



Town of Berwyn Heights

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Minutes Worksession July 24, 2017

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

1. Action Items

Humvee acquisition: TA Cowles provided supplemental cost estimates pertaining to the proposed acquisition and maintenance of a Humvee that was available at no cost through the U.S. Defense Logistics Agency (DLA):

- Insurance through LGIT \$600 annually.
- Electronics and lights installation at no cost, using existing surplus materials from Police Department.
- Decals, markings, and Town Seal by local sign shop at no cost.
- Routine preventative maintenance \$500 annually. For comparison, decoy vehicles annual maintenance costs \$200 annually.
- The Town's attorney advises there is no legal reason to forgo the acquisition.

TA Cowles said the total acquisition cost of the Humvee is expected to be \$600 and the total recurring, annual costs \$1,100. Chief Antolik added that normal wear-and-tear on the Humvee would likely be less than for the Suburban, as there is no air conditioning and the vehicle runs on diesel fuel.

Mayor Jewitt read two letters in support of the Humvee acquisition. The first was addressed to the Council and signed by 6 residents, the other a petition signed by 17 residents. The point was made that the Humvee would be useful in bad weather and in responding to riots, hostage takings and terrorist attacks. Currently, Chief Antolik brings his personal vehicle when weather is bad.

MPT Kulpa-Eddy said she heard comments from residents who did not support the Humvee acquisition. She could ask them to submit their comments in writing if needed. However, she expressed concern about creating divisiveness among residents. Mayor Jewitt said she did not ask residents to write these letters, but is grateful for their support.

MPT Kulpa-Eddy said she had additional questions after taking a look at the vehicle:

- whether the hitch works for towing the emergency trailer;
- why a second set of tires is stored in the vehicle;
- whether the vehicle may have a leak; as she found the windows to be fogged up;

- how many persons can ride in the vehicle.

Chief Antolik answered that the hitch could be replaced with one that can tow the trailer at little cost. The tires in the back of the Humvee are the originals and work with a central tire inflation system, which has been removed. The moisture on the windows may be due to condensation. The Humvee can seat 4 people and transport additional riders in the cargo area. MPT Kulpa-Eddy asked for cost estimates to replace the towing hitch, dispose of or store the extra tires, install seats and seat belts for additional passengers (currently the vehicle can only accommodate the driver and another in front), and whatever repairs might be needed to fix the condensation/moisture issue.

CM Shields thanked TA Cowles and Chief Antolik for providing additional information and the residents for providing input on this matter. CM Rasmussen said the Humvee acquisition has symbolic significance beyond its practical applications in that it represents an expanded mission for the Police. He considers hostage takings and terrorist attacks to be the responsibility of the armed forces and National Guard, not the BHPD. He hopes that residents will engage with the Council in the broader discussion of the mission of the BHPD, BHVFD and Public Works Department, planned for the September worksessions. The composition of the BHPD fleet and equipment purchases should be guided by a mission, rather than what is available on the military surplus market. He suggested checking with neighboring municipalities on whether they own military vehicles and what purpose they might serve there.

TA Cowles said that she and Chief Antolik are prepared to look into the cost and utility of other types of police vehicles once the Council has decided what the BHPD fleet should look like. No action was taken to change the prior decision of the Council to engage in a broader discussion of the Town's emergency and public safety operations before adding the Humvee to the Police fleet.

2. Discussion Items

Speed camera and school zone process and procedures: MPT Kulpa-Eddy explained that there are speed limit signs with a 'photo enforced' warning posted in the 8900 block of 63rd Avenue and the 6100 block of Quebec Street she did not recall being approved by the Council. Per State law, speed cameras can only be operated within a designated school zone in conjunction with proper signage indicating the speed limit. She proposed the Council discuss where school zones should be, in light of recent requests to operate speed cameras on Osage Street and Berwyn Road.

TA Cowles gave an overview of State law and Town ordinances and resolutions that govern the operation of speed cameras in Berwyn Heights. School zones can be established within a ½ mile radius of a school. Ordinance 149 was adopted in November 2009 to authorize the Town's speed camera program. Resolutions 2-2009, 5-2010, and 8-2013 designate certain blocks of Pontiac Street, Edmonston Road, 63rd Avenue and Greenbelt Road as school zones, in which speed cameras can be operated. Public notice was given in the Town Bulletin and speed limit signs are posted at the designated locations.

