

**Town of Riverdale Park  
Legislative Meeting Minutes  
January 3, 2022  
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 Hala Mayers, Ward 6

John N. Lestitian, Town Manager  
Jessica Barnes, Town Clerk/Director of Administrative Services  
Ryan Chelton, Development Services Director  
Rosa Guixens, Acting Chief of Police  
Gentry Jones, Deputy Director of Finance Services  
Ivy Lewis, Director of Public Projects and Services  
Paul Smith, Director of Finance and Employee Services  
Robert Turner, Captain, Riverdale Park Police Department

**Absent**

CM Thomas Sadiq, Ward 4  
CM Karen Mejia, Ward 5

**Call to Order**

Mayor Thompson called the Legislative Meeting to order at 7:07 p.m.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited, and a moment of silence was observed.

**Approval of Agenda**

CM Faulx made a motion to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded by CM Smith. Vote:  
4-0-1 (Favorable)

Roll Call Vote:

Mayor Alan K. Thompson: Abstained  
CM Richard Smith, Ward 1: Aye  
CM Aaron Faulx, Ward 2: Aye  
CM David Lingua, Ward 3: Aye  
CM Thomas Sadiq, Ward 4: Absent  
CM Karen Mejia, Ward 5: Absent  
CM Hala Mayers, Ward 6: Aye

*Discussion:*

There were no amendments to the agenda.

Mayor Thompson noted that, technically, all members of the Council had a conflict of interest with the Council Committee Assignments item, but it was unavoidable.

## **Presentations**

### Riverdale Park Arts Update: Robert DiLutis and Samuel Williams

Samuel Williams and Robert DiLutis discussed the status of Riverdale Park Arts and upcoming programs and events. Mr. DiLutis discussed the approach that Riverdale Park Arts was taking with regard to funding and developing programs.

Mayor Thompson thanked the group for their continued efforts.

CM Faulx thanked the group for all that they brought to the community. CM Faulx stated that artists have had a difficult time during pandemic and the live music in Town had been a relief.

CM Lingua also thanked the group for their work and asked what was envisioned for Arts Fest moving forward. Mr. DiLutis stated that there was general consensus amongst members of the group to focus on smaller art events. Mr. Williams discussed the impact of COVID-19 and the overall cost of Arts Fest.

CM Smith thanked Riverdale Park Arts for all that they do for the community and stated that he wanted to hear more about how the Town could support their efforts. Mr. DiLutis stated that they would like to have an outdoor (covered) area for artists to sit or play. Mr. Williams stated that they would also like to be able to provide grants to artists.

CM Faulx stated that he had been a vocal proponent for a stage-like area in the Town Center and he would like to have music at all times.

Resident Lora Katz thanked Riverdale Park Arts for their work and stated that it was appreciated by the community. Ms. Katz stated that she had recently heard a fantastic bassoonist in Town Center and suggested that signage was needed to promote the Train Stop Tunes program.

### FY2023 Budget Presentation: Gentry Jones, Deputy Director of Finance Services Capital Improvement Project (CIP) Updates and Projections

Deputy Director of Finance Services Gentry Jones provided an overview of the Capital Improvement projects and related projections.

Deputy Director Jones reported that staff were finalizing the vehicle and equipment requests for FY2023. Deputy Director Jones discussed the projects that were expected to be completed in FY2022 as well as the projects that would continue into FY2023. Deputy Director Jones also provided a list of potential Capital Projects for FY2023.

CM Lingua asked if the projects had been listed in order of priority and Town Manager Lestitian replied that the projects had been listed as they were listed in the FY2022 budget. CM Lingua stated that he would like an update on when the Longfellow Street Stormwater Management project would be completed.

Town Manager Lestitian stated there was an aggressive list of projects moving forward and that some projects may continue into the next fiscal year, but the majority of the project would be completed in the current fiscal year.

Public Projects and Services Director Ivy Lewis provided an update on the Municipal Center Project and related timeline as well as the Longfellow Street Stormwater project. CM Lingua stated that he was concerned about the timeline for the Longfellow Street Stormwater project. Director Lewis discussed some of the challenges related to the project and reported that County CM Glaros had recently coordinated a meeting with all of the parties involved with the project. CM Lingua stated that he was willing to help with resident outreach, if needed.

