



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

Work Session Minutes January 16, 2024 | 7:00 p.m. Council Chambers

Call to Order

Mayor Jodie Kulpa-Eddy called the meeting to order at 7:11PM. Present were Mayor Pro Tem Chris Brittan-Powell, Councilmember Shinita Hemby, Councilmember Faustino Menjivar, and Councilmember Jason Papanikolas. Also present was Town Manager Kyle Snyder and Town Clerk Melanie Friesen as well as representatives of the three firms presenting to Council.

Approval of the Agenda

CM Hemby moved to approve the agenda. CM Menjivar seconded. With no discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

1. Mayor

a. Announcements

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy gave an announcement of the closed session which preceded the open meeting. The session closed at 6:33pm on a vote of 4:1 with MPT Brittan-Powell opposed. All Councilmembers were present for the closed session along with TM Snyder and Town Attorney Suellen Ferguson. The session was closed under Maryland Code Annotated, General Provisions Article, § 3-305 (b)(1) and (b)(3) to discuss a personnel matter and to consider the acquisition of real property. For the personnel matter, Council voted unanimously to direct TM Snyder to take action on the issue. Regarding the real property, no vote was taken, but the Council asked the TM to gather further information.

MPT Brittan-Powell thanked Public Works staff for all the work they did during the winter storm. He shared about the upcoming memorial services for resident David Williams. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy directed TM Snyder to lower the Town Flag until Saturday in honor of Mr. Williams.

b. Calendar

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy noted there should be a PGCMA meeting this month, but no notice has been received yet. She also highlighted the Four Cities Meeting on January 25th in College Park.

c. Architecture/Placemaking Proposal Reviews and Presentations:

TM Snyder reviewed that there were seven proposals received in response to the Town's request for an architecture/placemaking consultant. He reviewed that Staff met and reviewed the proposals, narrowing them down to the three that are presenting here today. He noted that Council is viewing these presentations as the placemaking group will be public-facing and wanted Council to feel sure they are comfortable with that aspect of the firms.

i. AMT Presentation

Jo Ann Trach Tongson introduced her team members Amy Findley and Laura Connelly, each giving a brief overview of their relevant experience on similar projects. Ms. Trach Tongson reviewed several projects that AMT had been responsible for, highlighting projects conducted with M-NCPPC. She also reviewed the proposed eight month timeline for the project. This would include a programing/recreational opportunities assessment, then engagement with the public and staff, and finally producing an action plan with budgets for short-, mid- and long-term planning. They highlighted their ability to assist with grants from M-NCPPC, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and Prince George’s County. Council had no questions for AMT.

ii. KCI Presentation

Mr. Charles Kenny of KCI lead the presentation and noted that the goals of the project are straightforward. The action plan needs to be more than just data, but rather a roadmap to an achievable vision, one that is informative and insightful, and maximizes community engagement. He reviewed the project approach “Plan, Do, Study, Act” in detail, highlighting that consensus-based decision making is key to transparency. He noted that their project goal would be to complete it in six months, as the DNR grants are due in August for FY2026. Mr. Rick Hoehn introduced himself and the role that he would play, while also introducing Mr. Kenny’s role within the project and Ms. Wisa Kompayak who would serve as the senior landscape architect. Mr. Hoehn noted that KCI is large and resource rich, including GIS and other technologies.

In questions, MPT Brittan-Powell asked about blending spaces and events among the different cultural elements in the community. Mr. Kenny shared that they use a product called “Social Pinpoint” which has seamless translation capabilities.

iii. Ven Presentation

The Ven Studio team introduced themselves. The three members of the team that were present are residents of Berwyn Heights and highlighted the organic nature of their founding. Justin Cullen, Kiley Wilfong Cullen, and Nusheen Majidi briefly reviewed their resumes. They highlighted the need for “third places” (home and work being first and second places) as these are the areas that build community. They noted the foundations for this have already been laid with the different organizations and facilities within the community. Finally, they shared that one of their associates, Mr. Ian Rosario is fluent in Spanish and has previous experience in playground construction. Mr. Cullen and Ms. Wilfong Cullen shared their experience as grant recipients during their education.

