



# Town of Berwyn Heights

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## Minutes Town Meeting April 8, 2015

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. Present were Mayor Cheye Calvo, Mayor Pro Tem (MPT) Jodie Kulpa-Eddy, CMs Patricia Dennison and Anthony Schreiber. CM Chris Rasmussen had an excused absence. Also present were Town Administrator (TA) Jessica Cowles, Corporal Paul Roberson, Treasurer Suzan Lape, Clerk Kerstin Harper and citizens.

Mayor Calvo led the Pledge of Allegiance.

### 1. Budget Hearings

Town Budget: Mayor Calvo gave an overview of the FY 2016 Town Budget. The budget maintains the same tax rates as last year - 50 cents per \$100 of assessed real property valuation, 3 cents for road improvements, and \$1.25 for personal property. Revenues from taxes are almost flat in this 3rd year of the triennial assessment cycle, with the exception of a \$30,000 increase in income taxes. On the expenditure side, the total operating budget is \$2.8 million, up from \$2.6 million in FY 2015. However, most of this increase is one-time receipts from the Metroland development, which is set aside in a reserve. Otherwise the operating budget is flat.

Other highlights include a decline in Town's pension contributions from 9.7% to 8.5%, which pays for anticipated health insurance increases, and an increase in the salary pool from \$17,500 to \$34,000 for merit increases, COLAs and individual salary increases as needed to attract and retain quality employees. The capital budget funds 2 police vehicles, one from the Public Safety Taxing District, and one new trash truck. Capital expenditures will go down in FY 2016, as the sidewalks projects and emergency generators projects are wrapped up this year. Additionally, the Council approved capital expenditures for repairs to the Sports Park batting cage, new Neighborhood Watch/Emergency Preparedness radios and an economic development study for the Route 193 commercial district.

MPT Kulpa Eddy gave an overview of the Administration budget, which funds the Mayor and Council, Administration Department, Municipal Building and Town Center. As with the rest of Town operations, the Administration budget is flat. Increases in staff training and public relations were offset by decreases in vehicle maintenance & repair and travel stipend. Proposed capital expenditures include the hiring of a consultant to overhaul the personnel manual and

review the position classification and pay plan system, and hiring a vendor to update the Town website to enable credit card payments and streaming meetings online.

CM Dennison said that the Parks and Recreation budget had no noteworthy changes from last year. CM Schreiber said that the Public Works budget is also flat, with salaries being the largest line item. On the capital side, Public Works will purchase a new 27 cubic yard trash truck, which will enable it to consolidate the second weekly trash collection on Thursday and leave Friday open for non-trash projects.

Mayor Calvo added that the Council also appropriated \$40,000 from surplus for operating expenditures, less than the \$50,000 originally planned, to get through this assessment cycle. The Town remains debt free and has saved \$700,000 in its infrastructure reserve, \$235,000 in the vehicle replacement reserve and nearly \$500,000 in its "rainy day" operating reserve. He is proud to say that the Town's overall financial condition is very good.

At 7:49 p.m., Mayor Calvo opened the public hearing. With no comments, the hearing was closed at 7:50 p.m.

Public Safety Taxing District Budget (PSTD): Mayor Calvo summarized the PSTD budget. He noted that Berwyn Heights in 2008 was the first municipality in Maryland to establish a special taxing district for public safety. It essentially funds one full time officer, which happens to be a detective that investigates much of the financial crime perpetrated in the commercial district. The FY 2016 PSTD appropriates \$72,800 for one police officer and \$34,800 for a police vehicle purchase. Revenues amount only to \$72,000 but are supplemented from a healthy PSTD reserve of \$42,000.

At 7:52 p.m., Mayor Calvo opened the hearing on the PSTD budget. With no comments, the hearing was closed at 7:53 p.m. Mayor Calvo concluded with an invitation to residents to comment at upcoming worksessions or in emails to the Council.

## **2. Minutes**

Clerk Harper read a summary of the March 11 Town meeting minutes. On a motion by CM Dennison and second by MPT Kulpa-Eddy, the minutes were approved 4 to 0.

## **3. Treasurer's Report**

Treasurer Lape gave the Treasurer's report for the month of March.

