



Town of Berwyn Heights

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MAYOR
Jodie Kulpa-Eddy
COUNCIL MEMBERS
Christopher Brittan-Powell (Mayor Pro Tem)
Shinita Hemby
Faustino Menjivar
Jason W. Papanikolas

Town Meeting Minutes Town Council Chamber July 20, 2022 | 7:00 p.m.

Call to order

Mayor Jodie Kulpa-Eddy called the meeting to order at 7:01PM. Present were Mayor Pro Tem Chris Brittan-Powell, Councilmember Shinita Hemby, Councilmember Faustino Menjivar and Councilmember Jason Papanikolas. Staff present were Town Manager Laura Allen and Town Clerk Melanie Friesen. Residents of the Town of Berwyn Heights were present.

Pledge of Allegiance

1. Announcements

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy reported that the Council met in Executive Session from 5:08 to 6:31PM to discuss two personnel issues and to receive legal advice. CM Menjivar moved for the Council to enter the Executive Session and CM Papanikolas seconded. Present in the session were Mayor Kulpa-Eddy, MPT Brittan-Powell, CM Hemby, CM Menjivar, and CM Papanikolas. TM Allen and Town Attorney Suellen Ferguson were also present. No action was taken during the Executive Session.

2. Approval of Agenda

CM Hemby moved to approve the agenda. CM Papanikolas seconded. In discussion, MPT Brittan-Powell moved to amend the agenda to include discussion and action on reestablishing the committee formerly known as the Quality of Life Commission. TM Allen asked if this agenda item comes out of the meeting that is the subject of the Open Meetings Act complaint. MPT Brittan-Powell stated that it was somewhat related. TM Allen responded that if the complaint is upheld, any actions that resulted from that meeting will have to be undone. CM Menjivar seconded adding the Quality of Life Commission to the agenda. After no further discussion, the motion to amend the agenda passed unanimously.

3. Consent

CM Papanikolas moved to approve the Consent agenda. CM Menjivar seconded. After no discussion the motion passed with four in favor and MPT Brittan-Powell abstaining, stating he had not reviewed the minutes.

4. Mayor & Councilmember Reports

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy shared that the Town is still dealing with the aftermath of the storm and there was a thorough discussion of the event at the Monday, July 18th worksession. On June 22nd, she attended the Police Chiefs' Association of Prince George's County where Officer Herriot gave the invocation. Two officers received local departmental awards: Corporal Rufino received the Community Service Officer of the Year and Detective Krouse received Investigator of the Year.

The Town Treasurer, Mike Lightfield, volunteered some pro bono accounting work and received a President's Award. On June 28th, she attended the County Council Public Hearing where the Senior Property Tax Credit was passed and the County's Police Chief Aziz gave a public safety briefing and an overview on how their department is working to address various crime incidents. On July 29th, she and TM Allen met with representatives from Greater Riverdale Cares, which purchases hot meals from local businesses and distributes them to people in need, and how that might work in Town. On July 12, she joined a Federal Communication Commission call on the Affordable Connectivity Program. She shared [FTC.gov/weathereemergencies](https://www.ftc.gov/weathereemergencies) on how scammers use weather emergencies to cheat people. She also attended the Maryland Department of Budget and Management webinar for requirements on subrecipients, contractors and beneficiaries receiving ARPA funds. On July 15, she met with M-NCPPC regarding Sports Park and the Indian Creek Playground, as well as a representative from Senator Ben Cardin's office. She promoted attending the Creating Resilient Communities Webinar focusing on the mental health of students in grades K-12. She also shared about the upcoming Maryland Insurance Administration virtual presentation and Q&A for storm-related questions.

MPT Brittan-Powell expressed appreciation for the community that is Berwyn Heights, making this difficult time more tolerable and that people are still helping each other through the storm.

