

**CITY OF TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND
PUBLIC HEARING, VOTING SESSION AND WORK SESSION**

Monday, April 27, 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, and City Clerk Carpenter

The City Council convened at 7:30 PM in the Community Center Auditorium.

CHANGES TO THE AGENDA / AGENDA SCHEDULING UPDATE

Ms. Stewart provided an update on future agendas.

READING BY TAKOMA PARK POET LAUREATE KATHLEEN O'TOOLE

PUBLIC HEARINGS

1. FY 2023 Tax Rate (Constant Yield Tax Rate Public Hearing)

Megan Scribner, Ward 1, commented in opposition to increasing the tax rate. She urged the Council to lower the Takoma Park property tax rate. She stated that the two areas most focused on lower income residents, recreation and housing and community development, account for less than 20% of the ARPA funds.

2. FY 2023 Budget

No Comments

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Seth Grimes submitted testimony on the K-9 program and asked the Council to consider the testimony on behalf of Takoma Park Mobilization's Equal Justice Committee. Mr. Grimes spoke in opposition of continuing the K-9 police program.

Cristy Lopez commented on her experience as a crime victim. She spoke in opposition of continuing the K-9 police program.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Ms. Kostiuk thanked the residents for their public comments and Kathleen O'Toole for reading her poem. She announced a Ward 3 virtual meeting scheduled for tomorrow at 7 p.m. to discuss the budget. Ms. Kostiuk stated that she was opposed to the continuing the K-9 police program.

Mr. Seamens commented on the crime in Ward 4 where a young man was killed. He thanked the officers that apprehended the perpetrator. Mr. Seamens said that he was interested in hearing about the different uses of K-9 dogs.

Ms. Searcy thanked the residents for their public comments and thanked the Poet Laureate. She gave an update on the stormwater work at Hillwood Manor playground. She announced the opening of the Crossroads Market. She thanked Prince Georges Councilmember Taveres and the Prince Georges Department of Transportation for extending the sidewalk design work on Kentland and Hopewell Avenues. She said that she appreciated the work presented on the K-9 police program. She commented on the work being done based on the Task Force's recommendations.

Ms. Dyballa thanked the people who came out on April 23 to do various volunteer work in the City and the people who signed up to volunteer for the invasive management of Dorothy's Woods.

Mr. Smith offered his condolences to the family of the man killed last week. He thanked the Chief and the police officers for their work. Mr. Smith stated that he would make a proposal that will not have a tax increase and address this year's deficit during the reconciliation list discussion.

Mr. Kovar thanked the residents for their comments. He agreed that the Council needed to reduce the tax increase. He concurred with Ms. Lopez and Mr. Grimes about the K-9 police program. He said that he held several community meetings to discuss the budget. Mr. Kovar announced a virtual meeting on May 9 about the Takoma Metro construction.

Ms. Stewart thanked the public for their comments. She offered her condolences to family of the man that lost his life and the Essex House community. She stated that she and Council will work with staff to schedule a discussion on specific policies regarding use of K-9s. She said that she opposed to continuing the K-9 police program but that she concurred with Mr. Seamens about the different uses of K-9 dogs. She announced an event at the VFW on May 14th.

CITY MANAGER COMMENTS

Mr. Fox thanked the Police Department for their response to the shooting in Takoma Park and thanked the Sheriff's office and their K-9 unit for assisting in the apprehension of the perpetrator.

VOTING SESSION

3. First Reading Ordinance Approving FY 2022 Budget Amendment No. 4 (moved to work session)

4. Second Reading Ordinance Amending Chapter 11.04 to Regulate Signs in Public Areas and Public Rights of Way

There was no further discussion.

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

Ordinance 2022-11 (attached)

5. Second Reading Ordinance Amending Chapter 4.24 of the Takoma Park Code (Police Employees' Retirement Plan) to Change the Application Process for the Deferred Retirement Option Program

There was no further discussion.

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

Ordinance 2022-12 (attached)

WORK SESSION

6. Discussion of Proposed FY 2022 Budget Amendment No. 4

Mr. Fox gave a brief overview of a chart showing the budget items that increased, decreased, and were delayed. He stated that these budget items were a \$936,000 reduction for FY22.

Mr. Seamens said that he had some concerns with the amendment including the hiring freeze which he said should have been Council decision. He said that he did not support the amendment that addresses the hiring freeze. Mr. Seamens said he moved that the Council strike the hiring freeze from the ordinance. He said that he was also not in support of the reductions in street improvements and moved that the Council also strike that from the ordinance.

Mr. Fox explained that if the Council decides to remove items recommended by City staff in the budget amendment, other items would need to be considered for reduction in order to maintain the recommended \$936,000 reduction for FY22.

Ms. Stewart reminded the Council that the budget amendment would be scheduled for a vote at the next Council meeting.

7. Old Takoma Business Association Request for Temporary Street Closures in Support of the 2022 Event Calendar

Mr. Fox explained that the Old Town Business Association identified six events for the 2022 calendar year beginning on May 7th.

Ms. Stewart stated that the Council would vote on a resolution next week.

8. Redistricting Debrief

Ms. Carpenter stated that the Council requested this debrief to discuss the redistricting process. She said that FLO Analytics provided a final redistricting report. She stated that she heard from city resident Arthur David Olsen who presented ideas to be considered by future members of Council. Ms. Carpenter suggested that it would be helpful if a City report were put together that would include information to consider the next time the City has to go through redistricting again.

Mr. Smith asked if working with a consultant and not having a committee or task force involved made the process easier. Ms. Carpenter replied that from her perspective and staff perspective, it was helpful having a consultant prepare the maps. She said that a certain amount of work and time go into creating the maps. In regards to the task force she said that it was helpful to not have a task force because a certain amount of work and times was required of residents and staff to put together a task force. Ms. Carpenter stated that the public outreach done by staff and the consultants and the public feedback was possibly better than if the City did have a task force.

Ms. Stewart recommended that an advisory board be considered for the next time.

Mr. Kovar suggested looking into changing the very large census blocks. He commented the City Charter instructions could be changed to have an independent entity conduct redistricting where the Council would not vote.

Ms. Kostiuk agreed with looking into changing the census blocks. She said that it was difficult to get early feedback from residents. She suggested an initial outreach so all members of the community knew what was going on. She said that the Council heard from many people of one side of the community and not much from other parts of the City. She recommended exploring ways of balancing that out. Ms. Kostiuk concurred with Ms. Stewart on the advisory board suggestion. She said she would also like future council to explore the idea of working with other communities as suggested by Mr. Olsen. Ms. Kostiuk said that she thought it would be beneficial to include communities of interest in the charter.

Ms. Searcy said she appreciated having a consultant. She liked the idea of having an advisory group. She commented on the idea of community of interest. She said that keeping a large

community of interest together would be a direct conflict with the need for compactness and that the City should keep that in mind.

ADJOURNMENT

The Council adjourned for the evening at 10:00 PM.