



Town of Berwyn Heights

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Minutes Town Meeting December 13, 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) Patricia Dennison, Chris Rasmussen, and Gerald Shields. Also present were, Chief Kenneth Antolik, Code Compliance Supervisor Freddie Glass, Treasurer Michelle Rodriguez, Clerk Kerstin Harper and citizens. Town Administrator (TA) Jessica Cowles had an excused absence.

Mayor Jewitt led the Pledge of Allegiance.

1. Minutes

Clerk Harper read a summary of the November 8 Town meeting minutes. On a motion by CM Dennison and second by CM Shields, the minutes were approved 5 to 0.

2. Mayor's Report

Mayor Jewitt wished everyone a happy holiday and advised residents to watch out for the delivery of Christmas packages, as several thefts have been reported. Mayor Jewitt continued that the Town's refuse disposal education has resulted in greater compliance with the requirement to place refuse in a container with the tight-fitting lid. The Council has begun discussing proposed security improvements at the Town Center and the Public Works yard, and continues to work on a Town organization policy. CM Shields is reaching out to Town organizations for input. At the last worksession, she presided over her first code appeals, which highlighted the importance for rental home owners to communicate with the Code Department. The Council also selected a new Town Attorney, Suellen Ferguson, to replace the late John Shay, while continuing to search for a Public Works director.

3. Department Reports

Administration: MPT Kulpa-Eddy reported she, CM Dennison and TA Cowles met with the Town's State, County and School Board representatives for the annual legislative dinner in November to discuss the upcoming legislative agenda. School Board Member Grady informed that PGCPs has started to work on the FY 2019 budget, which may include some items for Berwyn Heights Elementary School. The School Board also decided to extend recess times to 30 minutes. Ms. Grady has been invited to attend an upcoming worksession or Town meeting. County Councilmember Glaros gave an update on the Purple Line, for which construction is now underway. Residents are encouraged to sign up and follow construction updates at

purplelinemd.com to stay informed about impacts on local traffic. The Council told State legislators about their concerns regarding the WSSC rate restructuring, and learned that a bill has been drafted that would allow WSSC to establish different rates for different customer classes. This may result in lower rate increases for residential and commercial customers. Delegate Washington will monitor the legislation.

MPT Kulpa-Eddy also attended the Prince George's County Municipal Association (PGCMA) Legislative Dinner, where PGCMA and MML legislative priorities were presented. More funding for environmental projects and education, a short-term rental hotel tax and a County-municipal revenue sharing agreement were mentioned as County priorities. On the State level, Highway User Revenue restoration, protecting personal data on municipal e-mail lists, and ensuring municipalities have permitting authority over small cell facilities were designated as priorities.

Further, the Council submitted comments on the comprehensive review draft of the new County Zoning Ordinance, voicing concerns over the approval process for major and minor subdivisions, and requesting clarification on certain land uses and the effect of rezoning on properties north of Branchville Road. MPT Kulpa-Eddy also attended Senator Pinsky's Town Hall. Residents are encouraged to attend the State delegation's legislative reception on January 18 in Annapolis, which affords the opportunity to speak directly with our representatives.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Rodriguez gave the Treasurer's report for November. In response to questions, she said she will check the number provided for receipts for November, and then send out a revised report. Ms. Rodriguez also gave the Administration Department report, as TA Cowles was absent: TA Cowles continues as Acting Public Works Director until a new director has been hired. She is working with the University of Maryland on a sustainability projects list, finalizing the employee evaluations, and starting to prepare the FY 2019 budget. Monthly accomplishments include the selection of a new Town Attorney, adoption of an Emergency Operations Plan and an inventory of the contents of the emergency trailer, which involved the NW/EP committee, CM Rasmussen and a number of Town staff.

Code Compliance: Supervisor Glass gave the Code Compliance report for November. A total of 30 code violations were issued, as well as 6 building permits, 2 dumpster permits and 25 rental licenses. Two new rental properties were registered and vacant properties numbered 12.

In response to CM Rasmussen, Supervisor Glass explained how the Code Department cooperates with the Public Works Department on the enforcement of refuse violations. Public Works assembles a list of households where they have observed during trash collection that the refuse has not been placed into bins with lids. It passes the list to the Code Department, which confirms the violations, takes photos and leaves a notice at properties not in compliance. This courtesy notice requests compliance with refuse regulations going forward before any fines are issued. In response to MPT Kulpa-Eddy, Mr. Glass said 2 properties that were demolished in 2014 have been sold to a developer, and a building permit has been issued for one.

CM Rasmussen said that an outfit of tree contractors worked in his neighborhood and went door-to-door to offer their services. Residents should be aware that anyone soliciting must have a permit from the Town. Commenting on the code appeals the Council heard at the last worksession, he said that the Town allows property owners to appeal any code fine to the Town

Council, which the Council may then uphold, modify or wave. Property owners should know the Town always communicates with the owners about code violations because they, and not tenants, are responsible for compliance with Town ordinances.

