



Town of Berwyn Heights

5700 Berwyn Road
Berwyn Heights, MD
20740 Tel. (301) 474-5000
Fax (301) 474-5002

Minutes Worksession September 11, 2017

Executive Session (6:15 p.m. – 8:08 p.m.)

Personnel matter

Regular Meeting

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 p.m. Present were Mayor Cheryl Jewitt, Mayor Pro-Tem (MPT) Jodie Kulpa-Eddy, Councilmembers (CMs), Christopher Rasmussen, and Gerald Shields. CM Patricia Dennison had an excused absence. Also present were Town Administrator (TA) Jessica Cowles and Clerk Kerstin Harper.

1. Action Items

There were none.

2. Discussion Items

Sustainable Communities designation: TA Cowles provided the Council with the latest draft of an action plan that is required for the *Sustainable Communities* application, as well as a draft resolution of the Town Council supporting the designation of the Town of Berwyn Heights as a *Sustainable Community*, to be adopted at the September Town meeting. *Sustainable Communities* designation opens the door to a range of grants for revitalizing the designated area. Members of the Green Team, Shade Tree Board and Historical Committee have provided input and submitted letters of support for the designation. TA Cowles asked the Council if they had any remaining questions or comments about the application or the action plan.

In response to questions, TA Cowles said that the action plan is informed by the Council's priorities enshrined in the 2016 strategic plan, but it adds new information in the areas of Housing, and Local Planning & Land Use. Berwyn Heights is one of the last communities to seek Sustainable Communities designation in Prince George's County. The designation is due for renewal every 5 years.

Emergency Operations Plan: MPT Kulpa-Eddy explained that she and TA Cowles have continued to work on incorporating comments from committees and residents into the draft Emergency Operations Plan (EOP). This overhaul of an existing plan dating from 2003 is based on a new template adopted by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) after Hurricane Katrina. The Council was requested to submit comments on the plan and Mayor Jewitt provided her comments in a separate document included in tonight's packet.

Mayor Jewitt explained her comments, and the Council discussed and made changes to the EOP based on her comments as follows:

- Delete emergency response specifics that could change, such as number of police, Spanish speaking staff, and type of alert systems. This information can be listed in addendums.
- Add essential staff list and clarification of duties;
- Clarify police reporting duties relating to the elementary school;
- Clarify authority for activating CERT volunteers;
- Delete CERT limitations;
- Clarify BHVFD emergency response responsibilities;
- Notify CDMA, Presbyterian Church, BHES and Community Center that they may be asked for assistance in an emergency, but are not under the Town Emergency Operations Center's (EOC) direction.
- Clarify the role of the Mayor as spokesperson/ PIO;
- Clarify that Councilmembers are not under the command of the EOC or Chief of Police in an emergency;
- Clarify that the NW/EP maintains the trailer in a state of readiness;
- Add occupancy limits for facilities that could serve as shelters, and a list of County-designated shelter locations;
- Add provision for EOC check-in/ check-out station for volunteers, staff and Councilmembers;
- Delete specific reference to local clergy as contact for coordinating recovery;
- Add provision for supplying 'go-bags' to essential employees; and
- Add list of essential emergency preparedness training courses in the appendix.

MPT Kulpa-Eddy and TA Cowles will incorporate the changes into a revised draft that will be available to the public for comment at the upcoming Town meeting.

Acquisition of new refuse and recycling bins: Mayor Jewitt said that the Council recently received citizen complaints about rats and refuse collection that have led to consideration of purchasing new recycling and trash bins for residents. TA Cowles explained that Public Works Director Cox researched available bins. He recommends the *Toter* brand, which is used by city governments throughout the United States, and is available under a national contract price.

