



# 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 April 20, 2023 | 6:00 p.m. Council Chamber

### Call to Order

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy called the meeting to order at 6:00pm. Present were Mayor Pro Tem Chris Brittan-Powell, Councilmember Shinita Hemby, Councilmember Faustino Menjivar, and Councilmember Jason Papanikolas. Also present were Interim Town Manager Peter Jones, Town Treasurer Mike Lightfield and Town Clerk Melanie Friesen.

### Approval of the Agenda

CM Papanikolas asked about the requirement to have CM reports. MPT Brittan-Powell asked about the ARPA 18 Month Budget Development item and the goals to be accomplished. No motions to amend the agenda were made. CM Papanikolas moved to approve the agenda. CM Menjivar seconded. After no further discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

### 1. Mayor

#### a. Announcements

There were no announcements.

#### b. Calendar

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy highlighted the Four Cities Meeting on April 27<sup>th</sup> and the Commercial District Management Authority (CDMA) meeting to review the Public Safety Taxing District budget that will occur during the day on April 27<sup>th</sup>.

#### c. General Fund FY24 Budget Discussion, including Salary and Reorganization

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy reviewed that the General Fund is the primary budget that funds the daily services of the Town. MPT Brittan-Powell asked for clarification on the differences between the budget presented this evening and the prior version. TT Lightfield stated the primary difference is the 4% COLA for all employees. There was discussion about the proposed enhancements that had been suggested to be included in the ARPA fund and if those were in the General Fund. As those enhancements are not currently in the GF budget, there was considerable discussion on how to fund the Public Works enhancement requests (one pick-up truck and a piece of equipment called a “dingo”). TT Lightfield was asked to explain the current budget version. He framed the conversation that the budget as presented has a deficit of \$310,000: \$150,000 of which are one-time expenses with \$160,000 being recurring expenses. If the Council adopts the Constant Yield Tax Rate (CYTR), the deficit will

increase by \$112,000. He added that this budget does not reflect backfilling the vehicle reserve fund. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy asked Council to look at Ordinance 187 closely as this is what must be introduced at the next meeting, while the budget can still be worked on until it is passed. Several minor changes to the ordinance were identified. CM Hemby asked about the status of stormwater funding. ITM Jones reviewed that the floodgate program is open and that the application for the residential stormwater mitigation grant is still awaiting approval.

Council weighed the advantages and disadvantages of keeping the tax rate at \$.545 per \$100 of assessed real property value or maintaining the CYTR of \$.5187 per \$100 of assessed value. After considerable discussion, Council consensus was to assume a CYTR.

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy introduced the proposed reorganization for Public Works. She gave background that the Town did a “Classification and Compensation” study in 2016 and suggested using those Worksession minutes as the study summary. There was discussion if the recommendations from that study were ever enacted. There was discussion about the limited salary comparisons that staff were able to gather in the short time available this year and how those compared to Berwyn Heights. CM Menjivar stated while large municipalities may have larger budgets, they also have more employees and that the individual pay for an employee may not be that different. He stated that the proposed reorganization and salary changes reflect the increased responsibilities that the employees would have. CM Hemby invited ITM Jones to give his thoughts on the reorganization proposal. He shared that he has concerns about the job position descriptions as well as the raises that seem too high. There is concern about bias and hiring practices. There was detailed discussion about the consequences of rewriting a position and if there would need to be a rehiring process as well as external recruitment. CM Hemby expressed that she is not comfortable with reorganizing at this time. She also expressed a desire to conduct an annual employee survey to ensure that they are being heard. The challenges of doing that anonymously with such a small staff were discussed. A 360° review system in which employees could evaluate each director was also mentioned. CM Menjivar suggested a closed session with each director to discuss personnel matters. This would frame what the Council would be able to do in Fiscal Year 2025. Public Works budget items for the Administrative Assistant position and CDL training incentive were also discussed. Several small changes to the Code Compliance budget were identified.

**d. FY24 Public Safety Taxing District Budget Discussion**

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy stated that Ordinance 188 will need to be introduced at the next meeting. The proposal is to raise the real property tax rate by \$.01 for every \$100 of assessed value making the rate \$.13. Several small changes were identified. MPT Brittan-Powell mentioned that the Town chooses to use this allocation of funds to pay for one officer, but that other municipalities may choose to use PSTD funds in other fashions for Public Safety.

