



# 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

## Budget Work Session Minutes March 23, 2024 | 9:00 a.m. Council Chambers

### Call to Order

Mayor Jodie Kulpa-Eddy called the meeting to order at 9:00am. Present at the call to order were Councilmember Faustino Menjivar and Councilmember Jason Papanikolas; Town Manager Kyle Snyder, Town Clerk Melanie Friesen, Code Compliance Director Hollyce Goodwin, Public Works Director Brad Pudner, Lt. Daniel Unger and Chief Kenneth Antolik were also present.

### Approval of the Agenda

CM Papanikolas moved to approve the agenda. CM Menjivar seconded. With no discussion, the motion passed unanimously (3:0)

### 1. FY 2025 Budget Presentation

#### a. Budget Summary

Mayor Pro Tem Chris Brittan-Powell and Councilmember Shinita Hemby joined the meeting at 9:04am as TM Snyder began his FY25 budget review. Highlights of the proposed budget include additional funding for tree canopy preservation, enhanced use of Highway User Revenue funds, language incentives for staff, enhancements for Code and Police staffing, funding for several road projects, investing in the vehicle replacement reserve fund, and providing a 1% COLA and 2% merit increase for salaries (which is comparable to surrounding municipalities). The overall budget is still 2.08% less than the FY24 budget, as the vehicle replacement reserve fund has now been replenished.

#### b. Real Property Tax Forecast and Tax Rate Discussion

TM Snyder reviewed the Constant Yield Tax Rate Certification that the Town received from the State. He shared several possible tax rates and how they would affect the projected deficit that is included in the FY25 budget. CM Papanikolas and Mayor Kulpa-Eddy asked about the current year revenues and the projected totals for this year. TM Snyder reviewed that there were a few items in the FY24 operational budget that were transferred to the ARPA budget, which should help lower the deficit for the current fiscal year.

### 2. Code Compliance

Code Compliance Director Hollyce Goodwin shared several FY24 accomplishments ranging from maintaining a high level of customer service, participating in ongoing training, and the major construction and opening of the new Aldi grocery store. She also shared some statistics

of the year such as the number of complaints, investigations, citations, and permits issued. She reviewed some vulnerabilities in the department including a need for increased staffing, updating the department's database management software, increasing compliance with business licensing, limited office and storage space and a need for more community engagement. Director Goodwin stated her department's FY25 goals which include: updating the departmental Standard Operating Procedures, reviewing rental housing and clean lot ordinances for needed updates, increasing compliance with business licensing, and continuing the high level of service to residents. In discussion, CM Hemby suggested that the department look at adding an on-call officer to address night and weekend issues. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy had budgetary questions. CM Papanikolas asked if home-based businesses needed a business license. He also asked about body cams being included in the slides. Director Goodwin replied that the department does not currently use body cams but has been considering them for safety. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy expressed concerns about the cost for storing the video from body cams. MPT Brittan-Powell asked about the software and how changing standards are integrated. There was discussion about enhancing efficiencies between Berwyn Heights and the County Code departments. CM Menjivar asked about language barriers with Spanish speakers. Director Goodwin acknowledged that this is a challenge but shared the way they have been working to overcome it, while noting a bilingual employee within Code would be helpful.

### **3. Police**

Lt. Unger shared the departmental accomplishments for the year, including attendance at several events hosted by the Prince George's County State Attorney's Office, participation in Shop with a Cop, Pfc. Herriot and Sgt. Hollowell receiving 2023 Maryland "Top Cop" Nominations and BHPD Officers of the Year, and Chief Antolik receiving the "Chief of the Year" award from the Board of Governors for Small, Rural, and Tribal Law Enforcement Executives' Association. Lt. Unger continued by sharing areas of need of improvement, highlighting the subpar workplace facilities that lack capacity and evidence storage, as well as the need to replace aging weapons. He provided an overview of current staffing and the condition of the vehicle fleet. In discussing operational budget needs, Lt. Unger reviewed a plan to transition a part-time officer to a full-time position, a need to increase the Overtime budget, and to increase the shift differential and Field Officer training pay to come into alignment with surrounding agencies. He also asked for an increase in additional line items for Dues and Conferences and Miscellaneous, to respond to inflation and unfunded mandates from the State for annual mental health assessments. He noted Capital items needed, including a new vehicle and firearm updates as the department transitions back to the Glock .9mm which would aid interoperability with surrounding agencies.

