



# Town of Berwyn Heights

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## Minutes Worksession August 21, 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 was Clerk Kerstin Harper. Town Administrator (TA) Jessica Cowles had an excused absence.

### 1. Action Items

There were none.

### 2. Discussion Items

**Rat infestation:** Mayor Jewitt reported that she had reached out to the Police and Public Works Departments, and the City of College Park to find out if they had noticed an increase in the rat population. They had seen an occasional rat but not the rash of sightings that has been reported by residents. She recommended considering the rat problem when the Council discusses new recycling bins for the Town, as soon as the next worksession.

The Council discussed the possible reasons for the increased sightings of rats, including trash set out in bags without being placed into a trash can, or set out in cans without a lid, or left at the curb too long. Another reason may be the loss of shelter and food sources in the commercial district following the Code Department's clean lot enforcement actions.

The Council concluded that it should focus not solely on the acquisition of better recycling bins, but also on new trash containers. New containers should be easy to handle to improve trash disposal practices. A standard trash can might be provided by the Town to all residents who want them, but should not necessarily be mandated. Types of trash cans should be considered in conjunction with the possibility of adding automatic lifts to the trash trucks. Further, the Public Works Department might be asked to pay more attention to trash disposal violations.

**Animal Ordinance timeline:** CM Rasmussen explained that he would like the Council to establish a timeframe for revising *Ordinance 101 – Animals* in the context of the Council's overall to-do list for the fall. MPT Kulpa-Eddy, who raised the revision of the Animal Ordinance, recommended opening it up in October, with a tentative adoption in January 2018. The Ordinance should be cross-checked with the recently revised Prince George's County Animal Ordinance to determine which provisions may need updating. In addition, it should be made consistent with other Town ordinances, such as Noise and Clean

Lot Ordinances that also deal with animal issues. Lastly, provisions for animal welfare that are currently lacking should be added. The Council agreed on the proposed timing of the revision.

**MML conference attendance:** Councilmembers were requested to state whether they intend to attend the Maryland Municipal League fall conference, October 12 – 14. Mayor Jewitt confirmed attendance.

### **3. Minutes**

On a motion by CM Dennison and second by CM Shields, the August 7 worksession minutes were approved 5 to 0.

### **4. Announcements/ Department Reports**

Mayor Jewitt read a resident's letter opposing the acquisition of a Humvee. She also provided feedback on the draft Emergency Operations Plan to be finalized in September and received a comment about a leaning tree at 5701 58<sup>th</sup> Avenue. She forwarded it to Director Cox, who had it taken down immediately.

MPT Kulpa-Eddy reported that property tax bills were sent out this month. Property taxes went up due to a rise in assessments. Homestead and home owners tax credits are available to help mitigate the impact of the tax increases. The owner of the Sir Walter Raleigh Inn, Jerry Cosker, passed away on August 14. As of yet, there is no news as to what may happen to the restaurant. School will be back in session on September 6. PGCPs offers a *Blackboard* app that provides transportation updates, as well as information on school lunch balances, homework assignments, grades and more. CM Dennison confirmed that no trash will be collected on Labor Day; the trash collection schedule for the remainder of the week will be published in the Bulletin and on the Town website.

CM Rasmussen reported that the Code Department performed the rental inspection for his Osage Street home. CM Shields was present for transparency purposes. CM Rasmussen received citizen comments regarding the live streaming of meetings, and pedestrian safety issues in the 5700 block of Ruatan Street.

CM Shields reported that he received some of the same comments other Councilmembers received, including those regarding Ruatan Street traffic, rats and the Humvee acquisition. He received additional comments expressing concern about the militaristic image a Humvee might produce, but the concern was allayed when told of BHPD plans to paint the vehicle in the Berwyn Heights livery. CM Shields stated that a school bus app would greatly benefit parents with school children, since late school buses are a common frustration.

### **6. Town Council Schedule**

The Council reviewed the calendar. No changes were made.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Signed: *Kerstin Harper*, Town Clerk