



# TOWN OF BERWYN HEIGHTS

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## Minutes Town Meeting August 8, 2018

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. Present were Mayor Lynn White, Mayor Pro Tem (MPT) Stephen Isler, Councilmembers (CMs) Jason Papanikolas and Ethan Sweep. Also present were Interim Town Administrator (TA) Mike McLaughlin, Clerk Kerstin Harper, Treasurer Michelle Rodriguez, Chief Kenneth Antolik, Public Works Director Kenneth Hall, Code Compliance Supervisor Freddie Glass and citizens.

Mayor White led the Pledge of Allegiance.

### 1. Minutes

Clerk Harper read a summary of the July 11 Town meeting minutes. On a motion by MPT Isler, seconded by CM Papanikolas, the minutes were approved 4 to 0.

### 2. Mayor's Report

Mayor White reported on the July 25 Four Cities Coalition meeting hosted by Berwyn Heights. Participants received a legislative update from County Councilwoman Glaros, a presentation on the 2020 Census and a request to support the re-instatement of career fire fighters at the Branchville Volunteer Fire Department. Mayor White also attended a celebration of the Berwyn Heights Volunteer Fire Department (BHVFD) Yvorra Leadership Development Foundation, which raises money for the professional development of fire fighters. A stretch of highway was dedicated to honor BHVFD fire fighter Yvorra, who lost his life there in the line of duty.

Mayor White continued that the Council held a special session on July 30 at which Maria Broadbent was selected as the new Town Manager. She asked Ms. Broadbent to introduce herself. Ms. Broadbent said she is honored to have been selected for the position. She had the chance to meet with senior staff and a group of citizens during the interview process and is looking forward to working for the Town.

### 3. Department Reports

**Administration:** MPT Isler said he has been busy learning about the Administration Department and has met with TA McLaughlin to discuss its functions, staffing and possible streamlining of operations. One of the things he plans focus on is the creation of a welcome packet for new residents. MPT Isler commended the BHPD, especially Cpl. Krouse, for putting together another great National Night Out and thanked Cynthia Jackson, the Director of the Berwyn Heights Community Center, for her help.

**Administrator's Report:** TA McLaughlin gave the monthly report for the Administration Department. He assisted Public Works Director Hall with drawing up a proposal on street resurfacing vendors to be voted on later tonight. He helped set up a briefing from Andrew Fellows, UMD Community Outreach Program Manager, on the University's connected communities initiative, in which Berwyn Heights participates; and he coordinated the recruitment of the new Town Manager. In the coming month, he plans to work on the transition to new Town Manager; help create an information strategy for the Code Compliance Department; draft a proposal for expanding the Town's public information capacity and a proposal for improving the Town's return on investments.

Mayor White added that the Administration Department also hosted two visits from Pepco representatives, who provided much useful information on modernizing utility infrastructure and street lights. She will brief the Council on these programs at an upcoming worksession.

**Treasurer's Report:** Treasurer Rodriguez gave the treasurer's report for July. The report has a new format that is intended to provide more meaningful information about the financial state of the Town. Treasurer Rodriguez highlighted several important items, including an 81% compliance rate in business licenses paid; an \$8,000 savings on the purchase of the new Four Cities street sweeper and \$4,000 savings in the liability insurance payment.

TA McLaughlin added that the re-formatted Treasurer's report consists of a detailed profit and loss statement and a summary of the detailed report. It also shows the percentages of revenues received and expenditures paid year to date. If the Council agrees, the statement of the general fund balance will no longer be provided as it is deemed less useful. There ensued discussion about some of the particulars of the statements.

**Code Compliance:** Code Compliance Supervisor Glass gave a summary of the code activities report for July. Currently, there are 265 rental units in Town of which 213 are active. There were 5 fewer rental properties compared to the previous month. The Department performed 13 inspections and 7 re-inspections and issued 13 rental licenses. The Department also issued 3 dumpster permits, 31 Clean Lot violations and 1 Commercial Clean Lot violation. CM Papanikolas added that he is working with Supervisor Glass on reformatting this report to make it easier to track the various activities.

**Parks, Recreation, Education & Civic Affairs:** Mayor White announced an August 12 rock concert at Sports Park and a possible rain garden workshop in September. The Department is expected to resume work on a Town organizations policy once the 5<sup>th</sup> Councilmember has come on board.

