



Town of Berwyn Heights

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Minutes Town Meeting July 12, 2017

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. Present were Mayor Cheryl Jewitt, Mayor Pro Tem (MPT) Jodie Kulpa-Eddy, Councilmembers (CMs) Chris Rasmussen, and Gerald Shields. CM Patricia Dennison was absent. Also present were Town Administrator (TA) Jessica Cowles, Chief of Police Kenneth Antolik, Cpl. James Ignowski, Code Compliance Supervisor Freddie Glass, Public Works Director Stevie Cox, Treasurer Michelle Rodriguez, Clerk Kerstin Harper, Interim Police Chief of the City of Greenbelt, Maj. T. Kemp, and citizens.

Mayor Jewitt led the Pledge of Allegiance.

1. Commendation of Cpl. Ignowski

The City of Greenbelt Interim Chief of Police, Major Kemp, was present to award a certificate of appreciation to Cpl. Ignowski. Cpl. Ignowski had assisted Greenbelt's police in apprehending the perpetrator of a carjacking on July 2. He identified and gave chase to a vehicle on Branchville Road that had been stolen in the City of Greenbelt where the suspect was captured.

2. Minutes

Clerk Harper read a summary of the June 14 Town meeting minutes. On a motion by MPT Kulpa-Eddy and second by CM Rasmussen, the minutes were approved 4 to 0.

3. Mayor's Report

Mayor Jewitt reported that she met with the new Berwyn Heights Elementary School (BHES) Principal, Amanda Alerich, during a July 22 meet and greet. A letter appealing SHA's decision not to conduct a noise test along Kenilworth Avenue was approved by the Council and has been sent. There were two recent house fires, one of which occurred at a rental property belonging to CM Rasmussen. The Berwyn Heights Volunteer Fire Department and other fire companies responded quickly and brought the fires under control. Patrick Goforth, a resident of Ruatan Street, passed away on July 10 at age 59.

Mayor Jewitt continued that she, other Councilmembers and staff attended the annual MML convention. She participated in a number of workshops and meetings, completed the requirements for her certificate of Excellence in Local Governance and was elected coordinator for the Prince George's County Mayors delegation. The Maryland Assembly passed a law that

enables victims of domestic violence to obtain a protective order requiring the respondent (alleged abuser) be monitored with GPS. The law was named in honor of Berwyn Heights resident Amber Shinault, who was murdered by her ex-boyfriend in 2012.

4. Department Reports

Administration: MPT Kulpa-Eddy gave an overview of the workshops and meetings she attended at the MML convention, where she was again the Town's flag bearer. The Council received a number of comments about domestic animals, which call for a review of Ordinance 101 – Animals. She, NW/EP member Sarah Speth and TA Cowles are working on updating a 2003 emergency operations plan that will be reviewed by the Council in the coming month. The Prince George's County Council will hold a town hall meeting on July 17 on the status of the County zoning code rewrite.

Treasurer Rodriguez gave the treasurer's report for the month of June and a summary of the classes she attended at the MML convention. TA Cowles gave an overview of her activities at the MML convention, where she was appointed to serve on the 5-member board of the Maryland City Managers Association. The Administration Department has been working on closing out the 2017 fiscal year and preparing for the annual audit. A UMD graduate student in Public Policy has been hired as a summer intern and is working on obtaining the *sustainable communities* designation for the Town of Berwyn Heights. A workgroup comprising Town staff, CM Shields and the Washington First Bank branch manager is assisting in the effort. The Town also obtained a wellness intern, who is giving weekly yoga lessons to interested staff, and is partnering with the City of Hyattsville in putting on a wellness fair.

Public Health and Safety (discussed out of order): Berwyn Heights Volunteer Fire Department (BHVFD) members Brandon Davendorf, Christopher Hagan and Michael Hall were present to give fire safety tips, as there have been several house fires in recent weeks. The fires are still under investigation, but arson has been ruled out. The BHVFD members said it is important to have an escape plan in the event of a house fire, and working smoke detectors on every floor of the home. New models have sealed batteries that last 10 years. They also gave information on special fire alert systems for people with disabilities and minimizing the risk of grill fires.

Chief Antolik advised never to grill on a deck due to the high risk of accidental fires, and to post special plaques to alert first responders to the presence of pets. He then gave the police activities report for June. There were six Part I offenses in June, as opposed to the 5-year average of 4.28. The year-to-date total was 25 as opposed to the 5-year average of 29. The police issued 237 state and municipal citations and 71 speed camera tickets, all on Greenbelt Road. BHPD and TA Cowles are exploring with the speed camera vendor whether speed cameras can be moved to other locations in Berwyn Heights.