MPT Brittan-Powell expressed appreciation for the organic nature of the team’s development.

During Council discussion after the presentations, CM Papanikolas noted some “scope creep” with the projects. He also expressed an interest in the Ven Studio presentation and hyper-locality of the staff. CM Menjivar stated that he feels KCI is the strongest of the firms.

Council discussed the next steps of process to make a decision, including review of the written proposals and costs. CM Hemby would like to see examples of projects in person.

d. Reso. 01-2024 to Amend Fees and Fines for Ordinance 101

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy asked for Staff to confirm with Director Goodwin that the fines in the resolution attachment are in line with County fines. CM Hemby asked if there were any other fines that needed to be re-evaluated. If there is no further input from Department heads, the resolution will be presented at the February Town Meeting.

e. Resident Comments

There were no resident comments.

2. Code Compliance

CM Hemby thanked Public Works for all the work they did to keep the Town safe during the snowstorm. She also wanted residents to know how lucky they are to have a Code Compliance office that is willing to discuss ways to keep the community safe, rather than go straight to enforcement. She asked that residents keep an open mind if they see a Code Officer on their property as they may be coming to speak with you about an issue you are unaware of and that may be resolved quickly. She encouraged residents to reach out to her directly if there are issues, but also to treat Code Officers the way they would want to be treated. There was discussion on the possibility of the Town acting as a mediator between residents. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy expressed her concern about the possible legal issues that may entail, and to have it cleared by the Town Attorney before engaging in that role.

3. Parks, Recreation, Education, and Civic Affairs-

CM Papanikolas added his thanks to Public Works for all their work during the storm. He also expressed his gratitude for Code Compliance. He noted that so much of this is about community resiliency and getting over the shared trauma of Covid.

a. Town Organization Policy Draft Review

TM Snyder stated that the document before the Council is a second draft. Notable changes include removing the Rec Council as the overall umbrella organization for the Town, instead establishing them as the primary event organizing group. It also temporarily calls them the "Recreation Committee" in response to their desire to have a name change. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy requested a Word version of the document for wordsmithing, rather than trying to do this in a meeting. MPT Brittan-Powell asked about being deliberately obtuse in order to allow for organizations to develop outside of the Town structure. CM Papanikolas suggested having the Rec Committee be the catchall for encouraging participation and development of new groups, while noting that some groups have never expressed a desire to become official organizations. There should be something formal enough to encourage new groups, but less formal than saying the Rec Committee is the incubator for new groups.

The Council also discussed organizations email accounts, access to BHTV, a need to reference the Bulletin policy, and event policy for insurance coverage needs. An updated draft policy will be reviewed at the next worksession.

4. Public Safety

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy mentioned the upcoming Narcan and First Aid classes and deadlines for registration. She noted that minors are able to take either of the classes as long as they are able to read, but they are not able to receive a Narcan kit at the conclusion of that class.

5. Public Works

CM Menjivar stated that Director Pudner and the Public Works crew did an excellent job,

responding 24/7 for a few days during the winter storm. He noted that they are monitoring the weather reports for future impacts to trash pick-up. He thanked TM Snyder for going above and beyond as well. MPT Brittan-Powell expressed a concern that we do not take advantage of Public Works. CM Menjivar stated they are doing a good job of rotating staff. TM Snyder reviewed how the floater position funded by Council has also provided relief and that they brought in a temporary employee for snow response. CM Papanikolas noted more staff having their commercial driver's license makes it easier for this work to be done. CM Menjivar also stated that the Police Department is very active during these types of events as well.

6. Administration

MPT Brittan-Powell shared about the celebration of life for David Williams. He praised administration staff for the work that is being done. CM Hemby also expressed her thanks to TM Snyder for his work on facilitating meetings.

7. Adjournment

MPT Brittan-Powell moved to adjourn. CM Papanikolas seconded. With no discussion, the motion passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 9:11PM.