

**Town of Riverdale Park**  
**Work Session Minutes**  
**April 26, 2021**  
**7:00 p.m.**

**In Attendance**

Mayor Alan K. Thompson  
CM Marsha Dixon, Ward 1  
CM David Lingua, Ward 3  
CM Hala Mayers, Ward 6

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

**Absent**

CM Aaron Faulx, Ward 2  
CM Christopher Henry, Ward 4  
CM Colleen Richardson, Ward 5

**Call to Order**

Mayor Thompson called the Work Session to order at 7:45 p.m.

**Agenda Approval**

There were no changes to the agenda.

**Presentations**

Mayor Thompson reported that the presentation from Anacostia Trails Heritage Area, Inc. would be rescheduled for a future meeting.

FY2022 Proposed Operating and Capital Improvement Project Budget: Gentry Jones, Deputy Director of Finance Services

Town Manager Lestitian thanked the residents and the Mayor and Council for their careful review of the Proposed FY2022 Budget. Town Manager Lestitian stated that the feedback given had been a great benefit to staff. Town Manager Lestitian reported that the Proposed Budget did not include an increase in any tax rates or any fees.

Deputy Director Gentry Jones provided an overview of the Proposed FY2022 Operating Budget by cost center.

Town Manager Lestitian discussed the format changes to the Proposed Budget as well as the inclusion of workload and performance measures. Town Manager Lestitian asked if there were

any further questions from the Mayor, Council, and public regarding the Proposed Operating Budget. There were no additional comments or questions.

CM Lingua outlined the CIP projects that were covered during the FY2022 Budget Public Hearing held on Saturday, April 24<sup>th</sup>.

#### CDBG Funded Sidewalk Improvements

Development Services Director Ryan Chelton provided an overview and update on the CDBG Funded Sidewalk Improvements.

CM Lingua asked about staff outreach to the County regarding the project and Director Chelton discussed the most recent response from the County. Director Chelton stated that staff were developing a contingency plan if the project continued to encounter delays.

#### Welcome Signage

Development Services Director Chelton provided an overview of the Welcome Signage project and potential locations for the new signage. Town Manager Lestitian stated that staff would come back to the Mayor and Council with potential designs. Town Manager Lestitian stated that staff envisioned monument signs on the main entry points to the Town.

CM Dixon requested more information regarding the design of the signage and Mayor Thompson provided clarification. Town Manager Lestitian stated that the design would come back to the Mayor and Council for consideration.

#### Community Garden

Development Services Director Chelton provided an update on the Community Garden project and outlined the types of vegetables that were grown in the Community Garden. Director Chelton stated that funds were included to add fruit trees as another component of the Food Forest.

CM Lingua asked about the size of the Community Garden and Director Chelton discussed the size and design of the Community Garden. Director Chelton discussed the plans to add fruit trees in the spring or fall and the options to keep wildlife from eating the fruit.

CM Lingua stated that he was trying to understand how the Community Garden, Food Forest, and Pollinator Garden would work together and Director Chelton stated that he would provide an update in the future.

Resident Lora Katz suggested that more strategic planning was needed with an attainable goal for the project. Ms. Katz stated that focus on the outreach aspect was needed to get more people involved.

Town Manager Lestitian stated that the project started as a more traditional Community Garden, but due to COVID-19 the plan was changed to have more of a focus on simply feeding people. Town Manager Lestitian stated that the effort had been primarily staff driven, with no volunteers assisting with the Community Garden. Town Manager Lestitian also reported that staff received guidance and advice from Maryland Master Gardeners.

Town Manager Lestitian stated that the Community Garden would continue to evolve and grow in the future. Town Manager Lestitian stated that the project needed the assistance and support of residents and volunteers.

Ms. Katz asked that signage and outreach be included in the coming year to encourage resident engagement.

Ms. Katz asked about an area near the Community Garden that had been cleared of vegetation. Public Projects and Services Director Ivy Lewis discussed the encroachment of the vegetation on a neighboring property. Mayor Thompson stated that resident Karyn McAlister stated in a chat message that the area that was cleared was a litter magnet and vegetative spaces needed to be trimmed to prevent that issue.