Chief Antolik announced that the BHPD has set up an "internet exchange safe zone" in the BHPD parking lot, monitored by a video camera, where one may transact business with strangers one meets online. Lastly, he reminded everyone to come out for Berwyn Heights' National Night Out. Volunteers for the dunk tank are being sought to raise money for the BHVFD.

Code Compliance: Code Supervisor Glass gave the code activities report for the month of June, and reported that he and 4 inspectors of the County's Department of Permits, Inspections &

Enforcement (DPIE) conducted joint inspections of the Town's commercial and industrial properties last month. They found numerous violations of County and Town code, many related to missing permits, missing address identification and clean lot issues. Correcting these violations may take up to 6 months, as it may require obtaining permits or involve possible court proceedings.

CM Rasmussen thanked the fire companies who responded to the house fire at his Ruatan Street rental property, as well as the BHPD, neighbors and friends who provided advice and assistance in the aftermath. He seconded the advice from the Chief and BHVFD members about preventing house fires, adding that the County recommends having outdoor grills as far as 10' from the house or any flammable structure, and to always be present to monitor the grill.

CM Rasmussen further reported that the Council has received a number of complaints about barking dogs and plans to reopen Ordinance 101- Animals for revision. He recommended that those disturbed by barking dogs try to speak with the dog owners first before filing a complaint with the Town. The Code Department continues to work with property owners on abating spreading bamboo, which must be confined to within 2' of the property line, and encouraged neighbors to work together on addressing the problem. CM Rasmussen wrapped up with thoughts on the cancellation of the FBI headquarters search, and a digest of the MML workshops he attended.

Parks and Recreation, Education and Civic Affairs: CM Shields reported that the Council appointed Historical Committee member Lee Fuerst to serve as the Town's liaison to the Anacostia Trails Heritage Association (ATHA). At the MML convention, he received the Town's Banner City award, attended workshops, participated in the Young Elected Leaders Story Slam, and sought information on how other cities interact with community organizations. He also announced the Boys & Girls' Club (BG&C) ongoing fall soccer registration, the search to fill the vacant secretary position on the BG&C Board, and the upcoming National Night Out.

Public Works: Public Works Director Cox reported that the recycling collection was down over the previous month, due to the 4th of July holiday. He and Foreman Cardenas attended the MML Industry Day and Public Works Directors meeting. He was elected Vice President of the Maryland Public Works Officials Association, attended several workshops, and explored partnering with neighboring communities on building a salt dome. On June 22, a reconstituted Shade Tree Board met for the first time and selected Amanda Dewey as chair and himself as recording secretary. The Board will meet every other month, with the next meeting scheduled for August 16 at 7:00 a.m.

Director Cox announced several upcoming initiatives, including a street marking project, the drafting of an RFP for a roads assessment study, participation in a vendor's demonstration of a new Four Cities street sweeper, interviewing applicants for a vacant crewman position, and collecting information on damaged and non-functioning storm drains in Berwyn Heights for repairs by Prince George's County.

5. Committee Reports

Green Team: CM Shields reported that the Green Team continues to work on the Sustainable Maryland recertification.

Historical Committee: Clerk Harper reported that the Historical Committee received a demonstration from the County's GIS Section on a digital walking tour application it is creating for the Committee.

Neighborhood Watch/Emergency Preparedness: CM Shields reported that the roof of the emergency trailer has been patched and the Committee is assisting in the drafting of an updated emergency operations plan. MPT Kulpa-Eddy added that a CERT training course will be offered in Landover on August 5 and 6. Anyone interested should contact Co-Chair Mike Attick. The Committee is finalizing plans for a wine festival and will announce a date soon.

Recreation Council: CM Shields reminded everyone to come out for National Night Out.

6. Unfinished Business

There was none.

7. New Business

There was none.

8. Citizens Discussion

Councilmembers reported on the citizen comments they received, including fire trucks racing down Pontiac Street to respond to a report of a gas leak at the Town Center, and support for the acquisition of a Humvee.

Phil Ventura, 57th Avenue, gave additional tips on fire safety, advising residents to turn off the valve of propane tanks after every use, and to install wired smoke detectors in combination with battery powered ones. He also suggested the Town return to painting street markings and gave a short demonstration. He asked whether former Councilmember Wilkinson managed to obtain a salt dome for the Town. He was informed that the Town made a contract with SHA to receive salt during the winter.

Joan Hayden, Seminole Street, commended Officer Ignowski on his award, and enquired when the Town intends to get recycling bins with wheels. She was informed that the decision awaits a discussion by the Council on whether to equip the garbage trucks with an automatic lift.

John Biddle, Berwyn Road, expressed his disappointment about the FBI headquarters decision and noted that speeding on Berwyn Road continues despite 'children at play' signs.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:53 p.m.

Kerstin Harper, Town Clerk