



# 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 January 19, 2021 | 7:00 pm

This meeting was held by videoconference due to the ongoing COVID-19 health emergency. The meeting was broadcast on Berwyn Heights cable TV channels and streamed on the Town website. Residents were given the opportunity to join the meeting via Zoom and comment by telephone and email.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. Present were Mayor Amanda Dewey, Mayor Pro Tempore (MPT) Jodie Kulpa-Eddy, Councilmembers (CMs) Christopher Brittan-Powell, Jason Papanikolas and Ethan Sweep. Also present were Town Manager (TM) Laura Allen and Town Clerk Kerstin Harper.

### 1. Announcements

Mayor Dewey encouraged everyone who does not have to travel into D.C., to refrain from attending the Inauguration tomorrow for safety reasons. She also gave an update on the pandemic, noting that COVID cases and deaths have been increasing. Prince George's County has extended the ban on indoor dining to January 29 and everyone is requested to continue to observe COVID-related safety protocols. On the vaccine front, the County has moved into phase 1b which includes adults aged 75 years and older, as well as teachers and some government workers. The Town website has posted links where people can sign up for phase 1b vaccinations. Anyone can sign up to register to receive the vaccine through the State of Maryland's [CovidLINK](#) webpage.

### 2. Approval of the Agenda

On a motion by CM Brittan Powell and second by MPT Kulpa-Eddy, the agenda was approved 5 to 0.

### 3. Discussion Items

**Greenbelt Road Task Force:** Mayor Dewey said the City of Greenbelt and the Town of Berwyn Heights agreed to establish a workgroup with two Councilmembers from each municipality to develop a roadmap for moving forward with Greenbelt Road improvements. The roadmap will inform the efforts of the larger Greenbelt Road Task Force to advocate for shared priorities regarding Greenbelt Road improvements. CMs Sweep and Brittan Powell will represent Berwyn Heights and CMs J. Davis and Emmett Jordan will represent Greenbelt. College Park has been invited to participate but is expected to do so in a more limited capacity.

In discussion, CM Sweep said he would hope the workgroup can simplify the issues to be considered by the task force by:

- Setting geographic limits for Greenbelt Road redevelopment;
- Identifying a few key areas of focus, such as certain intersections or stretches of road; and
- Defining functional goals for redevelopment, such as connecting communities and destinations, creating an urban center around Beltway Plaza, or a mix of both.

Councilmembers identified Berwyn Heights priorities for redevelopment, including:

- Making Greenbelt Road safer for pedestrians and bicyclists;
- Creating connections with neighboring cities, parks and metro stations;
- Economic development and main street upgrades for Berwyn Heights;
- Visioning redevelopment of Quantum properties (Staples and others) in Berwyn Heights;
- Improving mass transit options.

***Tree Ordinance follow up:*** Mayor Dewey requested the Council give their feedback on a proposed tree ordinance first discussed in November 2020. The Shade Tree Board provided parameters for a tree ordinance to better protect the Town's tree canopy through educational efforts and discouraging the removal of shade trees. She and TM Allen have since met with the Town of University Park to learn about its tree program, which might inform a Berwyn Heights program. TM Allen said that University Park contracts with a professional arborist who advises on tree removals, works with Pepco on tree management issues and helps its Council and staff develop an annual tree plan. University Park does not have regulations pertaining to trees on private property.

In discussion, the following points were made:

- Berwyn Heights has used professional arborists before to conduct a tree canopy study in 2016 and subsequently advised on Pepco tree trimming and removals.
- Berwyn Heights' tree canopy is declining due to a variety of factors, including aging trees and removals on private property.
- A tree ordinance could help collect data on loss of private trees.
- Residents with medical conditions depend on continuous power, which Pepco seeks to ensure with regular tree pruning and removal.
- Better communication/ notification by Pepco about upcoming tree projects would be helpful.
- The high cost of removing a shade tree is enough disincentive; an added fee/ fine would not necessarily make a difference.
- Assisting property owners in determining whether a tree is sick, as well as helping with tree removal and replanting would be more productive than charging a fee/ fine.
- Tree planting rebates, subsidized arborist visits and education about benefits of trees are other ways to maintain the tree canopy.
- Use of an arborist can help diagnose disease and infestations that may spread to other trees.
- Replanting should consider characteristics and value of different species.
- Advocating for modifying the legislation that sets standard for utilities' tree maintenance programs might be considered.

Mayor Dewey summarized that the Council appears interested in using an arborist for a variety of tasks, implementing a rebate program to incentivize planting, and refrain from requiring a permit for tree removals on private property. Responding to CM Sweep, Mayor Dewey said the Shade Tree Board has a strong desire to preserve the tree canopy but not enough expert knowledge to make decisions about individual tree issues. The Town will also reach out to University Park to find out more about its annual tree plan.

***Four Cities agenda items:*** The Council identified the following agenda items for the January 28, 2021 Four Cities meeting in College Park: PGCPs boundary initiative; Maglev DEIS comment period; and COVID lessons, innovations and path forward.

#### **4. Department Reports**

Mayor Dewey reminded everyone to stay out of D.C. for the inauguration for health and other safety reasons. COVID vaccination has entered phase 1b which covers adults over 75 years of age, assisted living staff, educators, and certain government officials. Phase 1c will begin next week. The Town is sharing links to online vaccination registrations on its website.

MPT Kulpa-Eddy announced an ongoing Prince George's Cultural Arts Survey available online until February 1 as well as a related virtual community meeting on January 28. The Maglev Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) has been released and will be open for comment until April 22. Further, she announced upcoming meetings of the Education Advisory Committee (BHEAC), which is working on a teacher appreciation project, and the Historical Committee, which is advertising virtual presentations on local history on its Facebook page.

CM Papanikolas said that he can offer advice to residents who may experience problems with receiving unemployment assistance. He can be reached at his Town email.

CM Brittan-Powell expressed appreciation for Director Goodwin and TM Allen handling an awkward situation.

CM Sweep noted a problem with the trash collection schedule, which caused residents to put out refuse on the wrong day. TM Allen added that Public Works henceforth will always collect trash town-wide on Tuesdays after a Monday holiday, recycling on Wednesdays, yard waste on Thursdays and trash town-wide on Fridays. Mayor Dewey suggested posting a yearly schedule for trash collection for weeks with holidays.

#### **5. Resident and Community Comments**

In response to MPT Kulpa-Eddy, Clerk Harper said that BHTV programming could include many different types of events, but newer videos need to be converted to a format that can be played on the system. This takes time.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Signed: *Kerstin Harper*, Town Clerk