



# Town of Berwyn Heights

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## Minutes Worksession July 5, 2016

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. Present were Mayor Cheryl Jewitt, Mayor Pro Tem (MPT) Jodie Kulpa-Eddy and Councilmembers (CMs) Patricia Dennison, Christopher Rasmussen and Maria Robles. Also present were Town Administrator (TA) Jessica Cowles, Chief of Police Kenneth Antolik, Detective Daniel Unger, Officers Scott Krouse and James Ignowski, Public Works Director Kenny Hall, Clerk Kerstin Harper, and citizens.

### 1. **Promotion Ceremony**

Mayor Jewitt performed the promotions of Officer Ignowski to Corporal, Officer Krouse to Corporal and Detective Unger to Detective Sergeant, assisted by Kenneth Krouse who awarded the badges. Chief Antolik gave a brief speech. He said that the Berwyn Heights Police Department is notable for its corps of talented officers, which he is proud to lead. The officers then signed their certificates of promotion and departed for a public reception in the Senior Center.

### 2. **Minutes**

On a motion by CM Robles and second by CM Rasmussen, the June 20 worksession minutes were approved 5 to 0. The June 8 Town meeting minutes were distributed.

### 3. **Agenda process**

Mayor Jewitt explained that Clerk Harper provided her with a summary of the agenda process previous Councils have followed, which she plans to follow. She asked if the Council had any questions or comments. CM Rasmussen clarified that the process provides for the Mayor to make the final decision of what items will be on the agenda. This ensures that the meetings remain within a given timeframe during which the Council can work productively.

### 4. **Department Reports**

MPT Kulpa-Eddy reported that the College Park REI is slated to be closed. The Council may want to take a position to support the store remaining open at this location. CM Robles said that an online petition is circulating asking REI to reconsider, which could be posted to the Town's website. MPT Kulpa-Eddy continued that Prince George's County has banned Styrofoam take-home food containers effective July 1. Restaurants will no longer be able to use them once the current inventory has been used. Further, the County Council is proposing to amend its charter to add two at-large members to the County Council. Councilmembers who have already served on the County Council would be eligible to

run for these seats and, if elected, could serve another two terms. County Councilwoman Glaros might be invited to a worksession or 4 Cities meeting to explain the amendment. Ms. Glaros will also be hosting her second annual career fair on September 29, 5:30 pm at Parkdale High School.

CM Rasmussen asked for another councilmember to accompany him on the Code Department's inspection of his 3 rental properties in the interest of full disclosure. Mayor Jewitt and CM Dennison said they would do so. CM Rasmussen also asked that the Council think about the extent and timeframe of the planned revision of the Rental Housing Ordinance. It was agreed that the review should begin in the fall and take 2-3 months. An amendment of the Town charter is also on the legislative calendar.

CM Robles reported that she made contacts and gathered information for improving recreational facilities in Berwyn Heights at the MML convention. She scheduled meetings with the Town's school board representative and the M-NCPPC regional director to discuss possible upgrades to the tennis court, basketball court and hockey rink. She also reached out to a vendor for preliminary proposals, and is looking into applying for a DNR Community Parks & Playgrounds grant to finance facility improvements.

CM Robles continued with an update on her efforts to make Berwyn Heights an MML Banner City. The Council fulfilled one of the requirements by attending the MML convention. She asked councilmembers to consider signing up for attending a PGCMA meeting to fulfill another banner city requirement. Flying the Municipal Government Works flag, participating in the "If I Were Mayor" contest, and enrolling in the Academy for Excellence in Local Governance would also earn credits towards Banner City status. Further, CM Robles signed up for the MML Parks & Recreation Association and may join a national Parks & Recreation Association. Lastly, she announced that the next BHEAC meeting will be held on July 21. She will ask if they would like to serve as a review committee for educational grants the Town makes from time to time.

#### **5. Citizen Comments**

Mayor Jewitt received a complaint from a resident who was not able to obtain information on a police raid that occurred near his home. She has requested Chief Antolik to report on what information can be disclosed to the public about such incidents at the next Town meeting. She also noted that Mike Attick, NW/EP co-chair, donated a commemorative coin to the Town, that was given to him by AMTRAK officials who held a disaster preparedness workshop at the Town Center. NW/EP now has several members that are qualified to help in the event of a train accident in this vicinity.