CM Hemby shared that the Code Department has been very busy working on storm clean-up. She added that Code will not be giving any notices for storm related debris. She is also still working on the welcome packet and has a meeting with the Mayor to finish up that project. CM Hemby added that she is looking to schedule a volunteer appreciation breakfast.

CM Menjivar asked that residents be patient during the clean-up. Public Works is working hard but is also taking precautions during the excessive heat. He shared about a temporary water cut-off at Edmonston and Pontiac from 9PM to 5AM on July 21st.

CM Papanikolas reported that he was out of town when the storm happened, but he followed the worksession and stayed up to date with what was happening. He shared relaying messages to the Town Manager and believes that there are lessons to be learned. He added that he has some ideas on how the Neighborhood Watch/Emergency Preparedness group could be utilized in events like this going forward.

5. Committee Reports

- a. Education Advisory Committee: CM Papanikolas shared that he was not aware of any meeting this month.
- b. Green Team: CM Papanikolas shared that the Green Team was scheduled to have their meeting on July 14. Resident Paul Kavanaugh shared that they met right after the storm and primarily focused the discussion on their role in the wake of so many trees being damaged; the most significant suggestion was to send out information from the Arbor Day Foundation on what to do with trees after the storm. One of the things the Arbor Day Foundation says is to not be drastic in the first 2-3 weeks, to allow time to properly evaluate the trees as they may be more or less damaged than they first appear. Information from the Foundation website has been translated into Spanish. The Green Team also encourages residents to be aware of scammers as many people offering tree services may not be qualified to do so. There was conversation about contracting with an arborist to determine the health of trees.
- c. Historical Committee- No representative was at the meeting, but TC Friesen shared that there was no meeting in June or August, but they are meeting on July 27th.
- d. Neighborhood Watch/ Emergency Preparedness- Mayor Kulpa-Eddy shared that they discussed

the Bulletin pages for the upcoming months and received an update from Det. Krouse. She shared that National Night Out is August 2nd, and the Police Department is not planning as big of a gathering as in past years but wanted an event where people could spread out.

- e. Recreation Council- Resident Meg Miller shared that the Town Social had a good turnout, even after the storm and was attended by new residents as well. She shared about the upcoming concerts at Lake Artemesia on July 21st and on August 18th at Sports Park. She added that the Rec Council is looking to host a tea after the November elections. She shared that game nights have been successful and they are trying to come up with more activities for youth. The Walking Group meets on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 8AM at Sports Park and that more outdoor trips are being planned. The next Rec Council meeting will be in September due to National Night Out.

6. Old Business

- a. Senior Club Use Agreement (pending response from Town Attorney)- Mayor Kulpa-Eddy and TM Allen reviewed that during the last worksession in June they worked on the agreement with Mr. Smith from the Senior's Club. The new agreement looks very similar to the current one, but is still being reviewed by the Town Attorney. The current agreement doesn't expire until Mid-August, so there will be time to vote on the agreement during the August Town Meeting.
- b. Council Rule II (pending Council decision on 7/11/22)
CM Papanikolas reviewed that they are tabling this item and bringing it back in the August Town Meeting due to issues with how this new rule fits into the current rules structure.

7. New Business

- a. Green Team member appointments
Mayor Kulpa-Eddy stated that one of the privileges of being mayor is making new Committee Appointments. She invited the two new Green Team members to share a little about themselves. Matthew Binstead introduced himself saying he has lived in town for a little over 3 years. He works in research on climate change, decarbonization of the economy, and has been working with the Green Team for about 9 months and looks forward to being considered as a formal member of the Green Team.

Paul Kavanaugh shared that he moved from Texas and is enthusiastic about the Town's commitment to sustainability, diversity, and quality of life issues. He worked in the research division at 3 different components of the University of Texas, where he developed grant proposals. He looks forward to helping with fundraising opportunities for the Town. One of the reasons they moved to this area is the burgeoning Hispanic population. He looks forward to being active in the community.

