



**Town of Berwyn Heights**

**MAYOR**  
Amanda M. Dewey

**COUNCIL MEMBERS**  
Jodie A. Kulpa-Eddy (Mayor Pro Tem)  
Christopher S. Brittan Powell  
Jason W. Papanikolas  
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## **Council Meeting Minutes April 4, 2022**

**Executive Session – 6:00 p.m.**  
G. Love Room, 8603 57<sup>th</sup> Ave.

Executive Session held under General Provisions Article § 3-305(b) (1) to discuss the appointment, employment, assignment, promotion, discipline, demotion, compensation, removal, resignation, or performance evaluation of an appointee, employee, or official over whom this public body has jurisdiction; or any other personnel matter that affects one or more specific individuals.  
Mayor and Council returned to open session at 7:05 p.m.

### **Worksession** Council Chamber, 5700 Berwyn Road

This meeting was held in the Council Chamber. Residents could comment by attending the meeting, calling 301-474-9570, or e-mailing Mayor Dewey at [adewey@berwynheightsmd.gov](mailto:adewey@berwynheightsmd.gov)

#### **Call to Order**

Mayor Amanda Dewey called the meeting to order at 7:07 PM. Present were Mayor Dewey, Mayor Pro Tempore Jodie Kulpa-Eddy, Councilmember Jason Papanikolas, Councilmember Chris Brittan-Powell and Councilmember Ethan Sweep, as well as Town Manager Laura Allen and Assistant to Town Manager Yvonne Odoi. Also present were residents Dave Wolfinger, Meg Miller, Claudia Barragan and Jose Valcarcel, as well as Mary Lo Lyle of WPS.

#### **1. Announcements**

Mayor Dewey asked that the Town Clerk be kept in our thoughts and prayers as her and her family navigate a difficult loss. She reminded everyone the vaccine clinic at the Sports and Learning Complex is closing soon so please schedule your vaccinations and boosters. She also stated that the Council just concluded an executive session where they sought legal advice and discussed an administrative personnel matter.

#### **2. Approval of Agenda**

Mayor Dewey asked the Council to approve the agenda: CM Brittan-Powell moved; CM Papanikolas seconded and made a motion to remove Agenda Discussion Item E (Council Rule #2). CM Sweep second the motion to amend the agenda. After no discussion, both motions passed unanimously.

## 1. Discussion Items

**A. WPS Presentation of AV System Replacement Quote** Mayor Dewey gave a brief background, stating this project is to replace the current Audio-Visual (AV) system the Town uses to broadcast meetings. TM Allen introduced Mary Jo Lyle, Government Account Manager of Washington Professional Systems (WPS) to explain the quote provided for Council consideration. She also called attention to the staff report that details the background, financial impact, analysis and the next steps for this project. TM Allen explained the challenges with the current system and the critical need for a hands-on partnership with a new vendor being priority. She explained the challenges of securing quotes from AV Companies, even after reaching out to neighboring municipalities, as to the unusual way of securing this quote. Ms. Lyle explained the approach WPS took to arrive at this quote for a “turnkey” AV system. MPT Kulpa-Eddy asked about the permanent equipment need for the Town Center (2<sup>nd</sup> Floor). Ms. Lyle explained that there would be a need for permanent cameras and speakers to be able to broadcast from the Town Center. MPT Kulpa-Eddy expressed concern for permanent cameras in the Town Center, as it’s used as a rental space for private events. Renters may be uncomfortable with cameras in that space and the equipment could be damaged or stolen. Ms. Lyle explained various ways to cover the cameras or secure the equipment to the building making it damage and theft proof. CM Brittan-Powell asked how residents can call in when broadcasting from the Town Center. Ms. Lyle explained that wasn’t part of the initial proposal but that this system is flexible, and this feature can be added. She also explained that her team is researching the ability to broadcast from outside buildings. Mayor Dewey inquired about the ability to use Zoom or Skype and present from the same monitor. Ms. Lyle confirmed that that would be the case with the new system. TM Allen interjected that this system offers a hybrid meeting option. She asked the Council pull money from the ARPA funds to cover the deficit in the budget for the AV system cost. She stated that staff training and support are priorities in having a high-quality broadcast production. Her recommendation is that WPS is very skilled and capable in filling all these needs. CM Brittan-Powell asked for clarification between the price provided by the first company and WPS’ current quote. TM Allen explained that this first quote was a blanket estimate after 15 minutes of looking at the system, whereas WPS reviewed the working operation of the system and gave a quote including training, support for staff, and broadcasting from the Town Center. MPT Kulpa-Eddy inquired as to the number of companies who were contacted to obtain a quote. TM Allen responded that the Town Clerk reach out to 7-10 companies. TM Allen reached out to 3 municipalities for recommendations. MPT Kulpa-Eddy asked as to what the previous RFP for this project had revealed. CM Allen responded that there are no past RFP for this project but can search again if we could narrow down the timeframe in which it would have been presented. MPT Kulpa-Eddy asked for justification to spend this amount of money without going through the normal process of acquiring bids for projects over \$10,000. TM Allen stated that this is an atypical process of acquiring the quote. Due to the pandemic, there has been difficulty obtaining supplies and vendors willing to work with us. TM Allen suggested that Council could scale back the project by doing it in phases and delaying

