



# Town of Berwyn Heights

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## Budget Worksession Minutes April 11, 2016

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. Present were Mayor Jodie Kulpa-Eddy, Mayor Pro Tem (MPT) Chris Rasmussen, Councilmembers (CMs) Patricia Dennison, Maria Robles and Lynn White. MPT Rasmussen arrived 10 minutes late with apologies. Also present were Town Administrator (TA) Jessica Cowles, and Town Clerk Kerstin Harper.

### 1. Mayor

**Announcements:** The FY 2017 budget will be introduced at the April 13 Town meeting. Councilmembers will have the opportunity to highlight the important features of their departmental budgets. Solid Rock Church in New Carrollton is collaborating with Parkdale High School for a day of beautification on May 7, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

### 2. Budget

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy said that the Council will finish reviewing the proposed FY 2017 budget tonight, which includes Administration, Parks, Recreation, Education & Civic Affairs (PRECA), and Public Works departmental budgets.

PRECA: This budget is flat with the exception of a proposed \$2,500 increase in the *Sports Park* appropriation to honor a request from the Boys & Girls Club to pay for the Pepco electricity bill. The *equipment* line item is funded at \$2,750 and pays for any equipment or equipment repairs at Pop's Park. CM Robles proposed to look into getting a larger canopy to provide shade in summer. The Playgroup or the Public Works Department will normally make equipment requests. The Recreation Council *special events* line item, funded at \$9,000, pays for Berwyn Heights Day and other community events. Funding levels might be reevaluated in conjunction with an overall assessment of what Berwyn Heights Day should look like in the future.

Administration/ General Government: The General Government budget includes the major activities of Mayor & Council, Town Administration, Municipal Building, and Town Center. The Mayor & Council budget is level funded with the exception of a \$1,000 increase in the *public relations* line item to fund a contribution to the ATHA/ Maryland Milestones Heritage Center. The Council agreed to fund this item with remaining money in the FY 2016 public relations line instead, to avoid the assumption that the increase will continue indefinitely. The unspent \$1,000 in the FY 2017 public relations line item will be placed into the "kitty."

In the Administration budget, there is a 7.1% increase in the *salary* line item to cover the COLA and merit increases that went into effect in November 2015 and a raise for the

Administrative Assistant to the Town Administrator. The *bulletin* appropriation is going down by 27% to reflect lower printing and mailing costs negotiated with the vendor. The funds in the *network/software support* line item were moved to the non-departmental budget; and the capital equipment <\$500 line item is being phased out.

The Municipal Building budget is down by 44.4% due to contracting out *custodial services* and switching to a Voice over Internet Protocol (VOIP) system. Savings are also projected in the *electricity* and *water & sewer* line items reflecting budgeting closer to actual expenditures. The Town Center budget is proposed to decline by 26.1%, again due to *custodial services* being outsourced and moved to the non-departmental budget. *Electricity* and *water & sewer* expenditures are seeing a slight increase here, primarily because of increased use of the Town Center for party rentals. Overall, the General Government budget is down by 3.3%.

Public Works: The Public Works Building budget is proposed to go down by 4.6% due to taking the *gas* appropriation down to actual expenditures and reduced *telephone* costs. A slight increase is budgeted in the *tools* line item because more maintenance work is done in house.

The Streets & Sanitation budget is proposed to increase by 2.3%. The staffing levels have been adjusted from 9 full time and 1 part time staff to 8 full time and 2 part time staff, resulting in an increase of 1% in the *salary* line. This reflects the interim director's judgement on optimum staffing levels. A hybrid full time crewman/ administrative assistant position was abandoned and replaced with a part time administrative assistant position. Initially, the FY 2017 proposed to fund a full time administrative assistant responsible for clerical duties and supporting the Town's event planning functions. However, the event planning and marketing function has been given to the administrative assistant in the Administration Department.