CM Lingua asked if the items listed as “Queensbury Road Parking Lot” and “5000 and 5002 Queensbury Road Redesign” referenced the same project and Deputy Director Jones replied in the affirmative.

CM Smith asked for additional information regarding the License Plate Reader project and Neighborhood Safety Camera program and Town Manager Lestitian provided an overview.

Mayor Thompson asked how American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds for capital projects would be addressed. Town Manager Lestitian discussed how the budget would reflect those funds.

Mayor Thompson requested more information related to the leasing of police vehicles versus purchasing them at a future meeting.

Resident Lora Katz discussed the need for a bulletin board at the dog park as well as a storage box for park users to store bowls, balls, and shovels to fill in the holes that dogs dig at the park.

Ms. Katz suggested that the Town continue to expand the food forest, add closed loop composting on site, seek funding to preserve champion/legacy trees, install finished and permanent electronic signage, and consider the replacement of gas-powered tools with battery powered tools.

### **Mayor’s Report**

Mayor Alan K. Thompson reported:

- Happy new year!
- Reflections on 2021: 2021 was a terrible year- homicides, delta wave, beginnings of omicron wave, personal losses; 2021 also saw the Town sponsor vaccination clinics, hold two elections, work with Greater Riverdale Cares and Route 1 Communities Thrives to feed people, provide gifts and food to those in need during the holiday season, light the Trolley Trail, complete the 48<sup>th</sup> Avenue Sidewalk project, receive a grant for the Field of Dreams, make progress on flood mitigation, select a new location for Capital Bikeshare, the Municipal Center project getting ready to start, and a food hall coming to Riverdale Park Station. Looking forward to 2022.
- COVID-19 Update: statistics are terrible; rate is 225 per 100,000 people per day and was 10 only one month ago; positivity rate is over 30% which is the highest level in entire pandemic; omicron variant seems to be less harmful but the statistics for serious illness much higher due to higher number of cases; reminder to get vaccinated as more variants will come; stay home as much as possible; wear the best mask that you can get: N95; trusted KN95; KF94 (top three); surgical masks; cloth masks (try to upgrade); if you test positive stay isolated; incorporate fresh air and a lot of air exchanges as much as possible; assume everyone is positive when around other people
- Overview of what the Town is doing: ventilation upgrades and distributing 35,000 masks to residents in Town as fast as possible

## **Town Manager Report**

Town Manager John N. Lestitian reported:

- Thanked Mayor Thompson for detailed information regarding COVID
- Working to get masks to those who may not be able to access masks; looking to partner with community stakeholders
- Tough 8-9 days for the staff team: one hospitalized with COVID-19; several staff tested positive or were caring for COVID positive family members
- Contingency plans are in place to be as prepared as possible and ensure the ability to deliver services
- Good COVID-19 protocols in place to keep staff team, their families, and our residents safe
- Every member of DPW team worked during the recent weather event and did an outstanding job
- Looking forward to 2022

## **Monthly Finance Report**

Town Manager Lestitian stated that the monthly finance report was delayed as staff were out due to COVID-19 and scheduled leave. Town Manager Lestitian stated that the monthly finance reports would be distributed to the Mayor and Council by the end of the week and a Special Legislative Meeting would be scheduled for the end of the month.

CM Lingua suggested that a Special Legislative meeting be held on January 31<sup>st</sup>, prior to the Work Session to receive the monthly finance reports and take action. There were no objections.

## **Correspondence Summary**

The Correspondence Summary was included in the Meeting Materials. There were no questions or comments regarding the Correspondence Summary.

## **Fire Department Report**

There was no Fire Department Report.

## **Council Committee & Ward Reports**

### **CM Richard Smith, Ward 1**

CM Richard Smith reported:

- Echo Mayor and Town Manager's comments regarding COVID-19
- PGCPs will be closed again tomorrow, with no virtual learning
- Isolate/quarantine if you get a positive test and stay home as much as possible
- Treatment drug coming soon, perhaps a light at the end of the tunnel
- Take care of each other and take care of the community
- Appreciate Town staff's work
- Support small businesses in Town
- Noticed that Denizens beer has a label indicating that it was brewed in Riverdale Park
- Great review of Texas 2Fifty BBQ in *Washington Post*

### **CM Aaron Faulx, Ward 2**

CM Aaron Faulx reported:

- Mayor's Report always provides quality information

- Constantly searching for quality information- Mayor Thompson provides that every single meeting, need to share the Mayor's Report on social media
- Email regarding DPW ready for weather event- thank you Town Manager Lestitian, Director Lewis, Operation Manager Davis, and all staff for working around the clock
- Meeting with Maya Davis and Samanth Ferris of Riversdale; discussion regarding potential renaming of Field of Dreams as Plummer Family Park; looking for Council support
- Sent article regarding \$1500 parks; using space for wellbeing; improves the aesthetic; finding spaces in all Wards

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

CM David Lingua reported:

- CKAR CDC meeting on January 11<sup>th</sup>; agenda not released yet
- CKAR CDC to sponsor events for MLK Day of Service on January 17<sup>th</sup>
- COVID-19: advocate for residents to do all that they can to bring an end to the pandemic, to lower the transmission rate; we all need to work together

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

CM Hala Mayers wished everyone a happy new year.

### **Public Comments on Non-Agenda Items and Consent Agenda Items**

Resident Lora Katz thanked the Council and staff for their work on the Trolley Trail lighting project. Ms. Katz stated that she was enjoying the lit Trolley Trail. Mayor Thompson stated that he was also enjoying the Trolley Trail lights.

### **Consent Agenda**

Motion to approve consent agenda items:

1. Curb Cut Request: 4703 Oliver Street; replacement of existing driveway and apron
2. Minutes: October 18, 2021, Special Legislative Meeting; June 7, 2021, Legislative Meeting; May 24, 2021, Work Session; February 22, 2021, Work Session

CM Smith made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. CM Faulx seconded the motion. Vote: 4-0-1 (Favorable)

#### Roll Call Vote:

Mayor Alan K. Thompson: Abstained

CM Richard Smith, Ward 1: Aye

CM Aaron Faulx, Ward 2: Aye

CM David Lingua, Ward 3: Aye

CM Thomas Sadiq, Ward 4: Absent

CM Karen Mejia, Ward 5: Absent

CM Hala Mayers, Ward 6: Aye

### **Legislative Action Items**

1. Motion to authorize Town Manager to send a letter of support to the Board of Zoning Appeals for Variance Request V-112-21 for 5909 Taylor Road; variance of 7.9 feet front yard depth

CM Lingua made a motion to authorize the Town Manager to send a letter of support to the Board of Zoning Appeals for Variance Request V-112-21 for 5909 Taylor Road;

variance of 7.9 feet front yard depth. The motion was seconded by CM Mayers. Vote: 4-0-1 (Favorable)

Roll Call Vote:

Mayor Alan K. Thompson: Abstained  
CM Richard Smith, Ward 1: Aye  
CM Aaron Faulx, Ward 2: Aye  
CM David Lingua, Ward 3: Aye  
CM Thomas Sadiq, Ward 4: Absent  
CM Karen Mejia, Ward 5: Absent  
CM Hala Mayers, Ward 6: Aye

2. Motion to adopt Ordinance 2021-OR-10 Amendment of the FY2022 Budget

CM Lingua made a motion to adopt Ordinance 2021-OR-10 Amendment of the FY2022 Budget. The motion was seconded by CM Mayers. Vote: 4-0-1 (Favorable)

Roll Call Vote:

Mayor Alan K. Thompson: Abstained  
CM Richard Smith, Ward 1: Aye  
CM Aaron Faulx, Ward 2: Aye  
CM David Lingua, Ward 3: Aye  
CM Thomas Sadiq, Ward 4: Absent  
CM Karen Mejia, Ward 5: Absent  
CM Hala Mayers, Ward 6: Aye

*Discussion:*

CM Lingua provided an overview of the ordinance.

3. Introduction of Charter Amendment Resolution 2022-CR-01 regarding Elections

CM Lingua introduced Charter Amendment Resolution 2022-CR-01 regarding Elections and provided an overview of the legislation.

4. Introduction of Ordinance 2022-OR-01 regarding Town Election Procedures

CM Faulx introduced Ordinance 2022-OR-01 regarding Town Election Procedures and provided an overview of the legislation.