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy invited Council to make a motion to formally add both gentlemen to the Green Team. CM Papanikolas made the motion. CM Hemby seconded. During discussion, MPT Brittan-Powell gave his thanks for volunteering. The motion then passed unanimously.

- b. Discussion on recommissioning the Quality of Life Commission (amended agenda item)
MPT Brittan-Powell introduced this item as a way to reenergize the community. Ms. Miller shared that under Chris Rasmussen (a prior Mayor) the Citizen's Commission on the Quality of Life was charged with determining what was important to the town. The Commission was given a timeline and they developed a manual that is also available in PDF form on items that they felt needed to be addressed. The Commission had several subcommittees, such as beautification, traffic and parking, and a census subcommittee. Several items could not be tackled due to the pandemic and as we begin to move forward out of the

pandemic she is asking the Council to consider reconvening the commission and renaming it as a Committee to enable more people to participate. Ms. Miller stated that she is making a formal request to have the Commission reestablished and transformed. If their request is granted, they will then establish a chairperson and secretary for the taking of minutes so that those can be sent to the Town for safe keeping.

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy reiterated that the Mayor convenes and appoints the members of committees and due to the potential legal issue, will delay convening the committee until that is resolved. CM Papanikolas asked Ms. Miller if she is envisioning something similar to the Berwyn Heights Education Advisory Committee. MPT Brittan-Powell asked Mayor Kulpa-Eddy how she sees this item proceeding. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy responded that she is supportive of the idea of such a committee.

Resident Claudia Barragan asked the Mayor to give a specific date on when she will take action. Ms. Barragan gave her opinion that this is separate from the potential legal issue and wanted to make sure that this is not delayed. She wanted to know how quality of life issues would be handled until the time that the new committee is formed. She also wanted to know how residents could organize and discuss the issues around the quality of life. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy encouraged people who have interest in serving on the committee to start preparing their biographies. Ms. Barragan asked for complete clarification that the residents are able to organize.

Resident Jose Valcarcel stated that he was in the meeting that is the subject of the open meetings act complaint and he had never heard of this committee.

CM Papanikolas asked if meeting minutes were taken during the meeting that happened on Sunday (July 17th).

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy stated that she intends to see this commission/committee reinstated and but she needs to make sure there are no legal issues before doing so.

8. Resident & Community Comments

Ms. Miller stated that she wanted to thank the Town for coming to her aid during the storm. She added that she had seen MPT Brittan-Powell helping residents in the aftermath of the storm, along with many neighbors checking on neighbors.

Beth Brittan-Powell shared that MPT Brittan-Powell's character was called into question during the meeting on the 18th. She shared that despite having sections of five trees down on their property, MPT Brittan-Powell determined that his time was best spent helping the community. She shared several ways MPT Brittan-Powell had aided neighbors in the aftermath of the storm. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy took a moment to thank the Berwyn Heights Volunteer Fire Department as well as all the other municipalities who lent aid during the storm aftermath.

Edward Daffron came forward to discuss the Senior Center. He believes every room in the facility should be open to the public when the Senior Center is open to the public. He stated that there is a history of abuse in the Senior Center by residents. He was agitated and stated that he believes there to be several incidents of abuse of power.

Jack Brittan-Powell spoke, stating that his father has always sought to instill in him what it means to be a good neighbor and practices patience and kindness.

Patti Dennison thanked the Council for all that they do.

Dave Wolfinger asked for clarification on why the NW/EP trailer wasn't implemented or mobilized. He shared that during the meeting on the 18th the Chief of Police stated that it was because it wasn't safe, however residents were already outside helping each other. He expressed concern that the contents of the trailer seem to be inadequate and would like to see a worksession dedicated to the trailer issue.

Mr. Daffron spoke again, apologizing, saying that he is very upset and thanked Mayor Kulpa-Eddy for her help and MPT Brittan-Powell for being a man of his word.

9. Adjournment

CM Hemby moved to adjourn the meeting. CM Menjivar seconded. After no further discussion the motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:27PM.