



Town of Berwyn Heights

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MAYOR
Lynn White
COUNCIL MEMBERS
Stephen Isler (Mayor Pro Tem)
Jason Papanikolas
Ethan Sweep
Amanda Dewey

Minutes Worksession September 17, 2018

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. Present were Mayor Lynn White, Mayor Pro Tem Stephen Isler, Councilmembers Amanda Dewey, Jason Papanikolas, and Ethan Sweep. Also present were Town Manager Maria Broadbent, Clerk Kerstin Harper, Department of Public Works & Transportation (DPW&T) Representatives Vernon Stinnett, Mary Abe and Charles Griffith and the Reznek family.

1. **Announcements**

There were none.

2. **Presentation**

Mayor White welcomed Associate Director of the DPW&T Office of Highway Maintenance Vernon Stinnett, and DPW&T Project Managers Mary Abe and Charles Griffith for a briefing on Berwyn Heights' storm drain system. Mr. Stinnett said the Town experienced a flash flood in June 2014 damaging the basements of a number of homes in low-lying areas. DPW&T followed up by commissioning a hydrological study of Berwyn Heights in 2015 and presented its conclusions to the Council in November 2015. Mr. Griffith said the study found that the Town's storm water drainage system, constructed during the 1940s - 1970s, has become inadequate over time as infill and the paving of streets increased storm water runoff. The capacity of the system is strained whenever a severe rain event occurs.

Ms. Abe explained the improvements DPW&T's Office of Highway Maintenance made to the storm drain system this summer focused on modifying some 50 inlets to allow for greater storm water intake. To fully modernize the system, it would have to be rebuilt. This would be very expensive and pose many logistical problems, ranging from moving houses and removing trees, to rerouting and up-sizing drains and increasing the number of outfalls into Indian Creek. To address the problem over the long term, the County's Department of the Environment (DOE) would work with private property owners to reduce the storm water that flows into the system by installing rain gardens, adding rain barrels and other improvements.

In response to questions, Ms. Abe said the problem of standing water in back yards is likely the result of location at a low point and modifications to water flow resulting from changes neighboring properties have made on their properties: from building patios to retaining walls to stopping up inlets. Another problem the County has is a lack of information about easements, which allows them to access storm drains on private properties for maintenance. The Town should forward any property addresses to DPW&T where storm water tends to build up and cause problems.

3. Discussion Items

FOIA request for emails relating to bond issue: TM Broadbent said a resident had requested copies of emails related to the bond issue from which Berwyn Heights was recently removed. She was informed that most of those emails are not subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) because they fall under Attorney-client privilege or are of internal deliberative nature. Unless the attorney and/or the Council give permission for release, the information remains undisclosed. The resident has since withdrawn the request but will be notified that information about the road improvement project, which the bond was intended to fund, is open for public inspection.

Rain garden revitalization: CM Dewey said the Green Team has undertaken the task of looking into revitalizing the rain garden that was installed on the Town Center property in 2004 to hold runoff from the parking lot but no longer functions as intended. This project would be of value to the Town as well as be a good demonstration project for residents. The Green Team would like the Town to consider taking on the maintenance cost of the rain garden and use Green Team funds to fund the educational event. A cleanup and planting event is planned for fall has been moved to spring since the Green Team has partnered with the Anacostia Watershed Society (AWS) in drafting a plan for revitalizing the garden. The cost to the Town is estimated at \$1,500 mostly for purchasing plant and educational signage.

Internship for individual with disabilities: Mayor White welcomed Abigail, Karen and Arnold Reznick. She asked whether the Town has a policy about hiring interns and whether the policy could accommodate an individual with developmental disabilities. Clerk Harper said there is no formal policy. Each department has its own approach. This summer, the Administration Department for the first time took part in the County's youth employment program and had two interns who helped with filing and shredding documents. The Police have a more structured internship program and Public Works has occasionally hired local youth to help with various projects. TM Broadbent said, in her experience, it requires time and organization to make an internship experience meaningful. The Administration Department might be able to use someone who can design and carry out a project but does not have enough office support work to keep an intern busy.