Mayor Thompson stated that he appreciated the efforts of the staff team and that the infrastructure that was created for the Community Garden would certainly be used in the future.

CM Lingua suggested that a Saturday charette at the Community Garden may inspire people to participate.

#### Town Center Underpass

Director Chelton announced that a virtual charette with the Neighborhood Design Center (NDC) would take place on Tuesday, May 11<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 p.m. and invitations would be sent out soon. Town Manager Lestitian stated that NDC was typically asked to create project design using a phased approach.

Resident Ryan McAlister stated that the lighting and drainage needed to be addressed in the area before a mural was installed. Director Chelton stated that staff would work with SHA regarding the lighting and drainage issues.

#### Site Acquisition and Demolition

Director Lewis provided an overview of the project related to the properties located at 5000 and 5002 Queensbury Road. Town Manager Lestitian noted that the FY2022 funding accounted for the award of a Bond Bill.

Ms. Katz asked if the Town would consider using the land for a geothermal heating system for the Police Department and that the project could possibly be funded through the Maryland Smart Energy Commission. Town Manager Lestitian stated that the improvement of all of the HVAC systems in all of the Town buildings had recently been completed. Town Manager Lestitian discussed the recent request from Riverdale Elementary School for 26 additional parking spaces for their staff.

Mr. McAlister stated that a public process regarding the use of the property was needed, and parking did not appear to be the highest priority. Mr. McAlister stated that there appeared to be adequate parking near the elementary school.

Mayor Thompson stated that the Town anticipated letting Community Forklift take anything they wanted from the property prior to the demolition.

### Municipal Center Renovations

Director Lewis stated that the Town was moving into the construction phase of the project. Mr. McAlister asked if bike racks were added to the plans and Town Manager Lestitian stated that a bike rack that was removed from Town Center and would be installed after the renovations.

### 54<sup>th</sup> Place Pocket Park and Tot Lot

Town Manager Lestitian provided an overview of the project and the desire to create usable green space.

Ms. Katz stated that it was a great project and a creative idea. Ms. Katz asked about the funding of the project and Town Manager Lestitian reported that the DNR application window opened in August and did not align with the Town's fiscal year, so money was added to the CIP. Ms. Katz asked if the concrete would be removed to create the park, and Town Manager Lestitian replied in the affirmative.

### Building Weatherization and Stabilization at 6105 51<sup>st</sup> Avenue (Boys and Girls Club)

Director Lewis provided an overview of the project and noted that the Boys and Girls Club had been vacant for quite some time. Director Lewis stated that it was the location of the Community Garden and could provide storage for DPW.

CM Lingua asked if the project was in conjunction with the Community Garden project and Town Manager Lestitian replied in the affirmative.

Ms. Katz encouraged the Council's support as the most economical buildings were the ones that already exist, and the project was long overdue. Ms. Katz expressed appreciation to the staff.

Mr. McAlister asked about the history of the building and what the intended use of the building would be. Director Lewis stated that it would be used initially for storage for DPW.

### Streetlight Improvement

Town Manager Lestitian provided an overview of the project and stated that staff were working to reprogram a CDBG sidewalk project.

Mr. McAlister asked if the lights would be LED, and Town Manager Lestitian replied in the affirmative. Town Manager Lestitian noted that there would be a mix of Pepco lights and the Town's decorative lights.

### Curb Ramp Improvements

Director Lewis reported that the Curb Ramp Improvement project was an ongoing project to upgrade existing curb ramps that were not ADA compliant and add those that were missing and needed.

Mayor Thompson asked how many ramps could be installed with \$25,000 and Director Lewis replied that it cost approximately \$5-6,000 for each curb ramp. Mayor Thompson stated that he was glad that there was continued investment in improving accessibility.

