

**CITY OF TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND  
CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING  
WORK SESSION**

**Wednesday, June 15, 2022**

**MINUTES**

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

**Also present:** City Manager Fox, Urban Forest Manager Frye, and City Clerk Carpenter

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

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

Ms. Stewart provided an update on future agendas.

**FOR THE RECORD**

Ms. Stewart recognized by proclamation World Refugee Day (June 20) and Juneteenth (June 19).

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Susan Schreiber, Ward 1, commented on the Takoma Junction development and asked the Mayor and Council to terminate the 99 year lease with the Neighborhood Development Corporation (NDC).

Michael McGuire, Ward 3, thanked the Mayor and Council for the World Refugee Day proclamation and for their efforts over the year to ensure that Takoma Park was a welcoming community for refugees, asylum seekers, and new immigrants. He asked what else can the City do to meet the needs of new arrivals. He suggested creating an ad hoc task force and working with the Welcoming America organization. He thanked Ms. Kostiuk for her efforts in supporting refugees both on and off the Council.

Steve Boden, Ward 3, request assistance from the City for two Afghani families who sacrificed to support the U.S forces in Afghanistan. He said the family would like to relocate to Montgomery County so that their combined eight children could attended the best schools.

Sue Miller, Ward 3, commented on the Takoma Junction development and urged the Council to end the agreement and ground lease before the November election.

Bob Dreher, Ward 3, said that that he echoed the comments made by Ms. Miller and Ms. Schreiber. He commented on the Takoma Junction development and NDC. He urged the Council to end the agreement and ground lease.

Janet Pegues, Ward 2, said she agreed with the comments made about NDC. She stated that she and other members of the community were concerned about the conditions of the Recreation Center on New Hampshire Avenue. She requested an update on the air filtration system repair and on the renovation of the facility.

Paul Huebner, Ward 3, commented on NDC and urged the Council to end the contract with NDC before the November elections.

Colleen Cordes, Ward 1, thanked Ms. Stewart and Mr. Kovar for their continued efforts to get the FCC to limit its exposure to wireless. She thanked Mr. Kovar for all his work as Ward 1 councilmember. Ms. Cordes asked the Mayor to cut ties with NDC.

Karen Elrich, Ward 5, stated that the parking lot at the Junction had become a vibrant town square and new business have created a real need for parking in that lot. She said that the City needed to get ride of NDC and move on.

Julie Boddy, Ward 1, thanked the Council and staff for the recruiting efforts for the Nuclear-Free Takoma Park Committee. She said that the committee was looking for four more volunteers. Ms. Boddy read part of a mayor's for peace resolution.

Esther Segel, said that she agreed with the comments made about NDC and to end the contract. She said that she wanted to trust her City Council.

### **COUNCIL COMMENTS**

Mr. Seamens announced that he attended Josephine Warren's drive-by birthday party to celebrate her 99th birthday.

Ms. Kostiuk thanked the residents for their comments. She thanked the two residents who spoke about refugees and immigrants. She said that she has talked about the City seeking a welcoming certification. She said that the same organization that issues the certification also hosts an annual welcoming week. Ms. Kostiuk said she would like to see the City host a similar event to honor that week in September. She reported that the National League of Cities Transportation Planning Board voted on the visualize 2045 plan and it passed. She explained that there was an amendment to the plan proposed by the County Executive's office. She said that she added a clause that was adopted to specifically reference some climate goals. Ms. Kostiuk said she voted no on the plan because of the City's long-standing opposition to the MDOT beltway and 270 expansion project.

Ms. Searcy thanked the residents for their comments. She announced a traffic calming meeting on June 23 at 7 p.m. with residents of Hopewell, Kentland and Larch Avenues. She reminded the public about the Summer Mercado event on June 25th. She also requested an update on the recreation center.

Mr. Kovar thanked the residents for their commenters. He commented on the two proclamations presented by the Mayor. He thanked Ms. Kostiuk for sharing a letter asking President Biden to increase the number of refugees admitted into the U.S. He said he signed the letter. Mr. Kovar congratulated the nominees and winners of the Azalea Awards.