The *Toter* bins have wheels, an attached lid and are very durable. They come in 32, 48 and 64 gallon sizes, costing \$34, \$38 and \$39 per unit, or \$37,200, \$41,700 and \$43,300, if 1,100 units are purchased. If both recycling and trash cans are purchased the price would double. The *Toter* bins are heavier than those currently in use, which may require installation of an automatic lift on the Town's 2 trash trucks, costing an additional \$10,000 each. In all, the Town may need to spend around \$100,000 to provide new bins to all households and outfit trucks with lifts. Bin sizes could be mixed in one order, and different-sized bins can be serviced by the same lift.

Councilmembers discussed the advantages and drawbacks of purchasing new recycling (and trash) bins for all households. There was disagreement on how many bins to purchase at which time, how to pay for them, and whether residents would be comfortable with once-a-week pickup that would likely result from transitioning to automatic lifts. It was agreed that a citizen survey may help decide some of these issues.

TA Cowles was requested to provide information on whether 16 gallon *Toter* bins are available, whether there are clips for lids, and whether all bins can be serviced by the same lift.

Performance evaluation process: TA Cowles reviewed the performance evaluation timetable, which begins with a review of employee goals from the prior evaluation period in August and September 2017 and ends with completed evaluations submitted to the Human Resource Manager in February 2018, prior to the FY 2019 budget process. Any salary and merit increases would take effect at the beginning of the next fiscal year.

In discussion, TA Cowles said that she discusses all staff evaluations with their supervisors/ department directors, including rating standards to ensure that evaluations are fair across departments. Senior staff evaluations follow the same process, but they are evaluated by the Town Administrator based on a list of core competencies. October 2 was set as the date for an executive session to discuss the Town Administrator's evaluation.

3. Minutes

On a motion by MPT Kulpa-Eddy and second by CM Shields, the August 21 worksession minutes were approved 4 to 0.

4. Announcements/ Department Reports/ Citizen Comments

Mayor Jewitt summarized a letter from the Maryland Department of Transportation explaining its decision not to commission a noise study the Town had requested for Kenilworth Avenue between Greenbelt Road and Pontiac Street. She and TA Cowles attended a meeting of the Prince George's County Office of Management & Budget, at which a standardized chart for tax differentials was distributed. This newly developed chart will provide clarity, and facilitate municipalities' requests for reimbursements of services they provide, such as police protection and refuse collection. Police Clerk Iris Cruz has accepted a position with the federal government and will leave Berwyn Heights by the week's end.

Mayor Jewitt summarized two emails she received regarding the Humvee acquisition, one in favor and one opposed. She also received comments regarding the parking of cars other than the owners in front of his or her home. She explained that Berwyn Heights has no reserved parking and allows anyone to park anywhere on Town streets, unless there is a parking violation.

MPT Kulpa-Eddy reported that County Executive Baker is seeking to bring the headquarters of online merchant Amazon.com to Prince George's County. Amazon is planning to open a second headquarters and the Washington area meets their criteria. A "Sound the Alarm" smoke detector installation drive was postponed to spring 2018 because the sponsor, the American Red Cross, has deployed its staff and resources to responding to hurricanes Harvey and Irma.

CM Rasmussen sought clarification on when the Council plans to vote on the Humvee acquisition. The Council agreed to place it on the agenda for the October 2 worksession. At the September 18 worksession, the Council will discuss the Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) and recycling bin purchase.

CM Rasmussen referred Councilmembers to a newspaper article giving background on the U.S. government program that allows municipalities to acquire certain military surplus equipment. Public Works quickly removed a tree that fell in front of a long-vacant, bank-owned property on 58th Avenue. Neighbors of vacant homes are advised that the Town cannot force the owners to sell or rent the home, but does enforce any violations of the Town's ordinances.

CM Shields reported that he received 2 comments on the Humvee acquisition, both opposed, and announced upcoming events. CM Shields reached out to Town organizations to get feedback on a citizen

survey of Town services, and updated the survey. He suggested to extract the questions relating to recycling bins for publication in the next Bulletin. The Council agreed. CM Rasmussen offered to assist.

6. Town Council Schedule

The Council reviewed the calendar. No changes were made.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:42 p.m.

Signed: *Kerstin Harper*, Town Clerk