## **4. Mayor's Report**

Mayor Calvo commented on the State budget process. Although the legislature will adjourn next week, Governor Hogan and the legislature are battling over \$200 million in education funding proposed by the legislature, which is in part paid for by not making the required contributions to the State pension plan. If the education plan is not funded, it will entail a loss of \$70,000 for Prince George's County Schools (PGCPS).

The County budget process will not conclude until the end of May but promises to be contentious because County Executive Baker proposed a 15 cent increase in the real property tax rate, removing a long-standing cap known as TRIM. If adopted, it would mean an approximate increase of \$300 per year on residents' real estate tax bills. Residents are encouraged to let their

County Councilmember know what they think. Councilmember Dannielle Glaros welcomes comments and can be reached at [dglaros@co.pg.md.us](mailto:dglaros@co.pg.md.us).

Mayor Calvo continued that the sidewalks project is progressing well now that the weather has improved. He enjoys walking his dogs on the finished sections and receiving feedback from residents. However, the process of getting to this point has been long, difficult and more expensive than anticipated, probably costing the Town close to \$500,000 when all is done. The Council also expects to complete a new section of sidewalks in the 8900 block of 63rd Avenue funded with a Safe Routes to School Grant by the end of this fiscal year.

In other news, the Council has taken a position to support the redevelopment of the McDonald's restaurant on Greenbelt Road at 63rd Avenue. McDonald's was responsive to the Town's requests to make pedestrian safety improvements on the property, including a sidewalk on their side of 63rd Avenue and marked crossings in the parking lot. Activity is likely to begin later this summer and the restaurant will be closed for the duration of construction. The Recreation Council will sponsor another Town-wide cleanup this Saturday. Residents are encouraged to participate and will be served free pizza and snacks.

Lastly, Mayor Calvo presented the winners of this year's 'If I Were Mayor' contest, one of his favorite Mayoral acts. Each year, fourth graders at Berwyn Heights Elementary School write an essay about what they would do if they were mayor and receive prizes for placing in the top. The runners up were Auden Baldwin-Bott, Kiara Reddon, Andrea Gomez and Nathaniel Diaz. The overall winner was Gannon Forbes in Ms. Jin's class. Mayor Calvo read the essay for the record.

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*If I were mayor, I would look at how much it costs for different sources of energy for our town and try and get grant money. Two ideas of energy are a small wind turbine or solar panels. They can generate energy for our town resources, such as the town office and hall, parks and street lights.*

*A good location for the windmill would be up at the elementary school because the school is located on a hill. It is windier on hills and the school could use it to teach students about wind and energy.*

*Solar panels cost less than wind turbines and they do not need much maintenance. Panels on the Public Works building would be good for the town since Public Works uses a lot of energy. The elementary school would be a good place for the entire town's use and has the highest elevation without a lot of trees.*

*With the money the town would save, it can be reinvested into the town. As mayor, I would use the money saved to install a saltwater pool for the people of Berwyn Heights. The filtration system for a saltwater pool would not cost as much money as a pool that uses chlorine. Also, having a saltwater pool would not irritate your skin like a chlorine pool. The pool would help provide jobs for teenagers and fun for the residents in the neighborhood.*

*It is my job as mayor to make our town awesome. With these ideas, I can help make Berwyn Heights a greener place to live and bring more enjoyment with these attractions.*

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Mayor Calvo congratulated Gannon Forbes, the runners-up, and thanked all fourth graders for sharing some interesting ideas about how to make Berwyn Heights a better Town.

## **5. Department Reports**

**Administration:** MPT Kulpa-Eddy said that the Administration Department has been focused on the FY 2016 budget during the last month. On April 15, County Councilmember Danielle Glaros will hold a Town Hall meeting for her constituents at William Wirt Middle School. The meeting will be attended by County Executive Baker and staff members as well as PGCPs CEO Kevin Maxwell and will be a good opportunity to ask questions about the County's proposed budget and education plans.

**Code Compliance:** Mayor Calvo said that the Town has continued its search for a new code supervisor and has identified 2 finalists, which the Council will interview next Monday.

**Parks and Recreation, Education and Civic Affairs:** CM Dennison said that she has been working with the Council on putting together the FY 2016 budget. As noted, a Town-wide cleanup will be held on April 11.