In discussion, the following points were made:

- Internships preferably should be project based;
- Internships require an investment of staff time to plan for and supervise interns;
- An intern should not be hired unless an internship framework is in place;
- BHPD's internship program could serve as an example for designing a Town-wide program;
- People with developmental abilities will be considered for internships, if there is an opening.

All Councilmembers said they have worked with interns and offered to help create an internship program. Regarding Ms. Abigail Reznick specifically, environmental projects might be suitable. The Arc, a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the quality of life of persons with developmental disabilities, would be able to offer advice and support for working with its clients and members.

Voting protocols for MML and PGCMA: Mayor White said the previous Council decided to "designate a Councilmember planning to attend a Prince George's County Municipal Association (PGCMA) meeting ahead of time to vote on any matter that may come up, or, if one Councilmember always attends the PGCMA meetings, to designate that person to vote on behalf of the Council." It was further decided, if more than one Councilmember attends a PGCMA meeting, the Councilmember who received the most votes in the previous election would vote on behalf of the Council. This Council agreed to follow the same procedure. It was also agreed that Councilmembers would rotate attending the 10 PGCMA meetings throughout the year, with each Councilmember attending at least 2 meetings.

Council Rules: CM Papanikolas said he requested the Council to review the Council Rules because many appear to be quite outdated. After some discussion, the Council agreed to divide the 19 Council Rules into sets of 5 to be reviewed at upcoming meetings, starting with Council Rules 1 – 5 at the October 1 worksession.

Order of meetings (added item): MPT Isler asked the Council to come up with a solution for handling the increase in side comments that have occurred at recent meetings. While he is fully in favor of allowing citizens to speak to each item on the agenda rather than only during a designated citizen comment period, the spontaneous comments from the audience have made it more difficult to know who said what and to maintain a good order. He proposed that residents be asked to raise their hands, come to the podium and state their name and address to speak.

After extended discussion, the Council agreed that citizens raise their hands to be recognized by the Mayor, then come to the podium and state their name and address before they speak. A notation of this process will be published on the top of each Council meeting agenda. It was further agreed that ‘Citizen Comments’ be the first item on each agenda rather than the last. For Town meetings, citizens will be asked to write their name, street and topic on a sign-up sheet, which will determine the order in which they will be allowed to speak.

4. Minutes

The Council reviewed the minutes of the August 20 worksession. On a motion by CM Sweep and 2nd by MPT Isler, the minutes were approved 3 – 0 – 2, with Mayor White and CM Dewey abstaining.

5. Department Reports

MPT Isler said he plans to meet with TM Broadbent and Clerk Harper to discuss renewing production of a welcome packet. Mayor White announced that she will hold a meeting on September 19 with the leadership of all community organizations to discuss the Town organization policy and succession planning. CM Papanikolas announced that Berwyn Heights Elementary School (BHES) will hold its annual Hello Huskies night next Thursday. Usually one or more representatives of the Town will attend and may give a brief speech. He will go since he has a child in the school. CM Sweep reminded citizens that the mid-term elections are approaching and make sure they are registered to vote. CM Dewey said she and TM Broadbent met with the Police to learn what they are currently working on. She will also go on a ride-along with an officer in the near future.

TM Broadbent said she was informed by the Town’s insurer LGIT which Town organizations are covered. As it stands, Neighborhood Watch/ Emergency Preparedness does not have official committee status and would not be covered. MPT Isler said that he was working with NW/EP to develop an organizational framework for the committee so that they would be covered. The Council requested they be provided the latest version of the Town organizations policy.

6. Town Council Schedule

The Council reviewed the upcoming schedule of meetings and events. No changes were made.

On a motion by MPT Isler, seconded by CM Papanikolas, the meeting was adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Signed: *Kerstin Harper*, Town Clerk