broadcasting from the Town Center to a future time. She further explained the current AV system is in a mission critical stage as some systems no longer have technical support available. Mayor Dewey clarified that tonight is not for decision-making but rather discussion for next week's Town Meeting. MPT Kulpa-Eddy asked whether the sound quality issue could be a Verizon/Comcast issue rather than a Council chamber issue. TM Allen stated that having a vendor who speaks tech helps facilitate the communications between Verizon, Comcast, and Granicus. CM Brittan-Powell asked about the new building that has been proposed to replace the Town Office. Ms. Lyles stated this equipment is designed to last 8-10 years and could be moved to a new location. CM Sweep asked if the quote includes training and software updates; Ms. Lyles confirmed that it did. MPT Kulpa-Eddy asked if a budget amendment can be made rather than pulling funding from the ARPA budget. TM Allen explained that there is \$40,000 in the FY22 budget and \$108,000 in FY23 draft budget. She proposed the use of ARPA funding to fill the \$40,000 funding deficit in the quote. Mayor Dewey asked if WPS could modify the quote to reach the Council's budgetary goal. Ms. Lyles stated that WPS could, but the Town Center would no longer be included in the project. Council thanked her for her presentation on the WPS quote. CM Papanikolas asked that TM Allen provide the list of the companies that were contacted and their responses. No additional comments.

**B. New Town Committee Proposal - Immigrant Neighbor Organization** – Mayor Dewey introduced Claudia Barragan, a new resident to the community. Ms. Barragan gave a brief personal background and explained her interest in Community Equity development. She presented census ACS (American Community Survey) data from 2020 which covers the last five years. She explained the diversity breakdown in Berwyn Heights: White alone – 34.8% (1,113), Black, African American – 9.09% (296), Asian – 9.12% (297), Some other race - .40% (13), Two or more races – 5.22% (170), Hispanic or Latino – 41.37% (1,347). It also breaks down data that shows country of origin and that there are 1,140 immigrants (foreign born residents) in Berwyn Heights. She reviewed the federal mandate of language access laws that are in place requiring access to a language if there is a population of 5% or more who speak the language. Ms. Barragan proposes starting a committee in Berwyn Heights to engage the immigrant community. She explained her \$3000 funding request is based on her past experiences in other locations that have worked in creating and maintaining such groups. She stated that this funding is for the committee to run and organize themselves by having in-person meetings that are open to all. The funding request is \$3,000 for the first year which will go toward food for meetings and translations availability for meeting and events. She concluded by stating that interpreters and interns should not be undervalued but compensated for the needed service they provide. Mayor Dewey thanked Ms. Barragan for the presentation. She explained that she had discussed the proposal with TM Allen and determined the Town could support this new Committee's request for some funding now, so they may start meeting before the new fiscal year begins in July. Mayor Dewey stated the Town's Organization Policy allows for the creation of a committee or assembly within the Town. MPT Kulpa-Eddy asked if Ms. Barragan could provide examples of activities this committee might conduct. She gave an example of a recent committee that she organized to help organize families to update the DCPS annual report. Her participation resulted in growing the focus groups from 10 parents to 50 families while working within the \$150k budget. MPT Kulpa-Eddy explained the Town has tried for several years to connect with the Town's immigrant community using various methods to no

