



# Town of Berwyn Heights

5700 Berwyn Road  
Berwyn Heights, MD 20740  
Tel. (301) 474-5000  
Fax (301) 474-5002

## Minutes Budget Workshop March 23, 2018

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. Present were Mayor Cheryl Jewitt, Mayor Pro-Tem (MPT) Jodie Kulpa-Eddy and Councilmembers (CMs) Patricia Dennison, Christopher Rasmussen, and Gerald Shields. Also present were Town Administrator (TA) Jessica Cowles, Police Chief Kenneth Antolik, Code Compliance Supervisor Freddie Glass, Public Works Director Kenneth Hall, Clerk Kerstin Harper, and citizens.

### 1. Budget

#### *Overview and goals for the budget worksession*

This special budget worksession is designed for the Council to review the entire proposed FY 2019 budgets (both the General Fund and the Public Safety Taxing District) presented by TA Cowles at the March 5 worksession. Senior staff is in attendance to present their departmental budgets in the morning. In the afternoon, TA Cowles will review the General Government, Capital Projects & Purchases, Non-Departmental and Cable budgets, followed by the heads of Town organizations, who have been invited to explain their budget requests. Questions will be answered at any time during a presentation.

#### *Code presentation*

Code Supervisor Glass gave an overview of the organization and responsibilities of the Code Compliance Department. Currently, the Department has one supervisor, 2 part-time officers and 1 part-time clerk. They assist the supervisor in carrying out core functions of the Department, consisting of: monitoring residential and commercial properties for proper maintenance; licensing and inspecting the 214 rental properties, making up approximately 22% of all residential dwellings; issuing building, dumpster and portable storage unit permits; and providing call-a-bus service for seniors and disabled residents. The Code Department maintains 2 vehicles, one sports utility vehicle for everyday patrols and the County-provided call-a-bus.

Mr. Glass listed last year's accomplishments and goals for the next fiscal year. Goals include:

- educating rental property owners about their responsibilities in maintaining rental properties;
- continuing to educate residents about Town ordinances;
- reviewing Ordinance 107 - Clean Lot for recommended changes;
- attending CEZOA and County training to learn about best practices; and
- increasing part-time hours.

Mr. Glass continued with an explanation of line items in the [Code Department budget](#). Some were discussed in detail, including

- software/ network support (level funded. Comcate for tracking Code violations);
- part-time salaries (31.4% increase due to moving the business licensing function from the Administration to the Code Department, and mandated sick leave for part-time employees);
- vehicle repairs & maintenance (level funded. Code car is relatively new);
- gas & oil (level funded based on prior year actuals);
- dues & conferences (104% increase. Includes MML conference);
- training & seminars (33.3% increase to support professional development of staff. Updated Animal Ordinance may require additional training of Code staff).

Revenues for rental licenses and building permits are projected to increase as the number of rental homes is showing an upward trend and building activity is increasing. Revenues from fees and fines are projected to decrease as the Department works with home owners to achieve compliance.

CM Rasmussen proposed that the Town discontinue issuing building permits, as he does not see any value added to the permitting process by the Town. Supervisor Glass replied that Code staff monitors for unauthorized building activity, as well as for compliance with permitted building plans. DPIE does not have enough staff to monitor across the County. TA Cowles said the Town receives no tax differential for code enforcement activities. She confirmed that other municipalities issue building permits. MPT Kulpa-Eddy said the monitoring of building activity helps improve the overall safety and well-being of Town residents. If the Town chose to stop collecting building permit fees, it might have to raise taxes instead. The next Council may want to re-evaluate the amount charged for a building permit.

### ***Police Presentation***

Chief Antolik gave an overview of the [Police Department's mission, functions and values](#). It is the mission of the BHPD to provide professional law enforcement services in accordance with Federal and State laws and the Charter and Ordinances of the Town of Berwyn Heights. This includes a broad program of community outreach, ongoing cooperation with the Code Department in enforcing the Noise, Parking and Animal Ordinances, and partnering with neighboring police departments in preventing crime and responding to incidents. The Department currently has 9 salaried officers, one Chief, one Clerk, 4 public safety aides and 2 interns. It has 10 marked police vehicles, 4 unmarked vehicles and a covert vehicle.

Chief Antolik reported that crime has followed a steady downward trend over the last 10 years and Berwyn Heights remains the safest municipality in Prince George's County. Mayor Jewitt suggested that the monthly crime report break down thefts by whether they are committed against commercial or residential properties, as the majority of robberies target businesses.

