

**CITY OF TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND  
CITY COUNCIL MEETING**

**Wednesday, March 23, 2022**

**Minutes**

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

**Also present:** City Manager Fox, Deputy City Manager Clarke, City Clerk Carpenter, Public Works Deputy Director Eubanks, Library Director Jones, Recreation Director Clark, City Attorney Cornbrooks, Economic Development Manager Ira Kowler, and ARPA Manager Vernae Martin

The City Council convened at 6:00 PM in the Auditorium of the Takoma Park Community Center, 7500 Maple Avenue, Takoma Park, Maryland.

**CLOSED SESSION OF MARCH 23, 2022**

The City Council convened at 6:00 PM to vote to go into closed session to legal advice and discuss matters related to collective bargaining with the City's two unions. Motion to go into closed session by Councilmember Kostiuk and second by Councilmember Kovar. Voting for: Stewart, Kovar, Dyballa, Kostiuk, and Smith. Absent: Seamens, Searcy. Present for Closed Session: Mayor Stewart, Councilmembers Kovar, Dyballa, Kostiuk, Seamens, Smith, Searcy. Also present: City Manager Fox, Deputy City Manager Clarke, City Clerk Carpenter, Labor Attorney Garrett Wozniak. The Council was briefed on the status of negotiations and discussed options.

The Council reconvened in the Auditorium at 7:30 PM.

**CHANGES TO THE AGENDA / AGENDA SCHEDULING UPDATE**

Ms. Stewart provided an update on future agendas.

**YOUTH COUNCIL UPDATE**

Faith Smith provided an update.

**LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

The City Council was updated by Legislative Advocate Suhani Chitalia on Maryland General Assembly legislative matters.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Jessica Landman, Ward 1, commented on the Takoma Junction redevelopment plan and NDC. She urged the Council to cancel the development agreement and the parking lot lease. She commented on the EYA development at the Takoma Metro and asked that Council request a presentation from EYA.

Arthur David Olsen, Hancock Ave., commented on the redistricting plan and urged the Council to review its redistricting process. He noted that "communities of interest" became the tail that

wagged the dog. He felt that the process will result in continued economic segregation in the community.

Sue Miller commented on the proposed sign ordinance and expressed concern about reinstating restrictions on where flyers can be posted.

## **COUNCIL COMMENTS**

Ms. Kostiuk thanked the residents for their comments. She gave an update on the traffic safety at the Lincoln/Carroll Avenue intersection.

Ms. Dyballa thanked Public Works for clearing invasive plants from Forest Park and planning to replace them with native plants. She announced an information meeting on the Belford Avenue sidewalk and reported on MWCOG regional committee meetings that she had attended.

Mr. Kovar mentioned the formation of Friends of Native Trees of Takoma. They have developed a native tree guide for the community. He asked for clarification on the ability to recycle clamshell containers. He provided information of efforts to have EYA make a presentation to City residents.

Ms. Stewart said she would work with staff to schedule a review of the redistricting process and plan to have a report developed to provide information to future Councils.

## **CITY MANAGER COMMENTS**

Mr. Fox introduced Ira Kowler, Economic Development Manager, to provide an update on the small business grant program. Mr. Fox announced that the proposed budget would be posted to the City website by April 4.

## **VOTING SESSION**

### **1. CONSENT AGENDA**

Mr. Seamens moved the consent agenda. Ms. Dyballa seconded the motion. The motion carried (VOTING FOR: Stewart, Kovar, Dyballa, Kostiuk, Seamens, Smith, Searcy).

#### **A. Single Reading Ordinance 2022-9 Approving a Contract for a Public Space Management Plan**

**Ordinance 2022-9 (attached)**

#### **B. Single Reading Ordinance 2022-10 Approving a Contract for Red Light Cameras**

**Ordinance 2022-10 (attached)**

**C. Resolution 2022-7 Approving Sole Source Designation for the University of Vermont Spatial Analysis Laboratory for a Tree Canopy Analysis**

**Resolution 2022-7 (attached)**

**WORK SESSION**

**2. Sign Ordinance**

City Attorney Cornbrooks briefed the Council on the amendments he drafted to the existing sign ordinance to ensure that it is content neutral, does not give discretion to the City Manager, and does not allow private signs to be posted on property around a City park or facility so that it would not like the City is endorsing the sign contents. He has also included a requirement that the person posting the sign be identified on the sign and that the sign be dated so that it can be removed after 14 days.

The Council asked questions and made suggestions.

- The person sponsoring the sign should be identified, rather than the individual posting it.
- Elections are often larger than the 20-inch limit in the draft ordinance.
- There were questions about use of Pepco poles.
- It was noted that there can be difficulty identifying rights of way versus private property in some instances.
- There is a difference between City rights of way and SHA rights of way.
- There were questions about how hate speech can be addressed with a content neutral sign ordinance.
- If signs are blocking pedestrian or traffic site lines, there are other laws that would permit their removal.

**3. Update from the Sustainability Manager**

Sustainability Manager Gina Mathias gave a presentation on the work completed and work in-process to meet the Council's sustainability goals. (Presentation attached.)

**4. Discussion of Plans for American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds Allocated for Social Service Partnerships and Library**

ARPA Manager Vernae Martin gave a presentation on the City's progress with developing a direct cash assistance program.

Ms. Stewart said that there seemed to be a general agreement in partnering with a nonprofit to, connecting to other services, not having a lot of eligibility requirements, and to make sure there were proper logistics put in place in the event direct cash cards were lost.

David Eubanks, Public Works Deputy Director, introduced Library Director Jessica Jones, Recreation Manager Gregory Clark, Project Architect Brandon Hughes from RMM, and Construction Manager Bob Jones from Arcadis.

Mr. Eubanks gave a presentation on the Library redevelopment project, the value engineering findings and next step recommendations.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

The Council adjourned for the evening at 11:05 p.m.