CM Rasmussen thanked all involved in helping with the inventory of the emergency trailer, which should be a good basis for seeking funding for emergency supplies in the next budget process. Further, the Council had a discussion with TA Cowles about the DPW director search, which led to an examination of how the position was advertised and, more broadly, about how the Department is organized. Lastly, a friend sent him a packet of Box Tops for Education with his Christmas greetings, which he passed on to CM Shields.

Parks and Recreation, Education and Civic Affairs: CM Shields said that Box Tops can be dropped off in the Town office to benefit Berwyn Heights Elementary School. He then reported that the Town organizations policy is on hold while he is soliciting input from all organizations and clubs. He is working on renewing Berwyn Heights' banner city status for 2018 and inspecting holiday decorations in Town as part of the annual decorating contest. Winners will be announced in early January. Lastly, CM Shields showed a 2007 gold presidential service award pin and 2012 bronze volunteer service medallion he recently received.

Stephen Isler, the recently appointed Parks & Recreation aide, reported on his first month of activities. He was busy attending the meetings of Town organizations and getting familiar with their members and programs. The draft organization policy was provided to the groups for feedback and a revised draft is expected by early February. Upcoming events include a January 13 Regifting Party, February 10 Valentine Cards & Cookies event, and Berwyn Heights Day on May 5. Residents are encouraged to participate in community life by joining a group. Ideas and comments can be emailed to him at isler2002@gmail.com and to CM Shields.

Public Works: CM Dennison reported that the Town continues to search for a Public Works Director. Public Works employees appreciate residents for cooperating with the Department's effort to improve the refuse collection process.

Mayor Jewitt reported that loose leaf collection has experienced delays due to equipment breakdowns, but with repairs to the leaf vacuum completed, the collection has resumed. Further, the Council is looking over the job description for the Public Works Director, having concluded that too much expertise may have been required from potential applicants. She will review the job description, and plans to provide a revised version to TA Cowles by Friday. While the search continues, the Department is run by Acting Public Works Director Cowles, Foreman Cardenas and Administrative Assistant Benjamin.

Public Health and Safety: Chief Antolik gave the police activities report for November. There were 7 Part I offenses, as opposed to the 5-year average of 8.4. The year-to-date total was 54, and the 5-year average 62.8. The police also issued approximately 162 state and municipal citations and 32 speed camera tickets on Greenbelt Road. Chief Antolik provided safety tips for the upcoming holidays. Residents should watch out for delivery of packages as there have been a number of reports of stolen packages left by the front door. Free *SoberRide* cab service is available in the D.C. area by calling 800-200-TAXI. Chief Antolik concluded with a BHPD rendition of "T'Was the Night Before Christmas."

CM Rasmussen commented that the speed camera on Pontiac Street has not recorded violations in months, and should probably be moved to a different location.

4. Committee Reports

Green Team: No report.

Historical Committee: Chair Debby Steele-Snyder reported that the BHHC's fall reception was a big success. Guests got a demonstration of a new historic walking tour app that can be downloaded to a smart phone or viewed online. The Committee also continues to work on the oral history program and has interviewed many long-time residents. Some do not like to be on camera. Hence members are looking into other ways of recording their memories, from writing them down to audio recording. The next meeting will be held on December 20.

Neighborhood Watch/Emergency Preparedness: Co-chair Mike Attick reported that NW/EP held its elections at the last meeting and the same officers were re-elected: He and Merrill Weinrich will continue as co-chairs, Shirley Attick as Treasurer and Helen Weinrich as Secretary. The Committee is in need of new volunteers. Any interested resident can attend the monthly meetings held on the first Wednesday of the month.

Recreation Council: CM Shields said that he attended the last Recreation Council meeting and discussed the organizations policy.

5. Unfinished Business

There was none.

6. New Business

There was none.

7. Citizens Discussion

Mayor Jewitt said she and TA Cowles have followed up on citizens' comments regarding inadequate signage at streets intersecting with Greenbelt Road and about moving homes to a different feeder in Pepco's power grid to reduce power outages. So far, SHA and Pepco have not replied to the inquiries.

Nathan Kight, 58th Avenue, asked how he might obtain a recycling bin from the Town since bagged recyclables are not accepted. Mayor Jewitt said he would have to request one from Public Works, and offered to do it for him.

Mike Attick, 62nd Avenue, asked why the Council is embarking on writing a (Town organization) volunteer policy at this point. CM Shields said the Town wants to minimize its liability for incidents involving volunteers, establish guidelines for the use of Town facilities and the Town seal, and for providing funding. Mr. Attick said some Town organizations may go bankrupt if they are required to obtain insurance as set forth in the policy. Liability has not been an issue to-date despite a number of accidents that have occurred on Town property because the Town's insurance company paid for them.

Mr. Attick also stated that he would like to have a copy of Pepco's power grid for Berwyn Heights; that the Council should review and provide an interpretation of the Charter Section 304

on Council meetings; and that the proposed security improvements at Public Works and the Town Center are too expensive. A \$10,000 electronic gate for the Public Works yard would not prevent thefts or provide the expected security.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Signed: *Kerstin Harper*, Town Clerk