Chief Antolik provided a summary of the Police Department's accomplishments, goals, and a detailed explanation of the community programs BHPD runs. Many have been working successfully for years, and some are newer initiatives. Among the latter are a resumption of bike patrols, in which Officer Rufino has expressed interest, more foot patrols during the warm months, ID badges for itinerant vendors, expansion of services for the elderly, outreach to the Latino community with the help of a bi-lingual clerk and a bi-lingual officer, greater social media presence and public relations videos, and a renewed emphasis on litter and animal violations enforcement.

The FY 2019 budget seeks more funding for recognizing exceptional performance, increasing training of command staff and officers, updating medical and first aid kits, and purchasing 9 in-car cameras and 1 tablet computer.

Questions & Answers: Chief Antolik and TA Cowles responded to questions from the Council:

- Increase of \$3,000 in the public relations line item reflects greater efforts to engage the community, a strategic priority of the Council. It also reflects a drop-off in donations from the business community. The funds are used to purchase t-shirts, gifts, literature, posters and branded merchandise.
- Proposed 0.41% increase in FY 2019 salaries appears low because there were significant salary lapses in the previous two years due to vacant positions. FY 2019 salaries are based on a fully staffed police department.
- A \$10,000 contribution to the Berwyn Heights Volunteer Fire Department (BHVFD) instituted in FY 2013 seeks to compensate the Department for a drop-off in donations from residents. The funds come from the Public Safety Reserve, allowing the Council to increase the contribution without impacting the operating budget.
- Projected \$53,000 in police aid is based on the FY 2017 actuals.
- Projected \$30,000 in speed camera receipts are transferred into the public safety reserve. The reserve pays for the administration of the program, pegged at \$20,000, and for the \$10,000 BHVFD contribution. The cost of administering the speed camera program includes an officer's time spent reviewing the tickets and speed camera vendor fees. The sum of \$20,000 for speed camera administration was proposed to make expenditures equal to revenues.
- Rent for the BHPD offices has gone up by 4.9% but the space remains inadequate, lacking sufficient privacy for discussing confidential matters, and an emergency generator. Chief Antolik would welcome moving the police department into a Town-owned building.

Break: 11:00 to 11:15 pm

### ***Public Works Presentation***

Public Works Director Hall gave an overview of the [Public Works functions and organization](#). Core functions consist of curbside collection of different types of refuse, maintenance of Town infrastructure, buildings and lands, and responding to weather emergencies. Public Works coordinates with County agencies in maintaining storm drains and park land, and with the Town's Code Department in enforcing refuse regulations. Currently, the Department has 9 employees, including a director, 1 foreman, 1 administrative assistant (part-time) and 6 maintenance workers (1 part-time).

Director Hall highlighted last year's accomplishments and next year's goals. Among the latter are:

- Oversee street repairs;
- Inventory and replace street signs to meet current US Department of Transportation standards;
- Continue to implement processes and procedures to improve operations;
- Work on team-building and staff accountability.

Director Hall proposed to reduce refuse collection from 2 times to 1 time per week to free up staff time for other maintenance work. This could be accomplished by adding automatic lifts to the refuse trucks, and switching to standard refuse and recycling bins designed to fit the mechanical lift. While the upfront investment is substantial (truck lift = \$23,000; refuse bins = \$42,000; recycling bins = \$42,000), there would be long term benefits. Benefits include:

- Healthier work environment for DPW staff;

- More time to complete other maintenance work;
- Stable refuse collection schedule;
- Long-term savings from recycling a greater share of household refuse.

Director Hall said the new collection schedule could be as follows:

- Monday – Household Trash, town-wide;
- Tuesday – Yard Waste, town-wide;
- Wednesday – Recycling, town-wide

A 2<sup>nd</sup> pickup of household refuse could be offered for those who need it on Thursdays but an additional fee would be charged (for example \$125 quarterly). Once-weekly collection would require using larger 64-gallon bins to collect more refuse from each household. Director Hall demonstrated how the pickup would work using 2 sample bins. CM Rasmussen said a municipality in Minnesota where he lived charges a refuse collection fee to households based on the size of bin they select, i.e., how much refuse they generate.

TA Cowles said the cost of the Town's collection service in terms of staff and (landfill) disposal fees should be around \$327 per household per year, not including the cost of equipment and fuel, to reflect the cost of this service. Currently, the Town charges a \$70 annual collection fee and subsidizes the remainder from the general fund. Some municipalities set up enterprise funds to budget for the service.

The Council discussed whether the Town should provide standard bins and require every household to use them. MPT Kulpa-Eddy objected to the 64-gallon bin requirement saying that these bins, if filled completely, would be difficult to drag up an incline, and some households do not need such a large bin because they don't generate much trash. The bins proposed for purchase are made of durable plastic and have a 10-year warranty, but wheels are likely to wear out earlier. Any worn or broken parts would need to be replaced by the Town.

