



Town of Berwyn Heights

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Minutes Town Meeting September 11, 2013

The meeting was called to order at 8:00 p.m. Present were Mayor Calvo, Mayor Pro Tem (MPT) Wilkinson, CMs Almoguera, Dennison, and Kulpa-Eddy. Also present were Town Administrator (TA) Murphy, Chief of Police Antolik, Treasurer Lape, Clerk Harper and citizens.

Mayor Calvo led the Pledge of Allegiance.

1. Minutes

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

2. Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Lape gave the Treasurer's report for the month of August.

3. Mayor's Report

Mayor Calvo reported that Berwyn Heights Elementary School got off to a good start with one of the best Hello Huskies Nights he can remember. He thanked the PTA for the successful effort. The PTA, working jointly with Green Team, also deserves credit for the beautification of the school entrance area, which now looks very inviting. A student aide recently told him that she decided to complete her teacher training at Berwyn Heights Elementary School when she saw the well-kept grounds. Planting and caring for the gardens has become an integrated part of the school's curriculum and students are regularly working outside through the growing season. Mayor Calvo also thanked CM Almoguera for all her work renovating Pop's Park, which culminated in a wonderful dedication ceremony last weekend. Mayor Calvo then announced upcoming events, noting that the Town sent out a postcard featuring the fall event schedule and the public hearing on new school zones.

Mayor Calvo continued that the sidewalks project took a big step forward last month, when the County indicated its acceptance of a proposed stormwater mitigation project at the Public Works Yard. The Town is required by new stormwater regulations under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) to offset stormwater runoff when it adds paved surfaces in Town in excess of 5,000 square feet. Another step towards the completion of sidewalks was taken when the Council and C.P. Johnson engineers took a tour of the sidewalks route starting at Sports Park and ending at 60th Avenue and Greenbelt Road last week. They discussed special

design challenges and possible solutions at particular points along the route, which will serve as the basis for the next set of plans. He hopes design and engineering can be completed this fall so that sidewalks construction can be put out to bid.

The Town also made progress with adding emergency generators to the Town Administration Building and the Town Center. The Town secured State funding and settled on a contractor to design and engineer the backup generator systems. When the installation is complete, the Town will have a safe place for residents to come to during an extended power outage and for the Town to be able to continue to operate.

Mayor Calvo noted that the Council has been busy with staffing issues. Code Director Solomon resigned in August after 20 years of service with the Town. The Council wishes Ms. Solomon all the best in her future endeavors and will work on filling the vacancy after revising the job description. In the coming months, the Council will also work on finding a replacement for Town Administrator Murphy, who will retire at the end of the fiscal year and to transition Acting Public Works Director Lockley to the full director position. The turnover will present opportunities for rethinking how the Town government should function and how the different departments relate to each other.

On a positive note, in August the Town received the last disbursement of its FY 2013 income taxes from the County, bringing the total to \$415,000. Continuing a trend of recent years, this exceeded the budgeted amount of \$345,000 by \$70,000, and makes up for part of the loss in real property tax receipts the Town has to overcome. The money will help make possible the kinds of investments in infrastructure and amenities that make the Town an attractive place to live.

4. Department Reports

Administration: CM Almoguera thanked all those coming out for the reopening of Pop's Park. The park was filled with kids. Invitations were sent out to the PTA and Boys & Girls Club and the Town in general and she was pleased to see such a great turnout, including State delegates and Town Councilmembers. There were even a number of families from out-of-Town, as Berwyn Heights is becoming a go-to place for nice playgrounds. The playground will continue to improve as the fence is going to be rebuilt, sidewalks added and benches installed. There are also plans to add more equipment for older kids.

Code Compliance: CM Kulpa-Eddy said she is sorry she could not attend the reopening. She took part in a memorial stair climb and 3 Kilometer walk to remember the fire fighters that died on 9/11/2001 in the collapse of the World Trade Center. She announced that TA Murphy has been appointed acting director of the Code Department following the resignation of Code Director Solomon. The Council will be reviewing the job description and hopes to be able to advertise the position soon. She wished Ms. Solomon the best for her future.

CM Kulpa-Eddy announced that the "making homes affordable" fund will host a free event on September 17 at FedEx field that will provide home owners the opportunity to meet with their mortgage company or housing counselor to discuss options on how to avoid foreclosure. Further, applications are now accepted for Christmas in April, a program in which volunteers help seniors and disabled people make repairs to their homes for free that they cannot accomplish themselves. Repairs will be made the April 2014.

Parks and Recreation, Education and Civic Affairs: CM Dennison announced that Berwyn Heights Elementary School got off to a great start. Hello Huskies Night drew a record crowd. Back-to-school nights for ESOL students is coming up on September 12 and for regular students on September 19. On October 5, the Recreation Council will present the 2nd annual concert at Lake Artemesia, featuring the Susan Jones Jazz Ensemble. The Recreation Council together with the Community Center staff will again host the *Trunk or Treat* event in the lower school parking lot on October 19.

Public Health and Safety: Mayor Calvo noted that on this 12th anniversary of 9/11, Berwyn Heights police were stationed at the school to provide additional protection. Chief Antolik said that he believes the students are quite aware of the significance of 9/11 although many of them were not yet born when the attack occurred. He congratulated Officer Krouse for completing the *Drug Abuse Resistance Education* (DARE) course. This is an international education program founded by Daryl F. Gates that seeks to prevent use of controlled drugs, membership in gangs, and violent behavior.

