



Town of Berwyn Heights

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Minutes Worksession June 5, 2018

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. Present were Mayor Christopher Rasmussen Mayor Pro-Tem (MPT) Lynn White, Councilmembers (CMs) Stephen Isler, Jason Papanikolas and Ethan Sweep. Also present were, Chief of Police and Acting Town Administrator Kenneth Antolik, Public Works Director Kenneth Hall, Code Compliance Supervisor Freddie Glass, Treasurer Michelle Rodriguez and Clerk Kerstin Harper. Interim Town Administrator (TA) Mike McLaughlin had an excused absence.

1. Announcements

Mayor Rasmussen remarked on the heavy rainfall that occurred over the last weekend, causing Indian Creek to rise over its banks. He thanked Chief Antolik and his officers for monitoring the situation and keeping him apprised.

2. Discussion Items

Overview of Department Functions and Operations: As an extension of the Council orientation, each department director, as well as the Town treasurer and clerk gave a brief overview of their department and some of their functions.

Chief Antolik reported on last night's apparently random act of vandalism in which an unidentified person or persons shot at and damaged a number of vehicles in Town. Berwyn Heights Police is investigating and following several leads. In response to questions, he said BHPD continues to have overnight patrols, usually pairing two officers at a time. There are a few hours a week, however, during which there is no BHPD patrol. BHPD also continues to coordinate with the Neighborhood Watch/ Emergency Preparedness Committee (NW/EP) in responding to situations when residents' safety might be at risk. NW/EP was on standby last week as flood waters threatened roads and homes near the Creek.

Police: Chief Antolik described the mission and functions of the Police Department. In carrying out its mission of delivering efficient and effective law enforcement services, his officers take a very broad view of their responsibilities to protect life, liberty and property. This includes responding promptly to any calls for service including to protect the lives of animals. The officers also enforce all manner of traffic violations, work with the Code and Public Works Departments to enforce Town ordinances, and coordinated with neighboring police departments to control crime and keep the public peace. To prevent crime, they seek to build a relationship of trust with residents through a range of community outreach programs, such as National Night Out, Coffee with Cops, or safety lessons for BHES students, among others.

The BHPD has 8 full time officers, including a Chief and Detective, 1 part time officer and 1 police clerk, who also serves as a Spanish interpreter. BHPD has an experienced force and includes several officers retired from other agencies, as well as some younger 'home-grown' officers. All officers are very well trained and committed to serve the residents of the Town.

Public Works: Director Hall gave an overview of the Public Works Department. Its main responsibility is to keep the Town clean by providing efficient refuse, recycling and yard waste collections. The remaining time is spent performing other maintenance activities around Town ranging from stop sign installation, to servicing the dog waste stations, to grass cutting and landscaping of Town property. There are more things to do than personnel to do it. The Department has a total of 9 employees, including a director, a foreman and a part-time administrative assistant. On days with refuse collection, 2 trucks with a driver and 2 crewmen each are sent out for collection. Once they complete their routes and had lunch there are only a couple of hours left to do other things. He rotates crews between trash collection and other maintenance work.

Administration: Treasurer Rodriguez explained that she serves as both treasurer and human resource manager. As treasurer, she maintains the Town's accounts, while making payments and processing receipts. As human resource manager, she is responsible for the payroll and employee benefits, which include pensions, health insurance and workman's compensation. She also assists other departments with recruiting and on-boarding new personnel, and she is working on becoming a certified Spanish language interpreter. The training will put her in a better position to help resolve problems with residents and staff that do not speak English well. In addition, when the Town Administrator is absent, she is one of the staff who can serve as the acting Town Administrator.

Ms. Rodriguez noted that Administrative Assistant Odoi serves as the Department's go-to person. She is the main person handling citizen requests for service, be they made in person at the Town office or on the phone. She facilitates coordination among the department and handles everything related to event planning, from Town Center rentals to the Volunteer Appreciation Dinner to supporting the Recreation Council's event program.

Clerk Harper gave a summary of her responsibilities. Her main task is to support the Town Council. This includes the preparation and recording of meetings, managing elections, booking conferences and occasional research and writing tasks. Over the years, she has taken on a number of communication functions, which range from coordinating the publication of the Town Bulletin to managing the Town website, to video streaming and BHTV broadcasting. In that capacity, she hires camera operators and interfaces with Inter-Governmental Network (I-Net), which provides the Town's internet service. She also serves as the Town's records manager and Notary public, performs front desk backup service and liaises with the Historical Committee.

In response to questions, Ms. Rodriguez said it would be help the Administration Department if they had additional staff. She as well as Clerk Harper do many things that require them to focus, but this is not always possible when they help out at the service counter. She would also like to have additional privacy when she handles sensitive information relating to employee records and Town finances. She will provide her job description to the Council, as well as an employee handbook.

Code Compliance: Code Supervisor Glass said that his Department has 4 employees, including a full-time code supervisor, 2 part-time code officers and 1 part-time clerk. His Department is responsible for ensuring compliance with Town Ordinances to maintain community standards and enhance property values, and administering a comprehensive program of rental licensing and inspections. The code

compliance function comprises both residential and commercial properties and requires coordination with the Public Works and Police Departments. He and his code officer perform daily patrols to monitor properties for violations as well as perform rental inspections on a daily basis.