Director Hall had an alternative proposal to free up Public Works staff for other work, in the event the Council did not want to mechanize refuse pickup and move to once-a-week pickup:

- Monday – Household Trash, town-wide using 2 trucks and 6 men;
- Tuesday – Yard Waste, Town-wide, using 1 truck and 3 men. Remaining staff can do other jobs;
- Wednesday – Recycling, Town-wide, using 2 trucks and 6 men;
- Thursday – Household Trash, Town-wide, using 1 truck and 3 men. Remaining staff can do other jobs.

The crewmen, who perform collections on Tuesday and Thursday would be allowed to go home after pickup is complete; however, this proposal still assumes that the Town would switch to larger recycling bins to incentivize more recycling. Disposal fees at recycling facilities are less than disposal fees at landfills. In either case, the changes in collection procedures will require educating residents.

Director Hall discussed other budget requests, including:

- \$18,000 is proposed to replace the dump body on 2004 dump truck, saving the Town \$50,000 over buying a new truck;
- \$30,000 is proposed to replace worn double bay doors at the Public Works building;
- Maintenance & repair of vehicles is level funded. FY 2018 expenses were unusually high because the leaf machine and refuse trucks underwent extensive repairs. DPW has contracted with another truck repair shop that offers better service at a lower cost.
- Fuel costs are projected to decrease by 16.7%, based on FY 2017 actuals and overall better fuel-efficiency of the vehicle fleet.

In response to other Council questions, Director Hall answered that an inadequate storm drain at Ruatan Street and 56<sup>th</sup> Avenue could be brought up to standard when the road repair project is underway. A deteriorated parking area adjacent to the T-ball field on 56<sup>th</sup> Avenue could be improved by spreading some of the milled water-pervious asphalt that will become available during the road repair project. But Park & Planning (M-NCPPC) will have to approve it.

### ***Phase II Road Repair Funding***

TA Cowles requested guidance on how the Council desires to fund Phase II of the road repair project, comprising those streets rated in 'fair' condition. If considering a bond issue through the State's Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), the Council would have to adopt legislation fairly soon to be able to participate in the next DHCD bond issuance round. Phase I road repairs are already covered by funds in the infrastructure reserve. Director Hall recommended moving forward as contractor prices, on which the repair estimates are based, are only good for another year. The roads rated in fair condition need attention sooner rather than later.

The Council agreed that taking on new debt after having worked hard to become debt free is a big step and will meet some resistance from residents. The decision will depend in part on whether Highway User Revenue (HUR) is restored at a level to be able to pay off a bond. A DHCD's 10-bond issue of slightly more than \$1 million would require \$125,000 annually to pay off at 3.1% interest rate. Longer term bonds would lower the principal but increase the amount of interest to be paid. The Town's road tax projected at \$99,000 in FY 2019 would not be sufficient to cover the bond payments, but it could be supplemented by using the unrestricted fund balance, currently at \$789,000, and the Greenbelt Station reserve, currently at \$515,000.

Break 12:30 – 1:00 p.m.

### ***General Government***

TA Cowles said that salaries across all departments are budgeted to receive increases of a 1 ½% COLA, plus merit increases ranging between 0% and 4% based on performance ratings. Additional funding has also been budgeted for professional development of the Town's workforce.

In the Administration Department the main changes were the transfer of the business licensing function to the Code Department, and changing the Town Clerk position from part-time to full-time, with additional funding to cover the salary increase coming from the cable budget. Expenditures for the Town Bulletin have stabilized, while expenditures for the Town Center and Municipal Building have decreased slightly, due to the installation of a more energy efficient heating and air conditioning system. The Mayor & Council budget has been level-funded, maintaining funding of \$4,500 for publicrelations.

Questions & Answers: TA Cowles responded to questions about particular line items. Some funding changes were proposed:

- Increase in legal services for bond counsel. TA Cowles noted that expenses for a bond counsel could be wrapped into the bond issue itself;
- Increase in public relations for special mailers to publicize changes in the refuse collection schedule and urban forest initiatives;
- Increase in audit services to explore hiring a different auditing firm.

Also discussed were upgrades to the Town Center 2<sup>nd</sup> floor to make the facility more suitable as an



emergency center; specifically, adding more bathrooms and a shower facility. This could be undertaken in conjunction with the planned upgrade to the municipal building to accommodate the Police Department. The proposed beautification of the event space with murals and/ or exhibits could be taken from money currently set aside in the Parks & Recreation (PRECA) budget.

