

The Town of
GLEN ECHO

Chartered 1904

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TOWN COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
February 12, 2024

CALL TO ORDER: MAYOR DIA COSTELLO. 7:31 PM

PRESENT

Mayor: Dia Costello

Councilmembers: (CM) Dan Spealman, Julia Wilson, Dawn Tanner, and Matt Stiglitz

Town Clerk: (TC) Emily Parsons

Residents: Aaron Hirsch (University), Mark Brewster (Wellesley), Charlotte Fryar (Vassar), Nancy Cohen and Alex Boyar (Cornell), Mary Parsons (Bryn Mawr)

SWEARING IN OF NEW TOWN CLERK: Mayor Costello swore in TC Emily Parsons.

OPPORTUNITY FOR COUNCIL TO HEAR RESIDENTS' COMMENTS:

Mayor Costello offered an opportunity to take comments from residents. There were no comments at this time.

OPPORTUNITY FOR COUNCIL COMMENTS:

Mayor Costello offered an opportunity to take comments from the Council. There were no comments.

OLD BUSINESS:

Mayor Costello reported on the meeting about the Clara Barton House renovation on Jan 30: They are still working through the historical approval part but hope to begin construction as early as October 2024. The Mayor added that her main concerns, like noise, light, and disruption to residents, have not yet been addressed. The Historical Society wants the

building to house exclusively things related to Clara Barton, and GEPPAC is not a partner at this point. Mayor Costello said that she'd be attending a meeting with the NPS and WMATA on February 21. This project is also delayed pending the 106 process assessing the historical significance of the old trestle bridge. The Mayor said that she has applied for a legislative bond initiative for up to \$150K to help pay for a rain garden at Town Hall and possibly other stormwater management projects in Town. This would free up the ARPA funds for things like replacing the elevator in Town Hall. The Mayor mentioned some recent crime in the area, including an armed robbery near Brookmont, a stolen car in Bannockburn, and some break ins at Glen Echo Park. In response, she reached out to our community liaison Officer Johnson to host a community discussion at Town Hall about crime prevention on February 13. Mayor Costello reported that she will be testifying against Pepco in March in Annapolis over the higher-than-normal rates offered to the Town to replace our streetlights with LEDs.

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES: ACTION ON JANUARY 8, 2024 MEETING

The minutes of the January 8, 2024, Council meeting were not voted on because the CMs had a lot of changes. CM Wilson had questions about the use of TM for "The Mayor" in the minutes, but the TM actually referred to "Town Manager," who was referenced once. Going forward, Mayor Dia Costello will be referred to by her name. CM Spealman wanted any reference to how the Council "felt" about issues to be stricken and replaced with quotes by particular CMs. CM Wilson wanted to change references to "Tree Ordinance" to be replaced with the more accurate "amendment to the vegetation control ordinance."

Motion to Adopt 1/8/24 minutes: No motion to adopt without edits. These minutes will be revisited at the March 11 Council meeting

23-05 HEARING AND VOTE: AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND ARTICLE 3 (BUILDING CODE) AND ARTICLE 5 (VEGETATION CONTROL) TO ADD CRITERIA FOR TREE REMOVAL DECISIONS AND CLARIFY EXISTING PROVISIONS:

The Council received letters for and against the proposed changes from residents. There was a lot of confusion about what trees would actually be impacted. There was language in the amended ordinance that indicated that any tree over ten feet could be impacted. It was unclear if trees with a caliper of 20 feet meant a diameter or a circumference of 20 feet. The Mayor said early on in the discussion that this wouldn't get a vote and that they needed to go back to the drawing board and rewrite it. She began to come up with a list of CMs and interested residents to be on a committee to tackle it. CM Wilson agreed that this amended ordinance and the discussion about it had gotten away from the original intent. Resident Mary Parsons suggested specifying particular types of trees and making the specifications larger. Resident Aaron Hirsch said that in DC you pay \$55 per inch, so you can take down any tree but it will cost you.

