



Town of Berwyn Heights

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Minutes Town Meeting November 18, 2015

The meeting was called to order at 8:00 p.m. Present were Mayor Jodie Kulpa-Eddy, Mayor Pro Tem (MPT) Chris Rasmussen, CMs Patricia Dennison, Maria Robles, and Lynn White. Also present were Town Administrator (TA) Jessica Cowles, Chief of Police Kenneth Antolik, Treasurer Michelle Rodriguez, Clerk Kerstin Harper and citizens.

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy led the Pledge of Allegiance.

1. Minutes

Clerk Harper read a summary of the October 14 Town meeting minutes. On a motion by CM Dennison and second by MPT Rasmussen, the minutes were approved 5 to 0.

2. Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Rodriguez gave the Treasurer's report for the month of October.

3. Mayor's Report

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy announced that Public Works Director Lockley is no longer in the Town's employ. The Department is now led by an interim director. She also announced a series of executive sessions the Council has held since she was sworn-in as Mayor. On July 6, two executive sessions were held: one at 6:30 p.m. to interview applicants for the Council seat vacated by former Mayor Calvo, and another at 9:35 p.m. to select the future councilmember. On August 24, an executive session was held to fill a vacancy on the Town Council left by CM Schreiber's resignation. On September 21, an executive session was held to discuss the performance evaluations of department directors. On October 5, an executive session was held to discuss a pending lawsuit. On October 19 and November 2, executive sessions were held to discuss a legal and a personnel matter, and on November 16, an executive session was held to discuss a personnel matter.

In other news, Mayor Kulpa-Eddy said that Prince George's County representatives gave a presentation at the last worksession on the findings of a hydrologic study the County commissioned following the severe flooding experienced during a June 10, 2014 rain storm. The storm was labeled a "200 year event" with 4.7" of rain falling in the very short period of 90 minutes. County representatives and a team of consultants explained that the Town's system was

built between 50 – 70 years ago and designed to lesser standards. Since then, the Town's population has expanded, more homes have been built and more impervious surfaces added resulting in more runoff.

The examination of the Town's stormwater system found that the two largest drain systems are deficient and cannot handle a "10-year rain event" that serves as today's standard. In the short term, the County plans to improve the performance of the existing system through regular maintenance and by cleaning up the existing inlets, some of which are blocked. In the long term, the Town's storm water system has to be redesigned and portions of it rebuilt. The first step is a feasibility study the County is planning to undertake in FY 2017. The Town will work with the County's Department of Public Works & Transportation (DPW&T), which is responsible for storm water systems, on the feasibility study and eventual redesign of the system. Residents may view the presentation when worksessions are played back on BHTV, Comcast Channel 71 and Fios Channel 12.

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy continued that the reconstruction of the pedestrian bridge over the Metro tracks was postponed yet again, and the reopening is not likely to occur before late January. Upcoming meetings of interest include a seniors' lunch & resource fair hosted by County Councilwomen Glaros on November 23; an SHA informal project meeting about the proposed upgrade of the Beltway interchange at Greenbelt Metro Station on December 9; and public hearings on the GSA's draft environmental impact statement for the three proposed sites of the future FBI headquarters, the nearest one occurring on December 8 at the Greenbelt Library.

4. Department Reports

Administration: MPT Rasmussen congratulated TA Cowles on hiring Treasurer Michelle Rodriguez, who is here tonight. She served the Town of Edmonston for the last 8 years in a Clerk/ Treasurer capacity and fit into her new role of Town Treasurer without difficulty. Congratulations also go to Governor Hogan, who is now cancer free, and the recently elected Mayors of College Park Patrick Wojahn and of Greenbelt Emmett Jordan.

MPT Rasmussen reported that the Town's postal service has been reduced to the selling of stamps, as the Town office's service counter was deemed inadequate for the secure handling and storage of mailed letters and packages. Patrons have the choice of 3 nearby full-service USPS stations to take their mail. Seniors and persons with disabilities can request the Town's call-a-bus service to take them to a post office. Further, the Town's new IT vendor has begun to convert all workstations to Windows operating systems, but has encountered some incompatibility issues with the Linux server. This, and getting all employees to use the same office software and email systems, will require additional expenditures beyond what was budgeted.