### Field of Dreams

Director Lewis stated that the Field of Dreams was an ongoing project to build out the "Lazy Meadow" concept that was developed several years ago through a community charrette. Director Lewis reported that the next phase was an assessment of the drainage issues at the site and a

design to improve drainage. Director Lewis noted that additional trees would be planted through a partnership with CKAR.

Resident Karyn McAlister asked about the status of the Trolley Trail Lighting project and Mayor Thompson provided a summary. Town Manager Lestitian discussed the Bond Bills related to lighting the Trolley Trail.

#### DPW Staff Workstations

Director Lewis provided an overview of the project and stated that COVID-19 had forced a change in the configuration of the workstations from a pod design to individual workstations in the DPW shop.

There were no questions from the Mayor, Council, or public.

#### Street Furniture and Waste Receptacles

Director Lewis discussed the placement of recycling bins and benches throughout Town.

CM Lingua asked about pet waste stations and Director Lewis reported that six pet waste stations would be purchased in the coming weeks. Ms. Katz discussed the Riverdale Park Sustainability Committee's role in mapping pet waste stations.

Ms. Katz stated that she was blown away by number of trash cans in Town and that technology existed for trash receptacles that could also compact trash. Ms. Katz discussed the need for automation to assist staff.

#### Streets and Sidewalk Improvement

Director Lewis reported that significant progress had been made over the last year to identify priority locations for street and sidewalk improvement projects. Director Lewis discussed the use of RoadBotics to assess road conditions.

CM Lingua asked if the 47<sup>th</sup> Avenue sidewalk project would be addressed, and Director Lewis replied in the affirmative.

#### Vehicle Upgrades and Improvements (DPW)

Director Lewis discussed the need to replace a 2005 F250 pickup truck and to make repairs to other DPW trucks.

Ms. Katz stated that she was looking forward to the day when all electric vehicles were included in the proposed budget.

#### Street Light Pole Installations

Director Lewis reported that approximately 10 street light poles needed to be replaced each year and the life span of the light poles fit the criteria for a capital project. Director Lewis reported that the LED retro fit project was included in the Department's Operating Budget.

Mayor Thompson asked about the damage to the street light poles and Director Lewis reported that most of the damage was due to motor vehicle accidents. Mayor Thompson also asked if the LED retrofit occurred when the street light pole was replaced and Director Lewis replied that most had already been converted but if not, the conversion would be done at that time.

### Town Center Railroad Fencing

Director Lewis provided an overview of the Town Center Railroad Fencing project and noted that the project was carried over from the previous fiscal year.

Ms. Katz asked about the location of the project and Director Lewis provided additional details. Director Lewis confirmed that the purpose of fence was to prevent pedestrian crossing. Town Manager Lestitian clarified that the fencing would not be chain-link and would span approximately 100 feet. Town Manager Lestitian further explained that the project was not optional as the Town had signed an agreement and it was a condition of the purchase of the property.

Ms. Katz suggested that native plantings could have been used in place of the fencing. Town Manager Lestitian stated that staff would look to do so whenever possible however, in this case, safety would have been a concern when staff needed to maintain the plantings along the railroad. CM Lingua noted that it was difficult when dealing with the railroad.

### Neighborhood Safety Camera System

Town Manager Lestitian provided an overview of the Neighborhood Safety Camera program and reported that he expected that some of the design work would be completed in the current fiscal year with an RFP being issued in the next fiscal year. Town Manager Lestitian stated that some of the cameras may be mobile, and some may be stationary with the overall goal of reducing crime and the fear of crime.

There were no questions from the Mayor, Council, or public.

### Vehicle Replacements (Police Department)

Chief of Police David Morris stated that the project would be a continuation of the vehicle leasing program with the goal of replacing the aging fleet vehicles that were generating significant repair expenses. Chief Morris stated that the lease would be through Ford and would include vehicles with upgraded hybrid engines that were capable of handling patrol operations. Chief Morris also noted that the term of the lease would be reduced to 4 years.

Ms. Katz asked why the Town would want to own the vehicles after the lease ended and Town Manager Lestitian replied that the Town could not afford to replace the entire fleet of police vehicles.