Motion to Adopt Ordinance 23-05: No motion to adopt

COMMUNITY GARDEN: Aaron Hirsch

Regarding a proposed community garden on Town land next to the Irish Inn, Resident Aaron Hirsch came to this meeting with an updated list of costs, much less due to a DIY fence and no variance required, a map of the proposed plots, and a copy of the Community Garden Bylaws that every participant would need to sign. He said the soil has been tested, the water procured, the participants identified, and all that was needed now was money for the startup, which he is asking the Town to provide. It comes out to about \$3000 with the remaining \$2500 coming from a progressive dinner fundraiser and dues (\$50 or \$75 depending on plot size) and a one-time

member start up contribution of \$50. The Mayor said that no money would be promised until the CMs got time to read over all of the documents, and the lawyer got to see the Bylaw contract. CM Tanner asked if this needed a hearing. The answer was no. The Mayor asked if we needed a contract, and added that she didn't get one to use the land in front of Town Hall for the bench and statue by long-time resident Raya Bodnarchuk. CM Stiglitz said that we would need a macro agreement as well as the micro—a signed agreement with each participant. Those documents stipulate that the Town may revoke permission to the Community Garden to use the land at any time.

Mr. Hirsch said that he wants this Community Garden to be like the Livable Town Committee, an official Town subgroup. He wants the Town to handle the administration of the garden, as in processing payments and disbursing funds and making the garden a line item in the budget. The Mayor said that this isn't really how it works with the Livable Town Committee. That group raises its own funds for each event and has just a \$500 budget to defray costs above the fundraisers. Resident Alex Boyar suggested that they find a 503-c to "host" them, then contributions could be tax deductible and payments could be online, something the Town is not yet set up for. Mr. Hirsch also said they were looking into applying for a mini-grant from the Chesapeake Bay Trust as long as it doesn't affect the Town's future grant applications. The Mayor wants to see what the DIY fence will look like. The CMs acknowledged the hard work that the garden organizers have put into their proposal, and CM Stiglitz said that a \$3K ask was much better than an \$11K one. However, the CMs still need time to read everything over and consult with the Town lawyer, while the garden committee wants to start March 1. Mr. Boyar said that he didn't think that any Town funds should be spent on the community garden and that the fees for it could be much higher thus covering more of the cost. Mr. Hirsch said that governments pay for amenities that only some residents opt into all the time, that just having the community garden can add value to the properties of non-participants.

EV PLUG IN DISCUSSION: The Town has an ordinance that addresses things blocking sidewalks—bikes, scooters, roller skates—and it is not allowed. EV cords would certainly be covered by this ordinance. The Mayor said that a survey of surrounding municipalities didn't turn up any specific laws governing EV cords, despite the growing issue. It's a particular issue in Glen Echo where many people do not have driveways or are even permitted to park on the side of the street where they live. The Mayor said that she'd like to encourage residents to get the ramped cord cover (\$300) like she has. It is ADA compliant, and she noted this was also being required in DC. The Mayor said that one could interpret our current law to indicate that she was supposed to remove the ramp when it wasn't in use and asked the Council if that should be required of residents. CM Spealman said it should not be required, because we want to encourage people to get ramps and not build in a deterrent, and that one could also interpret the ordinance to indicate that removal was unnecessary. The Mayor said we could encourage residents to get the ramps, but make it clear that they wouldn't be considered an obstruction. The fee for obstructing the sidewalk is \$100 for the first offense and \$200 for the second. The Mayor joked that after levying two fines, the Town could buy the offender a ramped cord cover.

FINANCIAL REPORT FOR THE MONTH OF DECEMBER: TC Parsons

The financial reports were more in line with what the Council expected to see. The budget vs. actuals were included. Many of the income percentages are way over budget (more coming in than budgeted for), including for Town Hall rentals. One Council Member asked if we should be charging more or if we should revisit doing some upgrades to the space. CM Spealman asked for an asterisk and explanation for each instance where the numbers were over budget.