Chief Antolik then gave the police activities report for August. There was 1 assault, 3 burglaries, and 2 thefts, for a total of 6. This is below the 5-year average of 8. The year-to-date total is 37, also considerably below the 5-year average of 57. Two of the burglaries were in vacant homes, where copper pipes were taken. The third burglary was of a residence on Pontiac Street, which has already been closed and the suspects taken into custody. Further, 69 State citations were issued and 14 parking tickets. With the recent transition to e-tickets, multiple charges can now be logged on one ticket. The Department is still working on reformatting the reporting of citations.

Chief Antolik further reported that a total of 329 speed camera tickets were issued, with 201 on Greenbelt Road, 82 in the 5900 block of Pontiac Street and 47 in the 6200 block of Pontiac Street. He is expecting a spreadsheet from the speed camera vendor to evaluate the issuance of speed camera citations in July. The department will dismiss or refund any tickets given in error.

MPT Wilkinson thanked Chief Antolik and Officer Roberson for quickly solving the burglary on Pontiac Street, which was very reassuring to his family and his neighbors.

Public Works: MPT Wilkinson reported that he was excited to take the sidewalks tour at the last worksession, which showed the progress the Town is making on this project. He noted with concern recent newspaper articles about plans to redevelop the University of Maryland golf course. The project apparently is moving forward, despite reports to the contrary at the last Four Cities Coalition meeting. Another town house development along Route 193 will likely bring more traffic to an already congested corridor and make it less likely that Beltway Plaza will be redeveloped.

In Public Works news, MPT Wilkinson thanked Acting Director Lockley and his crew for getting Pop's Park ready for the dedication. They brought in and spread mulch, raked and weeded, and removed concrete footers from old play equipment that had remained in the ground. Further, Public Works installed dog waste stations in several priority locations and is making plans to install bike racks at parks and playgrounds. He noted that the next electronic recycling date is on October 26, and that residents can drop off their recyclables in designated containers at the Berwyn Heights Public Works yard the week prior. Loose leaf collection begins on

November 1 and residents are requested to rake leaves to the curb, but not into the street. If the leaf machine just was on a particular street to collect leaves, it will take approximately 2 weeks to come around again. Lastly, Public Works is looking forward to the next Trunk or Treat event and plans another great exhibit.

5. Committee Reports

Green Team: Mayor Calvo reported that the Green Team has been making progress on a community garden, which is the centerpiece of their effort to earn the Sustainable Maryland bronze certification. Kristin Larson, the newest Green Team member, was recently appointed to an environmental management job by the City of Bowie.

Neighborhood Watch/Emergency Preparedness: CM Kulpa-Eddy reported that the NW/EP will participate in an Emergency Preparedness event in Greenbelt on September 29 and will bring its trailer. She reminded residents that September is National Preparedness month and urged everyone to put together an emergency kit. On October 19 and 20, a CERT training class will be held in Laurel. Residents can contact the NW/EP to sign up. The next NW/EP meeting will be on Wednesday, October 2.

6. Unfinished Business

Ordinance No. 118 - Roads & Public Rights-of-Way: Mayor Calvo said that the Council will not take any action on this Ordinance tonight but continue discussing the Ordinance at upcoming worksessions. The Town received a letter from Pepco's Vice President for Public Relations, Jerry Pasternak, in which he made a number of constructive comments on the Ordinance. The Council may invite him to a future meeting to discuss his comments. The Town is still waiting for a tree planting plan Pepco was asked to provide for the Town for the Edmonston Road buffer. TA Murphy was asked to follow up.

7. New Business

There was none.

8. Citizens Discussion

Phil Ventura of 57th Avenue asked for clarification on the recent change in school zone hours. Mayor Calvo explained that the Council approved an extension of school hours from 7 am to 6 pm in school zones when school is in session. During those times, the speed limit is 15 mph. No changes in hours was made for the school zones on Edmonston Road or Greenbelt Road. However, the Town has asked the State Highway Administration (SHA) to adjust the hours for the Greenbelt Road school zone so as to match Greenbelt Middle School hours. MPT Wilkinson added that the new hours would also apply to new school zones in the 8600 and 8900 blocks of 63rd Avenue, which the Council plans to designate at the October Town meeting.

Mr. Ventura asked what the problem was that caused Berwyn Road to be covered with mud. Mayor Calvo replied that a major water main break occurred in the 5600 block of Berwyn Road, which resulted in a disruption of water service and flooding of basements. He had the opportunity to speak with several affected residents, who said that WSSC was very responsive in repairing any damage to their homes. The Town has to follow up with WSSC regarding repairs to the road when the mud has dried.

Mr. Ventura commented that the Town should start to think about enforcing 'no parking' areas at Indian Creek park now that a new parking area has been created next to the T-ball field. Frequently cars are parked in the intersection at 56th Avenue and Seminole Street, which could easily lead to accidents. Chief Antolik replied that in a T-intersection, like this one, parking is permitted. However, his officers will talk to the owner of any car parked in the intersection if it impedes traffic flow. He has recommended that yellow lines be painted to indicate the 'no parking' areas. Mayor Calvo added that the Council already made decisions about where cars cannot park, such as the embankment along the T-ball field. But enforcement has been postponed until the new parking area would be finished. The Council needs to revisit the issue to make sure the 'no parking' plan is implemented.

Lastly, Mr. Ventura expressed his opposition to the 'stop for pedestrians' signs that have been installed in the middle of Berwyn Road at the Indian Creek trail crossing and on Pontiac Street at Edmonston Road. He said that he has difficulty getting through with his pickup truck when cars are parked on the side of the road, and he believes that emergency vehicles would also have difficulty. He thinks that the signs pose a traffic hazard and could be placed on the side rather than in the middle of the road.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:04 p.m.

Signed: *Kerstin Harper, Town Clerk*