

Town of Riverdale Park
Work Session Minutes
April 25, 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 Thomas Sadiq, Ward 4
CM Karen Mejia, Ward 5
CM Hala Mayers, Ward 6 (arrived at 8 p.m.)

John N. Lestitian, Town Manager
Jessica Barnes, Town Clerk/Director of Administrative Services
Ryan Chelton, Director of Development Services
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

Call to Order

Mayor Thompson called the Work Session to order at 7:18 p.m.

Agenda Approval

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

Presentation

FY2023 Budget Presentation: Review of edits to the Proposed Budget

Deputy Director of Finance Services Gentry Jones discussed the edits made to the Proposed Budget following the public hearings. Deputy Director Jones discussed a substantive changes chart to illustrate the edits made to the proposed budget.

There were no questions or comments from the Council or public.

Mayor's Report

Mayor Alan Thompson reported:

- Thank you to staff for a fantastic and detailed presentation of the budget.
- COVID-19 Update: up to 16-17 cases per day per 100,000; concerned that this will continue; please stay vigilant and stay safe

Town Manager's Report

Town Manager John Lestitian reported:

- Appreciate kind words related to staff's work on the FY2023 budget; it improves every year

- COVID-19: numbers continue to rise; issued reminder to staff to remain vigilant and follow all protocols
- Reminder regarding Tax Rate public hearing next week: tax rate to remain the same; more opportunities to comment on the FY2023 Budget

Discussion:

Mayor Thompson asked if the Mayor and Council's Financial Disclosure Statements were due at the end of April and Director Barnes replied in the affirmative.

Council Committee & Ward Reports

CM Richard Smith, Ward 1

CM Richard Smith reported:

- Next week is National Teacher Appreciation Week: thank you to all educators in Riverdale Park!

CM Aaron Faulx, Ward 2

CM Aaron Faulx reported:

- Thank you to CM Smith for kind words for educators

CM David Lingua, Ward 3

CM David Lingua reported:

- Thank you to everyone for attending the FY2023 Budget public hearings
- Thank you to staff for preparing the budget: very well done and it keeps getting better each year; greatly appreciated by the Council
- Defer rest of report to next week

CM Thomas Sadiq, Ward 4

CM Thomas Sadiq reported:

- Ongoing concerns regarding students leaving Parkdale High School and impacting the Madison Hill community
- Discussion regarding the installation of a fence to alleviate the issues

CM Karen Mejia, Ward 5

CM Karen Mejia did not have a report.

Public Comments

Resident Michelle Fox of Madison Hill discussed the issues associated with students from Parkdale High School. Ms. Fox outlined her concerns to include a fire started by a student and a BB gun that was hid in the bushes in a resident's backyard. Ms. Fox noted that she had contacted the Riverdale Park Police Department as well as the principal of Parkdale High School. Ms. Fox stated that she would like to have a fence installed.

Mayor Thompson stated that he would discuss the situation further with Town Manager Lestitian at an upcoming meeting.

Discussion Items

1. FY2022 Revenue Update

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

CM Lingua noted that the number of parking citations were down.

2. Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) Mosquito Control Program

Mayor Thompson stated that more information was needed such as the species of mosquitos that have been collected in Town and whether a higher threshold could be set for mosquito spraying. Town Manager Lestitian stated that staff would reach out to Mr. Prendergast with the MDA to obtain more information.

CM Lingua suggested that the Town move forward with the MDA mosquito control program this year and augment the program with traps for Asian Tiger mosquitos. CM Lingua also discussed creating a community program that would distribute free seeds for perennials to residents to plant in their yards with the goal of preserving and promoting the pollinator population.

CM Faulx stated that he was supportive of any program that would promote pollinator gardens in Town. CM Smith stated that he was also supportive of a program of that nature as long as the plants were conducive to pollinators. CM Smith also encouraged the use of native plants. Resident Lora Katz recommended distributing outreach materials and bringing in the Audubon Society for assistance. CM Lingua suggested that the Green Team may want to assist with the effort and possibly work towards creating a pollinator corridor.

Ms. Katz asked Mayor Thompson about the rationale for increasing the threshold for mosquito spraying. Mayor Thompson stated that he was trying to balance two issues, the comfort of residents and their needs, and protecting pollinators from the potential harm from spraying. Mayor Thompson stated that the Town could not opt out of public health sprayings but perhaps nuisance spraying could occur only if certain conditions existed.

Ms. Katz asked if there were more effective efforts to address nuisance mosquitos and protect pollinators. Mayor Thompson stated that the Town was trying to find the best path forward.

3. Acquisition of public art

Director of Development Services Ryan Chelton provided an overview of the Town's public art initiative. Director Chelton discussed a piece of public art, the Insect House sculpture, that could be acquired and relocated to one of the pollinator gardens in Town.

CM Lingua discussed his concerns related to the maintenance and upkeep of the sculpture.

Ms. Katz noted that the sculpture was also a bee hotel, and it was consistent with the Town's commitment to sustainability.

Mayor Thompson stated that the Town had made a long-term commitment to public art and funding for maintenance and upkeep could be added to future budgets. CM Lingua

noted that the acquisition of the sculpture would be a commitment to a functional, living piece of art. CM Lingua stated that he had no objections to adding the topic to the Legislative Meeting agenda.

Ms. Katz recommended reaching out to the artist for more information about maintenance of the sculpture.

Mayor Thompson stated that Discussion Item 3 would be added to the Legislative Meeting agenda for potential Council action.

