



# 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 May 16, 2022| 7:00 p.m. Council Chamber

### Call to Order

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy called the meeting to order at 7PM. Present were MPT Brittan-Powell, Councilmember Hemby and Councilmember Menjivar. CM Papanikolas had an excused absence. Also present were Town Manager Laura Allen and Town Clerk Melanie Friesen.

### 1. Announcements

MPT Brittan-Powell expressed condolences to the family of Giselle Diaz who passed away. There were no other announcements.

### 2. Approval of Agenda

MPT Brittan-Powell moved to approve the agenda. CM Hemby seconded. After no discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

### 3. Discussion Items

#### a. 50<sup>th</sup> Town Council Goals and Objectives

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy shared that this is a traditional discussion item, to allow Councilmembers to lay out their goals and objectives for their term. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy shared that her goals were laid out in her candidate's profile. One goal is to find a permanent home for the police station. She would like to find a location that the Town owns, upon which it could design a building to meet the needs of a growing department. A previous Council had put money into the budget for a stormwater analysis of the Town, and that would be an essential component for the prospect of rebuilding a new combined Town Hall at this location. MPT Brittan-Powell shared that community health and vibrancy are his priorities as well as reaching out to parts of the community that haven't been more involved. He'd like to focus on enhancing volunteerism and bring in professionals to help. CM Hemby shared that she is planning to put together a meeting with Code Compliance and TM Allen. She would like to move forward with a welcoming packet for all new residents in Berwyn Heights. She also invited residents to call or email her directly with ideas for the welcome packet. Resident Mike Attick stated that former Clerk Kirsten Harper attempted to put something together several years ago. He wondered if ARPA funds could be spent to put items in the welcome packet. CM Menjivar inquired about how much work has been done on the police department project. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy shared that there was work done in the early 2000s and then revitalized in 2015-16, with a study being done in 2020. CM Menjivar expressed his concerns about the difficulty about finding a location in Town. MPT Brittan-Powell asked about real estate conversations, as these can occur in closed session. CM Menjivar asked about the possibility of purchasing a house in Town to convert to a

police station if there are no commercial spaces available in Town. He also shared that he is still learning about Town issues, and will be meeting with Public Works to learn more. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy shared CM Papanikolas has a goal to increase transparency on the Council by having Council office hours and listening sessions. She mentioned she would like to review and update the Town Organization Policy. She feels that when the resolution was passed in 2019, it caused unintended outcomes and she'd like to resolve them, possibly by implementing a third tier of Town organizations. MPT Brittan-Powell returned to the subject of the police department, and asked about funding structure, and structure of the building configuration, i.e. would there be room for Code in the building? He also asked about what the strategic plan is for the police department, including growth of the department. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy continued that another issue is getting feedback from the community on any or all of these items. MPT Brittan-Powell stated that he would like to use the University as a resource to help increase engagement. CM Hemby stated that she thinks community events would be opportunities for outreach. MPT Brittan-Powell advocated for an ad hoc committee to look at space needs and limitations. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy shared CM Papanikolas would like to have a needs inventory to inform both short-term and long-term needs of the community. MPT Brittan-Powell asked if there would be a strategic plan for this Council. CM Menjivar asked about sharing flyers and information through the schools or community center as another means of doing outreach. MPT Brittan-Powell shared that he wants to bring in community members to serve the Town by focusing on particular areas, such as Parks and Recreation, to assess our current facilities and see if there are things we could consider adding. He also shared ideas about community enhancement, addressing street parking issues/number of occupants in homes, a Town-Wide voter registration drive, and a cross community committee on Indian Creek, similar to what Greenbelt is doing with 193/Greenbelt Road. There was discussion on the feasibility and necessity of a cross community committee on Indian Creek. Resident Mike Attick shared about Metroland and how construction caused issues for the creek. MPT Brittan-Powell stated that he would like to see work done on restorative justice regarding Lakeland, including collaboration with College Park and the Lakeland community. He also shared that he'd like to address residents' concerns regarding the changes in the Berwyn Heights structure of government. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy shared that she'd be happy to do a presentation on the process that was undertaken to make the changes and to invite former councilmembers to discuss the issue. MPT Brittan-Powell additionally shared that his neighborhood would like to have a block party. TM Allen suggested that MPT Brittan-Powell come and speak with her about this. She stated that she believes this could be done at a staff level for the most part, but if the Council wanted to develop a process to handle requests it will take longer to get the approvals. He also stated a resident request to have something similar to Candidate's Night but for County and State level Democrat candidates. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy reminded everyone the Town Council is non-partisan and should not consider creating even the perception of favoring one political party over another. MPT Brittan-Powell stated again that he would like to establish a relationship with the UMD School of Public Health.

