



Town of Berwyn Heights

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Minutes Worksession June 19, 2017

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. Present were Mayor Jewitt, Mayor Pro-Tem (MPT) Jodie Kulpa-Eddy, Councilmembers (CMs) Patricia Dennison, Christopher Rasmussen, and Gerald Shields. CM Shields left early with apologies. Also present were Town Administrator (TA) Jessica Cowles and Clerk Kerstin Harper.

2. Action Items

CDBG grant agreement: Mayor Jewitt said that Prince George's County is in the process of requalifying to receive Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). These funds will be used for community development and housing activities primarily for the benefit of low to moderate income people. Municipalities may enter into a cooperation agreement with the County to assist the County in providing the approved activities and thus increase the County's entitlement. The cooperation agreement is effective for the period of 2018-2020 and Berwyn Heights has participated in this program during previous cycles. TA Cowles added the Town recently has participated in a CDBG-funded weatherization program run by the City of Bladensburg from which a number of Berwyn Heights residents benefitted. On a motion by CM Dennison and second by CM Shields, the Council voted to remain a participant in the CDBG cooperation agreement. The motion passed 5 to 0.

Kenilworth Avenue sound barrier: Mayor Jewitt presented a draft a letter to appeal SHA's decision not to conduct a noise test along the south-bound lanes of Kenilworth Avenue between Greenbelt Road and Pontiac Street. Traffic noise has become more noticeable for residents living along the 8700 and 8800 blocks of Edmonston Road since Pepco's tree removals in the green strip along Kenilworth Avenue in the fall of 2016. SHA informed Berwyn Heights that noise tests are only conducted when new highways are built or an existing highway widened. No noise test was conducted when Kenilworth Avenue was widened in that area from 4 to 6 lanes (including the access lanes) in 2006.

Councilmembers commented that the Town should fact-check if Kenilworth Avenue was widened, or only resurfaced in 2006. The narrow width of the green strip and traffic speed might be cited as well to strengthen the case for a noise study. Mayor Jewitt will make the proposed corrections and send the letter to SHA.

MML convention voting: Mayor Jewitt will attend the business meeting during the upcoming MML convention to vote for the next board of directors, and pick up Berwyn Heights' Banner City award.

3. Discussion Items

Town Organizations: CM Shields provided an updated classification system/ policy for Town organizations, an updated list of Town organizations, as well as a sample policy from the City of Greenbelt for their recognized community organizations.

The revised draft policy, (based on the Greenbelt policy), would require Town organizations to apply for recognized status, which would entitle them to free use of Town facilities, listing in Town publications and, potentially, Town funds. All recognized Town organizations would have to have bylaws and annually submit an application to renew their recognition status. Once recognized, the organization becomes eligible to request funds from the Town. Funding requests would be reviewed by staff and approved by the Council. If funds are received, an organization would be required to file receipts for any purchases made. Councilmembers and Town staff would not be able to hold elected offices in a Town organization. Informal Town organizations would still be eligible to use Town facilities and be listed in Town publications, but not eligible to receive Town funds.

The Council discussed the recognition status of the Town's existing groups. It was agreed that a Town organization policy should establish categories or tiers based on the degree of formality of an organization. The category would help determine the privileges to which an organization is entitled, including free ads in the Town Bulletin, being listed on the Town website, free use of Town facilities, and fundraising spots at Town events. The policy would also define responsibilities, including filing membership rosters, residency information and minutes with the Town. CM Shields will consult with TA Cowles and Clerk Harper to further develop the policy.

CM Shields left the meeting at 8:05 p.m.

Strategic plan update: TA Cowles gave an update on the strategic plan.

- Goal - Acquire improved facilities for Town departments: Short-term measures to improve facility adequacy have largely been implemented, with the exception of exploring electronic archiving. A risk assessment to improve facility security in the short term will be available in mid-August. Long-term, the Town will seek the recommendations of a consultant on improving facility security and adequacy. An RFP is due by October 1.
- Goal - Bring the roads up to standard: An RFP for consultants to conduct a formal roads needs assessment is due by August 1.
- Goal - Community building: A community survey is being developed to gauge how to communicate better with residents and businesses. A survey of Town organizations is planned to gather ideas and best practices on how to increase residents' participation in Town activities.
- Goal – Improve Town aesthetics: Improving tree canopy and species diversity has moved forward with the completion of Pepco's replanting plan and the establishment of a Shade Tree Board. An RFP for consultants to write a long-term tree maintenance plan is scheduled for spring 2018. The Town's welcome signs will be replaced. A design contest was held in April but no designs were submitted. MPT Kulpa-Eddy plans to submit a design. A perpetual plaque to honor Citizens of the Year is in production and will be erected at Pop's Park when ready.
- Goal – Enhance economic development opportunities: The Town will seek a sustainable community designation through the Department of Housing & Community Development (DHCD) to open new financing opportunities. The application will be submitted by October 1. Improvements to the Route 193 corridor will be pursued in close coordination with the City of Greenbelt. The Town will explore aligning with the Route 1 Coalition communities to advocate for

economic development in the area. Release of an RFP for an economic development consultant is scheduled for February 1, 2018.

WSSC proposed new rate structure: MPT Kulpa-Eddy reported on WSSC's proposal for a new rate structure for water usage. WSSC was mandated by the Public Service Commission (PSC) to devise a more equitable rate structure between high and low-volume users. A study identified a range of options, which has been narrowed to two. The first option proposes to gradually increase the rates for low-volume users and decrease the rates for high-volume users over a 3-year period until they pay the same price of \$11 per gallon. The second option proposes a sliding scale of rates, with higher rates charged when certain levels of water usage are exceeded. WSSC does not have the authority to implement different rates for residential and commercial customers.

WSSC has held a number of informational meetings on the proposed rate structures and is now taking public comments. WSSC will come out with a recommendation on the new structure in October, which will go into effect in July 2018. The Town may send comments to WSSC's municipal liaison Karyn Riley until the end of this year. The Council asked to check if Ms. Riley could make a presentation at the next Four Cities Coalition meeting.

4. Minutes

The Council reviewed the June 5 worksession minutes. On a motion by CM Dennison and second by CM Rasmussen, the minutes were approved 4 to 0.

5. Announcements

Mayor Jewitt announced that she attended the annual Prince George's Police Chiefs awards program at which Detective Sergeant Unger was honored as officer the year and Police Clerk Iris Cruz as employee of the year. She also announced that Town Attorney Shay passed away after a battle with cancer and that the Town Council did not attend a celebration of BHES last day of school because no invitations were sent to the Town.

MPT Kulpa-Eddy announced that BHES will hold a welcome open house for the new principal on June 22. All are invited. A University of Maryland student will start to work as an intern in the Administration Department next week, focusing on economic development issues. CM Rasmussen reported he attended the Town-wide yard sale, where participation was lower than in previous years. He received comments on tipping day being discontinued and on a misunderstood announcement of the May 3rd homicide on the Town website's. CM Dennison announced the refuse collection schedule for the week of the 4th of July holiday.

6. Department Reports/ Citizen Comments

Mayor Jewitt received comments on a rat problem in some areas of the Town, posting yard signs to announce Town meetings, endorsing the Humvee acquisition, improper placement of stop signs and stop lines, and moving the second refuse collection day to Fridays.

7. Town Council Schedule

The Council reviewed the calendar. TA Cowles noted that Town offices will be closed on Monday, July 3, as it was designated as the Town's 'floating holiday'.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:49 p.m.

Signed: *Kerstin Harper*, Town Clerk