



# Town of Berwyn Heights

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## MAYOR

Jodie Kulpa-Eddy

## COUNCIL MEMBERS

Christopher Brittan-Powell (Mayor Pro Tem)

Shinita Hemby

Faustino Menjivar

Jason W. Papanikolas

## Work Session Minutes June 6, 2022| 7:00 p.m. Council Chamber

### Call to Order

Mayor Jodie Kulpa-Eddy called the meeting to order at 7p.m. Present were Mayor Pro Tempore Chris Brittan-Powell, Councilmember Shinita Hemby, Councilmember Jason Papanikolas. Also present was Town Clerk Melanie Friesen. Councilmember Faustino Menjivar and Town Manager Allen joined the meeting remotely. Also present were Dr. Dushanka Kleinman and Erin McClure of the University of Maryland School of Public Health and residents of the Town of Berwyn Heights.

### Approval of the Agenda

MPT Brittan-Powell moved to approve the agenda. CM Hemby seconded. After no discussion, the motion passed unanimously 4-0 as CM Menjivar absent at the time of the vote due to technical issues.

### 1. Mayor

#### a. Executive Session Report Out

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy reported that an Executive Session was held Friday, May 20, 2022 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. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy, MPT Brittan-Powell, CM Hemby, CM Menjivar, and CM Papanikolas were present to discuss the performance of the Town Manager.

#### b. Announcements

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy shared a comment on the horrific gun violence in Uvalde, TX. She encouraged those who are hurting to reach out to their support systems. She also shared that residents of Prince George's County can call 211 to speak to a crisis counselor. MPT Brittan-Powell reiterated gratitude for the Council prioritizing mental health in Town. He also shared celebrations of all graduates, including children of three Councilmembers.

#### c. Calendar

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy shared that the purpose of this item is to keep tabs on upcoming meetings and events. She shared about the Green Team meeting on the 9<sup>th</sup>, Council attending Maryland Municipal League Summer Conference and Juneteenth being observed on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

#### d. News from the Town Manager

TM Allen updated Council that the Town is required to submit an annual report to the County on stormwater runoff and that she has submitted it. She also stated that the Town is working to get a new camera operator as the prior person has left for a new job. She was in attendance at the Government Finance Officers of America conference in Austin, TX and she will have a report for Council soon.

**e. Citizen Comments**

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy shared that she was moving citizen comments to the beginning of the worksession agenda so residents may have the opportunity to speak without sitting through the whole meeting if they prefer not to. Resident Mike Attick stated that he didn't understand moving the comments to the beginning of the meeting as it removes the opportunity for residents to comment on the discussions of the Council.

**f. MML Conference Schedule**

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy shared with the newer Councilmembers about the Maryland Municipal League and suggested that they consider registering with the Academy for Excellence in Local Governance. Council went through the proposed schedule of the conference and determined which Councilmembers would attend each session.

**2. Administration**

**a. "Public Health and Community Engagement: Understanding and Nurturing Local Level Needs of the Berwyn Heights Community" (presentation by Dr. Dushanka Kleinman, Principal Associate Dean and Associate Dean for Research, UMD SPH, and Erin McClure (she/her), Chief of Staff and Diversity Officer, UMD SPH)**

MPT Brittan-Powell shared that the Town has been looking for expert opinions on ways to advance the health of the Town. He and CM Papanikolas worked together to take advantage of the proximity of the University of Maryland School of Public Health (SPH) to address both the health aspect and community engagement. Dr. Dushanka Kleinman gave a brief overview of the University and how the different schools are interconnected. The SPH defines Health as being "the state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (World Health Organization, 1948). She continued that Public Health services are broken into 3 areas, one of assessment, followed by policy development, and finally, assurance. She shared the SPH approach to community engagement: listening and learning, followed by identifying key issues, assessing health and well-being, and finally identifying priority findings to address. Erin McClure shared about several different partnerships and collaborations that the SPH has been involved in. Dr. Kleinman shared the bare bones of what a partnership agreement would look like with the Town:

- a. Agreed upon goals
- b. Responsibilities of each partner
- c. Timeline and milestones
- d. Oversight, monitoring, and roles
- e. Term(s) of Agreement would be mutually agreed upon.