CM Dixon about the term of the lease and Chief Morris noted that the lease term would be changed from a 5-year to a 4-year lease.

### Ballistic Shields

Town Manager Lestitian reported that the project had been completed and would not be funded in the next fiscal year.

### Technology Improvements

Chief Morris reported that as the Town continued to upgrade vehicles, the Mobile Data Terminals (MDT) also needed to be upgraded in order to meet the requirements of the RMS system. Chief Morris noted that some of the MDTs in the Town's older vehicles also needed to be upgraded in order to maintain compatibility with the County's RMS system. Chief Morris noted that the Town would piggyback on another contract to get the best pricing available.

There were no questions from the Mayor, Council, or public.

### License Plate Reader (LPR)

Chief Morris explained that one LPR had been acquired in FY2021 and that two more needed to be acquired over the next two fiscal years. Chief Morris explained that the LPRs were used not only to identify expired tags but they also aided in investigations.

Mayor Thompson discussed a case regarding bank robberies that was solved partly through the use of LPR technology.

Mayor Thompson noted that the funding was listed as restricted in one area of the CIP page but unrestricted in another area. Deputy Director Jones noted that it should be unrestricted in both places and a correction would be made to the CIP page.

Town Manager Lestitian thanked the Mayor, Council, and public for their work in reviewing the proposed budget.

Mayor Thompson thanked the staff for their work on a very detailed, nicely presented, and balanced proposed budget. CM Lingua agreed.

CM Dixon thanked the staff for their work on the budget.

### **Mayor's Report**

Mayor Alan Thompson reported:

- Deferred most of his report to the next meeting.
- Town Election on Monday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>; reminder to vote if you have not already voted by Absentee Ballot
- Read good news regarding the COVID-19 metrics in the State heading in a good direction. Hold on just a little while longer.

### **Town Manager's Report**

Town Manager Lestitian deferred his report to the next meeting and thanked the staff team for their work on the proposed budget.

### **Council Committee & Ward Reports**

#### **CM Marsha Dixon, Ward 1**

CM Marsha Dixon reported:

- Reminder residents to vote on Monday, May 3<sup>rd</sup> and to exercise their civic responsibility
- Encouraged everyone to get vaccinated and continue to follow protocols
- Hopes to be able to celebrate her birthday with others this year

#### **CM David Lingua, Ward 3**

CM David Lingua reported:

- Happy birthday to CM Dixon
- Get out to vote on May 3<sup>rd</sup>
- Get vaccinated: reminder to everyone to stay positive and test negative

#### **CM Hala Mayers, Ward 6**

CM Hala Mayers did not have a report.

### **Public Comments**

Ms. Katz expressed her appreciation to the staff and Mayor and Council for the work that was done to prepare the FY2022 Proposed Budget and for the opportunity to participate in the budget process. Ms. Katz stated that she looked forward to working with everyone in the future.

### **Discussion Items**

#### 1. FY2021 Revenue Analysis

Deputy Director Jones provided an update on the FY2021 revenue categories in comparison to the three previous fiscal years.

Mayor Thompson noted that the 2018 building permit revenue was very high, likely due to Riverdale Park Station.

#### 2. Town Election Update

Director of Administrative Services Jessica Barnes provided an update on the preparations for the upcoming Town election.

Director Barnes reported that 62 Absentee/Mail-in Ballot requests had been received in comparison to the 2 that were received for the 2019 Town election. Director Barnes also reported that the Town had received 12 applications for the Town's Supplemental Voter Registry which marked the first time that voters had pre-registered for the Town's Supplemental Voter Registry.

Director Barnes also discussed the timeline for the Town election and the Council meeting following the closing of the polls on Election Day.

#### 3. Minutes

Mayor Thompson requested that the Council provide staff with any changes or corrections that were needed to the draft minutes.

### **New Business**

There was no new business.

### **Unfinished Business**

There was no unfinished business.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 10:07 p.m.