In addition, his department reviews and issues building permits, dumpster permits and temporary storage container permits. Starting in July, the Department will also take on the business licensing program, which is currently under the Administration Department. Further, the Department manages a call-a-bus program for seniors and handicapped residents. His small staff is very busy trying to fulfill all departmental functions, which includes a significant amount of written correspondence with property owners and replying to complaints.

In response to questions, Mr. Glass said complaints about neighbors are investigated discretely and if violations are found, the property will receive a violation notice posted on the front door, followed by a written notices and fines if needed. Most property owners respond promptly by addressing the violation. His department's approach is to seek voluntary compliance first. Fines are issued as a last resort. The County is not notified as part of the regular process. However, the County does its own patrols of neighborhoods and may issue citations.

For purposes of the Manager/ Town Administrator search, Mayor Rasmussen clarified that the Chief of Police keeps the Mayor apprised of any important development having to do with public health and safety, but, in terms of the organizational hierarchy, he reports to the Town Administrator. CM White said she is primarily interested in the evolution of the role of the Town Administrator, which she is happy to discuss at another time.

At 8:15, the Council took a 5-minute break

Priorities of the 48th Council: Mayor Rasmussen asked the Council to review a list of priorities that is based on the discussion of priorities at the previous worksession. The list will be refined at future meetings and finalized in July or August. The final version will serve as a work plan for the incoming Town Administrator. The following items were added:

- Restructure the refuse collection program with new equipment (refuse and recycling bins) and a revised schedule;
- Review departments' efficiency in terms of general operations and staffing.
- Review metrics for monthly reports.

Quality of Life Commission: The Council reviewed draft Resolution 02-2018 establishing a Citizens Commission on Quality of Life, which will explore concerns raised during the recent election campaigns and develop recommendations to make Berwyn Heights a better place to live. The deadline for accepting applications was published as June 15 in the Bulletin and the Resolution is scheduled to be adopted at the June 20 Town meeting. One correction was made, changing the number of potential members from "10 to 12" to "up to 11." At the next worksession, an applicants' list will be reviewed and a timeline of meetings established.

ULI TAP Summary: Mayor Rasmussen reported on the Urban Land Institute Technical Assistance Panel (ULI TAP) he attended on June 4 and 5. The Panel, composed of architects, designers and urban planning experts, explored options for revitalizing the Route 193 corridor. They looked at a variety of metrics, including traffic flow, trail connections, pedestrian facilities, signage, housing stock, types of businesses, and customer base, among others, to determine how best to generate new economic development. The panelists interviewed stakeholders, including municipal officials, business owners and citizens from

Berwyn Heights, College Park and Greenbelt; toured the Route 193 corridor between Route 1 and Kenilworth Avenue; and developed a report of their findings, which was presented to the public on June 5 after the Panel ended.

Mayor Rasmussen noted that Kap Kapastin, the General Counsel of Beltway Plaza and other commercial properties along Route 193, participated in the panel. Mr. Kapastin said there was interest in redeveloping their properties, but not without generating additional income. As it is, Beltway Plaza is 97% leased and doing very well from a business standpoint. New types of businesses may have to wait for more demographic changes. The existing businesses reflect the diverse customer base that includes the residents of the 3,000 rental units of Springhill Lake/ Franklin Park, Berwyn Heights and the new Greenbelt Station Development.

In conclusion, the Panel recommended the stakeholders create an economic development organization that allows them to pool resources and pursue a joint economic development initiative for Route 193.

Four Cities Coalition meeting: The following items were proposed for the July 25 Four Cities meeting, hosted by Berwyn Heights: presentations on the 2020 Census and County Council legislative update, and for discussion: coordinating activities of the Education Advisory Committees of Berwyn Heights, College Park and Greenbelt, reviewing changes in PGCPs leadership, and M-NCPPC capital improvement process.

3. Minutes

No minutes were reviewed.

4. Department Reports/ Announcements

Mayor Rasmussen reported that the City of Greenbelt sent a letter congratulating Berwyn Heights on electing a new Council. The County Council has begun to draft legislation to regulate short-term rentals and is accepting comments. The Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has opened the annual grant cycle for playground improvements. The Town could explore whether dog parks qualify for such grants.

MPT White reported that she attended the Prince George's County Police Chief's Association meeting, where Cpl. Krouse was named Officer of the Year and Clerk Murales Clerk of the Year. CM Isler reported that he continues to work with Town committees and groups on a Town organizations policy.

5. Citizen Comments

Mike Attick, 62nd Avenue, suggested the Town explore whether an exercise trail could be added to the Town's trail system. He also requested the Town check whether NW/EP volunteers driving Town vehicles (trucks) are covered by the Town's liability insurance. NW/EP volunteers used to be able to drive Town vehicles when they wanted to move the emergency trailer, and provided the Town with a designated list of qualified drivers. TA McLaughlin was asked to check with LGIT whether there is coverage for volunteers, and whether volunteers need a CDL license to drive a truck.

Mr. Attick requested the Town install lock boxes at the Town Center containing keys to the Town office, Senior Center and emergency trailer. Lastly, a referendum petition on a pending Charter Amendment, which would change the title of 'Town Administrator' to 'Town Manager,' has enough signatures to go forward. Mr. Attick said an attorney, who has reviewed the Charter Amendment Resolution, expressed the opinion that the Charter Amendment is not on sound legal footing. Mayor Rasmussen said the Council

was advised by its Town Attorney that there is no problem with adopting the Charter Amendment. Regardless, residents have the option to petition any Charter amendment to a referendum.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:18 p.m.

Signed: *Kerstin Harper*, Town Clerk