MPT Kulpa-Eddy received a complaint about dump trucks regularly using Berwyn Road. Chief Antolik has been asked to look into it. She also had a complaint about noise from a construction project, and a question about a leaky fire hydrant. CM Rasmussen said that he learned through an e-mail exchange that a County building permit expires after 6 months and must be extended. He wondered whether Berwyn Heights also requires an extension. CM Robles noted that a driveway apron along Cunningham Drive was rebuilt with asphalt during recent construction work.

Merrill Weinrich, Cunningham Drive, asked whether the Bulletin figure of 190 rental homes in Berwyn Heights is correct. CM Rasmussen confirmed this, noting that the number has come down from a high of 210.

#### **6. Action Items**

**Footpath improvements:** TA Cowles provided additional information on the renovation of the 58<sup>th</sup>

Avenue and 60<sup>th</sup> Avenue footpaths. Both footpaths have gravel surfaces with no base layer and are prone to washouts and erosion from heavy rains. It is proposed to rebuild the paths to a width of 5' with a stone base and asphalt surface for greater stability and longevity. For the 58<sup>th</sup> Avenue footpath, it is proposed to re-grade the area, install soil stabilization matting along the slopes, and channel the storm water into the nearest storm water drain. A retaining wall to stabilize the slope would cost around \$18,000.

In response to questions, Public Works Acting Director Hall confirmed that the asphalt surface would be impervious and create additional runoff. Asphalt would be more durable and require less maintenance than asphalt millings. Asphalt sealing will not be necessary as this path will not be used by cars and heavy vehicles. Storm water runoff will be slowed by rip rap to be installed in the channel adjacent to the path. Pervious concrete is an option but would be much more expensive. The possibility of litter being washed into Indian Creek could be addressed by installing waste baskets at each end of the path.

TA Cowles summarized the challenges for improving the 60th Avenue footpath adjacent to the elementary school. In addition to washouts and erosion, two red maple trees are growing in the middle of the path with exposed roots that cause a trip hazard. SaveATree consultants, who are making an inventory of all Town trees, recommend that these trees be removed, as well as 4-5 trees along the 58th Avenue path.

In response to questions, TA Cowles and Acting Director Hall said that the renovated 60th Avenue path would not be completely ADA compliant because the slope is too steep. However, a straightened, 5' wide asphalt path would be a significant improvement. Installation of solar lights are planned for both paths but more research is needed to determine if there is enough sunlight available on the 58<sup>th</sup> Avenue path to re-charge them.

TA Cowles gave a brief update on the tree inventory. SavATree has a draft inventory of 860 town trees with recommendations for pruning or removals. They independently came to the conclusion that the two trees in the middle of the 60th Avenue path and several along the 58<sup>th</sup> Avenue path are in poor health and should be removed. The Town Council will have the opportunity to review the plan at the August 1 worksession. She also noted the Town attorney advises that speed camera money cannot be used to finance the path improvements. She therefore recommends using Highway User Revenues, excluding tree removals, which would be financed from the Public Works Department's tree care budget.

CM Rasmussen said that he appreciates all the work that went into getting a second opinion on tree removals and coming up with alternatives for improving the paths. He will not object to the removal of the two red maples recommended for removal on the 60th Avenue path, nor the removal of any dead trees. He believes that a retaining wall costing \$18,000 is too expensive to save one tree. He remains concerned about soil stabilization and privacy along the 58th Avenue path. Nonetheless, he supports moving forward with the project and made a motion to authorize removal of the designated trees and obtaining bids for the footpath reconstruction. CM Robles seconded.

MPT Kulpa-Eddy asked to get an estimate for rebuilding the paths using pervious asphalt. Acting Director Hall said he will do so but noted that it costs 3 times as much and requires frequent cleaning to retain its pervious quality. He would recommend using pervious concrete over pervious asphalt. Clerk Harper related a citizen comment from Brad Jewitt, who said that asphalt millings have been

successfully used for a perimeter path at NASA/ Goddard Space Flight Center. The motion to approve tree removals and obtain bids for path reconstruction passed 5 to 0.

**Strategic planning consultant:** TA Cowles explained that she solicited 3 proposals for a strategic planning workshop to help the Council set goals and priorities for the upcoming term and beyond. The Novak Group was used by the Town to recruit a Town Administrator and Code supervisor. The UMD Institute for Governmental Service and Research (IGSR) is familiar to her from consultant services provided to the City of Annapolis. The Phoenix Nest is affiliated with UMD's Center of Leadership & Organizational Change. All 3 proposals are within the \$3,000 budget and each outlines a different approach to the task based on minimal guidance she gave them, including: 1) a list of 46<sup>th</sup> Council priorities; 2) development of an overall vision and mission for the upcoming Council term; and 3) identifying 2-3 priorities with a step-by-step process for implementation.