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy asked about the difference between this program and what the Town is already doing through Campus Community Connection, and how or if the SPH would coordinate with that effort. Resident Meg Miller asked if the SPH was coming out into communities to address wellness or if they were also addressing mental health issues. Dr. Kleinman explained that after an "assessment of needs" period, the needs would be identified and brought forward. Ms. Miller continued, asking how needs would be assessed of the non-English speakers in the community. Ms. McClure stated that surveys and translators would be available in the languages required by the community. Resident Mike Attick asked if they work with Prince George's County schools, further detailing he wanted to know how the schools are calming aggravated children. Ms. McClure stated that while this was not an area that their program works directly with, there are schools in the University working on this type of engagement. Resident Claudia Barragan stated that 41% of the population in Berwyn Heights are Latino,

greater than 60% are non-white and 42% are non-English speakers. She expressed concerns about the stated research portion, expressing that she believes that staff, students, and alumni, involved should be Berwyn Heights residents. She also had comments and concerns about the partnership agreement that was included as part of the agenda packet. MPT Brittan-Powell assured that there would be greater conversation about the agreement. CM Papanikolas stated that the project is not at the agreement stage yet. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy reiterated that it is not a contract but rather a partnership agreement. She asked if there had been other communities they had partnered with where it had been solely residents of the community leading it. Dr. Dushanka shared about a Community Research Advisory Board (CRAB) which is where faculty bring their proposals before the Board and community members are able to give their feedback on the proposals. CM Hemby asked about for more information about the monitoring portion of the proposal. Dr. Dushanka replied that monitoring/surveillance is done to ensure that whatever program is implemented continues to function well and has the resources required to be effective. Resident Jose Valcarcel would like to know if there are examples of locations where this engagement has been effective. Dr. Dushanka shared that the beginnings of all partnerships are conversations. She also shared that this is not the type of project that ends in a report, but rather in more conversation. CM Papanikolas asked if there was a general consensus in moving forward with seeing what an agreement might look like and offered to take the lead on that. TM Allen asked about the level of staff time that would be needed for the proposal. There was discussion regarding the level of staff time that would be required.

### **3. Code Compliance**

#### **4. Parks and Recreation, Education and Civic Affairs**

##### **a. Open Meetings Act Overview**

CM Papanikolas shared a quick primer on the Open Meetings Act (OMA). OMA embraces the notion that sunlight is the best disinfectant for all governmental ills. It defines what doing business in public means, as well as what the public has a right to know and what they don't; including the situations in which a closed meeting can be held and what needs to be reported out. The OMA states that the public has a right to observe, not participate. The right to participate is a function of the Town Charter. OMA also defines what is a meeting and what is not, and defines the 6 functions of government. TM Allen mentioned the Town will notice events where a quorum of the Council might be present, just out of an abundance of caution.

##### **b. MOU with Hyattsville for the Playground Inspections**

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy introduced and CM Papanikolas reviewed the proposed plan to have the licensed playground inspector from the City of Hyattsville perform inspections on the Town playgrounds. There was discussion over minor details of the MOU for some clarification, with Mayor Kulpa-Eddy stating that a updated version had been produced but was not included in the packet. Resident Claudia Barragan asked why there are vacant positions in Public Works and why are we outsourcing instead of hiring and training someone in Public Works to be a certified playground inspector. TM Allen shared that Public Works is understaffed and that the training is time consuming. Based on a conversation with the former Director of Public Works, that they don't have staff to spare to send to training. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy shared that this is an immediate need and the MOU would give us access to an inspector now, while the Town looks into getting someone trained from Public Works. MPT Brittan-Powell stated that there is a Council dedication to fully staff Public Works and make it competitive enough to keep people.

Resident Jose Valcarcel asked who has the liability in this agreement and if the Town of Berwyn Heights could be held responsible if a child was injured at a playground. He followed with asking why the Town is looking to use the employee of another municipality instead of using a playground installation company to inspect the playground. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy shared that she would have concerns about the bias of a playground installation company performing the inspections. CM Papanikolas expressed a desire to have a mutual indemnification clause added to the contract. Resident Meg Miller expressed concerns that trainings are being given to staff that don't deserve it while others who are deserving are not. Resident Mike Attick asked what qualifies as expensive for the training and expressed that they cover for people being sick all the time, that coverage could be found for training. There was discussion by Council about if there is a mechanism to evaluate who gets trainings in the various departments.

