



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 4, 2022| 7:00 p.m.

This meeting was held by videoconference due to the recent surge of the omicron variant of COVID-19 and was broadcast on Berwyn Heights cable TV channels. Residents could comment by calling (301) 474-9570 or e-mailing Mayor Dewey at adewey@berwynheightsmd.gov

Call to Order

Mayor Amanda Dewey called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Present were Mayor Dewey, Mayor Pro Tempore Jodie Kulpa-Eddy, Councilmember Chris Brittan-Powell, Councilmember Jason Papanikolas, and Councilmember Ethan Sweep. Also present were Town Manager Laura Allen and Town Clerk Melanie Friesen.

1. Announcements

CM Sweep thanked the Public Works Department for their work during the snowstorm response. He reviewed the revised trash schedule as it had been impacted by the storm.

2. Approval of Agenda

Mayor Dewey requested that Council consider amending the agenda to making the only item for discussion 3b and to schedule a special worksession on January 10, 2022 to discuss the other items on the agenda. CM Papanikolas moved to approve the agenda as amended, provided the special worksession was scheduled. MPT Kulpa-Eddy seconded. After no further discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

3. Discussion Items

b. January Council Meetings-in person or virtual

Mayor Dewey invited CM Papanikolas to share a number of questions formulated in advance. CM Papanikolas reviewed that there did not appear to be a consensus among Council on when meetings would be in-person or virtual. He reviewed his understanding of other Councilmembers' thoughts on the process for determining if a meeting would be held in person or virtually. CM Papanikolas understood that Town Meetings would be held in person, but that worksessions could potentially be virtual. Mayor Dewey confirmed that she understood that as well. CM Papanikolas stated he understood that CM Brittan-Powell had understood that all meetings would be held in person. MPT Kulpa-Eddy also stated that she didn't think there was a distinction between worksessions and Town Meetings with all meetings held in person. CM Sweep stated that he also understood all meetings to be held in person, but that given the current rise of cases and a number of other agencies transitioning back to hybrid or virtual, he supported this meeting being virtual to settle the issue. Mayor Dewey asked if the Council was interested in establishing the criteria for a process that would take the

pandemic into consideration for virtual meetings. The Council discussed a number of different metrics that could be considered for establishing virtual meetings, such as hospitalization rates, what other agencies are doing, and what information was dispensed by the County Health Officer. They also discussed a number of legal factors, including requirements for publishing the location of the meeting, and whether the decision to move to a virtual meeting was an administrative function of the Council that could be determined outside of a public meeting. TM Allen stated that she would need to discuss the ability for the Council to determine if this was an administrative function with the Town Attorney. The Council deliberated on these topics for some time before coming to an understanding that given the current state of emergency, they would seek to tie the decision to hold in-person meetings to what Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) was doing; that is, if students were in classrooms then the meetings would be held in person, and that if students were being taught virtually, then the Council would hold meetings virtually. PGCPS was chosen by the Council due to the fact that, of the County agencies available to mirror, PGCPS had a more robust reporting system for announcing changes/closures, which would give Town staff more time to publicize a virtual meeting instead of an in-person meeting. Given that PGCPS is holding classes virtually until January 18th, the Council meetings scheduled for January 10 and 12 will be held virtually.

Adjournment

Mayor Dewey adjourned the meeting at 8:42 p.m.