Expenses:

Bolt Legal Expense was \$33 for January: email about an adopted ordinance

OIPA Expense was \$385 for pre-construction meeting and reviewing tree save plan for 43 Wellesley

Motion to Approve the December Financial Report: CM Spealman; 2nd CM Wilson. All in favor.

Motion to Approve the January Financial Report: CM Spealman; 2nd CM Wilson. All in favor.

OPERATIONS REPORT: Social; Infrastructure; Administrative: TC Parsons

REVIEW AUDITOR RFP RESPONSE; SELECT A NEW AUDITOR:

TC Parsons presented the three proposals received for Town auditing services. Each proposal gave a fee for each of the next three years. CM Stiglitz asked if we were locked into a contract for all three years. [The RFP specifies that it is for a one-year, plus a two-year contract.] The Council didn't vote to select an auditor until that question was answered.

Auditor details: The RFP for a new auditor was posted on eMMA (marketplace for vendors) and sent to 349 vendors. It was also sent to five specific firms that were recommended by LSWG or through Mayor Costello by other mayors.

We received three proposals: From SEK, referred to us by LSWG; from HPBS; from Premier Group. For comparison, we paid LSWG \$8,000 for last year's audit.

SEK's rates:

First year: \$12,000

Second Year: \$13,000

Third Year: \$ 14,000

HPBS rates:

First year: \$5,500

Second Year: \$5,638

Third Year: \$ 5,779

Premier Group rates:

First year: \$22,000

Second Year: \$23,100

Third Year: \$ 24,255

References for SEK and HPBS are included. HPBS didn't specialize in town governments so they subcontract to Crowe. The references they provided were all for Crowe and knew nothing of HPBS. Both references state or imply that they don't use Crowe anymore. We lean towards SEK, because they were recommended by LSWG, their references are great, they have Maryland small town auditing experience, and the price isn't too much higher than we paid last year.

Social:

MLK Day Service Event: January 15, 9-noon in TH

Winterlude: March 2 on Harvard starting at 5; fundraiser for Greentree Shelter; luminaries, fire pits, chili contest

Infrastructure:

Plumbing issue in furnace room: There was water pooling at the bottom of the stairs in the furnace room. Handyman said we should have a plumber look at it and possibly clean the drain in the floor. MH Barnes Plumbing came 1/22 and said that there was a dry well down there and that pooling and then draining is what is supposed to happen. No fix needed.

Elevator: Is currently out of order. Kencor says we need a new electrical board. It's on order. Ken from Preferred Elevator came on 1/16 to inspect and make a proposal. Jerry from Area Access came 2/7 and will make a proposal.

Front Door Sticking: Handyman Julio fixed this and put a new rubber barrier at the bottom of the door—no rain in the entryway afterward despite heavy rains—and replaced the lightbulbs in TH as well as the filters. He did some work in the PO as well. He is getting prices to replace the doors to the cabinets in the PO. It was an expensive handyman month.

Administrative:

Auditor Search: We've gotten three proposals, one of which came from one of the recommended firms (SEK CPA's and Assoc.)

Landscaping Contract: LevelGreen sent a proposal for another year of maintenance; they do the mowing and maintenance of Town right-of-ways and Town Hall; leaf collection; storm drain and gutter cleaning; etc.

Permits:

43 Wellesley: Received Demo and Building permits from the County and Glen Echo.

6003 Bryn Mawr: permit to cut down a tree

5906 Oxford: permit to cut down two trees, a hickory and a box elder; and a permit to obstruct the street; March 4, 8:45 AM to 4 PM; Lee's Tree Service

OPPORTUNITY FOR COUNCIL TO HEAR RESIDENTS' COMMENTS:

There were no comments.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion to Adjourn: CM Tanner; 2nd CM Wilson. All in favor. Meeting Adjourned 9:33 pm

Minutes Prepared by: Emily Parsons Town Clerk

Approved: Dia Costello Date: 3-13-2024

Mayor, Dia Costello