



Town of Berwyn Heights

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Minutes Worksession December 21, 2015

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m. Present were Mayor Jodie Kulpa-Eddy, Mayor Pro Tem (MPT) Chris Rasmussen, Councilmembers (CMs) Patricia Dennison, Maria Robles and Lynn White. Also present were Town Administrator (TA) Jessica Cowles, Clerk Kerstin Harper, and Stuart Eisenberg, Executive Director of the Hyattsville Community Development Corporation (CDC).

1. Mayor

Announcements: Executive Director of the Hyattsville CDC will give a presentation on economic development later in this meeting.

Calendar: The Council expressed a preference for February 25 to hold a Four Cities meeting which UMD President Wallace Loh is able to attend. The regular January 27 Four Cities meeting might be devoted to a presentation on the Prince George's County zoning rewrite.

Minutes: On a motion by CM Dennison and second by MPT Rasmussen, the December 7 worksession minutes were approved 5 to 0.

Department reports: CM White noted that the trash collection schedule will be modified during the holidays. Loose leaf collection ends on December 30. Electronic recycling will be on January 23, 2016. MPT Rasmussen reported that the owners of the 58th Avenue property slated for demolition this winter have filed a last minute appeal. They are working with engineers to assess the structural integrity of the house and what it takes to rehabilitate it. The Town expects that a building permit will be requested within the next few weeks. The owners of the condemned property on Cunningham Drive have also expressed an interest to reclaim the property. It is up to the County to decide what they must do to keep the property.

CM Robles said that the owners of the 58th Avenue property have been in regular contact with Code Supervisor Glass to keep him up to date on their efforts to rehabilitate the house. She also announced that the Code Department continues to offer the call-a-bus service for residents who have trouble using regular public transportation. Seniors and people with disabilities are encouraged to call ahead if they need a ride. CM Robles also announced several upcoming student learning opportunities. More information on these will be available at the Town office.

CM Dennison reported that Mayor Kulpa-Eddy will join her in a tour of Berwyn Heights to find the best decorated homes and yards. The Education Advisory Committee meeting was attended by a number of parents with school-aged children, who discussed current concerns with local schools and a possible structure and mission of the future Committee. Clerk Harper will provide documentation on the previous EAC. CM Dennison will try to invite the chair of the Greenbelt EAC to the next worksession. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy reminded residents that Santa will drive through Berwyn Heights on a fire truck on Christmas Eve. She will go on a ride-along in a BHPD patrol car this week.

Citizen comments: CM Robles received another comment on the increasing number of rental properties in Town and the lack of upkeep on these properties.

Economic development: Mayor Kulpa-Eddy welcomed Stuart Eisenberg, Executive Director of the Hyattsville CDC. She said that the Council set aside money in this year's budget for an economic development study. This initiative was spearheaded by former Mayor Cheye Calvo, and, after his resignation, was set aside until a decision on the FBI headquarters relocation has been made. The Council is not as informed on the subject as Mayor Calvo was and is looking forward to a high-level overview of economic development from Mr. Eisenberg.

Stuart Eisenberg presented a slide show to give an introduction and overview of the activities of the Hyattsville CDC, a 501 c (3) non-profit organization. The CDC was founded in 2000 to launch a revitalization of the city of Hyattsville with a \$350,000 Community Legacy Grant. Initially, the CDC's efforts were focused on the Hyattsville Metro station, using it as platform to jumpstart development. Then partnerships were formed with the arts community, small businesses and the Hyattsville Historic District to keep the revitalization going. The Hyattsville CDC manages the Gateway Arts District, which has its own M-NCPPC sector plan, and maintains a website to publicize its activities. To support the new economic and cultural activities, the CDC helps to improve access by improving transportation. It helped set up the *Route 1 Ride*, a Prince George's County bus that serves the Route 1 corridor during business hours. And it helped install signage and created a cell phone app that provides information on parking in downtown Hyattsville.

Mr. Eisenberg said that the CDC's activities are data driven. Data is gathered from market analysis, and ongoing input from residents and businesses, who review development plans for outcomes. When analyzing market conditions, it is important to know where the nearest shopping centers are and what services are being offered there. Shops in neighboring communities are viewed not only as competitors but also as collaborators, as they offer products and services not available nearby. In analyzing markets, the CDC looks at everything, because everything connects.

Recently, the CDC was hired to draft an economic development plan for the City of Greenbelt. The package prepared for Greenbelt includes a business toolkit, which consists of a business database, a commercial property database, a commercial codes brochure, public maps and a guide to starting a business. These tools will be integrated onto the city's website, where they will be publicly available. Also included is a competitive-collaborative analysis of economic development resources in Prince George's County. The first step to attracting new businesses is often providing easily accessible information.

In response to questions from the Council, Mr. Eisenberg said Berwyn Heights is not unlike Hyattsville

if one looks at the historic center. It is a largely residential community with a historic core and a highway at its northern borders that has some potential for commercial development. Currently, the Route 193 commercial corridor is underutilized, focused on automobiles, and has to be driven to be experienced. The Town's small industrial area, too, could be a candidate for transformation.

Mr. Eisenberg continued that he looks at economic development holistically. He regards education levels, community health and ability to employ itself as resources for economic development. On the other hand, he is skeptical about relying on a federal agency, such as the FBI headquarters, to jumpstart an economic transformation. Rather, he would look to promoting interactive and mixed land use patterns and a healthy market dynamic as sources for economic development. Strategic planning based on a community vision of how the available land should be used is at the core of the Hyattsville CDC's approach to economic development.

At 8:40 p.m., the Council took a 10 minutes break.