**Public Works:** Director Hall gave the monthly report. Public Works performed grass cutting and trimming of roadside vegetation, marked handicap parking spaces at the Town Center, and helped set up for National Night Out. He worked on a proposal for selecting vendors for the upcoming street resurfacing project. In the coming month, he will track the work of SaveATree's tree pruning activity and the County's storm water project. The crew will continue to update road signs and street markings as time permits. Director Hall concluded with a report on refuse collection totals and associated expenses and receipts.

MPT Isler thanked the Public Works staff for helping make sure that National Night Out was a success.

**Public Safety:** Chief Antolik thanked BHPD intern Marlene Anaya for singing the national anthem on National Night Out, then gave the police activities report for July. There were 7 Part I offenses, bringing the total this year to 29. The 5-year average is 25.4. The police also wrote 141 state and municipal citations, 39 speed camera tickets, and made 1 arrest for 1<sup>st</sup> degree burglary. BHPD is gearing up for its 'no bullying' campaign for the start of the new school year and will be hosting an appreciation lunch for the Seniors Club on August 21.

Mayor White said she received citizen comments about illegal activity at the hockey rink and possible MS-13 activity at the Nevada Street trail. Residents reported seeing Park police following up and are encouraged to continue reporting suspicious activity in the area. Chief Antolik said BHPD will take calls related to this matter and is coordinating with the Park Police. His officers are also on top of the hockey rink activities. Kids sometimes gather there to drink, and smoke and he wants to make sure this is handled in a tactful way.

#### **4. Committee Reports**

**Quality of Life Commission:** Chair Meg Miller Shane reported that all subcommittees of the Quality of Life Commission have held meetings and got a lot done. Outreach to the Latino community has been assigned to the Commission as whole and it is trying to recruit Spanish speaking residents to help with that effort. The Commission also agreed to take on the function of a Complete Count Committee to ensure better participation in the 2020 Census. The next full Commission meeting will be held on August 13. All residents, including Councilmembers, are invited to attend.

**Education Advisory Committee:** Mayor White reported there was discussion at the recent Four Cities meeting about how the Cities' Education Advisory Committees can collaborate to improve local schools. It was agreed to hold a joint Education Town Hall that would address the range of issues concerning the schools students from the Four Cities attend.

**Green Team:** Facilitator Amanda Dewey gave the report. She said the Green Team continues to celebrate a year of recycling and will hold a recycling competition this fall. She encouraged dog owners to make use of the new dog waste stations Public Works recently installed and thanked the volunteers who participate in the Town cleanups, held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of each month.

Ms. Dewey continued that the Green Team has looked into revitalizing the rain garden located at the southwest corner of the Town Center parking lot. The rain garden was installed by the County in 2004 but has not been kept up. The Green Team has contacted the Anacostia Watershed Society (AWS) for assistance with revitalizing the garden and hold planting event and rain garden workshop either in November or early next spring. The Green Team hopes the Town might help finance the purchase of plants and supplies for the project. Councilmembers expressed interest in supporting the project and plan to discuss it in more detail at a future worksession.

**Historical Committee:** Clerk Harper reported that the Historical Committee next will meet in September and hold its election of officers. The Committee frequently partners with the Anacostia Trails Heritage Area (ATHA) and will send 2 volunteers to assist with what promises to be a great celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the first airmail flight out of the College Park airport.

**Neighborhood Watch/ Emergency Preparedness:** NW/EP Co-Chair Mike Attick said that approximately 70 people signed up for the CERT training on August 11-12 and is now sold out. It will include a disaster drill in which BHVF members will participate. Mr. Attick thanked BHPD and Public Works for their efforts in organizing National Night Out, and all those who helped out at the grills. He thought it was the best National Night Out yet.

**Recreation Council:** President Susan Jones gave an overview of the Recreation Council's fall lineup of events: this Sunday at Sports Park a classic rock concert with the Woo Yeahs; September 20 an ice cream social at the Town Center; Trunk or Treat on October 20 at the Community Center; November 2, a new event, Berwyn Heights team trivia; and December 8, the annual tree lighting.

## **5. Unfinished Business**

There was none.