**b. Worksession Protocols**

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy brought up the structure of Council worksessions. She shared that her goal is to keep worksessions to two hours, with flexibility to go longer as needed. She shared an agenda from 2010 as a format that she would like the Council to consider. She believes changing the format could reduce the time. She shared that in the older format, Department Reports came from Staff to Council. TM Allen asked for clarification on that as during the Town Meeting staff prepares comprehensive reports

from department heads. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy shared that in the new worksession format, this item would be more like department announcements, with councilmembers sharing any relevant items of interest that cannot wait for the next Town Meeting. She also explained that an item titled “citizen comments” would be an opportunity for CMs to share comments that they had heard from residents. TM Allen asked if there would still be resident and community comments at the end of the meeting. She also suggested that the location of the meeting should be included on the agenda. MPT Brittan-Powell asked about having committees meet outside of the Council chamber where councilmembers are present to facilitate shorter meetings. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy shared that this can happen but that there cannot be a quorum of the Council present without it being noticed in advance as a public meeting.

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

**Mayor Kulpa-Eddy** shared that this year’s Resident of the Year is Georgina Dodge. She also shared about the Greater Riverdale Spring Health Fair on Saturday May 21<sup>st</sup>. She mentioned the Prince George’s County Department of Parks and Recreation is developing a children’s mental health matters coloring book. Additionally, registration for grades K-5 reading and math tutoring is open through PGCPs. Graduation ceremonies will be held at the University of Maryland starting May 27- June 6 and traffic will be heavier on Greenbelt Road and Route 1. Lastly, she shared about the upcoming Green Team, BHEAC and BHHC meetings.

**MPT Brittan-Powell** shared that there is nothing to report about Administration at this time and gave thanks to CM Papanikolas for his written comments.

**CM Hemby** shared that she is ready to get started with Code Compliance.

**CM Menjivar** asked TM Allen to share contact information with Public Works and would also like to reach out to the Seniors Club.

#### **5. Resident & Community Comments**

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy shared about the Prince George’s County Municipal Association (PGCMA) meeting on Thursday, May 19<sup>th</sup> and invited all councilmembers to attend. She stated the purpose of the PGCMA is to address the needs of incorporated municipalities in the county and shared examples of their activities.

Claudia Barragan of 58<sup>th</sup> Avenue stated she would like to have had more information provided in the agenda on the Council goals. She wanted to share that many residents understand how legislative processes work. She expressed an interest in democratizing resident engagement and flattening the peaks of responsibility. She wondered why the Town does not have a Department of the Environment. She asked about the deliverables of the council, expressing a preference for a strategic plan that is measurable. Ms. Barragan continued, stating that she would like to see legislative action from the Council on restorative justice, that presentations are a start, but not enough. She also spoke on the balance of power, stating each councilmember should have power over their department and not have to ask the mayor. She asked when does the community give input? She shared her experience is that when someone volunteered to help, no one got back to them. Her husband spoke from the audience stating that it’s difficult to feel welcome when the committee is referred to by the name of the president or chair of the community organization, rather than the name of the organization itself. MPT Brittan-Powell shared that perception is key and also shared that the Town has a “weak mayor” system of government.

An anonymous resident commenting via email asked if the Council is thinking about starting mental health services in the Town. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy stated that the Council has set aside ARPA funding that would benefit mental health non-profits that can provide these services to residents. MPT Brittan-Powell shared that mental health is a broad topic, ranging from individual counseling to community engagement events that bring happiness. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy asked MPT Brittan-Powell to consider

creating a document that defines what counts as mental health.

Mike Attick on 62<sup>nd</sup> Ave asked if the Town has taken a real look at what land is available for the police station? He further stated that this land (at Town Hall) isn't going to be able to handle a two-story building. He suggested annexing the area around Westchester Park and build the police station in the undeveloped area. He also asked if the Town is looking to add a time limit on community/citizen comments. He noted that some of the Council rules are annotated to be moved to to the Charter or Ordinance level, and he suggested that Council should not alter the Charter. He also suggested that community groups could distribute flyers around Town when needed. He expressed complaints about Candidate's Night. He also stated that he thinks Councilmembers should attend community organization meetings. He thanked the Councilmembers for running for office and thinks this Council will be able to accomplish things.

There was a follow up email from the anonymous resident clarifying that the request for mental health services would be for services for dealing with depression.

Angie Wolfinger on 58<sup>th</sup> Ave. shared that she didn't hear in the goals anything about stop signs and reckless driving in Town. She would like that to be a priority of the council. In reference to surveys and getting a response, she suggested using electronic surveys. Referencing the Block Parties, she stated that she thinks that street closures should be addressed by Council.

Jose Valcarcel, also on 58<sup>th</sup> Ave, stated that regardless of the individual, everybody should go through the same process for approval of a Block Party.

## **6. Adjournment**

CM Hemby moved to adjourn. CM Menjivar seconded. After no discussion, the motion passed unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 9:38 PM.