The Town has closed out the priority 1 sidewalks project with the mailing of the last check to the contractor E&R Services, and has begun the construction of the Safe Routes to School sidewalks project on the 8900 block of 63rd Avenue, which will provide a safer route for students to get to Greenbelt Middle School. With ongoing construction of new housing at the Greenbelt Station south core, the Town's Metroland compensation fund has grown and now stands at \$276,000. The Town receives approximately \$1,200 per housing unit when a permit is pulled. The funds are intended to mitigate the impacts the new development will have on the Town in terms of traffic and use of public services.

MPT Rasmussen said that the Council has made progress on the urban forest initiative and is looking into updating Ordinance 122 – Urban Forest and re-establishing a shade tree board, which would be a vehicle for residents to give their input on preserving the Town’s tree canopy. Lastly, he announced that he will do another weigh-in as part of the *Lose It to Win It* campaign at the next Town meeting, which he began last January. He has made progress on his weight loss goal and is looking forward to compare his performance with Chief Antolik’s, who also participated.

Regarding the Greenbelt Station development, Mayor Kulpa-Eddy added that the new traffic light at the Greenbelt Station entrance and associated intersection improvements will be responsibility of the Town’s police officers to monitor.

Code Compliance: CM Robles reported that Code Supervisor Glass has had to attend to a number of building permit violations. The Town enforces Prince George’s County’s rules for construction permits for private properties and requires Town permits whenever a County permit is required. Building additions or accessory structures and many home improvement projects require permits. A detailed list of projects requiring permits can be found at the website of the County’s Department of Permits, Inspections and Enforcement (DPIE).

With winter approaching, CM Robles also reminded residents to be aware of regulations regarding the storage of fire wood, which should be stacked at least 6” inches above the ground. Address numbers should be clearly visible from the street so that public safety personnel can easily locate particular home owners. Lastly, home owners are requested not to rake leaves into the street but keep them on their property near the curb. This will help prevent the clogging of storm drains.

Parks and Recreation, Education and Civic Affairs: CM Dennison announced that the holiday tree lighting will occur on December 5 and feature caroling, crafts and a visit from Santa. On December 10, there will be a meeting to try to revive the Education Advisory Committee, which last led the effort to re-open the Berwyn Heights Elementary School.

Public Health and Safety: Chief Antolik said all police officers and the Neighborhood Watch were on patrol during trick-or-treating, which passed without incident. However, there was some vandalism in the early morning hours. The perpetrators have been identified and warrants will be served shortly. Chief Antolik continued with the police activities report for October. There were 6 Part I offenses, all of them larcenies. This number is slightly higher than the 5-year average of 4. The year to date total is 62, as opposed to the 5-year average of 57.8. In all, the police wrote 236 State and Town citations and issued 61 speed camera tickets, all on Greenbelt Road. Chief Antolik concluded with tips for a safe Thanksgiving.

In response to MPT Rasmussen, Chief Antolik said that the speed camera vendor would decide if and when a speed camera is taken out of service after consulting with him. The Town already lost one of its speed cameras after State legislation raising the minimum speed limit in school zones to 20 mph was passed. The Town’s police officers will return to enforcing speed limits with radar guns if the camera on Pontiac Street was to be pulled.

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy highlighted a few items from the Berwyn Heights Volunteer Fire Department monthly report. The BHVFD annual fund drive, done exclusively by mail, is ongoing. In addition, the annual Christmas tree sale fundraiser will start right after Thanksgiving. The trees always sell out early so residents should not wait too long.

Public Works: CM White announced that Kenneth Hall has been hired as the Town's interim Public Works Director. He served as Greenbelt's Public Works director for many years and his leadership and experience will be of great value as the snow season approaches. He is expected to serve for approximately 4 – 6 months until the Town has recruited a new director. The Department also has a new temporary administrative assistant in Kathy Watkins, a Town resident. Kudos go to DPW foreman Juan Thorpe, who received an award from the Town's insurance company LGIT for helping to save a life during a house fire. DPW employees are getting ready for the winter season and are receiving training on operating snow plow equipment. For the moment, the Department is busy with leaf collection which will last through the end of December.

