

CITY OF TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND

CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING

Wednesday, February 23, 2022

Minutes

Minutes adopted July 27, 2022

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Present: Mayor Stewart, Councilmember Kovar, Councilmember Dyballa, Councilmember Kostiuk, Councilmember Smith, Councilmember Searcy

Absent: Councilmember Seamens

Also Present: City Manager Fox, Deputy City Manager Clarke, City Clerk Carpenter, Public Works Director Braithwaite

The City Council convened at 7:30 PM on Zoom.

CHANGES TO THE AGENDA / AGENDA SCHEDULING UPDATE

Ms. Stewart provided an update on future agendas.

FOR THE RECORD

Ms. Stewart presented the proclamation of Invasive Species Week (February 28 – March 4). (Proclamation attached.)

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

The City Council was updated on Maryland General Assembly legislative matters.

1. PUBLIC HEARINGS

Emmanuel Wagner, Boyd Ave., reminded the Council that in 2020 the Complete Safe Streets Committee presented the Council with recommendations to improve the process for installing traffic calming measures and sidewalks and that the Council decided to change the City Code and update the process. He urged the Council to finish the implementation process of the committee's recommendations and reminded the Council that the committee also urged the Council to adopt a 15 mile per hour speed limit.

A. Traffic Calming on the 7900 Block of Glenside Drive

Dawn Reeves, Glenside Drive, stated that there was an issue with cut through traffic due to the Purple Line construction. She requested to have the existing speed hump to be moved onto the hill so that it may serve as a deterrent.

Deborah Thomas, Glenside Drive, agreed with Ms. Reeves in moving the speed hump. She was opposed to adding a second speed hump on the Glenside Drive.

B. Traffic Calming on the 6700-7800 Blocks of Prince Georges Avenue

Ashleigh Nugent, Belford Drive, commented on traffic calming on Prince Georges and Elm Avenues. She thanked the Council and the Public Works director for their work on this project. She also thanked Gretchen Goldman for assisting her in addressing the traffic issue by collecting petition signatures, holding public meetings and emailing City staff and Council. She urged the Council to protect the City's pedestrians and cyclist and to proactively address traffic hazards throughout the City.

Gretchen Goldman, Prince Georges Ave., stated the traffic issue was speed. She advocated for speed humps to slow cars down. She stated that some people may argue that speed humps were an inconvenience. She urged the Council to prioritize safety over speed and people over convenience.

Paul Mackie, Prince Georges Ave., thanked Ms. Nugent and Ms. Goldman for putting the petition together. Mr. Mackie was in favor of placing a speed hump to slow down traffic.

Thomas Di Liberto, Prince Georges Ave., commented on the traffic safety issues on Prince Georges Avenue. He was in favor of installing a speed hump to slow down traffic.

C. Traffic Calming on the 6400-6500 Block of Fourth Avenue

Betty Krier, Poplar Ave., commented on traffic safety issues. She stated that there were existing speed humps that were not helping. She suggested a bump-out to encourage drivers to slow down.

Sarah Bohl, 4th Ave., agreed with Ms. Krier's comments. She was in favor of installing a couple of bump-outs.

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON VOTING ITEMS AND OTHER MATTERS

Seth Grimes, Willow Ave., stated that the advances on the New Hampshire Avenue Recreation Center, library project, reforming Takoma Park's public safety approach was taking a long time. He asked the City Council to use the FY23 budget to make structural changes in the City. He urged the Council to rededicate themselves to the 2020 climate emergency response framework.

Laura Heaven, Grant Ave., thanked the Council for making the change to not have the proposed mental health worker as part of the Police department. She said that she hoped that Takoma Park's proposal can be strengthened further by stating that the goal of the PILOT is to move toward non-policing approaches to crisis intervention.

Emil Parker, Maple Ave., commented on the allocation of ARPA funds for mental health services PILOT and requested that the services be part of City Administration, not the Police Department.

Megan Scribner, Willow Ave., thanked the Council for the revision of the ordinance regarding mental health service. She stated that she was in support of the clarifying amendment on the objective of the mental health service introduced by Councilmember Kostiuk as well as the amendment to the social service partnership program to establish direct cash assistance introduced by Councilmember Kovar. She thanked Councilmember Smith for proposing to reduce the amount of ARPA funds for the library renovation and Councilmember Seamens for voting yes. She stated that she was disappointed that it was not supported by all the Council members. She was opposed on the amount of ARPA funds that would be used for the library renovation and atrium rebuild.

Michael Rubin, Flower Ave., commented on the ARPA spending plan and requested an update from Council regarding the recommendations made by the Reimagining Public Safety Task Force. He urged the Council to reserve as much of the ARPA funds for direct cash assistance to those in need. He stated that the use of ARPA funds on the library or atrium renovation was not a good or legitimate use of the funds. He asked the Council to re-establish the Reimagining Public Safety Task Force.