avail. Ms. Barragan explained that trust is a key factor and that is why it's important the effort be immigrant-led. She continued to explain that WhatsApp and Facebook groups are key communications avenues for success. MPT Kulpa-Eddy asked that the committee ensure everyone is included; Ms. Barragan stated the committee is open to all but it can't make anyone attend. CM Brittan-Powell - asked if this committee will be engaging the other Town organizations. Ms. Barragan clarified that the committee members do not have to be immigrants, all are welcome and there will be English translators available. Mayor Dewey asked about resident interest, and Ms. Barragan stated she believes helping immigrant residents overcome the language barrier will help resolve issues in Town. CM Sweep stated that this was a great presentation and asked if there were any resources that would be available to the LGBTQ immigrant community. Ms Barrigan confirmed there are resources. CM Brittan-Powell asked if Ms. Barrigan would be willing to hold off on becoming a committee until she has recruited potential members. Ms. Barrigan stated that the first thing priority is to get the word of the Committee out into the community. She stated that she is hoping that funding will be approved, but if it's not, the community will fundraise and still proceed to meet. Her focus is to be able to get an announcement into the April Bulletin. CM Brittan-Powell stated that funding wouldn't be allocated but set-aside for the new committee in the FY2023 budget. Mayor Dewey reminded everyone the Council had previously established that any resident can bring together a group of neighbors to make budget request to the Town. Engaging the immigrant community has been a priority of the Council for at least the past 2 terms, and she would prefer not to delay a decision. MPT Kulpa-Eddy stated that she would want to see the outreach plan or a first event of the new committee before proceeding with the funding request. Mayor Dewey reminded that there is not much time left before the FY2023 budget is to be adopted. CM Sweep stated that such a committee formation has been done in the past with the Citizens' Commission on the Quality-of-Life committee and the Walkable Bikeable Committee; neither had a track record prior to formation. Resident Meg Miller took the podium to elaborate on the failed attempt in 2018 to engage a more diverse collection of residents. She asked the Council to move forward to approve the funding for the new committee. CM Papanikolas asked if funding could be found for this in FY2022. TM Allen stated there is \$500 available in the Rec Council line item. and that payments made to the group are done on a reimbursable basis. The Council discussed various funding options and sources for the committee, and to which budget the funding would be charged. The final consensus was to (1) Recognize the committee as an assembly at the next meeting (granting them access to advertising in the Bulletin and Staff support); (2) Allocating \$600 funding to the committee in FY2022; and (3) Funding the Assembly \$3-4000 in FY2023. Mayor Dewey thanked Ms. Barrigan for her presentation and her work in this area of need in the community.

### **C. Annual Review of Fines and Fees**

Mayor Dewey explained this is an annual review conducted as part of the budget process. She explained the difference between a fine (a deterrent) and a fee (covers the cost the Town bears to provide a service). TM Allen stated this year's review identified duplicate language in the schedules of Ordinance 179. She stated she will postpone this presentation and put before the Council at the April 18 Worksession, when they have all the documents before them. Council agreed.

### **D. Draft FY 2023 Budget**

Mayor Dewey gave a brief overview of the budget process that has been underway these past months. She highlighted some changes that had been made to the budget, such as the

Tipping Fees, Historical Committee, Public Works and Street Repair. TM Allen noted that detailed changes to the budget are in the enclosed Staff report. PG County has yet to send the letter for the increase in the tipping fee. She stated Director Pudner has updated the Street Condition report. Many of the streets that needed to be repaired are WSSC planned project sites, so WSSC will have to restore those streets from curb-to-curb. TM Allen reviewed that the Council had inquired about maintaining a constant yield tax rate. She stated that doing that this year would require an increase in taxes in upcoming years. MPT Kulpa-Eddy explained that she wants the Council to delay the street repair projects and provide Town residents a break on taxes. CM Sweep voiced concern that would be delaying the inevitable. CM Sweep explained that the real property tax rate drop only helps the owners not the renters, who may be the ones struggling to make ends meet. MPT Kulpa-Eddy stated that suggesting cutting half the street cost allows the heavily traffic streets such as 60<sup>th</sup> and 62<sup>nd</sup> to be addressed while still being able to give the residents a financial break. She stated that ARPA funds are available to assist tenants with their rent and utility bills. CM Sweep explained that giving homeowners a break in taxes allows them to use that money any way they wish, whereas giving renters money specifically for the rent or utility doesn't give the renter the same freedom. Resident Dave Wolfinger came to the podium and stated it didn't matter whether an owner got a tax break, or a renter had their bills paid, both end up with extra money to spend as they wish. Resident Meg Miller also took the podium and recommended the Council not give a tax break to the residents, as that would mean tax increases in the future as costs go up. MPT Kulpa-Eddy explained that the proposed cost estimate from 2012 for the street repairs is similar to what is currently proposed. CM Papanikolas stated he is not a fan of deferred maintenance. Mayor Dewey asked if any councilmember wants to make a change to the budget for road repair. Council agreed 4-1 (MPT Kulpa-Eddy opposed) to keep the budget as is.

