortable attending a large unmasked event while encouraging safe behavior in Berwyn Heights. MML has committed to a generous refund policy, but nothing has been put in writing yet. CM Brittan-Powell asked if there was a virtual option. Mayor Dewey replied that

there is no virtual option due to constraints at the Conference center. MPT Kulpa-Eddy asked if there were any issues that would need to be voted on during the meeting. Mayor Dewey replied that there will be the legislative priorities vote and she is hoping that there will be an alternative process for voting, since most of the people who would not be attending for Covid reasons are from Prince George's and Montgomery Counties. Mayor Dewey asked that this be on the agenda again on the Oct 4th worksession. There was discussion about Banner City requirements. If this is not able to be addressed in the Worksession on Oct. 4, the Council will do the administrative work of determining who is attending what workshops via email.

4. Department Reports

Mayor Dewey began with a Covid report, reminding that masks are required indoors until at least Oct 5th. CVS can provide both flu and Covid vaccines. She briefly welcomed Public Works Director Brad Pudner who has begun work for Berwyn Heights. There is a community walk tomorrow at 5:30 pm at Beltway Plaza, beginning in the Target side of the parking lot. It is hosted by the Greenbelt Road Taskforce and spearheaded by CM Sweep and Delegate Alonzo Washington. CM Sweep stated that he was excited to be able to get in front of the shareholders. This will be an opportunity to walk down Greenbelt Road with representatives of SHA (State Highway Administration) and discuss concerns. Mayor Dewey asked that people please fill out the American Rescue Plan Act survey so that Council can make the best decisions on how to spend the money. There continue to be County level redistricting conversations. District 3, which includes Berwyn Heights, is proposed to be changed, but the proposal does not directly affect Berwyn Heights. The Redistricting Commission public hearing is the 28th at 5PM. The Planning Board is having their annual budget hearing. These are generally underattended and are an opportunity to have input on the County's budget for recreation in the community. The hearings are the 28th and Oct 19th, both 7-9, both virtual. You must register to speak and the link is on the Town website.

MPT Kulpa-Eddy highlighted the pending due date for local tax credits for homeowners on Oct 1st. She mentioned that if you are eligible for the Homeowners State Property Tax Credit you are also eligible for Berwyn Heights Property Tax Credit per Ordinance 180. That deadline is December 1st. Lastly, the Homestead Tax Credit involves a one-time application process and can limit the increase in annual property assessments. There is also State Renters' Tax Credits which is open to renters who meet the income criteria and that is also due Oct. 1. Information on these will be posted to the Town Website. The Historical Committee will be meeting Wednesday, Sept 22 and will be holding their elections. The Education Advisory Committee will meet Monday, Sept 27th and will be reviewing the Education Grant Awards. The Ice Cream Social was totally in flux at the time of this meeting due to weather forecasts. Additionally, there will be two Trunk-or-Treats this year.

CM Brittan-Powell also welcomed Brad Pudner to the team. He reported that he has received comments from several residents that he believes requires a closed session to discuss. He asked to speak with the Mayor to discuss that. He also reported that many people have had issues with the tax structure of the Town. He stated that he believes the Town is nearly at full staff.

TM Allen reported that he is correct, but there are still openings in Public Works.

CM Sweep welcomed the new Public Works Director and thanked people for their patience during the selection process. Roof repairs would commence on the Town Center the following day and he asked that people give the workers their space.

Mayor Dewey asked that Public Works do extra sweeps of the area after the roofing crews are complete to make sure there are no construction materials left behind for safety.

5. Resident & Community Comments

MPT Kulpa-Eddy asked CM Brittan-Powell for more detail on his comment about the taxation concerns. CM Brittan-Powell discussed the Town tax rate and how it was established. MPT Kulpa-Eddy reiterated that the tax rates for Berwyn Heights are set by the Council, not the County, despite the fact that the County property tax bill collects the taxes for both the Town and the County. Mayor Dewey stated that the rates are set each year as part of the budget cycle. TM Allen clarified that Council did not raise the rate. MPT Kulpa-Eddy also stated that because assessments went up, taxes went up.

There were no further resident comments.

Adjournment

CM Sweep moved to adjourn the meeting. MPT Kulpa-Eddy seconded. After no discussion the meeting adjourned at 8:53PM.