## **5. Public Safety**

### **a. Greenbelt Road Corridor Plan**

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy reviewed the history of the project, expressly that it is a visioning plan not an engineering plan. She shared that she has some concerns about the "road diet" that would take the studied section of Greenbelt Road from three lanes in each direction to two lanes. She expressed that she believed this would divert traffic from Greenbelt Road onto the Berwyn Heights streets. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy and MPT Brittan-Powell discussed concerns about general traffic flow and concerns as well on the impact of this change on emergency vehicles. CM Hemby expressed her concerns about the reduced number of lanes. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy said that she'd support the State Highway Administration proposed changes of upgrading the crosswalks, reducing the speed limit, adjusting the timing on the lights. She'd like those changes to be implemented and studied before going on a "road diet". She said she'd like to have an evaluation done after those changes were complete, and before any other engineering changes were made. MPT Brittan-Powell expressed that he did not agree with the Mayor on this and that he would not want to stop the process of creating a boulevard for pedestrian and bicycle safety. CM Hemby reiterated her concerns about the safety on the streets on Berwyn Heights. CM Papanikolas shared that there are some fundamental safety issues in Town and while he understands the Greenbelt bias, if the intent is really supposed to be a true tri-city undertaking, that they need to consider the Town's concerns. MPT Brittan-Powell stated that the previous mayor had told the Visioning Board that cut-through traffic would not be a concern of the Town, but that the Town could take steps to remediate issues, such as timed entry, and one-way streets. Resident Meg Miller stated that she was on the Quality of Life Commission that studied cut-through traffic. Resident Dave Wolfinger asked why this plan only covered this section of Greenbelt Road and not the entirety of Greenbelt Road, especially down to Roosevelt High School, where the City of Greenbelt has jurisdiction on both sides of the street. MPT Brittan-Powell shared that the entirety of Greenbelt Road will be studied through the City of Greenbelt, but that they are doing the plans section-by-section. MPT Brittan-Powell continued to express that the science presented by the engineering firm would show marked improvement in traffic with the proposed changes. Resident Claudia Barragan. shared that Vision Zero did not work in Montgomery County and DC. She stated that increased development leads to population density which will mean that the fire department will have more people to respond to. She shared the phased approach is intentional regarding development and density. CM Menjivar expressed that he would like to go deeper in this and see about the impacts on Public Safety. Resident Mike Attick shared about cut-through traffic and concerns about the Volunteer Fire

Department. He followed up with the Metroland development and how that did have an impact when the studies stated it wouldn't. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy and MPT Brittan-Powell word-smithed the letter together. Resident Claudia Barragan added her concerns and shared about the nature of developers. CM Papanikolas shared that the traffic studies for this were done during the pandemic and expressed concern that it wouldn't be an accurate reflection of the true nature of traffic today. Claudia Barragan shared some issues with the current situation of commercial parking on Greenbelt Rd and how it negatively effects pedestrian traffic. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy stated that they need to do a longer-term study, which is planned as part of the engineering phase of the project, but that this is a response to the visioning phase. Ms. Barragan and Meg Miller stated that the Town is limited in internal mitigation of traffic issues based on the size of the streets and that they implemented Quality of Life Commission recommendations. MPT Brittan-Powell asserted that the police are not pulling over people for running stop signs. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy shared that she understood that the town police know stop sign enforcement is a priority. CM Papanikolas stated that his understanding is that on a larger scale, police work has become more time consuming and as a result, police sacrifice the easy things such as traffic enforcement.

## **6. Public Works**

Resident Mike Attick spoke up stating that he had issue with the inclusion of a full page of Spanish content in the Bulletin where no translation was provided. CM Papanikolas expressed that this is content provided by a recognized Town Organization. MPT Brittan-Powell stated that there is much content in English with no Spanish translation. Claudia Barragan shared that each submission in the Bulletin includes a contact for language assistance. Ms. Barragan also stated that she would like to see the ARPA "resident assistance" application be available in Spanish and also believes the application to be poorly designed.

## **7. Adjournment**

CM Papanikolas moved to adjourn the meeting. MPT Brittan-Powell seconded. After no discussion the motion passed unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 10:12pm.

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