

Town of Riverdale Park
Work Session Minutes
December 20, 2021
7:00 p.m.

In Attendance

Mayor Alan K. Thompson
CM Richard Smith, Ward 1
CM Aaron Faulx, Ward 2
CM David Lingua, Ward 3
CM Thomas Sadiq, Ward 4
CM Hala Mayers, Ward 6

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

Absent

CM Karen Mejia, Ward 5

Call to Order

Mayor Thompson called the Work Session to order at 7:02 p.m.

Agenda Approval

There were no changes to the agenda or stated conflicts of interest.

Presentation

FY2023 Budget Presentation: Gentry Jones, Deputy Director of Finance Services

Deputy Director of Finance Services Gentry Jones discussed the FY2023 Budget Assumptions and the building blocks for creating the budget assumptions to include: 5-year projections, conservative approach to budgeting, guiding principles, the Town's values, adopted Vision and Commitment statements, debt service goals, fund balance goals, and best practices.

Deputy Director Jones also outlined the Budget Priorities, Guidelines, Challenges, and Opportunities used to develop the proposed FY2023 Budget.

CM Sadiq asked about the debt service goals related to the draw down of existing loan balances and Town Manager Lestitian provided an overview of the current loan debt and the Town's approach to reducing and eliminating debt. CM Sadiq suggested that in an potential inflationary environment that it may be helpful to uphold long-term debt because it became devalued, and Town Manager Lestitian stated that there would be opportunities for more discussion about that concept.

Town Manager Lestitian stated that the Constant Yield Notice would be received in mid-February. Town Manager Lestitian discussed the uncertainty regarding the assessable base due to COVID-19 specifically, the impact on the commercial, non-retail sector and what it may do to the valuation of some properties in Town.

CM Lingua thanked Deputy Director Jones for his presentation and asked how the budget challenges were prioritized. Town Manager Lestitian provided an overview of how the Budget and Leadership Team created the Proposed Budget with the primary focus on service delivery.

CM Lingua stated that the delivery of services and community and economic development went hand in hand and Town Manager Lestitian agreed as that was the direction that staff have received from the Council.

CM Sadiq asked what effect inflation would have on the budget. Town Manager Lestitian discussed the Town's Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) related to inflation and the impact of an increased COLA on the Proposed Budget. CM Sadiq asked if it was a possibility that expenses would increase without an increase in revenue. Mayor Thompson discussed the triannual property reassessment process.

CM Smith echoed CM Sadiq's concerns regarding inflation and paying down debt and asked if there was a statutory requirement for a balanced budget. Town Manager Lestitian replied in the affirmative. CM Smith asked about the Town fee structure and when fees were last increased. Town Manager Lestitian replied that staff, in preparing the Proposed Budget, were assuming no increases in fees or other rates provided that the assessable base holds or grows. Town Manager Lestitian stated that staff would know more when the Constant Yield Notice has been received.

Mayor's Report

Mayor Alan Thompson reported:

- COVID-19 update: mostly still delta cases, omicron is raising quickly; stats mostly unavailable due to cyber-attack in early December; numbers and statistics are not good; statewide hospitalization rate at over 85% of beds and positivity rate (typically 3%) now is 15% highest it has been since June 2020; not slowing down; everything is increasing; PGCPs is closed until January; Washington, DC reinstated indoor mask mandate; recommendations: get vaccinated or get your booster, wear a mask and wear the best that you can afford or find, consider skipping holiday events and gatherings, use OTC COVID-19 test if you plan to attend a gathering, and if you test positive, please isolate; we are on the edge of what could be the worst wave yet; be careful and stay safe
- Looking forward to next two weeks and some time off

Town Manager's Report

Town Manager John Lestitian reported:

- Nothing to add regarding COVID-19
- Welcome to LaVerne Peakes, ARPA Manager, overview of resume and qualifications
- Delivered 41 food baskets; 50 families received toys; 16 students participated in virtual Shop with a Cop event
- Holiday Party To-Go Bags: 100 distributed to families last week
- Trolley Trail Lighting project update
- 48th Avenue Sidewalk project wrapping up
- Town Hall and DPW will be closed on December 24th and 31st

- Thank you to the Council for a good year; recognizing resilience of residents and staff team; thank you for the leadership; looking forward to 2022

Discussion:

CM Lingua discussed his concerns with the new “kick-out” as part of the 48th Sidewalk project and asked if parking restrictions or one way traffic had been considered. Town Manager Lestitian reported that the Town’s engineer for the project was not proposing any changes to traffic flow or parking and staff have conveyed the CMs concerns. Town Manager Lestitian stated that staff would continue to monitor conditions. CM Lingua discussed his calculations and the amount of space for a travel lane if cars were parked on both sides of the street.

CM Lingua discussed an issue with the ramp on Taylor Road. Town Manager Lestitian reported that Public Projects and Services Director Ivy Lewis had met with the residents and some modification would be made. Town Manager Lestitian stated that the residents had expressed that they were satisfied with the changes.

CM Lingua stated that he would like for residents to receive more notice before projects were started and that the contractors (and utility companies) needed to provide adequate notice before starting work. Town Manager Lestitian stated that staff agreed. Director Barnes discussed the Town’s outreach efforts.