CM Dennison left the meeting at 1:20 p.m.

### ***Cable***

TA Cowles said that the cable budget is funded from Comcast and Verizon franchise fees and PEG grants, the latter being dedicated to running the Town's Cable TV channel. The main expense in the cable budget is the Town's I-NET membership that provides internet service at all Town facilities. The live-streaming service as well as the salaries of the camera operator and the clerk's time spent on programming tasks are also paid from this budget. It was noted that the streaming of Council meetings works well but that the broadcast on Comcast's channel 71 has problems.

### ***Non-departmental***

TA Cowles highlighted important changes in the non-departmental budget. Unemployment compensation will go up from \$3,000 to \$9,000 based largely on a claim filed 3 years ago that is now impacting the Town's experience rating. Workers compensation is projected to rise by 3.6% to \$72,500. This is a relatively large sum because the Town has a police force and policing is high-risk activity. The Town's contribution to the Maryland State Retirement System for employee pensions remains at 8.6% for a total annual expenditure of \$105,000, plus an \$800 administration fee.

The rates for the Town's FY 2019 health, vision and dental insurance are set and show modest increases. The LGIT health insurance plan, now in its second year, will increase by 5% in FY 2019 for a total cost of \$145,000. Employees confirm that this health plan is much better than the HMO plan the Town had offered until 2016. This year, the Town was reimbursed \$34,000 because employees are using the insurance as intended, seeking appropriate preventative care. A portion of this surplus will be used towards a wellness program for employees that may include gym memberships as well as participation in a Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) initiative.

### ***PRECA aide***

Mayor Jewitt asked if the appropriation of \$4,000 for a Parks & Recreation (PRECA) aide is money well spent. The PRECA aide position was established in this year's budget to assist the Councilmember in charge of the department in coordinating Berwyn Heights Day planning and liaising with Town organizations. She is skeptical if the aide is needed, given that the Recreation Council and PRECA department head also carry out these functions.

CM Shields replied that \$4,000 may be too high for an aide just coordinating Berwyn Heights Day, but the aide also attends all Town organization meetings and collects information about their activities he would not otherwise receive. Another department head may be able to attend all meetings, but he does not have the time. Clerk Harper and CM Rasmussen noted that the PRECA aide provides staff support for the Parks and Recreation activities, which otherwise relies only on the Councilmember and volunteer organizations to run the Town's recreation program. CM Rasmussen suggested the Recreation Council chair might be paid a stipend if the PRECA aide is seen as duplicating his or her programming and coordination responsibilities. TA Cowles said the aide works on a series of community events aimed at engaging more residents in Town activities, another of the Town Council's strategic priorities. If not the PRECA aide, someone else is needed to fill this role.

### ***Capital Projects & Purchases***

TA Cowles said this budget funds a couple of strategic priorities; i.e. increasing the Town's tree canopy and species diversity, and an architectural study to relocate the Police Department. In 2016, a tree inventory was completed, which served as the basis for obtaining proposals. The FY 2018 contains \$25,000 to prune and remove dead or damaged trees based on a 2016 urban forest study, and to create an app that can be used by Public Works to track tree maintenance activity. However, another \$22,000 to \$25,000 will be needed in FY 2019 to perform the remainder of the tree maintenance work. One proposal of \$22,000 has recently been submitted

TA Cowles said \$40,000 was budgeted in FY 2018 to undertake an architecture and engineering study to explore upgrades to office and event space at the Town Center complex and moving the Police Department to the Town Center complex. The project was delayed because the Town was without a Public Works Director for a time. She and Director Hall will meet with an architect in late March, but a proposal is not likely to be in hand until August or September this year. CM Rasmussen said he hopes that options for relocating the Police Department can be developed before TA Cowles' departure in mid-May.

MPT Kulpa-Eddy asked how the search for a new Town Administrator will be funded. TA Cowles said that this would be addressed as part of the FY 2018 budget amendments. CM Rasmussen suggested that legislation may have to be introduced at the April Town meeting if this Council wants to move forward with a bond issue to fund phase II road repairs. TA Cowles replied that this Council could introduce a bond ordinance and leave it to the next Council to approve but the incoming Council would not be compelled to adopt it. She is consulting with the Town attorney about what is required to approve the bond issue, and will have more information at the next worksession.

### ***Real Property Tax Rates***

TA Cowles explained the State requires the Town to notify the residents if it plans adopt a real property tax rate that yields more revenue than in the previous year. She is proposing to keep the tax rate at the current \$0.53 per \$100 of assessed property value, of which 3 cents is set aside in an infrastructure reserve for road repairs. The \$0.53 tax rate will yield more revenues than last year due to increasing values of real estate. The constant yield tax rate would be \$0.484 per \$100 of assessed property value. This tax increase must be announced in the April Bulletin or another paper of general circulation.