5. Committee Reports

Historical Committee: Clerk Harper, who chairs the Historical Committee, reported that there was a good turnout for the fall wine & cheese reception. Author and blogger John DeFerrari gave a presentation on his recently published book *Capital Streetcars* and a good discussion ensued.

Neighborhood Watch/Emergency Preparedness: Mayor Kulpa-Eddy reported that the NW/EP Committee again helped to patrol the Town on Halloween. The glow sticks passed out by the police officers were a hit and proved very useful in making the trick-or-treaters visible in the dark. NW/EP members are attending a bystanders training session in Greenbelt tonight and will continue to provide emergency training and information to residents. The next meeting will take place on December 2 in the G. Love conference room.

Recreation Council: CM Dennison said that the regular meetings of the Recreation Council have been moved to the first Tuesday of the month.

6. Unfinished Business

Ordinance 109 – 2nd Reading & Adoption of Amendments to Town Council Election & Selection Processes: Clerk Harper read a summary of the amended Ordinance 109. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy explained that this Ordinance, last amended in 1999, has undergone substantial changes. Recently passed State and County regulations have been incorporated, provisions on write-in candidates and Town Council vacancies were added, and a prohibition against campaign signs in the right-of-way of private properties was lifted, provided the property owner permits it and the sign does not pose a safety hazard. CM Dennison moved to adopt the Ordinance. CM White seconded. CM Dennison commented that the process of revising the Ordinance went smoothly. With no further comments the Ordinance was adopted in a 5 to 0 vote.

7. New Business

There was none.

8. Citizens Discussion

Jeff Gourley, Berwyn Road, said goodbye to the Town after living here his entire life. He said his family bought a home on Berwyn Road in 1951 and enjoyed being a part of this community. He attended Berwyn Heights Elementary School, Greenbelt Junior High School and Parkdale High School. His father served as a Town Commissioner in the 1960s and he served on the Council from 2004-2009, after being persuaded by two friends to run. As Councilmember, he enjoyed helping residents and putting together the annual budget. However, there were many contentious moments, which eventually led him to resign. He congratulated the sitting Council for bringing harmony and cooperation to the meetings and wished them well.

Mike Roberts, 58th Avenue, said he owns a property that is traversed by a storm water drain, as well as inlets and manholes. He asked how the Town plans to notify homeowners like himself when County maintenance crews need access to the property to service the system. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy said that the Council has not yet devised a plan to communicate this information to residents but will probably publicize it in the Bulletin and the website. If a homeowner has questions about a storm water inlet they should contact the County by calling 3-1-1 or visiting the Prince George's County Click 311 website. Mr. Roberts also suggested that residents mulch their leaves by running over them with a lawn mower rather than depositing them at the curb for pickup. This may save the Town money.

Phil Ventura, 57th Avenue, commented that he thinks the Town needs a leaf pickup service if it wants to promote the urban forest and preserve trees. Mulching too many leaves makes the soil very acidic. He continued with a complaint about the traffic light that recently went into operation at the entrance of the Greenbelt Station Parkway. He said it is very poorly engineered and poses a safety hazard, especially at night. He foresees many accidents occurring at this intersection, which will be the responsibility of Berwyn Heights' police to handle. He also complained about a resident who rides his electric wheelchair in the roadway and runs the risk of being hit at night; about a misplaced stop sign on 57th Avenue at Pontiac Street; about a "stop for pedestrians" sign in the middle of Berwyn Road at the bridge; and about the lack of clean-outs of stormwater drain inlets. He also recommended that the Town hire more people from Town, and regulate parking when it snows to facilitate plowing. WSSC should be asked to clean up the temporary patches remaining from the water main replacement project.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:23 p.m.

Signed: *Kerstin Harper, Town Clerk*