FBI headquarters environmental impact statement: Mayor Kulpa-Eddy said that she recently attended two public information meetings pertaining to the FBI headquarters relocation and has some materials for the Council to consider. The first meeting dealt with the planned upgrades to the Beltway interchange at Greenbelt Station. The proposed full interchange would widen the Beltway to 5 lanes in each direction and erect sound proof walls along the residential areas affected, North College Park and Springhill Lake. Berwyn Heights is not directly impacted. The North College Park Citizens Association raised concerns about the widening of the bridge that will have to be built over Rhode Island Avenue to accommodate the additional lanes.

The second meeting dealt with the environmental impact statement (EIS) produced for each of the three possible sites for the future FBI headquarters. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy explained last year the General Services Administration (GSA) invited comments on the scope of the proposed EIS to establish criteria for evaluating the impact of the future FBI headquarters. The Four Cities submitted three criteria: transportation, public safety and water resources, which were used in producing the draft statement. The GSA has now completed a draft EIS and is again inviting public comments due on January 6. The GSA created a brochure, of which the Council has received a copy, which summarizes the EIS' main points. For each site, there is a proposed site plan for the headquarters and a list of the beneficial and adverse impacts.

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy said that she is working through the EIS and has identified a couple of issues she would want to comment on. First, Greenbelt Station is the only site for which an alternative development plan is evaluated in the event the FBI headquarters is not moved there. As a result, the brochure shows two sets of impacts. Second, a potentially positive impact, construction of the Purple Line, was omitted from consideration. The planned Purple Line would alleviate some of the congestion on local highways. Lastly, it seems that more *Major Adverse Impacts* have been ascribed to Greenbelt Station than the two other sites. She questions why a natural gas pipeline, which would have to be laid to serve the development, should be considered a *Major Adverse Impact*.

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy asked the councilmembers to look over the brochure, or the 300 plus pages EIS available online, and let her know if she has missed any important points. She will incorporate any ideas into a draft letter she plans to submit to the Council for approval at the next worksession. The Council's goal should be to make the EIS for Greenbelt Station more positive. CM Rasmussen suggested reviewing comments of other organizations and the media that have taken a stand on the

development.

Nothing was discussed under **2. Public Works.**

3. Administration

IT Infrastructure funding: CM Rasmussen said that TA Cowles has developed a funding formula for the IT upgrades the Council was briefed on at the last worksession. TA Cowles explained that she spoke with I-Net Attorney Suellen Ferguson and an I-Net technical director about what parts of the IT upgrades could potentially be financed from Cable TV PEG grants. She was advised that all network and server upgrades costing \$12,200 would qualify as they are an extension of the I-Net infrastructure. The remaining IT improvements costing \$4,000 can be paid from the Administration Capital Expense budget. MPT Rasmussen moved to approve expenditures of up to \$13,000 from the Cable TV PEG fund to finance the proposed IT upgrades. CM White seconded. The motion passed 5 to 0.

USPS contract station: MPT Rasmussen explained that the Town has operated a postal contract station in the Town Office for many years. USPS has recently informed the Town that the manner in which packages were stored in the Town office before they are collected by a postal carrier does not comply with USPS security regulations. To meet security requirements, packages would have to be stored in a secure, lockable area to which only the postal clerk and USPS would have access. The Town was also informed that it would not be allowed to sell stamps unless all services of a postal contract station were provided. Therefore, the Town is inclined not to provide this service in the future.

TA Cowles added that the package security issue came up as a result of an onsite audit when the postmaster noticed packages stored in the vestibule. There may be a way to continue to sell stamps from the Town office, but it may be confusing to explain which postal services are offered and which are not. There are 3 full-service USPS stations within a 3 mile radius of the Town office that residents can use. Any residents not able to get to one of these post offices themselves can request a call-a-bus ride. She recommended that the Town notify USPS of the Town's intent to terminate the contract station agreement. Closure would take place 120 days from notification, or the end of March.

The Council agreed to send the notice to terminate the agreement and to inform the residents of the contract station closure through the Bulletin and website.

Bank accounts consolidation: MPT Rasmussen said that the Town has a number of accounts at different banks with small amounts of money. The treasurer has recommended closing them and transferring the money into an account that holds the Town's General Fund. This would reduce administrative costs and reduce security risks. He wondered why there is a separate account for Payroll funds. TA Cowles said that the Payroll is handled by a vendor who automatically debits the Payroll account to disburse paychecks. In this way, the vendor does not have access to any other Town funds. The consolidation of accounts holding small amounts of money is the first step in streamlining Town finances. TA Cowles also plans to set up money market accounts for each of the Town's reserves that have only one or two transactions per year, to maximize interest rates.

MPT Rasmussen asked if it is possible to set up more automatic payments to reduce the number of checks that have to be signed. TA Cowles said that the number of check payments is in part due to the Town Charter requiring 2 signatures for checks, which is a security feature. She is investigating how other municipalities are handling electronic check processing to come up with a recommendation on reducing the signing of paper checks.

CM Dennison moved and CM White seconded to consolidate E-Trade, Bank of America and two PNC accounts into the General Fund account. The motion passed 5 to 0.

Nothing was discussed under **4. Code Compliance, 5. Parks and Recreation, and 6. Public Safety.**

7. Executive Session (9:32 p.m. - 10:45 p.m.)

On a motion by CM Dennison and second by CM Robles, the Council went into executive session to discuss a personnel compensation matter and a lawsuit/legal matter. With matters discussed and voted upon, CM Dennison moved and CM Robles seconded to end the executive session.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:46 p.m.

Kerstin Harper