



Town of Berwyn Heights

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Minutes Town Meeting October 14, 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, Officer Paul Roberson, Clerk Kerstin Harper, Berwyn Heights Volunteer Fire Department (BHVFD) representative John Hess and citizens.

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy led the Pledge of Allegiance.

1. Hearing on Ordinance 109 - Elections

Mayor Kulpa Eddy explained that Ordinance 109 sets forth how Town Council elections are to be conducted. As a result of the 2014 election, the Council realized that the Ordinance did not address a number of issues relevant to electing and selecting Councilmembers and needed to be updated. The amended Ordinance has new provisions on write-in candidates and vacancy appointments, incorporates new State ethics and election requirements, and drops unnecessary detail.

CM Dennison said that it is good to update this Ordinance and put in writing how vacancies are filled. MPT Rasmussen said, while it is impossible to anticipate every possible circumstance of choosing Town Councilmembers, it is prudent to think about, and give direction on how to proceed if one or multiple vacancies occur in the middle of the term. The Ordinance was last amended in 1999 and was in need of being updated to take into account new State legislation and address issues not dealt with in the current Ordinance in order to provide more comprehensive guidance on the Town's election process.

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy invited any residents to comment on the Ordinance. Ron Shane, 57th Avenue, said it appears the Council has passed up an opportunity to lift the prohibition against posting campaign signs in the Town right-of-way except on Election Day. The Council may want to consider following the County's example and allow political signs in the right-of-way prior to Election Day with the permission of the property owner.

With no further comments, Mayor Kulpa-Eddy closed the hearing and invited residents to send in additional comments to the Town office.

2. Minutes

Clerk Harper read a summary of the September 9, 2015 Town meeting minutes. On a motion by CM Dennison and second by CM Robles, the minutes were approved 5 to 0.

3. Treasurer's Report

TA Cowles gave the Treasurer's report for the month of September.

4. Mayor's Report

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy reported that the pedestrian bridge connecting Berwyn Heights with College Park will be replaced in late November. Delivery will occur on November 19 or 20 using Ballew Avenue, which will likely result in some traffic disruption. The bridge is expected to be back in operation in early December. The County has completed a hydraulic study of the Town's stormwater drainage system, triggered by last year's June 10 flash flood. The Town Council will receive a briefing at a worksession in November or December. Residents are welcome to attend. The November Town meeting, normally scheduled for the 2nd Wednesday, has been moved to the third Wednesday (November 18) so as not to coincide with the Veterans Day holiday.

5. Department Reports

Administration: MPT Rasmussen reported that TA Cowles and Mayor Kulpa-Eddy interviewed three well qualified candidates for the Treasurer's position last week. A new Treasurer will likely be in place in early November. The first project meeting for the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) sidewalks projects took place last week after an issue with a subcontractor was resolved. It is hoped that the sidewalks will be installed before it gets too cold. Progress was made toward the demolition of two condemned properties when Pepco shut off electricity to the homes. Now only Washington Gas has to shut off its gas lines before the properties can be razed. Installation of the emergency generators project is moving forward again after the Town was able to secure a new set of permits. The first permits had expired due to the delays from re-bidding the project.

MPT Rasmussen continued that he met with TA Cowles to sketch out a plan for the Urban Forest Initiative, which he plans to present at the November 2 worksession. Lastly, he noted that a 6 lane interstate highway bridge over the Mississippi river in Minneapolis was rebuilt in 10 1/2 months after its collapse on August 1, 2007, putting WMATA to shame.

Code Compliance: CM Robles reported that residents should have received a post card from the Town with fall events on one side and the new Clean Lot regulations on the other. Questions and concerns about the regulations should be directed to the Code Compliance Department. The Code Department also revised the hours of availability for the Town's call-a-bus. Seniors and residents with disabilities can call the Town office 9 a.m. - 2 p.m., Monday - Friday and 3 - 6 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday if they need a ride. The call-a-bus is also available to Town organizations but prior reservation is required.

CM Robles also noted that she will attend the upcoming Maryland Municipal League (MML) fall conference in Cambridge, MD. She is looking forward to learning about municipal government in the workshops and seminars offered and networking with colleagues from other municipalities. Lastly, she thanked Public Works for helping set up and break down the Boys

and Girls Club Harvest Festival, which had been postponed to October 10, as well as the volunteers and customers who made the fundraiser a success.

Parks and Recreation, Education and Civic Affairs: CM Dennison said that she had fun taking part in the Harvest Festival and purchased her pumpkins. Halloween Trunk or Treat is coming up this weekend and will again take place in the school's lower parking lot. All are welcome to see the many cars decked out in Halloween decorations. Public Works and Police put a lot of effort into their exhibits and are worth checking out. The Holiday Tree Lighting is coming up on December 5.