4. County Legislation CB-14-2022 regarding disposable food service ware

Administrative Services Director Jessica Barnes provided an overview of CB-14-2022 regarding disposable food service ware.

CM Smith stated that he was supportive of the legislation and appreciated that it took into account the needs of those who were disabled.

CM Lingua suggested support of the legislation with review of the enforcement section of the legislation so that it would not be too onerous on businesses. Director Barnes noted that the sponsors of the legislation were reviewing the enforcement section of the legislation.

Mayor Thompson discussed his experiences and stated that County level support of the effort was likely needed.

There were no objections to adding Discussion Item 4 to the Legislative Meeting agenda.

5. Amendments to permit parking program

Town Manager Lestitian discussed the Town's permit parking program and noted that the program was last updated in 2018. Town Manager Lestitian stated that many of the neighborhoods included in the permit parking program, and those that want to be included in the program like Riverdale Park Station, all had unique characteristics such as road width, apron cuts, availability of on street parking spots, and the density of homes.

Town Manager Lestitian discussed the proposed process for review of the permit parking program to include several community discussions, with significant input from residents, that culminated in a re-write of the permit parking section of Chapter 64. Town Manager Lestitian provided an overview of the guiding principles for the discussions regarding the permit parking program.

CM Smith stated that he supported adding language that provided more flexibility.

CM Sadiq asked if parking passes would be available to all residents or just property owners.

CM Smith discussed situations involving landlord exploitation of limited parking.

Mayor Thompson stated that the process sounded reasonable, and he looked forward to resident input.

6. International Property Maintenance Code

Development Services Director Ryan Chelton provided an overview of the process to adopt a Town Property Maintenance Code. Director Chelton stated that Ordinance 2022-OR-04 was drafted by Town Attorney Fred Sussman.

Mayor Thompson stated that there had been significant discussion regarding Chapter 68 in the past and asked if anything would be lost through the adoption of the International Property Maintenance Code. Town Manager Lestitian stated that Town Attorney Fred Sussman had conducted a review to be sure nothing would be lost and there were no conflicts. Mayor Thompson stated that he appreciated the careful review.

CM Lingua asked how substantially different the International Property Maintenance Code was compared to what was currently in place. Director Chelton stated that there were few differences for residential properties however, the Town Property Maintenance Code would also apply to commercial properties.

CM Lingua discussed issues related to past changes to the permit process and the need to provide time for all parties to adjust to the changes. Director Chelton discussed a public information campaign. Town Manager Lestitian stated that staff would do a primary assessment and have constructive dialogue with property owners.

Mayor Thompson stated that, in the past, Neighborhood Services had contacted property owners about property maintenance issues and often received voluntary compliance. Mayor Thompson stated that the Town Property Maintenance Code would provide legal authority when voluntary compliance was not possible.

CM Smith asked if there were programs available to assist those who could not afford to maintain their property. Director Chelton discussed the programs available. CM Smith stated that he wanted to be sure that there was safety net in place. Mayor Thompson clarified that the new authority was for commercial properties.

CM Lingua stated that the County had a program available to assist residents. Director Chelton stated that the Town notified residents of the programs available.

Town Manager Lestitian stated that staff would be seeking introduction of Ordinance 2022-OR-04 at the Legislative Meeting.

7. Date of June Work Session

Director Barnes discussed the scheduling conflicts related to the June 2022 and June 2023 Work Sessions. Director Barnes outlined the options available related to rescheduling the meetings.

CM Lingua stated that the meetings could be held one week prior, June 12th and June 13th.

CM Sadiq stated that he would be in Spain in June, but he could attend a June 27th meeting virtually.

CM Smith stated that he would defer to the consensus of the Council.

CM Faulx stated that June 12th and June 13th would work for him.

Mayor Thompson requested that the Council reach out to staff regarding their preferred meeting dates.

8. Ordinance 2022-OR-02 regarding Financial Disclosure

Director Barnes provided an overview of Ordinance 2022-OR-02 regarding Financial Disclosure and stated that staff would be seeking introduction of the legislation at the Legislative Meeting.

Mayor Thompson stated that the legislation was straightforward.

There were no further questions or comments from the Council or public.

9. Appointments to Town Seal Design Committee; Redistricting Committee; and Board of Elections

Director Barnes discussed the status of appointments for the Town Seal Design Committee, Redistricting Committee, and Board of Elections.

Mayor Thompson stated that he may be ready to move forward with appointments to the Redistricting Committee and the Town Seal Design Committee at the Legislative Meeting.

CM Smith stated that Mr. Baker was interested in serving on the Town Seal Design Committee and Ms. Kelly was interested in serving on the Redistricting Committee.

10. Rebranding of Community Walks: TRP Walk and Talk

Director Barnes discussed the rebranding of Community Walks as TRP Walk and Talks and presented a proposed schedule.

CM Faulx stated that he was looking forward to the Walk and Talks.

Mayor Thompson stated that he was also looking forward to participating in the upcoming Walk and Talks.

11. Minutes

Mayor Thompson asked the Council to review the draft minutes and provide feedback to staff.

New Business

Public Art Selection Process

CM Lingua discussed the public art selection process coordinated by the Hyattsville CDC and the desire to add a resident to the jury. Town Manager Lestitian stated that staff would reach out to determine the status of the selection process and inquire as to whether there was an opportunity to add to the jury. CM Lingua stated that he felt that residents should be included on the public art selection jury. Mayor Thompson suggested that changes could be made for future public art selections.

Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:18 p.m.