Denise Jones, Maple Ave., commented on the proposed amount of ARPA funds for multifamily housing rehabilitation. She stated that she was aggrieved over the cuts to the \$1.5 million proposed amount. She said that the cut was an undercover racist act. She suggested the use of the County's racial equity and social justice community engagement tool as it relates to the ARPA spending proposal.

Sue Miller, Ward 3, urged the Council to aid the community in need immediately and to restore multifamily building funding. She commented on the Atrium renovation project. She asked for clarification regarding the Atrium expansion and asked if it was a legitimate use of ARPA funds. Ms. Miller commented on the redistricting maps. She was in favor of Option Z.

Susan Schreiber, Ward 1, stated that it was Lee Jordan Day and spoke briefly about Lee Jordan. She commented on the allocation of ARPA funds. She asked the Council if the City was doing the best job for the people that were most in need.

Arthur David Olson, Hancock Ave., stated that he hoped the City Manager will propose a tax rate no higher than 53.51 cents. He asked the Council to consider charging different property tax rates for residential and commercial properties in this year's budget. He stated that he

wanted to reiterate a suggestion he once made to the Council to rename Lee Avenue to Mr. Lee Avenue to honor Lee Jordan and not General Lee.

AJ Campbell, Ward 5, stated that the common utilities were going to be turned off in her apartment building. She stated that she has been trying to work with City staff to resolve the issue. She commented on the lack of communication from staff.

Ms. Stewart responded that the City Manager would confer with the Director of Housing to give an update to the City Council on the situation.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Ms. Kostiuk thanked the public for their comments. She recommended moving forward with the name changes of the streets named after Civil War generals. She commented on meetings attended.

Mr. Smith recommended that the City invite the District of Columbia's restaurant association to make a presentation and explore the possibility of establishing a Takoma Park restaurant association. He thanked the residents that organized a Ward 5 meeting. He commented on the ARPA funds and the library project. He concurred with Ms. Jones's and Ms. Campbell's public comments. He asked the City Manager to review the City's racial equity process and explore new tools and ideas.

Ms. Searcy thanked the residents for their public comments. She thanked the residents and staff that helped a displaced family due to fire. She commented on the ARPA funds and said that she was in support of the mental health PILOT and having managed by the City Manager's office.

Mr. Kovar thanked the residents for their public comments. He announced his virtual meeting office hours. He commented on meetings attended. He announced a Go Electric event hosted by Montgomery County.

Ms. Stewart thanked the residents for their comments. She commented on the street renaming matter. She said she would request an update on street renaming in Takoma Park. She commented on Lee Jordan Day and an upcoming event to honor him.

CITY MANAGER COMMENTS

Mr. Fox updated the Council on the families displaced by the fire at Maple Towers. He said that staff was working with the County.

Ms. Clarke gave an update on tax duplication reform. She stated that the expedited bill and supplemental appropriation will return to the County Council for approval on March 1.

VOTING SESSION

2. First Reading Ordinance Approving the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and Budget Amendment

Ms. Clarke briefed the Council on the amendments to the draft ordinance discussed last week and reviewed the description of each project included in Exhibit A.

Ms. Searcy moved the ordinance. Mr. Kovar seconded the motion.

Mr. Kovar introduced an amendment to allocate the amount of \$2.3 million to direct cash payments. Ms. Kostiuk seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Mr. Smith moved to reallocate \$500,000 from the \$4 million on hold for the Library to grants to nonprofits. The amendment failed for lack of a second.

The vote on the amended ordinance carried (VOTING FOR: Stewart, Kovar, Dyballa, Kostiuk, Smith, Searcy; ABSENT: Seamens).

First Reading Ordinance 2022-3 (Attached)

WORK SESSION

3. Traffic Calming Requests (Glenside Drive, Prince Georges Avenue, Fourth Avenue)

Ms. Braithwaite explained the the traffic calming request process; the staff review process and the locations of the traffic calming devices being requested.

4. Redistricting Plan and Draft Ordinance

Ms. Stewart noted that the majority of the Council selected large Map Y at the previous work session.

Ms. Carpenter gave a brief presentation on Map Y and explained that staff recommended adding an additional 90 students to the census count for Washington Adventist University campus blocks with student resident halls. She said that there were currently 130 students living on campus.

The Council was in support of making that adjustment.

Ms. Carpenter stated that the consultant wanted to suggest that the Council reconsider moving the Jefferson, Carroll and Lincoln neighborhoods into Ward 4, and instead move them back to Ward 5. She said that a decision can be next week at the City Council meeting.

5. Reimagining Public Safety – Review and Action Plan by City Council

Ms. Searcy gave presentation on the recommendations of the Task Force, the actions taken to date, and identified priority actions and possible next steps. (Presentation attached,)

The Council agreed to move forward and discuss the next steps at a future work session.

Ms. Stewart reminded the Council that the Police Department Annual Report was scheduled to take place in two weeks. She said that the Police Chief's Advisory Board has been reviewing the Task Force recommendations.

ADJOURNMENT

The City Council adjourned at 11:18 PM.