Public Health and Safety: Officer Roberson reported for Chief Antolik. He said that there were 5 Part I offenses in September, 3 of them thefts from cars. Residents are again reminded to lock their vehicles and not leave valuables in plain view. The 5-year average for September is 7.5. The police also issued 72 speed camera tickets, all on Greenbelt Road. Officer Roberson cautioned residents about computer and phone scams. For Halloween the police will have all hands on deck to patrol Town streets, assisted by the Neighborhood Watch. He recommended reviewing the trick-or-treat tips in this month's Town Bulletin to have a safe Halloween.

In response to Mayor Kulpa-Eddy, Officer Roberson said the police have issued many parking citations last month, many of them for parking at the Lake Artemesia parking lot and on Berwyn Road after dark. The park closes at dark. The police are trying to prevent the parking lot from becoming a place for hanging out. Purple lights at the Town Center and some other public facilities have been lit to show support for a County-wide domestic violence awareness month.

Public Works: CM White reported that Public Works installed bike racks at the Town's parks, Community Garden and Town office. With assistance from the Green Team, DPW identified places for planting trees and shrubs through the Maryland TREEmendous program and started tree pruning on the Town's north side. Director Lockley graduated from the UMD Academy of Excellence in Local Government and staff completed defensive driving training through the Town's insurer LGIT. Staff is also continuing to train in operating commercial vehicles and snow removal procedures. Marvin Plummer was named employee of the month for participation in the Town's roadside tree care program. The next electronics recycling event will take place on October 24 at the Greenbelt Public Works yard. CM White concluded with a thank you to all those who participated and helped with the Harvest Festival.

6. Committee Reports

Green Team: CM Dennison announced that the Green Team will hold a tree care workshop on October 21 at the Town Center.

Volunteer Fire Department: Mayor Kulpa-Eddy welcomed John Hess, a long-time member of the Berwyn Heights Volunteer Fire Department (BHVFD) board of directors, for National Fire Prevention month and presented the Town's annual contribution.

Mr. Hess gave an overview of recent accomplishments of the BHVFD and upcoming initiatives. He said that BHVFD plans to participate in Trunk or Treat and support the police during Halloween patrols. The Department received another grant from FEMA to help recruit, train and retain volunteer fire fighters over the next 3 years. The new ambulance is now in service but is still undergoing debugging of its electronic systems. The BHVFD rescue squad was recently

named rescue squad of the year by the PGC Volunteer Fire Fighters Association for its participation in the roller coaster rescue at Six Flags last summer. Mr. Hess concluded by expressing the BHVFD's satisfaction over improved cooperation with the Town, which has and will yield benefits for the community as a whole.

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy said that she and other residents took part in the fire extinguishing workshop BHVFD sponsored last Saturday. The Bowie Fire Department brought fire extinguishers and a propane fire simulator. Prince George's County sent out its safety trailer that simulated a very realistic kitchen fire which participants practiced putting out. She thanked the BHVFD for hosting the training. She also noted that the Department's annual fund drive is in progress, which uses mailed requests for donations only.

Historical Committee: Clerk Harper, Chair of the Berwyn Heights Historical Committee announced a presentation and book signing of "Capital Streetcars" with D.C. author John DeFerrari on November 8.

Neighborhood Watch/Emergency Preparedness: Co-chair Ron Shane reported that the NW/EP hosted a successful night-time mass casualty drill last month that showcased what CERT teams can do in an emergency before professional first responders may arrive on the scene. Laurel, Greenbelt and Clinton sent their CERT teams and practiced how to assist each other. It was a good learning experience. The Committee is also looking into replacing its large, overloaded emergency trailer which has come to the end of its useful life. A shed is being considered to store emergency supplies and a smaller trailer, which can be pulled by a private vehicle to move equipment when needed. The Committee may open a Twitter account to provide quick notification on emergencies and training opportunities. On Halloween the Committee will again support the police with patrolling the Town. Berwyn Heights is doing such a good job in making the Town safe for trick-or-treaters that now families come from all around the County to trick or treat here. The next meeting is on November 4.

Recreation Council: CM Dennison announced that the Recreation Council elected new officers. Tim Tormoen is President and Susan Jones is Treasurer. The Committee now meets on the first Tuesday of the month.

7. Unfinished Business

Ordinance 109 - Amendments to Town Council Election and Selection Processes: Mayor Kulpa-Eddy said that the Council continues to work on the Ordinance and hopes to adopt it at the November Town meeting. CM Dennison moved to continue deliberations. MPT Rasmussen seconded. The motion passed 5 to 0.

8. New Business

Resolution 07-2015 - 1st Reading & Adoption of Commercial Clean Lot Fine Schedule: Mayor Kulpa-Eddy explained that a new fine schedule was needed following the amendments to the Commercial Clean Lot Ordinance adopted in May. This schedule sets the fines for violations and the time frames for correcting violations. Clerk Harper read the Resolution. MPT Rasmussen moved to adopt it. CM Robles seconded. The motion passed 5 to 0.

9. Citizens Discussion

There was none.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:02 p.m.

Signed: *Kerstin Harper, Town Clerk*