



Town of Berwyn Heights

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Minutes Worksession March 18, 2013

The meeting was called to order at 7:13 p.m. Present were Mayor Calvo, Mayor Pro Tem (MPT) Wilkinson, Councilmembers (CM) Dennison and Kulpa-Eddy. CM Almoguera had an excused absence. Also present were Town Administrator (TA) Murphy, Clerk Harper, Budget Assistant Kyle Snyder and CP Johnson Engineer Brian Davila.

1. Mayor

Announcements: There were none.

Calendar: The date for the Nevada Street connector trail dedication was added for April 13, 11 a.m.

Minutes: On a motion by CM Dennison and second by CM Kulpa-Eddy, the February 19 worksession minutes were approved 3 to 0. On a motion by CM Dennison and second by CM Kulpa-Eddy, the March 11 budget worksession minutes were approved 4 to 0.

Department reports: Mayor Calvo reported that County Executive Baker proposed legislation that would give him the power to appoint the superintendent of Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) and control over the PGCPS budget, which amounts to a take-over of the school system. Mayor Calvo said that he supports the proposal because the school board has been ineffective and averse to taking responsibility for the school system's failings. He hopes that this will put an end to the revolving door superintendents and bring some sense to the school budget. School systems that have been successful in making needed reforms generally have had superintendents backed by a strong executive. MPT Wilkinson and CM Dennison expressed reservations about giving the County Executive this kind of power because the county has its own problems and future executives may not be as capable.

Mayor Calvo continued that PG Scrap was robbed last Friday. The crime was apparently well planned and perpetrators were able to escape with \$30,000. Prince George's County Police is taking the lead in the investigation. Further, the Town's testimony at the emergency generator bond bill hearings went well. Mayor Calvo is reaching out to a non-profit group that has implemented a solar energy program in University Park to see if it is possible to use solar energy for powering emergency generators. Last week, the Town received the February income tax disbursement, which was \$20,000 lower than expected. This validates the more conservative projection of \$345,000 in FY 2014 income tax receipts.

MPT Wilkinson reported that Public Works prepared for another snow event that failed to materialize. CM Dennison announced upcoming events.

Citizen comments: There were none.

Sidewalks design & engineering: TA Murphy introduced Brian Davila, who heads the public sector engineering division of CP Johnson & Associates. Mr. Davila said that CP Johnson's public sector division deals exclusively with governments, which have different needs than private sector clients. He then explained the process used for completing design and engineering of a project. In phase I, CP Johnson will collect data about the location of utility lines and property lines, and make an inventory of project components, such as storm drains, curb openings, signage, and trees in the public right of way. The firm will also contact county agencies about environmental permits. Permits apply only to projects that exceed 5,000 square feet. The cost for any environmental studies would be extra.

Mr. Davila said that environmental reviews are intended for large scale developments rather than small redevelopment projects such as this. He has made preliminary contact with Park & Planning and the Department of Public Works & Transportation (DPWT) about the requirements, and was informed that an agreement on a waiver might be worked out. For example, the Town could offer to mitigate storm water runoff near Indian Creek instead of using pervious concrete for sidewalks.

Mayor Calvo said that he would prefer not to mitigate storm water runoff by using pervious concrete for sidewalks. Pervious concrete is more expensive and has a shorter lifespan than regular concrete. He thinks that an alternative solution might yield a greater environmental benefit. Mr. Davila said that the issue of how best to handle storm water runoff and other environmental mandates is one reason why CP Johnson has a 30% design phase. It ensures that all parties are on the same page when a concept plan is submitted.

In response to Councilmembers' questions, Mr Davila explained that CP Johnson prefers to use its own surveys to design and engineer a project, the cost of which is included in their proposal. The survey is the basis for designing sidewalks for their specific locations, taking into account trees, poles, slopes, and property lines. If there is not enough right-of-way, sidewalks can be built to take up part of the existing roadway. Sidewalks can also incorporate traffic calming structures such as landscaped bumpers built into the road. Those elements will be incorporated into the concept design, to be approved by the Council before the project moves to the next stage. Residents directly impacted by sidewalk construction might also be given another opportunity to comment.

Mr. Davila confirmed that the cost estimates in the submitted proposal are firm, even if additional work is required for a particular project component. The exception is the design of a storm water management structure. CP Johnson was initially told that the Town plans to use pervious concrete to mitigate storm water runoff and the proposal was based on that.