Further, there is an increase in the *uniform* appropriation, which reflects an increase in the uniform service and planned purchases for more safety gear. The *mosquito control* line was increased to reflect what the Town actually spends. A substantial increase in the *street sign & traffic control* line item was requested by Interim Director Hall to bring the Town's signs into compliance with federal regulations for height and reflectivity. It also includes money for possible customizing of street signs. The *street lighting* appropriation is flat. Should the Council decide to add new street lights to light dark areas in Town, as recommended by a NW/EP study, funding might come from the Greenbelt Station reserve, as this would be a one-time capital project expense. Minor street repair expenses, such as filling potholes and sealing cracks, are covered by the Public Works budget *street repair* appropriation, but major street renovations are funded from the capital projects budget.

In response to questions, TA Cowles explained that the reduction from 8 to 7 full time crewmen has not posed a problem over the last 6 months. With the exception of the January snow storm, when temporary staff was hired to shovel snow, 7 staff have been sufficient to complete the regular workload of the Department. A new pay scale and position classification system that is being developed by the HR consultants will likely result in salary adjustments that will go into effect in the fall of 2016. The salary range for the new public works director is between \$61,000 and \$84,000.

The cost of snow removal incurred during the January 2016 blizzard is budgeted under Public Works *salaries/ overtime* for personnel expenses and under the *snow & ice removal* for salt and equipment. The Town has filed for reimbursement from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and anticipates being paid back. However, in the future FEMA will only reimburse a jurisdiction for snow emergencies if the snow accumulation is greater than any previous one on record. The *temporary labor* appropriation, which was tapped to pay for the 2 temps to help shovel snow, is down from previous years because the Public Works

Department did not have to hire temps for leaf collection last fall. This efficiency resulted from a streamlined trash collection schedule that leaves Fridays open for other tasks. The *employee recognitions* line item was dropped by \$200 back to FY 2015 levels because it was over budget in FY 2016.

TA Cowles next explained unresolved appropriations highlighted in the budget spreadsheets. The funding for 7 police vests in the amount of \$7,400 was, upon Council's request, taken from the Public Safety Reserve, which comes from speed camera revenue. The Council suggested that vest purchases might be staggered in the future, to even out expenditures. The *general liability insurance* line item was increased by 5% to \$31,000. Administration reviewed vehicles and equipment on the Town's LGIT liability insurance and deleted those items that have been disposed of this year, and added the appropriate items purchased.

The cost for switching to LGIT's health insurance program is incorporated in the proposed budget in the amount of \$108,000. Employees have been provided information about Cigna's provider network to check if their current providers accept the proposed new insurance plan. No conflicts have been reported as yet. The new health insurance plan would also lower copays for employees to \$10- \$20 per doctor visit but would charge higher copays for emergency room visits. Currently, employees pay \$30 copay per provider visit but can file for reimbursement from the Town's HRA.

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy requested removal of funding for the security cameras at the Town Center and municipal building as there may be privacy implications. TA Cowles said she has learned that the camera footage has a retention of 90 days during which it is subject to the Public Information Act. The cameras make up \$4,500 of the security improvements funding request, while the Town office access control device would require \$500. The Council agreed to place the \$4,500 for security cameras into the "kitty" or return it to surplus.

The FY 2017 Non-Departmental/ Employee Benefits budget includes \$30,000 for an economic development study, which was originally budgeted for FY 2016, but was not spent. The newly-elected Council will have to decide how to proceed. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy said that a Greenbelt resident has asked that the Four Cities promotional video be close-captioned for the hard of hearing and audio narrated for the blind. The cost per city would be \$170, and could be funded from the Cable TV budget. There were no objections.

The Council discussed how to spend the \$5,500 in the kitty. MPT Rasmussen proposed to divide the money as follows: \$1,000 for Recreation Council special events, \$1,000 for National Night Out, \$750 for Town beautification projects and the remaining \$2,750 into the surplus. The Council agreed.

#### **7. Executive Session (8:30 p.m. – 8:49 p.m.)**

On a motion by CM White and second by CM Robles, the Council went into executive session to discuss a legal matter. With matter discussed, CM White moved and CM Robles seconded to end the executive session.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

*Kerstin Harper, Town Clerk*