In discussion, Mayor Kulpa-Eddy asked about State Police Aid revenue, public relations, and miscellaneous budget line items. Chief Antolik shared that public relations are events such as "CoCo with the PoPo" and Seniors Appreciation Day, but that costs for those have increased due to inflation. He continued that the miscellaneous line item includes the mental health screening and morale items for the officers. CM Papanikolas discussed unfunded mandates and advocating to ensure that mandates created by the State are funded by the State. He also asked about training for officers encountering residents with mental health challenges. Lt. Unger replied that officers are continually in training, including addressing residents with mental health concerns. Chief Antolik added that Berwyn Heights is blessed to have an officer who is also a social worker. CM Menjivar asked about engagement with the Latino communities. Lt. Unger shared about multicultural events the Police Department has hosted as well as engagement through their Executive Assistant. MPT Brittan-Powell noted that no one is

pleased with the building in which the Police Department is housed, but that it is \$24,000 annually and not the cost of a new building, which could be millions. He also asked for more information and engagement on moving violations and petty vehicle thefts. Chief Antolik noted the statistics are published monthly and updates provided weekly. He added that with current staffing, if an officer is called for a serious incident, they aren't available to do traffic patrol and that if there is increased staffing there can be increased traffic patrols.

CM Hemby asked about hosting a community outreach event on home safety. Chief Antolik replied that they already provide individual home security surveys but would be open to a community event. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy stated we are working on a solution to address facility issues, noting the Town has requested a bond bill from the State for a new Police Station, and that there are reserves available to purchase a building, as well as a question on the upcoming election ballot regarding residents' willingness for the Town to assume debt.

**a. Public Safety Taxing District**

TM Snyder reviewed the budget for the public safety taxing district, noting that they are looking for a date in April to hold a meeting with the Commercial District Management Authority. A slightly lower tax rate is proposed due to the expected increase in revenues from the new Aldi grocery store. There was no additional discussion about the PSTD.

**4. Public Works**

Director Pudner reviewed the FY24 highlights, including a new roof for the truck port, conducting an updated street tree inventory, a new opt-in compost bin program, new equipment and vehicles, and high quality of service to residents. He noted that a new tree inventory is only good if you use it, and there will be tree work done on the three high risk trees that were identified. He reviewed some of the vulnerabilities in the department, including snow preparedness, preventative tree maintenance, and road safety and conditions. FY25 goals include implementing placemaking and beautification projects, road safety improvements, and urban forest safety while improving safety training and teambuilding for staff. He reviewed current staffing, noting that two staff members were incentivized to get their CDLs and that they were able to promote from within to fill the vacant Foreman position. He shared praise from residents about two PW staff members who went above and beyond. He reviewed the current fleet, building, and grounds, noting that storage is an issue at the yard. He reviewed some operational needs, highlighting tree pruning, personnel safety, composting, and general customer service. He reviewed the road repair plan for the upcoming three fiscal years.

In discussion, CM Menjivar shared how proud he is of the department and expressed a desire to see the space needs of each department be met. He asked about compost bin utilization and Director Pudner replied that he did not see any misuse of the bins. CM Menjivar asked about tree replacement and there was a brief discussion about streamlining the shade tree rebate incentives. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy asked about the temporary staffing line item. Director Pudner noted that when staff is lost, they cannot afford to wait for a position to be filled and when looked at as a whole as part of salaries, it balances out. At the request of CM Papanikolas, TM Snyder and Director Pudner reviewed an analysis of twice-a-week trash pickup. Once-a-week pick-up means heavier loads (and higher risk for physical injury) as well as more trash that can attract vermin. It was concluded that, at this time, it is not practical to switch to once a week. CM Papanikolas noted this is the third department to mention space needs and would encourage this and future councils to discuss the capital improvement needs for the Town.

