



Town of Berwyn Heights

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Minutes Worksession February 5, 2018

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, Clerk Kerstin Harper and Senior's Club President Ray Smith.

1. Animal Ordinance Discussion

Mayor Jewitt announced that the scheduled guest Rodney Taylor, Director of the Prince George's County Animal Management Division, is not yet present and moved the discussion of the Animal Ordinance back on the agenda.

4. Minutes (discussed out of order)

On a motion by CM Dennison and second by MPT Kulpa-Eddy, the January 8, 2018 worksession minutes were approved 4-0-1, with CM Rasmussen abstaining. On a motion by CM Dennison and second by CM Rasmussen, the January 22 worksession minutes were approved 5 to 0.

2. Action Items

Parkdale High School funding request: Mayor Jewitt explained that she received a request from Parkdale High School for the Town be a sponsor of its *Girl Power* Mentoring program. Sponsors are asked to make a donation between \$250 to \$2,000 toward a scholarship fund for members of the program, with scholarships awarded for a most improved student in three categories: 1) Academic studies; 2) School attendance; and 3) Behavior/ attitude. Students must have declared an intent to compete for a *Girl Power* scholarship, and must have received an official acceptance letter from the college or school of continuing education of their choice. The deadline for sponsorship is May 31. The program started with a Latina support group, but was expanded to include girls from all backgrounds at grade levels 9 - 12.

The Council discussed the parameters of the program and sought to clarify the eligibility requirements for the scholarships. CM Rasmussen said he does not think donating to the scholarship program is the best way to make Parkdale a more attractive option for Berwyn Heights students. He would be more inclined to support the mentoring program if the Council had more information about how it is run. Mayor Jewitt said that she can ask for a program coordinator to come to a meeting and answer questions. CM Shields moved to table the matter until an arrangement is made for someone to come in and explain the program. CM Dennison seconded. The motion passed 5 to 0.

3. Discussion Items

Town Organizations policy: CM Shields said he intends to submit a revised policy for discussion at the next worksession. Meanwhile, he continues to receive input from Town organizations and individuals regarding the policy. One of the main objections he has heard is that the policy would make it more difficult for organizations to operate. His revised policy will therefore remove such requirements as maintaining a checking account and submitting to background investigations. He plans to send the revised policy out for another round of comments, which he will then use to draft the next version.

In discussion, the Council made the following points:

- The policy evolved into something larger than originally intended and might be scaled down to focus on defining requirements for the free use of Town facilities, Bulletin space, use of the Town Seal or eligibility for Town funds;
- The policy should define the legal relationship between the Town government and community organizations as the basis for providing access to Town resources;
- The policy should address risks associated with organization activities;
- The policy should establish criteria for recognizing new community organizations;
- The policy should strive to make it easier for organizations to operate.

CM Shields said he will attempt to craft a revised policy in collaboration with PRECA Aide Isler that is narrower in scope, and focuses on how the Town recognizes community organizations. Mayor Jewitt said a Town organizations spreadsheet might be included as part of the policy. CM Rasmussen requested a copy of the agreement with the Senior's Club for the use of the first floor of the Town Center.

PRECA beautification contests: CM Shields said he is proposing to hold a landscaping contest as a way to engage with the business community of Berwyn Heights, a priority of the Town's strategic plan. The winner would be awarded a Town plaque that can be posted on the business property. Having researched landscaping contests elsewhere, he is proposing three criteria on which participants would be judged:

- Aesthetics
- Sustainability/ resilience
- Creativeness

CM Shields also proposed a contest to beautify the events room in the Town Center, which currently has plain beige walls. The goal is to have interested artists paint a mural with a Berwyn Heights or Prince George's County theme on one or more of the walls. The reward would be recognition by the Town and free publicity. The Town Council would select the best design based on the following criteria:

- Appropriateness for a government building
- Significance to Berwyn Heights or Prince George's County
- Historical significance
- Ease of maintenance
- Creativeness
- Attractiveness

In discussion, MPT Kulpa-Eddy questioned whether a mural would be conducive to renting the space to more patrons, a goal the Administration Department has been working on. A blank wall may provide more options for renters to decorate the space to their liking. Other public structures might be better candidates for a mural, such as the Sports Park hockey rink or the G. Love Room.

The Council discussed potential themes and places for a mural, as well as other decorative media. It was agreed to inform businesses of the landscaping contest during the annual meeting of the Commercial

District Management Authority (CDMA) in April, with a potential contest to be held in fall 2018. CM Shields will revise the criteria for a mural contest and bring it back for discussion at another worksession.