Council Committee & Ward Reports

CM Richard Smith, Ward 1

CM Richard Smith reported:

- Thanked staff and welcomed Ms. Peakes to the Town
- Lights up on Trolley Trail and some of the work was completed by union labor
- Omicron variant: get vaccinated and get boosted; 14-year-old daughter was supposed to arrive from Korea (had only seen her once since 2019) and trip was cancelled due to COVID-19; heartbreaking
- Reminder that there is lots of power in small decisions; can do a lot of good or can do a lot of harm; make responsible decisions

CM Aaron Faulx, Ward 2

CM Aaron Faulx reported:

- Loved hearing from CM Smith regarding union labor related to Trolley Trail Lighting project
- Thank you to the Mayor for report regarding COVID-19
- Important to build relationships with those in the community
- Former Ward 2 resident, Fernando, recently passed away; Fernando was unique and passionate; sending the best to his wife and family
- The work that we do does not go unnoticed
- Happy holidays to everyone

CM David Lingua, Ward 3

CM David Lingua reported:

- Deferred majority to January
- Current state of pandemic- have a safe, happy, and healthy holiday
- Stay positive and test negative

- Upcoming vaccination clinics at 6201 Belcrest Road- every Tuesday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Glad to see progress on 48th Avenue Sidewalk project; looking forward to Longfellow Street Stormwater Management project being completed
- Admire staff for all that they have endured; have done a great job figuring out how to make things run smoothly; plan the work and then you work the plan
- Wish everyone a safe and happy holiday

CM Thomas Sadiq, Ward 4

CM Thomas Sadiq reported:

- Washington Post reported that 73% of cases of are due to omicron variant
- Discussion regarding resident concerns related to teens congregating in the woods between Parkdale High School and Madison Hill community. Acting Chief Guixens discussed the types of calls RPPD was receiving and stated that they were working with the School Resource Officer.

CM Hala Mayers, Ward 6

CM Hala Mayers did not have a report.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Discussion Items

1. Variance Request: 5909 Taylor Road; variances of 7.9 feet front yard depth

Administrative Services Director Jessica Barnes provided an overview of the requested variance for 5909 Taylor Road.

CM Lingua stated that he had reviewed the plans and spoke with the applicant, Mr. Concha. CM Lingua explained that there had been a portico off of the front stoop in the past and the current owners were seeking to replace the portico and add a porch. CM Lingua stated that he supported the request for a variance.

Mayor Thompson thanked the applicant for attending the meeting and noted that the house had been built before the zoning ordinance was written.

Mayor Thompson stated that the Variance Request would be placed on the regular meeting agenda for January 3rd for official Council action.

2. Curb Cut Request: 4703 Oliver Street; replacement of existing driveway and apron

Development Services Director Ryan Chelton provided an overview of the request to repair and replace a driveway apron at 4703 Oliver Street. Director Chelton stated that the applicant was present to answer any questions that the Mayor and Council may have and had obtained a permit from Prince George's County.

Mayor Thompson thanked the applicant for attending the meeting and stated that the Curb Cut Request would be added to the Consent Agenda for the January 3rd Legislative Meeting. There were no objections.

3. FY2022 Revenue Update

Deputy Director Jones provided an overview of the FY2022 Revenue categories in comparison to three previous fiscal years.

CM Sadiq asked if the decrease in report fees, on line item 4301, related to a decrease in crime and Acting Chief Guixens confirmed that the decrease in report fees had no relation to the volume of crime.

4. Ordinance 2021-OR-10 Amendment of the FY2022 Budget

Town Manager Lestitian stated that Ordinance 2021-OR-10 regarding Amendment of the FY2022 Budget was on the agenda for another opportunity to discuss the legislation, and answer any questions that the Mayor, Council, and public may have. Town Manager Lestitian stated that the legislation was scheduled for adoption at the January 3rd Legislative Meeting.

5. Proposed legislation to create Riverdale Park Board of Elections

Administrative Services Director Jessica Barnes provided an overview of the proposed legislation to create a Riverdale Park Board of Elections.

6. Council Committee Assignments

Mayor Thompson stated that he had provided a cover memo regarding the Council Committee assignments and asked if there was any discussion. CM Faulx stated that he loved the idea of an Economic Recovery Committee to assist with the recovery efforts. Mayor Thompson provided an overview of the Council Committees.

CM Sadiq asked if there was a Charter for the Council Committees and Mayor Thompson discussed where, in the Town Code, Council Committees were addressed.

7. Town Manager Performance Evaluation

Mayor Thompson discussed the process for the Town Manager's annual performance evaluation.

8. Minutes

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

New Business

CM Faulx stated that he would be meeting with the new director of Riversdale, Maya Davis, regarding a new name for the Field of Dreams. CM Faulx stated that he would like to name the park for those enslaved at Riversdale.

CM Smith stated that he was very supportive of the idea and suggested that the Town reach out to the University of Maryland for assistance.

CM Lingua asked CM Faulx if he would also be meeting with other members of the Riversdale team and CM Faulx replied that he expected that Ms. Ferris would also be part of the discussion.

Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:53 p.m.