

Town of Riverdale Park
Work Session Minutes
June 30, 2020
7:00 p.m.

In Attendance

Mayor Alan K. Thompson
CM Marsha Dixon, Ward 1
CM Aaron Faulx, Ward 2
CM David Lingua, Ward 3
CM Christopher Henry, Ward 4 (left at 9:08 p.m.)
CM Hala Mayers, Ward 6

John N. Lestitian, Town Manager
Jessica Barnes, Town Clerk/Director of Administrative Services
Ryan Chelton, Development Services Director
Ivy Lewis, Public Projects and Services Director
David Morris, Chief of Police
Paul Smith, Finance and Employee Services Director
Gentry Jones, Finance Manager

Absent

CM Colleen Richardson, Ward 5

Call to Order

Mayor Thompson called the Work Session to order at 7:34 p.m.

Agenda Approval

There were no changes to the agenda.

Mayor's Report

Mayor Alan Thompson reported:

- COVID-19 Update: Prince George's County entered Phase 2; County numbers are looking much better; low number of diagnoses per day in 20737.
- Encouraged to everyone to maintain social distance, wear a mask, and wash hands frequently in order to avoid a second wave.

Town Manager's Report

Town Manager Lestitian reported:

- Staff team continually working to adjust plans for the "new normal" due to COVID-19
- Reviewing options to improve service delivery and expand resident outreach
- Revenue has outperformed conservative projections during COVID-19 despite some reductions such as permit revenue
- Thank you to the Leadership Team for their work to reduce expenditures

Discussion:

Mayor Thompson asked if there were revenue sources that had seen changes. Town Manager Lestitian provided an overview of the revenue sources that had slight decreases or remarkable increases. Mayor Thompson reported that he had heard that the State was considering \$1billion in budget cuts and it was likely that Highway User Revenue (HURs) and other state shared revenues would decrease.

CM Lingua asked how the annual staff goals were progressing in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and if any modifications were needed. Town Manager Lestitian reported that the staff goals would need to be modified and he expected to have a new document to the Council by the end of July.

CM Henry asked about projected plans for bringing the Council back to the Council Chambers as the State was in Phase 2. Town Manager Lestitian discussed the State and County guidelines related to COVID-19. CM Dixon stated that she was curious to know how many residents had needed in-person services, but the Town had been unable to provide them. CM Dixon also stated that if the Town was going to evaluate the decision of when to bring staff back in-person, then those instances should be taken into account. Town Manager Lestitian reported that he was aware of only one circumstance and the resident was able to be assisted by phone. Mayor Thompson and CM Dixon discussed the plans that their jobs had in place with regard to returning to on-site work. Mayor Thompson also discussed examples of places that had reopened too soon. CM Henry stated that he wanted to see the Town evolve cautiously and in consideration of those with health issues. Mayor Thompson stated that the Town needed to balance the potential risk and Town Manager Lestitian was working to establish the necessary balance.

Council Committee & Ward Reports

CM Marsha Dixon, Ward 1

CM Marsha Dixon did not have a report.

CM Aaron Faulx, Ward 2

CM Aaron Faulx thanked the Riverdale Park Sustainability Committee, Lora Katz and Sarah Batto, for their work in re-certifying the Town as a Sustainable Maryland Community. CM Faulx stated that he was very proud of their work and impact on the community. CM Faulx also thanked staff for their work on the Sustainable Maryland re-certification.

CM David Lingua, Ward 3

CM David Lingua thanked all of the members of the Riverdale Park Sustainability Committee, including Ms. Acevedo and the staff team. CM Lingua also thanked staff for their work over the last several months with COVID-19.

CM Christopher Henry, Ward 4

CM Henry stated that he appreciated everything done by staff and the Police Department.

CM Dixon added that she wanted to recognize every staff member for keeping the Town running even when they were not visible.

CM Hala Mayers, Ward 6

CM Hala Mayers did not have a report.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Discussion Items

1. Town-wide speed limit reduction to 20 miles per hour

CM Faulx stated that he fully supported lowering the speed limit to 20 miles per hour Town-wide and that the change would make the Town more cyclist and pedestrian friendly.

CM Henry asked who had requested the change in the speed limit. Town Manager Lestitian replied that the original recommendation had been made by Chief Morris.

Chief Morris stated that the reduction in speed recommendation stemmed from the increasing number of speeding complaints throughout the Town. Chief Morris stated that the goal was to make the Town safer for pedestrians and cyclists.

CM Lingua asked if the recommendation was for school zones only. Chief Morris stated that the recommendation was to reduce speed on all Town roads to 20 miles per hour. Mayor Thompson stated that the speed limits on State roadways would not be impacted.

Town Manager Lestitian stated that the County would also be working with the Town on bike lanes and other traffic calming options.

Resident Karyn McAlister stated that she wholeheartedly supported the lowering of speed limit because it would reduce injuries and fatalities. Ms. McAlister discussed her experiences on Rivertech Court and potential traffic calming options. Resident Ryan McAlister discussed recent traffic incidents and stated that lowering the speed limit would be a good first step. Mr. McAlister discussed the need to work with County and State agencies to seek out other traffic calming options. Mr. McAlister stated that enforcement was also important to change driver behavior and improve overall safety.