Ethics Ordinance amendments: Clerk Harper said the amended Ordinance 110 - Ethics is up for adoption at the February 14 Town meeting. She asked if the Council has any additional concerns they want to see addressed before going forward with adoption. They had none.

Election judges swearing-in: Clerk Harper provided a list of election judges that would supervise the Town Council elections on May 1st. This Board of Supervisors of Elections is staffed by the same judges as last year, except for the addition of Alice Daly, who replaced the retiring Richard Ahrens. Election judges are normally sworn-in at the February Town meeting. The Council had no objections.

Animal Ordinance: Mayor Jewitt said that Rodney Taylor with the Animal Management Division is probably not coming tonight. MPT Kulpa-Eddy said she had hoped to receive his input for drafting the enforcement provisions of the Animal Ordinance and introduce it at the February Town meeting so that it can be adopted before this Council finishes out its term. The Council discussed a timeline for adoption of the Ordinance. It was agreed to introduce the Ordinance at the February Town meeting, and try to reschedule Mr. Taylor for another worksession.

TA Cowles said she spoke with other municipalities about their enforcement procedures for animal violations. College Park has a designated animal inspector but still relies on Prince George's County for enforcement, such as impounding or caring for lost or abused animals. She also obtained information about how other municipalities deal with excessive noise related to animals, such as loud and continuous barking. A few cities use an affidavit filed by the complainant, who cannot be a city official. The problem with this approach is that complainants frequently don't show up in court when the violation is adjudicated. For that reason, most cities use a decibel meter.

MPT Kulpa-Eddy thought that an affidavit represents a subjective judgment of what is annoying. In a court setting it may result in a "he said, she said" situation that has no resolution. For that reason, and to maintain good neighborly relations, she would recommend using a decibel meter to determine what constitutes a noise violation. In addition, the Ordinance could clarify what is meant by "frequent and sustained" noise. For example, "frequent" could mean at least 4 times a day and "sustained" 10 minutes or more. However, further input is needed to establish a meaningful measure. Another approach to addressing animal noise complaints would be to dispatch a Code or Police officer to check on the animal's welfare, for which the revised Ordinance will now provide standards.

5. Announcements/ Department Reports/ Citizen Comments

Mayor Jewitt reported on the Four Cities Coalition meeting in College Park. University of Maryland President Loh was present and discussed the efforts to attract the Amazon headquarters to College Park, as well as other economic development initiatives. College Park and Greenbelt, who will be participating in an Urban Land Institute technical assistance panel with Berwyn Heights did not provide an answer as to the amount of their contribution. Mayor Jewitt also reported on the Maryland Mayors' Association conference she attended. The Speakers of the House and Senate were scheduled to speak on Highway User Revenue (HUR), but did not come. Instead mayors were invited to attend upcoming HUR hearings of the legislature. Other topics discussed included the Maglev project, the I-495 and I-270 widening and Marijuana dispensaries. Lastly, Mayor Jewitt thanked Public Works for providing a detailed description of its snow plowing procedures that was published in the February Bulletin.

MPT Kulpa-Eddy reported that College Park's Route 1 revitalization efforts were also discussed at the Four Cities meeting, including the potential impact on neighboring communities. Informational brochures about the Maglev project were handed out by a Maglev spokesperson. As part of the zoning rewrite the M-NCPPC Planning Department has published about a dozen test cases of how existing projects would develop under the new zoning regulations. Beltway Plaza is one of the examples and can be looked up on the zoning rewrite website.

MPT Kulpa-Eddy continued that the Prince George's County Executive and his team are holding listening sessions for the FY 2019 budget in February. She plans to attend, and remind them of the storm water system improvements they have planned for Berwyn Heights. Further, the sprinkler system in the Senior Center was repaired, and the former Sir Walter Raleigh Inn may get a new restaurant, as a liquor license application has been filed for that location.

CM Shields reported that this year's *Banner City* re-certification is making good progress but requires attendance at another PGCMA meeting, and an engagement project with Berwyn Heights Elementary School students. He continues to accept input on the Town organizations policy.

5. Town Council Schedule

The Council reviewed the schedule of events and activities. Mayor Jewitt and CM Rasmussen will not be present for the February Town meeting. MPT Kulpa-Eddy will preside.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:42 p.m.

Signed: *Kerstin Harper*, Town Clerk