



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 November 21, 2022 | 7:00 p.m. Council Chamber

Call to Order

Mayor Jodie Kulpa-Eddy called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Councilmember Jason Papanikolas, Councilmember Faustino Menjivar, Councilmember Shinita Hemby were present in Council Chambers. Mayor Pro-Tem Chris Brittan-Powell attended remotely, joining at 7:02 PM after the approval of the agenda. Chief Kenneth Antolik attended remotely as acting Town Manager. Town Clerk Friesen was also present. Andrew Fellows from the University of Maryland was present for the Campus Community Connections update. Also present were residents of the Town of Berwyn Heights.

Approval of the Agenda

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy moved to amend the agenda to reorder the agenda items: to move up the CCC Update to after Announcements, and move up items 5a and 5b to after the CCC Update, ending with Department Reports and Resident Comments at the end of the agenda. CM Papanikolas moved to approve the agenda as amended. CM Hemby seconded. After no discussion, the motion passed unanimously with MPT Brittan-Powell absent at the time of approval.

Mayor

- a. **Announcements** Mayor Kulpa-Eddy shared about the passing of former Mayor and State Delegate Tawana Gaines. There was discussion of the protocol for sending a remembrance on behalf of the Town. MPT Brittan-Powell reported having a concussion and that while he would attempt to be present, he may need to leave the meeting early.

Administration: amended position

b. CCC update- Andy Fellows

MPT Brittan-Powell introduced Mr. Andrew Fellows, who manages a University of Maryland program called Campus Community Connections (CCC) that has been assisting the Town since 2017. Mr. Fellows shared the history of CCC to update the Councilmembers who are newer to Council and have not been involved with the program to-date. He reviewed the ten projects proposed by Berwyn Heights and how the Town can engage the CCC program over the coming year. CM Hemby engaged with Mr. Fellows regarding details on how students are assigned to projects and the responsibilities of the Town's primary contact with them. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy asked about what types of projects other municipalities are doing with students from the School of Information Studies (the I-school). Mr. Fellows shared a number of projects done by other municipalities, including website enhancements and food security projects. He suggested Council consider a project involving the new 2020 Census data

for the Town and encouraged the Town to “think big”.

Public Safety: amended position b. Berwyn Heights Natural Disaster Emergency Assistance Program

CM Papanikolas shared that he worked on the application form to make it easier to read and understand. He added that he would like to see this as a webform, in HTML format. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy asked if he had worked on the program description, as the application criteria depends on the program content. There was extensive discussion on the program, determining if it would only be triggered by a Town-wide event or if a single household encountering an emergency would be eligible (example: the windstorm that damaged many residences in Town vs a windstorm that damages a single residence). CM Papanikolas stated that the money is coming from a reserve fund from the Town and it is important to be conscientious that the funds are finite. With input from residents Jose Valcarcel and Claudia Barragan, the consensus was that this program would be available to all residents, regardless of income and number of homes affected by the event. Conversation continued discussing what kind of emergency needs the Town would approve for the use of these funds. It was concluded that funds should cover basic, short-term, immediate needs, such as shelter, food, and clothing. Discussion continued regarding how funds would be distributed, acknowledging that the funds would need to be readily accessible. There was discussion about if the funds should be available as gift cards for specific vendors to ensure they were spent on the intended relief purposes, or if they should be available in the form of a Visa gift card for more options on how they could be used. There was discussion regarding asking residents to provide receipts after the fact, to verify the funds were used as intended. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy took the role of the Town’s risk manager, stating while she would be asking challenging questions regarding the need for documentation or limits to be placed on the program, they did not necessarily represent her personal position. There was continued input from Ms. Barragan and Mr. Valcarcel advocating that the program be broad and accessible. Council debated what, if any restrictions, would be placed on eligibility for the program beyond being residents of the Town. CM Hemby stated that she did not believe that income should be considered, as while someone may have a greater income, that does not take into consideration all that they may have in the way of expenses (example: funding the care of an elderly parent). Ms. Barragan suggested that an assessment be part of the approval process. MPT Brittan-Powell expressed that adequate assessments would require training. Discussion continued to include what would be considered proof of residency, with two documents confirming the address of residency being required. Ms. Barragan suggested that the Council set a standard list of items that are acceptable for proof of residency. Council considered several ways to distinguish between households that share an address. They also considered if the assistance should be limited to once per year or once per incident, and whether annual reviews should be conducted regarding how often a household has requested the funds. Ms. Barragan expressed that applications will be reviewed by people and will have human intervention. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy advocated for a set of standards that would be enacted so that whoever is on staff to do the assessment of need would be able to make a consistent decision. The application will be received by the Town Emergency Manager and the Chief of Police. Council decided to add a description of the emergency that caused a resident to apply for relief. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy asked if the funds will be given out on the honor system to be used as intended. CM Papanikolas stated that yes, it is essentially the honor system, however it is fraud to lie on an application for the government and if someone were found to be misusing the funds, then they would be turned over for prosecution. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy suggested clarifying this in the

affirmation statement. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy asked where the funding would come from for this program. CM Papanikolas suggested setting up a reserve fund of \$50,000. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy added that this would require a budget amendment. The Zoom technology became non-responsive during the last portion of this discussion. MPT Brittan-Powell left the meeting at 8:16PM, after leaving a note in the chat. Staff were not able to restart Zoom. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy released Acting Town Manager Chief Antolik. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy left a message for MPT Brittan-Powell to see if he'd be able to rejoin by phone. While the Council waited for his response, they moved on to the next agenda item.