**E. Council Rule #2** –Removed from meeting agenda.

**2. Department Reports**

Mayor Dewey

The FDA & CDC are recommending a second COVID-19 booster, and these are available at the local pharmacy and the Sports and Learning Complex (while it's still open). She updated that her and TM Allen attend the monthly liaison check-in with the PG County. The MML Legislative Committee is also meeting. She will participate in MML's Strategic Planning workshop focusing on succession planning.

BHEAC met last week. Rec Council meeting tomorrow April 5. NW/EP's virtual meeting on Wednesday, April 6<sup>th</sup> at 7pm is open to all. The meeting will focus on their BH Day plans and communications with Berwyn Heights Police Department. Green team is meeting next Thursday.

PG County Forestry Board is hosting a free tree workshop on April 23 from 10am – 1pm. From 1pm – 3pm they will be giving away up to 2 free trees: Black Locust or Northern Red Oak.

County Executive's office newsletter is now in Spanish as well. Link is on the BH website.

MTP Kulpa-Eddy

Attended Joint Public Works/Parks and Recreation MML Committee with Director Pudner, who is an officer of the Committee. They discussed what data to provide for the annual storm water permitting report. Municipalities were asked to locate their Storm Drain Acceptance program that lays out the infrastructure transferred from WSSC to the PG County in the 1990s. She attended a webinar on storm drain maintenance, which focused on fixing failing retention

ponds. They are updating their drainage manual to be available in both English and Spanish. PG County Department of the Environment is holding a virtual community partners meeting Wednesday April 6; it will also include updates from DPIE & DPWT.

Income tax filing is due April 18, and the Maryland State tax deadline is now July 15, 2022. ARPA has expanded tax benefits for those who normally don't file taxes. Federal taxes can be filed for free on IRS.Gov and the CASH campaign of Maryland at Cashmd.org has resources for filing your state taxes.

New zoning laws are in effect as April 1. Property owners may use the new or old code for the next 2 years. Staff has a virtual meeting for communities on Thursday April 7

A new Congressional map has been approved. Berwyn Heights is in County Council District 3 and Congressional District 4 (an open seat). The State district map is still under Court review. Rec Council – Meeting tomorrow. Focusing on Berwyn Heights Day and the upcoming re-gifting party on April 9. Kids may attend but it's an adult focused event.

NW/EP – Wednesday virtual meeting

Green Team – Tuesday April 12

CM Papanikolos

Outdoor permits have increased. A lot of improvements along Pontiac Street; one new build and 3 houses that have been remodeled.

CM Brittan-Powell

Thanked the great Admin Team for continuing the work in the midst of tragedy, for providing all the necessary paperwork for the meeting and keeping the Town running.

CM Sweep

DPW is getting the Town's Community Garden and landscaping ready for Spring. Reminder the Street Sweeper is in Town this week. Be mindful of parking and avoid parking on the street if possible. Yard waste is collected on Mondays for the Northside and Tuesdays for the Southside of town. TM Allen mentioned that the Street Sweeper has been confirmed for the week prior to Berwyn Heights Day and that the City of Greenbelt will assist with a bucket truck to hang the Berwyn Heights' Day banners in a safe manner this year.

### **3. Resident & Community Comments**

Mayor Dewey announced that the Green Team is still available to help with vines and invasives in your yard. Reach out to the Green Team. No resident comments or calls.

### **4. Adjournment**

CM Sweep motioned to adjourned; seconded by CM Papanikolas. Motion passed 5-0. Meeting adjourned at 9:35 pm.