The supplemental tax rate for the commercial district (Public Safety Taxing District) is currently \$0.65 per \$100 of assessed value. If a constant yield tax rate were to be adopted, it would be \$0.67 per \$100 of assessed value, or \$0.2 higher than the current rate. She is proposing to keep the rate at the current \$0.65/\$100 assessed value, in part because there are still significant funds in the PSTD budget reserve, and in part because the Town would like to engage with the business community to undertake improvements. A public notice is not required for adopting a tax rate that yields less revenue than in the prior year.

CM Rasmussen suggested the Council might also decide to increase the refuse collection fee, as proposed by Director Hall, to purchase a complement of larger recycling bins. Mayor Jewitt said she thinks it would be better to let the next Council decide this issue, as there is not enough time for another round of public input. After some further discussion, CM Shields moved, and MPT Kulpa-Eddy seconded to keep the residential real property tax rate at \$0.53 per \$100 of assessed real property value, of which \$0.03 will be reserved for road repairs. The motion passed 4 to 0.

Break 2:30- 2:45 p.m.

***Parks & Recreation, Education & Civic Affairs (PRECA)***

Town organizations were invited to present their budget requests. The requests were compiled into a standardized document by PRECA aide Isler.

Historical Committee: Chair Debby Steele-Snyder said the Historical Committee has requested \$2,000 for FY 2019, \$500 less than last year. It funds the 2<sup>nd</sup> installment for a new storage cabinet in the museum costing \$1,950, a new touchscreen tablet or playback device for the museum and miscellaneous expenses related to events and ongoing programs.

Green Team: Chair Amanda Dewey said this is the first budget request submitted by the Green Team. In previous years the Green Team has covered its expenses through various fundraisers and it plans to continue to do so. The budget request of \$5,250 total is expected to pay for supplies for workshops and field trips (\$500); advertising materials (\$500); a recycling campaign (\$1,200); event-related expenses including a 'green citizen of the year' award; a tree planting program (\$1,500); and community garden expenses (\$1,000). In recent years, Public Works has provided the mulch and compost, reducing community garden expenses to almost nothing. Plus, plot rentals bring in revenues, which are deposited with the Recreation Council. If mulch and compost and tree purchases are charged to the Public Works Department, then the Green Team budget can be reduced by \$2,500.

Neighborhood Watch/Emergency Preparedness (NW/EP): Co-Chair Mike Attick said that the NW/EP's current budget is \$3,600. It covers the cost of supplies for the emergency trailer, promotional materials, and periodic CERT classes. For FY 2019, the Committee is requesting \$4,000 to replace expired and missing supplies and cover potentially higher maintenance costs due to the age of the trailer.

Recreation Council: President Susan Jones said that the Recreation Council is requesting an additional \$3,000 for a total budget of \$13,000 in FY 2019. Most of the Recreation Council budget goes toward Berwyn Heights Day. The additional funds would be used to hold more events and associated signs and advertising. This year, a new summer concert series is planned to attract more people to Town events. The Recreation Council would also like to purchase a large canopy tent, under which it would be able to hold events if it rains. However, this budget request would only cover the rental of a large canopy tent.

Karate Club: Sensei Leon Swain said the Club does not charge fees of those who take classes, and takes part in many community events. Currently the club receives \$200 a year to pay for membership in an international Karate organization. For FY 2019, it is requesting an additional \$200 to pay for membership dues for its Senior Karate group in a national organization, and to hold an Executive Hall of Fame Night.

Seniors Club: No representative was present. There is no change in their budget request from last year.

Educational Advisory Committee (EAC): No representative was present. CM Shields said the EAC currently receives no appropriation but there is \$4,500 in the Council's public relations line that is used to fund educational grants. The EAC has produced a form schools can use to request contributions from the Town.



Boys & Girls Club: No representative was present. CM Shields said for FY 2019 the Club is requesting \$2,000 to purchase: insurance from the Maryland Youth Soccer Association (\$600), signage and promotional materials (\$1000), and fundraising tools (\$350). The Town pays for the upkeep of Sports Park.

***Wrap-up***

TA Cowles reviewed a list of items she will follow up on with the Council. The Council sought to clarify some of the organizations' budget requests, the process of issuing a bond, and other budget and infrastructure items.

On a motion by CM Shields, seconded by CM Rasmussen the meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

Signed: *Kerstin Harper*, Town Clerk