**e. ARPA 18 Month Budget Development**

Council discussed the proposed draft prioritization guidelines for a new ARPA budget. There was discussion on making the draft guidelines public. Clerk Friesen will publish the document to the agenda as amended at the meeting. There was discussion about if this needed to be formally adopted or if it was an administrative guideline that did not

require formal adoption. Resident Michael Bloom called to ask about how the public will have access to the document. There were suggested changes to add housing security to draft guideline #5 and to add aging-in-place to draft guideline #2.

**f. Resident Comments**

Resident Claudia Barragan from 8309 58<sup>th</sup> Avenue called and asked why the Council is rebuilding the wheel with the ARPA budget. She stated that the line items from last year keep moving, stating that the Council should be adding and not adjusting. CM Papanikolas responded that he feels they are additions and that the guidelines are informed by the previous budget. Ms. Barragan stated that March 13, 2023 has a very different proposed budget and that by law, the Council is required to share the documents they are reviewing. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy stated that the budgets are very different and that is a result of discussions between the Council and ITM Jones. Ms. Barragan expressed concern that the Council is trying to take away from the already allocated funding for stormwater. She asked where the bullet point summary of the budget will be published and believes that the website should be updated with each piece of the budget.

She also asked for a clear comment on if the Town will be raising taxes. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy and CM Papanikolas attempted to clarify stating that the property tax rate will be going down, but since the Town only controls a portion of the total property tax bill, taxes bills will go up, however the Town will not receive any additional revenue. Ms. Barragan stated each proposed budget should have a bullet point version to accompany it. ITM Jones reviewed that there was a budget summary on page 10-11 of the April Bulletin. Ms. Barragan stated that the summary in the April Bulletin is not the budget that the Council is not considering any longer.

Resident Paul Kavanaugh of 6019 Berwyn Rd stated that he does not agree with the previous speaker and he does not know how much more open the Council could be. He thanked the Council for their transparency and the civil nature of their conversations. He added that he is encouraged to see the ARPA budgetary guidelines. He shared when he lived in the delta of Texas his house flooded twice and his house here will likely not flood for another 50 years. He respects the challenges presented when with dealing with the County and every other agency that the Town does not control, but there is still a lot that the Town can do in stormwater management. He thanked the Council for moving it to the top of the list.

Resident Michael Bloom called and asked for someone to read the #1 priority on the draft guidelines. CM Papanikolas did so. Mr. Bloom asked about demonstration projects and the tree canopy and why the Town would spend any money on those. He expressed frustration over the inadequate drainage in Town. CM Papanikolas stated that trees absorb thousands of gallons of water and while not the only solution can be a part of the solution. MPT Brittan-Powell expressed that this item is encompassing and that many subtopics are included. Mr. Bloom would like to know when the Council will decide and what they will decide on the budget. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy stated that it will be at some point shortly after the General Fund Budget has been passed. MPT Brittan-Powell encouraged comment and input on the ARPA budget from the community.

**2. Public Works**

CM Menjivar stated that Public Works is working on Berwyn Heights Day, including fixing light fixtures at Sports Park.

### **3. Administration**

MPT Brittan-Powell expressed appreciation to all the staff that are putting long hours into the budget, especially ITM Jones.

### **4. Code Compliance**

CM Hemby met with ITM Jones and Director Goodwin for conversation about the Code budget and the budget for the teen volunteer program. She gave thanks to both of them as well as CM Menjivar for his input.

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

CM Papanikolas had no report for PRECA.

#### **a. Green Team Letter Sustainability Efforts at Aldi**

CM Papanikolas shared that the Green Team has requested that a letter of support be sent from Council to the Quantum Company and Aldi regarding green initiatives that they would hope could be implemented on the property. He shared that the lion's share of the work to write this draft has been done by Tom Capon on the Green Team. With some discussion, Council consensus was to vote on the letter at the meeting on April 26<sup>th</sup>.

### **6. Public Safety**

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy met with the Deputy Chief Administrator of Prince George's County on Infrastructure, Technology, and Environment on April 18<sup>th</sup>. This is the department that handles flood control, the County's climate action plan, stormwater, and storm drain management. They encouraged residents to use the 311-reporting system for problems so they can track issues. The County has also purchased a vehicle to assess the condition of road pavement, and there was discussion about municipalities possibly being able to borrow the vehicle. She announced National Drug Take Back Day on April 22 detailing the closest locations and types of medications that would be accepted.

MPT Brittan-Powell asked residents to wish the Mayor a Happy Birthday.

### **7. Adjournment**

CM Hemby moved to adjourn the meeting. CM Papanikolas seconded. After no discussion the motion passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 9:15pm