Mr. Smith thanked the residents for their comments. He said he understood the frustration and hoped to resolve the issue before the end of the Council's term. He reported that he attended the MML Conference. He said that he served as District Vice President of the MML Board of Directors for several years and that it was time for someone else to serve. He said that he would continue to serve the Chapter as Vice President. Mr. Smith announced a Ward 5 resident virtual meeting on June 21 to discuss the City's budget.

Ms. Dyballa thanked Ms. Kostiuk for the Transportation Planning Board update and for her work on the Board. She thanked the City planning staff for attending the Long-Branch Sligo neighborhood association meeting on the Minor Master Plan. She commented on the proclamations.

Ms. Stewart thanked everyone who came out to make a comment. She commented on the Azalea Awards event. She recognized Ms. Leandra Nicola, an owner of Main Street Pearl. She announced that the Spring Fling at the VFW was rescheduled and the Pride event was also postponed to June 26th. She wished everyone a Happy Father's Day.

### **CITY MANAGER COMMENTS**

Mr. Fox wished everyone a Happy Father's Day. He recognized Caribbean American Heritage Month. He thanked the City staff for all the work they do. He announced that the City offices would be closed in observance of Juneteenth. Mr. Fox reported that the City was seeking proposals for the direct cash assistance program. He also reported that the Library was still distributing masks and rapid COVID tests. He thanked the police department for their work. He reported that the crime rate was down compared to last year. Mr. Fox gave a brief update on the New Hampshire Avenue Recreation Center. He announced that an agreement to migrate to a new website was signed.

### **WORK SESSION**

#### **1. Urban Forest Program Update**

Marty Frye gave a presentation on the annual urban forest report.

Ms. Stewart thanked Mr. Frye for all of his work. She suggested working with Communication Specialist Donna Wright and the Newsletter editor to create an insert to include the information presented in terms of the PILOT.

The Council made several suggestions to encourage residents to plant trees.

#### **2. Procurement – Vegetation Maintenance Contract**

Ms. Braithwaite explained that the contract was a standard procurement contract. She introduced the new Vegetation Maintenance Supervisor, Anna John.

Mr. Smith said he previously requested to find a way for NGOS or businesses to sponsor some of our gardens or bioretention areas.

Ms. Braithwaite replied that the City was a part of similar program but that it was no longer active.

Ms. Searcy noted that there was a wide range in terms of the proposals and asked what else was considered in the selection process beyond the cost.

Ms. John replied that the track record of the business was considered to make sure the business can handle the different maintenance requirements for bioretention as well certifications.

Ms. Kostiuk requested to add the specific monetary amount to the ordinance.

Mr. Kovar asked how this scope of works was beyond the capacity of the City maintenance staff.

Ms. Braithwaite replied that staff could address most of the garden areas 2 to 3 times a year. She explained that with bioretention facilities and certain streetscapes they need more frequent maintenance.

Ms. John Anna added that Public Works does not have the staff to maintain the sites with the frequency needed because of visibility and stormwater permitting requirements.

Ms. Dyballa asked why the funding was not coming from the stormwater budget.

Ms. John replied that some of the sites were streetscape site and were not eligible to use stormwater funds

Ms. Stewart commented on the recent changes to the procurement process. She suggested that in the future, staff could update the Council on how the City was fulfilling that guideline. She said that the item would return to Council next week for a vote.

### **3. Draft Resolution Regarding Legislative Action Requests**

The Council discussed the four legislative action requests and narrowed the list to three requests that they would like to see MML support.

- to support legislation to increase authority for municipalities to collect revenue
- support legislation that assists municipalities with housing and community development issues
- to support of legislation for pedestrian and biker safety, SHA responsiveness, and meeting Vision Zero goals.

Ms. Stewart stated that Ms. Chitalia and Ms. Cietok would review the draft resolution wording and that the resolution would come back to the Council for a vote.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

The Council adjourned for the evening at 10:17 p.m.