Further, the proposal references a retaining wall for a property in the commercial district that has a significant slope, but for which an easement may not be available. In this case, the sidewalk would be placed entirely within Town right-of-way, using a retaining wall instead of re-grading the property. Generally, the solution for properties where easements cannot be obtained is to design more steeply-sloped driveways. However, CP Johnson will provide sketches showing what a driveway would look

like with and without an easement. Often home-owners will change their minds. In other instances, CP Johnson has offered to build a wider driveway that can fit additional cars in exchange for an easement. Most easement issues can be resolved by negotiation.

Mr. Davila said that CP Johnson is not involved in the construction process but can provide construction observation to ensure that the plans are followed. For references, the Town can contact the City of Hyattsville, where they have recently done work, as well as many other cities and agencies.

At 8:20 p.m., the Council took a 10-minute break.

Nothing was discussed under **2. Code Compliance, 3. Parks & Recreation, 4. Public Safety, and 5. Public Works.**

6. Administration

Code car surplus: TA Murphy said that he would like the Council to give permission to sell the old, white code car, which is no longer needed following the purchase of a new code car. CM Dennison so moved. MPT Wilkinson seconded. CM Kulpa-Eddy said that Director Solomon would like to keep the white Crown Victoria as a backup, or get the latest surplus police vehicle. Oftentimes a second code car is needed when 2 officers are working at the same time. The old Saturn is uncomfortable for the Code Department's tall employees and not always available.

Mayor Calvo said that he is concerned about the additional costs in maintenance and repairs this would entail. TA Murphy elaborated that the Town spent around \$1,500 per year on repairs of the 2 old code cars. The white car has manifold problems that would be too expensive to fix. It would not fetch more than \$300 if sold. Mayor Calvo said he does not want to sink any more money into this car. CM Kulpa-Eddy agreed, but asked if TA Murphy could check if there is another off-line police car in better shape, which the Code Department could have.

Mayor Calvo said he does not like the idea of continuing to transfer surplus police vehicles to the Code Department because they require expensive repairs. He thought the purpose of purchasing the new code car was to be able to dispose of the old code cars. However, he agrees to keep this old code car until it breaks. The Council agreed to keep the old code car as a backup.

Robotics Club request for meeting space: Clerk Harper explained that the Town received an inquiry about the availability of meeting space at the Town Center for a Robotics & Science club. The club is run by University of Maryland engineering students who work with a group of k-12 students with an interest in robotics and science. The members meet after school 3 times a week, build robots, do outreach at schools and prepare to participate in robotics competitions. The club currently meets at a church in Lanham but would like to meet closer to the University. While the club has no connection to BHES or Berwyn Heights families, it may afford an opportunity for extra-curricular science education and preparation for high school science and technology programs or engineering studies at university.

In response to Council questions, Clerk Harper said that the club currently has 25 members and brings tools and materials for building robots. Club members would probably car pool to Berwyn Heights if they were given meeting space. There is no charge to joining the club but members may be asked to participate in fundraising. The Council declined to grant the request because the club has no ties to Berwyn Heights and cannot be easily accommodated at the Town Center. While the concept of a

robotics club is worthy, this club is well established and already has a meeting space.

Budget: Mayor Calvo said that he had hoped to discuss the surplus tonight but TA Murphy is still working on the background document.

Mayor Calvo continued that he recently received an invitation from Pepco's municipal liaison Jerry Pasternak to meet and discuss tree trimming issues. He had requested but not yet received information from Pepco on plants suitable for re-growing a buffer along Edmonston Road prior to the meeting. The plants for the buffer should not grow too tall and preferably be evergreen. He would like to have a cost estimate for this project, which could be funded from the surplus.

MPT Wilkinson asked whether money in the Public Works beautification appropriation can be used to buy trash cans and recycling bins for Pop's Park and Indian Creek Park. TA Murphy noted that the Town has received the donation from 7 Eleven earmarked for the purchase of trash cans. He needs instructions on what type of trash cans to purchase and where to place them. MPT Wilkinson said he will consult with Acting Director Lockley but the initial plan was to mount the trash cans at bus stops and around 7 Eleven and the commercial district.

CM Kulpa-Eddy asked if TA Murphy has talked with Code Director Solomon about adjusting code fees and fines. TA Murphy said he has not done so yet. He will furnish background this information at upcoming budget discussions.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Signed: *Kerstin Harper, Town Clerk*