



Town of Berwyn Heights

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MAYOR
Amanda M. Dewey

COUNCIL MEMBERS
Jodie A. Kulpa-Eddy (Mayor Pro Tem)
Christopher S. Brittan Powell
Jason W. Papanikolas
Ethan D. Sweep

Worksession Minutes March 1, 2021 | 7:00 pm

Executive Session (6:30 – 7:00 pm)

An executive session was held under General Provisions Article § 3-305(b) (1) to discuss the appointment, employment, assignment, promotion, discipline, demotion, compensation, removal, resignation, or performance evaluation of an appointee, employee, or official over whom this public body has jurisdiction; or any other personnel matter that affects one or more specific individuals.

Regular Meeting (Starting 7:00 pm)

This meeting was held by videoconference due to the ongoing COVID-19 health emergency. The meeting was broadcast on Berwyn Heights cable TV channels and streamed on the Town website. Residents were given the opportunity to join the meeting via Zoom and comment by telephone and email.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. Present were Mayor Amanda Dewey, Mayor Pro Tempore (MPT) Jodie Kulpa-Eddy, Councilmembers (CMs), Jason Papanikolas, Ethan Sweep and Christopher Brittan-Powell. Also present were Town Manager (TM) Laura Allen and Town Clerk Kerstin Harper and WBBH Task Force members Drew Carlisle, Alex Lopatka, Debby Steele Snyder, Jim Elliot and Cheryl Compton.

1. Announcements

Mayor Dewey announced that the Council held an executive session on a personnel matter prior to this meeting.

2. Approval of the Agenda

On a motion by CM Sweep and second by CM Papanikolas, the agenda was approved 5 to 0.

3. Discussion Items

Walkable, Bikeable Task Force Recommendations: Mayor Dewey explained that a Walkable, Bikeable Berwyn Heights Task Force (WBBH) was created in August 2019 to produce a set of recommendations to make Berwyn Heights more pedestrian and bicycle friendly. The recommendations were presented to the Council in January 2020. In the FY 2021 budget, \$30,000 was appropriated to start implementing the recommendations. Staff gave input on the list of recommendations last fall, and Councilmembers each submitted their top three priorities for WBBH-recommended projects for this meeting, which are summarized in TM Allen's staff report. Council is requested to review the compiled list of 15 Council priorities, discuss and rank them so that staff can get to work on them.

TM Allen added that since the Council last discussed the recommendations, the cost estimate for projects staff suggested as priorities was increased to \$9,500 due to a proposed raised crosswalk for

Berwyn Road at the Indian Creek trail. Further, staff confirmed that a 4-way stop sign already exists at Berwyn Road and Ruatan Street, including in the Sports Park parking lot. The recently received Council priority projects have not yet been priced. A Town-wide 20-mph speed limit endorsed by 3 Councilmembers requires approval by the State legislature. State Highway Administration has confirmed that the yellow strobe lights for the pedestrian crossing on Greenbelt Road at 63rd Avenue have been deactivated because schools are closed but will be turned back on once schools reopen. Proposed 'speed tables' for intersections on Pontiac Street at Cunningham Drive and 58th Avenue require more research to determine what are the best options for pedestrians and emergency vehicles.

There ensued discussion of the Council's priority list. The following points were made:

- Speed monitoring by speed camera is limited to a ½ mile area around schools. The school zone for Berwyn Heights Elementary School may cover most of the Town and permit deployment of speed cameras. A speed monitoring sign BHPD planned to purchase could be used to enforce speed limits elsewhere.
- The crossing of Indian Creek trail at Berwyn Road has poor visibility because of overgrown vegetation and the difference in elevation between the trail and roadway. Remedies could include trimming back vegetation, building a platform for bicyclists and walkers that juts out into the roadway, adding speed bumps on both sides of the trail crossing, adding a 4-way stop sign, and/ or new parking rules.
- Berwyn Road between 60th and Charlton Avenue has poor visibility because of a blind hill and curve. Remedies proposed by WBBH include making that stretch one-way (westbound) or limiting parking to the north side. Additional changes might include extending the 'north side parking only' area, creating diagonal parking spaces, and adding a bike lane. WBBH took care to not propose measures that take away parking and access to homes from residents in the area.
- Pontiac Street has problems with cars speeding and running stop signs. WBBH proposed to install raised intersections (speed tables) and/ or installing high visibility crosswalks at intersections. Other options might include installing road narrowing devices, rumble strips, better lighting, and police officers monitoring intersections. Police cars and fire trucks could be hampered by speed tables.
- The intersection of Pontiac Street and Edmonston Road has been identified as a location most in need of improvement. Frequent traffic backups on Edmonston Road make drivers impatient. Pedestrians are easily overlooked. Accidents are common. Remedies could include making pedestrian crossings more visible, possibly by adding lights (as on Rhode Island Avenue) and alternating the right-of-way between Pontiac Street and Edmonston Road. Parking restrictions are already in effect on Pontiac Street. Any new restrictions would require meetings with affected residents and/ or public hearings.
- Town entrances, generally, need attention.
- Temporary speed bump installations might be considered to test efficacy in particular locations.
- A 20-mph town-wide speed limit, considered a priority by a majority of the Council, could be achieved by a combination of physical barriers and signage.
- Bicyclists' disregard for traffic rules should be addressed in the context of the type of transportation culture the Town wants to promote.