Mayor Jewitt said that she prefers the Novak Group because they are already familiar with the Town and its employees. MPT Kulpa-Eddy said she is leaning toward IGSR because they provide a specific timetable and objectives for the workshop. CM Rasmussen also preferred IGSR because they provide the most comprehensive proposal. In the ensuing discussion the following points were made: IGSR's agenda may be too ambitious with not enough time to address all items, particularly stakeholder interviews (with businesses or community leaders), in a 1-day seminar; stakeholder interviews may provide valuable insights into concerns of constituents; Novak Group's knowledge of Town's personnel might be limiting and a source of prejudice; IGSR is the only vendor that offers a half day follow-up workshop.

MPT Kulpa-Eddy moved and CM Dennison seconded to hire IGSR. The motion passed 5 to 0.

## **7. Discussion Items**

**MML debriefing:** Mayor Jewitt said her first MML convention attendance went smoothly but she wished she had a "newbie" tag, so people would know to explain things to her. She enjoyed a workshop on the different forms of local government and was surprised to learn that some cities have unpaid Mayors, or no Town Administrator. She was also surprised that some Councils do not receive regular budget updates, nor video-record their meetings. At the Mayor's lunch, she made acquaintance with several other mayors with whom she will consult in the future.

MPT Kulpa-Eddy reported that she was busy attending workshops from morning to night, starting with being the Town's flag bearer for the 5<sup>th</sup> time. She attended a Small Towns Emergency Preparedness workshop and a follow-up snap learning session on how to start up preparedness training in a community. She also took an interesting Fraud Awareness & Prevention workshop that might be integrated into the Town's budget process, participated in a Small Towns Forum, workshops on Intergovernmental Collaboration, Aging Population and The Next Big Thing in Municipal Government, which projected out the types of problems will cities might face 40-50 years from now.

CM Rasmussen reported that he attended many core courses for earning his Academy of Excellence in Local Governance certificate. One was on Hot Button Legal Issues ranging from zoning matters to campaign finance concerns. He attended workshops on Open Meetings and the Public Information Act and was pleased to learn that the Town is already complying with most of the requirements. He attended County Councilmember Dannielle Glaros' breakfast and had an opportunity to interact with Councilmembers from neighboring municipalities.

CM Robles reported that she enjoyed her first MML convention and was particularly impressed with the keynote speaker Jason Roberts, who inspired with his presentation to “Build a Better Block”; ways to improve of blighted neighborhoods with pop-up artistic elements. Some of these ideas might be tried in Berwyn Heights. She also attended workshops on Consensus & Team Building, Inclusive Communities, where Hyattsville stood out as an example, and Aging Population, among others.

TA Cowles said she also attended workshops on Fraud Prevention, Hot Button Legal Issues and Open Meetings. The ideas presented by the keynote speaker were discussed at length at the Town Administrator’s lunch. She particularly enjoyed a workshop on Unmanaged Conflict, which explored the City of Sanford’s response to the Trayvon Martin incident.

***Monthly reports format:*** CM Rasmussen said he would like the Council to re-evaluate monthly reports provided by directors to update the Council on workload, projects and expenditures in each department at the next worksession. It may be worthwhile to ask what type of data in which format would be most useful to the Council in leading their departments. The Council agreed and added that Town committees should also be asked to provide a report.

***Four Cities agenda:*** MPT Kulpa-Eddy explained the proceedings of Four Cities Coalition meetings for the benefit of Mayor Jewitt, who will attend her first Four Cities meeting. The July 27 meeting will be hosted by Berwyn Heights, with the Mayor presiding. The following items were proposed for the agenda: 1) presentation by County Councilmember Dannielle Glaros on plans to add two at-large members to the County Council; 2) follow-up discussion with the Department of Permits, Inspections and Enforcement (DPIE) on improving coordination; 3) update on the County’s rezoning effort, Module 2; 4) invitation of M-NCPPC Parks & Recreation representative to address tree removals on park land; 5) update on North County animal shelter; 6) proposed volunteer fire department changes in incident chain of command.

## **8. Town Council Schedule**

The Council reviewed the calendar for upcoming months. The date for the September 6 worksession was confirmed.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:34 p.m.

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Kerstin Harper, Town Clerk