A brief discussion on snow removal concluded the conversation with Director Pudner.

## **5. Parks, Recreation, Education, and Civic Affairs**

TM Snyder reviewed the changes to the budget, highlighting a small increase for the Rec Council to spend on Berwyn Heights Day, and a brief discussion on separating Berwyn Heights Day as a separate line item from the Rec Council in future years. He highlighted that there are two inactive committees that have not been funded and that youth engagement was moved to Recreation and is no longer part of the Administration budget. CM Papanikolas noted that field renovations need to be considered in future years and suggested acquiring the Community Center. There was discussion on specific line items. CM Hemby asked about storage at Sports Park. TM Snyder replied this will be addressed through the Architecture/Placemaking team and likely funded under ARPA. MPT Brittan-Powell asked about funding for new town groups if they would desire to form. TM Snyder noted a miscellaneous line item that could serve as funding for new groups until a budget amendment could be passed.

### **a. Community Organizations and Non-Profits**

Community Organizations and non-profits were not discussed separately.

## **6. Administration**

TM Snyder reviewed some of the accomplishments of FY24 to-date, including updating several vendors, bringing the Town into compliance with the audits, and hiring several ARPA funded positions and consultants. Council discussed several line items, including the possibility of a more appropriate stipend for future councils. TM Snyder reviewed the administrative line items including salaries.

MPT Brittan-Powell shared he had a family emergency and left at 12:28pm.

Council discussed the emergency assistance fund, determining how it was set up and if it was a reserve or operational fund. There was discussion on the municipal buildings including the Town Office and Town Center.

### **a. Miscellaneous and Benefits**

There was a brief discussion on benefits. Some invoices will need to be reviewed to make sure that they have been coded appropriately to account for the search for the Town Manager.

MPT Brittan-Powell returned briefly and expressed a desire to raise the tax rate to offset the deficit in the budget. CM Hemby also left to assist MPT Brittan-Powell at 12:40pm. Council briefly discussed several line items, including maintaining a separate IT network support for the Police (to make it easier for reporting purposes), and including the codification cost as an annual expense. Council discussed revenue for the current fiscal year, with TM Snyder noting that there had been a considerable amount of revenue, particularly personal property tax revenue that is not yet reflected in the year-to-date amounts.

## **7. Budget Discussion Wrap-up**

### **a. ARPA**

Council discussed the ARPA budget and how much of those funds have been expended, as well as what has been obligated to date. There was discussion on several projects that are in the operation budget that could be funded through ARPA. Possible projects discussed were road repairs and vehicle purchases, as well as the possibility of using it for field renovations and stormwater management, or to purchase a building. Council also briefly discussed the Vehicle Replacement Reserve Fund, and the possibility of investing those funds in a higher interest-bearing account to help hedge against

inflation.

**b. Finalize Town Tax Rate**

Council discussed the current tax rate and what each of the proposed tax rates would mean for the bottom line of the operational budget. There was discussion on how moving some of the Town Capital Improvement projects to ARPA would affect the budget. TM Snyder reviewed some changes to the Town's tax structure that he will be looking at implementing in the future, such as converting the public safety taxing district into a commercial taxing district. Council also discussed what the property tax rate would mean for the average Berwyn Heights house. The consensus of the Council present was to propose a \$.545 tax rate. Council tried to include MPT Brittan-Powell and CM Hemby in the discussion remotely and reviewed the tax discussion that had occurred with them. Both found it challenging as they were unable to see the referenced slides. However, they expressed discomfort with the proposed tax rate.

**8. Adjournment**

CM Menjivar moved to adjourn the meeting. CM Papanikolas seconded. After no discussion, the motion passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 1:25PM.