In terms of reducing items on the list, Councilmembers proposed:

- Completing as many 'low-hanging fruit' projects as possible, versus completing a high-impact, high-cost project, such as a speed table on Pontiac Street.
- Excluding projects that do not require purchases (such as trimming vegetation), are ongoing, (such as improving lighting), and are too costly (such as some improvements for the Berwyn Road and Charlton Avenue intersection).

TM Allen said her understanding of the Council's priorities is to start with low-difficulty projects focused on Pontiac Street, solutions for lowering speed limits, and lighting improvements. She will provide Council with a list of items that have been initiated, are ongoing or have been completed. Acquiring temporary speed tables may require further research of costs and would be included in the FY 2022 budget. Mayor Dewey noted that traffic enforcement by police should be added as well as bicycle facilities in the commercial district. WBBH members were informed that CMs Sweep and Brittan Powell are participating in a workgroup that is setting parameters for Greenbelt Road improvements in connection with the redevelopment of Beltway Plaza.

FY 2022 budget priority setting: TM Allen said, in order to help set priorities for the FY 2022 budget, she has solicited input from residents through a budget survey in the Bulletin, a code services survey on social media, and a virtual budget Town Hall. While the virtual budget Town Hall was attended by no residents, it produced a good discussion among Councilmembers on what they love about Berwyn Heights and how to make the Town an even better place to live.

In comparing the Council's views and residents' survey responses (56), there was a strong overlap of priorities around 1) pedestrian and bicycle safety/ road maintenance; 2) social life/ parks and recreation; 3) sustainability; and 4) communication/ community engagement. The code services survey garnered 3 responses and did provide actionable information. TM Allen recommended the Council identify 3 areas of focus based the priorities identified by the Council and residents to improve the chances of their proper execution.

In discussion the following points were made:

- The 4 overlapping priorities of the Council and residents identified by TM Allen should be the focus areas for the next budget, with ranking to be determined.
- The designation of focus areas should not in itself result in funding cuts for other services residents value highly, such as police and fire protection.
- The meaning of sustainability may need to be clarified. A definition of sustainability can include both maintaining the Town's fiscal health and ensuring a safe and healthy environment over the long term.
- Another goal might be rejuvenation of the Town after the pandemic, with the 4 focus areas subordinated to that goal.

The Council agreed that all four areas of focus derived from Council and citizen input should be used to build the FY 2022 budget. Specific projects related to these focus areas will be discussed in more detail when the draft budget is considered.

4. Department Reports

Mayor Dewey reported that she attended a mayors' meeting with the County Executive. It was learned that vaccine distribution is improving as new vaccines are being shipped and the vaccination process refined. Much effort is focused on increasing mobile clinics to come into each community. She met with TM Allen about the Thriving Earth Exchange, which will provide scientific assistance with stormwater or invasive species problems. Further, BHES hosted a grocery give-away last week and will hold a meeting about the school reopening process on March 2. Mayor Dewey attended a PGCMA meeting on February 18 and hosted an MML conflict resolution meeting for young municipal leaders on March 5. She thanked TM Allen, Public Information Aide Hargadon and Police Clerk Muralles for helping to get important information out to residents.

MPT Kulpa-Eddy reported that she attended an M-NCPPC meeting on the role of the arts in creative placemaking on February 18. This program aims to improve the quality of life in the County and offers grants to fund art projects. A meeting on arts and connectivity will take place on April 8. WMATA is seeking input on Metro's budget through a survey that is open until March 16 and virtual public hearings. Budget shortfalls may lead to the closing of the College Park station, among others.

In Town news, the BHES reopening is being planned with a hybrid virtual/ in-person model option. However, many families appear to want to continue with virtual schooling. PGCPSC CEO Goldson will make herself available for a Q&A during County Councilmember Glaros' virtual connections meeting on March 3. Other upcoming meetings include a Recreation Council meeting, where Berwyn Heights Day will be discussed, a Neighborhood Watch/ Emergency Preparedness meeting, featuring budget needs and organization structure, a Green Team meeting date change. The Boys & Girls Club is still seeking feedback on their Facebook page on whether families would enroll their children in sports during the 2021 season.

CM Papanikolas reported that a new Treasurer is on board. He is working on finishing up items from last year's audit and will then shift to help TM Allen with the budget. TM Allen added that Treasurer Lightfield has been hired as an independent contractor for a 1-year term.

CM Brittan-Powell said he has had a couple of conversations with the Code team, who continue to handle code matters deftly.

CM Sweep thanked everyone for their patience with the trash collection changes in February due to snow and announced that the street sweeper will be in Town next week.

5. Resident and Community Comments

There were none.

On a motion by CM Sweep and second by CM Papanikolas, the meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Signed: *Kerstin Harper*, Town Clerk