**Public Health and Safety:** Corporal Paul Roberson gave the police activities report for March for Chief Antolik, who was unwell. There were 4 Part I offenses, all thefts from cars, which is below the 5-year average of 5.8. The year to date total was 16, also below the 5-year average of 18.2. The police also wrote 159 citations and issued 234 speed camera tickets, all on Greenbelt Road. The lower than normal offenses and citations were likely due to the cold weather but credit should also be given to watchful residents who report unusual activities.

**Public Works:** CM Schreiber reported that Gary Stanton was chosen as employee of the month for March. In upcoming weeks, the Public Works Department will perform pot hole repairs, prune broken and low-hanging branches in the Town right-of-way and prepare for Berwyn Heights Day. Following the recent water main break on Cunningham Drive, Director Lockley has contacted WSSC to ask if the Town might be given the tools to perform an emergency shutoff so that it can prevent water from flooding homes and back yards in the future.

## **6. Committee Reports**

**Green Team:** Mayor Calvo reported that the Green Team is sponsoring a run/ walk around Lake Artemesia this Sunday as part of the 'Lose It to Win It' fitness campaign and has enlisted enough participants for a fitness boot camp on Sunday mornings. The Community Garden is open and most plots have been rented.

**Historical Committee:** Clerk Harper, as Chair of the Historical Committee, reported that the Council appointed Lee Fuerst, the BHHC's Vice Chair, as liaison to the Anacostia Trails Heritage Association (ATHA), and Debby Steele-Snyder as a new voting member.

**Neighborhood Watch/Emergency Preparedness:** MPT Kulpa-Eddy said that NW/EP will host the 2nd annual Wine Tasting fundraiser on April 24. Up to 6 Maryland wineries are expected to participate and there will be live music. A \$10 entrance fee applies. The Committee will again have its trailer open on Berwyn Heights Day and the next meeting is on May 6.

**Recreation Council:** Nothing was reported.

## **7. Unfinished Business**

**Ordinance No. 134 - Adoption of Commercial Clean Lot Amendments:** Mayor Calvo said that the Council is still working on refining amendments to the Ordinance but hopes to adopt it at the

next Town meeting. On a motion by CM Dennison, and second by CM Schreiber the Ordinance was continued.

## **8. New Business**

***Ordinance No. 169 - 1st Reading & Introductions of the FY 2016 Town Budget:*** MPT Kulpa-Eddy moved and CM Dennison seconded to introduce the FY 2016 budget. Without any comments, the motion passed 4 to 0.

***Ordinance No. 170 - 1st Reading & Introduction of the FY 2016 Public Safety Taxing District Budget:*** CM Dennison moved and CM Schreiber seconded to introduce Ordinance 170. Mayor Calvo noted that the real property tax rate for the Public Safety Taxing District is 10 cents and the personal property tax rate is 15 cents per \$100 of assessed valuation. With no further comments, the motion passed in a 4 to 0 vote.

***Ordinance No. 119 - 1st Reading & Introduction of Traffic & Parking Amendments:*** CM Dennison moved and MPT Kulpa-Eddy seconded to introduce the Ordinance amendments. Mayor Calvo explained that the proposed amendments address two specific issues: 1) updating the definition of an 'abandoned, junked or wrecked' vehicle to match the definition in the recently amended Clean Lot Ordinance; and 2) adopting a regulation that already exists in State law to require vehicles to display front and rear license plates. Once adopted in a Town ordinance, the revenue from citations for this violation will go to the Town of Berwyn Heights. With no further comments, the motion was adopted in a 4 to 0 vote.

***Resolution 02-2015 - 1st Reading & Adoption of Clean Lot Fine Schedule:*** Mayor Calvo explained that the Resolution implements the new table of enforcement schedules adopted with the recently amended Ordinance 107. It maintains a \$100 fine for most first time violations and a \$200 fine for repeat or multiple repeat violations. A \$25 fine applies to all violations carrying an immediate fine, such as parking on grass, as well as the new imminent threat category established for violations such as an unsafe storage of flammable materials. If violations that carry immediate fines are not corrected within 24 hours the fine doubles to \$50.

CM Dennison moved to adopt the Resolution. CM Schreiber seconded. With no further comments, the motion passed 4 to 0.

## **9. Citizens Discussion**

There was none.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:32 p.m.

Signed: *Kerstin Harper, Town Clerk*