## **5. New Business**

**Variance 53-18, 5805 58<sup>th</sup> Avenue:** TA McLaughlin said the home owner who applied for the variance was here earlier but has left. The variance is needed for widening a driveway at 5805 58<sup>th</sup> Avenue to accommodate 2 parked cars next to each other. This would require paving over a substantial area in the front yard. The variance request triggered 2 additional variances to validate existing, non-conforming setbacks of the dwelling and a shed. The background documentation contains a schematic showing the driveway extension and a photo with 2 cars parked next to each other on what is already a double wide driveway, with one half belonging to a neighbor. The County Board of Zoning Appeals will make the decision to grant or deny the variance. The Town Council's action is about whether to support the variance request by the home owner.

In discussion the following points were made:

- changes in the curb cut can be approved by the Town;
- a wider driveway would result in fewer cars parked in the street;
- there is no unique circumstance resulting in undue hardship to home owner if variance is denied

MPT Isler moved to take no position on variance. CM Sweep seconded. The motion passed 4 to 0.

**Resolution 5-2018 – Award of Street Renovation Contract:** TA McLaughlin said the Council discussed the proposal for street renovation contractors at the last worksession. It was recommended to award the contract for Phase I and Phase II of the Town's street renovation program to VMP Construction Company by 'piggybacking' onto a County contract. If approved, the contractor is ready to start construction this coming Monday. The contractor would complete Phase I of the street renovation program, leaving out streets WSSC is planning to work on, and then come back to the Council for approval of Phase II.

Mayor White expressed her concerns with the process of awarding the contract:

- failure to provide an updated list of streets to be repaired in Phase I and II;
- failure to provide sufficient options on contractors;
- failure to present comparison information on the contracts in a readily intelligible format, such as a spreadsheet;

MPT Isler responded, in the context of piggybacking onto the County contract, the type of comparison chart Mayor White requested is not needed. He trusts the judgment of Public Works Director Hall in recommending the best qualified contractors. He moved to approve Resolution 5-2018 to award the contract to VMP Construction. CM Papanikolas seconded. The motion passed 3 to 1, with Mayor White opposed.

***Support for McDonald's Revised Site Plan:*** Mayor White said the Council received a presentation on a revised site plan for the reconstruction of the McDonald's restaurant at 6219 Greenbelt Road last Monday. The changes are largely confined to architectural style. The Council is requested to send a letter supporting the revised site plan to Planning Department. MPT Isler moved to send a letter of support. CM Sweep seconded. The motion passed 4 to 0.

***Support for Restoring Career Firefighters to Branchville Volunteer Fire Department:*** Mayor White said at the last Four Cities meeting, the President of the Branchville Fire Department asked the Four Cities to support the re-reinstatement of career firefighters to his station. The Council discussed the letter and made the following points:

- The letter to Prince George's County Fire Chief Barksdale represents only one side of the issue;
- The County has stated it would restore career firefighters if the Department moved further north on Rhode Island Avenue. College Park and Berwyn Heights Volunteer Fire Departments are close enough to cover the area serviced by Branchville.
- The Branchville Fire Department has new leadership interested in re-opening the career staffing issue because it has difficulty recruiting enough volunteers.
- The Berwyn Heights Volunteer Fire Department supports career staff at Branchville.

MPT Isler moved and CM Sweep seconded to sign the letter of support. The motion passed 3-0-1, with CM Papanikolas abstaining.

## **7. Citizen Comments**

Former Councilmember Jodie Kulpa-Eddy, Ruatan Street, thanked the Council for moving forward with the street project. The previous Council heard from many residents who welcomed the planned street renovations. It would have been helpful if this Council could have had the price list from independent street contractors the previous Council was given. Those prices were substantially higher than what is offered in the County contracts. Ms. Kulpa-Eddy further commented that McDonald's has submitted site plans for the Council's review on two previous occasions. She hopes this plan will be realized and the new restaurant actually built. Lastly, she advised that variances are the only way for the Town to influence County zoning decisions and ensure some conformity with Town aesthetic and environmental preferences. Previous Councils have often attached conditions to their support of variances, mostly relating to storm water runoff and disposition of trees.

Phil Ventura, 57<sup>th</sup> Avenue, commented that National Night Out was very well done and attributed it to the leadership of Chief Antolik. BHPD attends to a wide variety of concerns other Police Department might decline to perform, ranging from checking on seniors to holding community events.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:22 p.m.

Signed: *Kerstin Harper*  
Kerstin Harper, Town Clerk