

MINUTES
College Park City Council Meeting
Tuesday, April 25, 2023
7:30 p.m. – 10:43 p.m.

This was a hybrid meeting: Online via Zoom.
In-person in the Council Chambers of City Hall.

PRESENT: Mayor Pro Tem Denise Mitchell; Councilmembers Kabir, Kennedy, Esters, Whitney, Adams, Rigg, and Mackie.

ABSENT: None.

ALSO PRESENT: Kenneth Young, City Manager; Bill Gardiner, Assistant City Manager; Janeen S. Miller, City Clerk; Suellen Ferguson, City Attorney; Gary Fields, Director of Finance; Bob Ryan, Director of Public Services; Michael Williams, Economic Development Manager; Valerie Graham, Student Liaison and Adrian Andriessens, Deputy Student Liaison.

Mayor Pro Tem Mitchell opened the meeting at 7:30 p.m.

Announcements:

Councilmember Kabir announced the Arbor Day event on Friday. Councilmember Kennedy also plans to attend.

Councilmember Esters announced Saturday is the final spring cleanup at DPW, Maryland Day on UMD Campus, and the final day of the District 2 walking tour.

Councilmember Whitney attended the Literacy and Legacy 5K hosted by Embry AME church and the unveiling of the Historical Marker in Lakeland.

Councilmember Adams discussed last week's community meeting about the playground.

Councilmember Rigg reported on the Yarrow Civic Association meeting on April 22 where there was much discussion about the Edmonston Road sidewalk project.

Councilmember Mackie thanked residents who are participating in No Mow April, and said tomorrow is the last day to request a mail-in ballot.

Student Liaison Valerie Graham discussed Student Liaison Recruitment and said interviews may be held this week.

Mayor Pro Tem Mitchell commented on the unveiling of the Lakeland Historic Marker. She attended a presentation on the Aviation Landing development.

City Manager's Report: Mr. Young reminded Council that Financial Disclosure forms are due by April 30; made a Special Election announcement; discussed details of the College Park Parade on May 6; and announced the first Friday Night Live event. No Mow April ends Monday, May 1.

Councilmember Whitney asked about a recent meeting with VeoRide about geofencing.

Amendments To/Approval Of The Agenda:

A motion was made by Councilmember Esters and seconded by Councilmember Whitney to add agenda item 23-G-67, "Appointments to the Student Liaison Selection Committee." The motion passed 8-0.

Public Comment:

Aubrey Batten, resident: He is in support of levying taxes on vacant properties in College Park. He discussed the positive results that other cities had when they did this. If implemented, it must be enforced.

Brian Haddad, resident: He is in support of having a different property tax rate for vacant and blighted properties; the tax must be large enough to impact the bottom line of large entities. It should apply to all units, and should be tiered.

CONSENT AGENDA: A motion was made by Councilmember Rigg and seconded by Councilmember Mackie to adopt the Consent Agenda, which consisted of these items:

23-G-66 Approval of minutes from the March 21, 2023 and April 11, 2023 meetings.

The motion passed 8-0.

ACTION ITEMS:

23-G-67 Appointments to the Student Liaison Selection Committee

Ms. Graham said the interviews likely will be held on Thursday afternoon. Committee members will be Mayor Pro Tem Mitchell, Councilmembers Kennedy and Rigg. Motion by Councilmember Rigg, second by Councilmember Mackie, passed 8-0.

23-O-03 Introduction of FY '24 Budget Ordinance - An Ordinance Of The Mayor And Council Of The City Of College Park To Adopt The Fiscal Year 2024 General Fund, ARPA Allocation Fund, Capital Projects Fund And Debt Service Fund Budgets Of The City Of College Park - Gary Fields, Director of Finance

Mr. Fields gave an overview. This budget ordinance reflects changes made since the budget Worksession. The budget is based on the current tax rate of 30.18 cents for residential property, and on 33.18 cents for commercial, industrial and apartment property. The residential property tax rate is subject to state-mandated Constant Yield Tax Rate laws regarding advertising, but the commercial property tax rate is not. The public hearing will be on both tax rates and the commercial tax rate will be included in the City's public hearing notice.

A motion was made by Councilmember Mackie and seconded by Councilmember Kennedy to introduce budget ordinance 23-O-03, and to set the Public Hearing for May 9, 7:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers of College Park City Hall.

Presentations And Worksession Discussions:

- A.** 2023 Quarterly Financial Presentation. Mr. Fields said there are no particular concerns, and the minor "overs" and "unders" are largely due to timing differences. There was a question about Highway User Revenues.
- B.** Discussion of having a different property tax rate for vacant and blighted properties. Mr. Fields provided a brief overview. Councilmember Adams requested this item and provided information for the staff report. The tax is levied to encourage good behavior by the property owner. Examples were given of what other cities are doing. There are approximately 26 properties in College Park that might fall into this category. There is a considerable amount of work involved in having this program. Tonight's discussion is about the legal authority and what other cities have experienced. Ms. Ferguson said this would be another tool to manage vacant and

blighted properties and put pressure on the owner to make improvements. Councilmember Mackie asked about waivers in extenuating circumstances, such as when the owner dies without a will, an older resident for whom maintenance of the property might be hard. Discussion of having an appeals board. What process will we use for reporting vacant or blighted properties. How will we investigate and/or determine and what resources are needed. Consider unintended consequences. How would we roll this out and inform people? Return future Worksession.

- C. Discussion of quality-of-life issues (noise, unruly social gatherings, open containers, public intoxication and public urination) and of UMD student health and safety.

Mr. Ryan reviewed the staff report and attachments. He reviewed the quality of life issues that Public Services monitors. Discussion on Chapter 138, noise, and Chapter 141, Nuisances. He reviewed the statistics provided in the attachments. Infractions for the Unruly Social Gathering ordinance require a witness. Discussion of noise ordinance.

Councilmember Adams invited a vendor of a noise decibel monitoring system and welcomed them on the call. Gregory McCart and David George of Larson Davis gave a presentation on their noise monitoring system.

Councilmember Adams raised the issues of revisiting our noise ordinance; the amount of open containers we see here; can we write municipal infractions for open containers; can we ask IFC/PHA to have their events on Fraternity Row instead of at their satellite neighborhood homes; engage more with the UMD on binge drinking. Councilmember Esters discussed the Maryland Collaborative and suggested they attend a Council meeting. Talk to other universities in the area for their ideas. These quality of life issues are not confined to the Old Town neighborhood. Councilmembers will continue the conversation and submit the request form when it is ready to return.

- D. Third Quarter Strategic Plan update – Bill Gardiner, Assistant City Manager

Mr. Gardiner reviewed the presentation with the 3rd quarter update.

[10:30 p.m., Rigg/Kennedy motion to extend the meeting, 8-0.]

Council Comments:

Councilmember Rigg provided an MML Legislative Committee wrap up.

Councilmember Mackie reported on the CMAST meeting.

Adjourn: Motion by Councilmember Whitney, second by Councilmember Esters, passed 8-0, at 10:43 p.m.

Janeen S. Miller, City Clerk