Parks, Recreation, Education, and Civic Affairs (amended to follow Emergency Assistance Fund)

a. 50th Council Goals/Objectives and Tracking spreadsheet

CM Hemby updated that she and CM Menjivar have a new item to include, a Teen Volunteer Program. In discussion, where the document should be kept so that CMs are able to update it and who should be updating projects was discussed. The document will be held on the Council OneDrive and that only the project leads should be making updates. There was discussion about adding a projected completion date for projects. CM Papanikolas stated that he envisioned this as tool so residents could know what the Council is working on, and would like it included in the consent agenda for Town Meetings. There was further discussion on categories to include on the document and best ways to use it. Resident Jose Valcarcel expressed that he believes this will be a helpful tool. He would like to have the projects numbered on the shared spreadsheet for easy reference and would like to have "Next Milestone" be changed to "comments" so that broader information could be shared. He also made comment on a project. He expressed that a Council/Councilmember-driven town-wide voter registration drive would be a conflict of interest. Resident Claudia Barragan stated that this document should not be used as an excuse to delay work. She would like to see a "date added" column to the tracker and encouraged Council not to continually add projects. CM Papanikolas responded that most of the projects came from agendas and that anyone on the Council has the power to add items to the agenda and that the Mayor is obligated to allow it. There was continued discussion on how to utilize the document for prioritization and setting each meeting's agenda, as well as if projects should be removed. Council discussed not removing any projects until the document had been completed and all Councilmembers were present. Ms. Barragan asked who provided oversight and holds the Council accountable. She also suggested that a column be added for "Department", to improve communication with department heads on the projects.

Public Safety

a. Berwyn Heights Home Retrofit Program (amended to follow the 50th Council Goals/Objectives)

MPT Brittan-Powell was absent and is the lead on this project. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy stated the expectation is that they will have to come back to this when the Council lead was present. Resident Claudia Barragan asked to speak, stating that she had sent an email on November 9th followed by another from INCbh offering to do this project on a pro bono basis. She continued that it has been 3 months with 9 public record meetings where this project was discussed, yet Council continues to delay the project. She asked for Council to accept or reject the proposal for the pro-bono work at this meeting. She also questioned if there was intentionality behind the absence of the project lead (MPT

Brittan-Powell) from tonight's meeting. She cited Ord. 184 which directs Council to respond in a timely manner to residents. CM Hemby suggested that Council take a vote on INCbh's offer. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy stated that Council doesn't take formal action or votes at worksessions. CM Hemby also offered to take over the project. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy stated she would see if MPT Brittan-Powell would be willing to turn the project over to CM Hemby. CM Papanikolas also expressed his support for the proposal. Mr. Valcarcel asked if INCbh could work with CM Hemby in the meantime. The consensus was that CM Hemby could work with INCbh and present a competing proposal to MPT Brittan-Powell's.

Mayor

b. Calendar

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy engaged discussion on several items, including an early start for the executive session scheduled for December 5th, the PGCMA legislative "meet and greet" event, and the Town-hosted legislative dinner. Council also discussed possible dates for a meeting with WSSC.

c. Update from November 17 Listening Session

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy shared concerns that were expressed during the November 17th Listening Session. There were two Councilmembers and two residents in attendance. The residents shared concerns about stormwater management, flooding and drainage, parking, speeding, and rentals. When residents were asked about how to improve the health and wellbeing of residents (the basis of the UMD-SPH agreement), the participants did not have a response. The event was primarily advertised by digital means because of the short advanced notice for the session and Mayor Kulpa-Eddy asked for input on how to increase engagement. Suggestions included planning sessions for several days so residents could pick a date that works best for them and planning in advance so that it can be advertised in the Bulletin. CM Papanikolas stated that he believes that the University should be conducting the listening sessions.

Ms. Barragan stated that a needs assessment is a technical endeavor and needs to be done by the University. She also offered to host a training on language access. She commented on all digital advertising being an issue. Ms. Barragan stated that her work experience as an urban planner has given her knowledge that engagement with the University, including the work done by Mr. Fellows, is a conflict of interest. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy refuted that statement.

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy will reach back out to the University of Maryland School of Public Health and ask that they take over the needs assessment.

d. Grants Administrator Position

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy reviewed that the Town received no responses to the RFQ posted for the Grants Administrator. The position will now be advertised as a contractual position and asked for input on the drafted advertisement. There was discussion on salary, work hours per week, and expectations. Resident Ms. Barragan asked about how many ARPA applications were processed and how many were approved. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy responded that she did not have that information immediately available, but believed it was less than a dozen. There were applications that were not approved as they were incomplete, and the residents did not respond to requests to complete the application. There was continued discussion about the advertisement, including input from Ms. Barragan that requiring experience with Federal Grants would increase the salary that would need to be paid to the contractor. CM Papanikolas added "experience working

with diverse populations” as an additional bullet point in qualifications as well as adding salary expectations. He also added that the contractor should be reporting directly to the Council and that there should be a point person on Council for the primary contact. Discussion also included where the position should be advertised.

Reports:

CM Menjivar gave an update on road repairs in Town as well as the status of the loose leaf collection. He added that Public Works will be putting up the Christmas tree and decorations in preparation for the December 3rd tree lighting party.

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy shared that the County is asking residents to take a survey to help update their Hazard Mitigation Plan. Details will be shared over the Town website and social media pages.

There were no other Council departmental reports.

e. Resident Comments

There were no further Resident Comments.

Adjournment

CM Papanikolas moved to adjourn the meeting. CM Hemby seconded. With no discussion the motion passed unanimously (4:0) and the meeting adjourned at 9:48PM.