The Council discussed school zone-related matters including:

- whether a residence where children are homeschooled can have a school zone (State law defines a school as an accredited public, parochial or private learning institution of 1 or more grades, k -12;
- whether the 6100 block of Quebec Street is a designated school zone,
- what the process is for placing a speed camera on Osage Street or Berwyn Road, and
- whether there is a speed camera on the north side of Greenbelt Road at 63rd Avenue.

TA Cowles will check whether Quebec Street was designated as a school zone to be sure the 'photo enforced' warning is legal, and have the speed limit markings on the roadway changed to 20 mph. Further, the Council must formally designate any areas a school zone where it intends to place the speed camera, provided it is within ½ mile of a school. TA Cowles will check on which locations are within ½ mile of the elementary, middle, or the Friends schools.

Prince George's County zoning rewrite: MPT Kulpa-Eddy gave an update on the rewrite of the County's zoning ordinance that started in 2014. She said the rewrite was undertaken to attract better development and to make zoning rules easier to understand. After completing Module 3 of the new 3-part zoning ordinance in the fall of 2016, the Planning Department staff and consultants are now working on a comprehensive review draft to be released in September. Public comments will be accepted until December 2017. Important changes in the new zoning code include an extended 30-day notice period for development pre-application meetings, a reduced threshold triggering a detailed site plan, and new land use categories for medical cannabis, urban farms and video lottery facilities. Further changes may be made based on public comments received.

Some items of interest to Berwyn Heights include the Cities of Greenbelt and Mount Rainier qualifying for a new neighborhood conservation overlay zone that protect their communities from some development; designation of test sites for the new zoning regulations, including Beltway Plaza; and the Rt. 1 Innovation Corridor's potential to impact future development along Rt. 193.

MPT Kulpa-Eddy suggested the Council consider adjusting its strategic plan and move up the hiring of an economic development consultant to coincide with the public comment period of the new zoning ordinance and Town's *sustainable communities* project. Mayor Jewitt said that the timing of the Council's development discussion should be coordinated with the conversations it plans to have with College Park & Greenbelt on Rt. 193 improvements. TA Cowles said that Berwyn Heights could benefit from working with College Park and Greenbelt, which have full-time planning staffs that work on economic development. She recommended that any economic development consultant the Town plans to hire focus on actionable proposals pertaining to the Rt. 193 corridor, rather than an analysis of current situation.

3. Minutes

There were none

4. Announcements/ Department Reports

Mayor Jewitt announced that Maryland will have 176 miles of bikeways that are part of the 3,000-mile East Coast Greenway reaching from Maine to Key West. She thanked Officers Roberson and Hollowell for escorting door-to-door salesmen who did not have a permit out of Town. MPT Kulpa-Eddy said it is part of police officers' duties to check that salesmen have a Town permit, which ensures that they are representatives of a legal business. She thanked the Berwyn Heights Volunteer Fire Department (BHVFD) for blocking off Ruatan Street between 58th and 60th Avenue, where last week's storm had caused an electric wire to snap, and the Public Works Department for fixing a street sign at 62nd Avenue and Greenbelt Road. She, NW/EP member Speth, and TA Cowles continue to work on updating the Town's Emergency Operations Plan, which will be ready for Council review in August.

CM Rasmussen shared a discussion that occurred on *Next Door* pertaining to overcrowding in owner-occupied houses. He said that the Town cannot address the issue if it is not a rental home, but may be able to refer such concerns to the County which enforces use and occupancy violations. He read an email commenting on the Town Council's discussions relating to the drafting of standard operating procedures for the emergency trailer and recommending that Town organizations draft an annual plan of activities.

CM Shields said that while *Next Door* is a useful venue for sharing community information, it is not an official channel to submit citizen comments.

5. Citizen Comments

Mayor Jewitt received comments about the Town's emergency generators running all weekend, which were reset by the engineering firm that installed them, and candidates for the National Night Out dunk tank.

6. Town Council Schedule

The Council reviewed the calendar. At the upcoming Four Cities meeting, representatives from WMATA and WSSC will give presentations.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Signed: *Kerstin Harper*, Town Clerk