5. Motion to approve Council Committee Assignments

CM Lingua made a motion to approve the Mayor's Council Committee Assignments. The motion was seconded by CM Faulx. Vote: 4-0-1 (Favorable)

Roll Call Vote:

Mayor Alan K. Thompson: Abstained  
CM Richard Smith, Ward 1: Aye  
CM Aaron Faulx, Ward 2: Aye  
CM David Lingua, Ward 3: Aye  
CM Thomas Sadiq, Ward 4: Absent

CM Karen Mejia, Ward 5: Absent  
CM Hala Mayers, Ward 6: Aye

*Discussion:*

Mayor Thompson stated that he had spoken with several members of the Council and there were no objections to the Council Committee assignments.

Ms. Katz asked why there was not an appointment to the Riverdale Park Sustainability Committee (RPSC). Mayor Thompson discussed the role of the Council Committees and how the RPSC was created.

**Unfinished Business**

Town Manager Performance Evaluation

Mayor Thompson stated that he had not received any feedback so the Council would proceed with the questionnaire as presented.

**New Business**

Street Tree Program

Public Projects and Services Director Lewis provided an overview of the Town's Street Tree program. Director Lewis stated that sixty trees in thirty-three locations were scheduled to be planted during the next planting season. Director Lewis stated that residents were notified that trees would be planted in the Town's right-of-way near their homes, and she received opposition from two residents for varied reasons. Director Lewis stated that staff were seeking the Mayor and Council's support to continue the Street Tree Program as planned.

CM Lingua stated that the Council's support of the program would overrule the objections of some homeowners and he had no issue with the program. CM Lingua suggested that if there was an objection to a tree planting that staff should reapproach it during the next planting cycle.

Director Lewis requested clarification regarding what considerations should be made by staff. Director Lewis stated that one of the residents who opposed having a tree planted near their home did not want leaves to fall into their yard and the other resident wanted to avoid issues that they had encountered in the past with maintenance and Pepco's tree trimming. Director Lewis explained that the maintenance concerns could be addressed but staff occasionally receives requests for healthy trees to be removed in order to keep leaves out of a resident's yard.

CM Smith stated that the concerns were valid if a resident did not have the physical or financial ability to maintain the Town's trees. CM Smith stated that he hoped that a process could be created to allow for flexibility but also get the full benefit of the trees without any hardship. Director Lewis clarified that the Town handled the maintenance of all Town trees.

Mayor Thompson stated that while he agreed with some of the sentiments expressed, the program was created by the Council and supported through the annual budget. Mayor Thompson outlined some of the benefits of trees and an increased tree canopy.

Ms. Katz stated that she appreciated the conversation and work done by Director Lewis. Ms. Katz suggested that the opposition to having a tree planted may be due to a misunderstanding of what was involved. Ms. Katz volunteered the Riverdale Park Sustainability Committee (RPSC) to assist with educating residents about trees. Ms. Katz also noted that there was a finite amount of space for trees to be planted and losing the tree canopy impacted everyone in the community.

Town Manager Lestitian asked the Council what would be considered a legitimate reason to object to a tree being planted in the Town's right-of-way near a resident's home. CM Smith stated that simply not wanting a tree was not enough of a reason and that we should try to find a way to work with residents to get to a yes.

CM Faulx stated that more community outreach was needed regarding the benefits of trees, but it was important to move forward with the planting of trees. CM Faulx noted that there were a limited number of locations that could handle a large shade tree.

Mayor Thompson stated that it was important to support Town programs.

Town Manager Lestitian stated that staff often get requests to remove healthy trees or have them severely pruned.

CM Faulx asked about plans to remove Bradford Pears and Director Lewis stated that opinions were split amongst her colleagues however, a tree inventory would provide more information about the trees in Town.

Mayor Thompson stated that he had talked to residents who wanted to have trees removed and he always directed them back to staff.

Mayor Thompson suggested that the Council revisit the topic in 6 months.

### **Adjournment**

CM Faulx made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:54 p.m. The motion was seconded by CM Smith. Vote: 3-0-2 (Favorable)

### Roll Call Vote:

Mayor Alan K. Thompson: Abstained  
CM Richard Smith, Ward 1: Aye  
CM Aaron Faulx, Ward 2: Aye  
CM David Lingua, Ward 3: Abstained  
CM Thomas Sadiq, Ward 4: Absent  
CM Karen Mejia, Ward 5: Absent  
CM Hala Mayers, Ward 6: Aye