Director Lewis provided an overview of her discussions with the Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPW&T) and the potential for a protected bike lane.

2. Reversion of Legislative Action Items 3, 4, and 5 from June 2nd Legislative Meeting

Mayor Thompson reported that, as discussed during the Special Legislative meeting, Legislative Action Items 4 and 5 would revert as of midnight on June 30th. Mayor Thompson stated that CM Henry had requested that reconsideration of the Council Action taken on June 2nd be added to the Work Session agenda.

CM Henry stated that it was his understanding that the legislation would need to be reintroduced due to a typo relating to a date in the legislation. CM Henry stated that he would like to see all legislative action taken in person at 5008 Queensbury Road for greater public participation.

Mayor Thompson clarified that Legislative Action Item 3, a charter amendment, was appropriately passed and the options available were to reintroduce Legislative Action Items 4 and 5 to bring the Charter, Code, and personnel manual into compliance or to revert the Charter Amendment.

CM Lingua stated that the meeting materials included a timeline of the discussions related to the legislation and asked if staff had any additional input. Town Manager Lestitian stated that staff had compiled a complete chronology of the Council's discussions related to the legislation as a guide. Mayor Thompson stated that the meeting packet included 176 pages of materials.

CM Dixon stated that the Council had already voted on the matter and this was more of a technical error.

CM Faulx stated that he understood CM Henry's position regarding meeting at Town Hall however the Council still needed to legislate despite the pandemic. CM Faulx stated that the legislation had been discussed for many months, and in some cases years. CM Faulx stated that there was no need to reconsider as there was substantial discussion of the topic prior to the legislation being adopted.

Mayor Thompson stated that he had carefully reviewed the Rules of Order and the Council was allowed to reconsider previously adopted legislation, but it was strongly discouraged unless there was a very serious issue. Mayor Thompson discussed the reconsideration of legislation in the past due to technical errors but stated that this was the first request of this nature that he was aware of.

Mayor Thompson asked for a motion to add Discussion Item 2 to next week's Legislative Meeting agenda.

CM Henry stated that he did not expect to receive support for the motion from Wards 1,2, and 3, however he felt strongly about the matter and wanted to move forward. CM Henry made a motion to add Discussion Item 2 to the July Legislative Meeting for Council action. CM Henry discussed his concerns regarding the role of the Town Manager.

CM Dixon discussed her concerns regarding the nature of the debate amongst the members of the Council. CM Henry also discussed his concerns and Mayor Thompson called the meeting back to order.

Mayor Thompson stated that the motion needed a second in order to move forward. The motion did not receive a second and failed.

3. Update on Partners in Economic Recovery Programs

Development Services Director Ryan Chelton provided an update on the Farmers Market Dollars Program, Resident – Restaurant – Town Partnership Program, and the Food Forest. Director Chelton stated that additional updates would be included in the upcoming Status and Information Reports.

Director Chelton reported that the Farmers Market Dollar Program had grown to include 164 households (a total of 746 individuals) and participants had spent nearly \$31,525 at the farmers market.

Director Chelton reported that the Resident – Restaurant – Town Partnership Program had five local restaurants enrolled and staff were working to recruit more restaurants for the program.

Director Chelton reported that the construction of the Food Forest was nearing completion and the vegetables had been planted. Resident Ryan McAlister asked about the goals for the Food Forest and who would be operating it. Director Chelton replied that the Town provided the plants, volunteers would assist with tending to the plants, and any resident in need could take the ripe vegetables from the Food Forest. Director Chelton also stated that signs would go up soon with a list of rules and volunteers would receive a key for the tool shed.

4. International Property Maintenance Code

Director Chelton stated that he has spoken to the Neighborhood Services team about local amendments to the 2018 International Property Maintenance Code. Director Chelton provided an overview of the proposed local amendments to Section 302 - Exterior Property Areas, 302.1 Sanitation and a proposed new section 302.10 Firewood.

CM Lingua discussed his concerns with Section 302.1 with regard to determining what was a weed. Town Manager stated that it depended on whether someone was intentionally trying to cultivate something. CM Lingua asked about noxious weeds and Town Manager Lestitian stated that noxious weeds were prohibited.

Resident Lora Katz stated that she would like more results-oriented standards applied and discussed her concerns regarding destructive vegetative growth and dangerous animals living in vegetation.

5. Minutes

Mayor Thompson requested that the Council make staff aware of any changes or corrections needed to the minutes.

Unfinished Business

CM Lingua stated that he had received a letter from a resident on Nicholson Street regarding poor performance from Bates. CM Lingua stated that the Town may need to reconsider how to move forward with waste management.

Mayor Thompson stated that the issue of how the Town would move forward was still open, but the current contract also contained a termination clause.

Mayor Thompson asked about the status of bulk trash. Town Manager Lestitian stated that he and Director Lewis had met with Mr. Bates last Thursday and Bates was having staffing issues related to COVID-19. Town Manager Lestitian stated that the Town was looking to restart the monthly Saturday bulk trash drop-off, as the staffing constraints improved in DPW.

New Business

CM Faulx stated that he wanted to thank the staff for their efforts. CM Faulx also stated that lack of Council attendance at Work Sessions was an issue and there needed to be a requirement for mandatory attendance at Work Sessions.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 10:16 p.m.