

MINUTES
Regular Meeting of the College Park City Council
Tuesday, May 11, 2021
7:30 p.m. – 9:35 p.m.

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, this was a virtual meeting.

PRESENT: Mayor Wojahn; Councilmembers Kabir, Kennedy, Dennis, Esters, Day, Rigg, Mackie and Mitchell.

ABSENT: None.

ALSO PRESENT: Bill Gardiner, Interim City Manager; Janeen S. Miller, City Clerk; Yvette Allen, Assistant City Clerk; Suellen Ferguson, City Attorney; Gary Fields, Director of Finance; Robert Marsili, Director of Public Works; Terry Schum, Director of Planning; Steve Halpern, City Engineer; Katie Hart, Community Development Coordinator; Bob Ryan, Director of Public Services; Jim Miller, Parking Enforcement Manager; Bridgette Johnson, Economic Development Manager.

Mayor Wojahn opened the virtual Regular meeting at 7:30 p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Councilmember Kabir talked about last night's community police meeting; there will be a North College Park Community Association meeting this Thursday; COVID-19 vaccines are available at the Greenbelt Metro Station.

Mayor Wojahn announced other vaccination opportunities.

Councilmember Dennis announced the Lakeland Civic Association virtual meeting this week; tomorrow's PG County Police District 1 Coffee Club

Councilmember Day congratulated College Park Academy for being named the 5th best high school in the state for the 2018-2019 academic year.

Councilmember Rigg said children from Hyattsville Middle School will be split between two different locations while construction is underway. The City might consider providing facilities to help the students have shared experiences.

Councilmember Mitchell thanked the City Clerk's staff for their support; there will be a meeting on Thursday about the Paint Branch Horse Trail; a meeting will be held on Monday about gas line replacement in College Park Woods; Maryland's Redistricting Commission will meet tomorrow night.

Councilmember Mackie announced a Health and Wellness meeting on Wednesday night hosted by County Council Members Ivey, Dernoga and Walker.

Councilmember Kennedy said Monarch Preschool is opening Monday.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT: Mr. Gardiner announced our new City Manager, Natasha Hampton, will begin on June 1, and is on the meeting tonight. There will be a meeting about the Paint Branch Golf Course hosted by M-NCPPC. Summer camp scholarships are available to City youth. Next Friday is Bike-To-Work Day; we are hosting a pit stop at Duvall Field. The Great College Park Scavenger Hunt will be next Saturday.

PROCLAMATIONS AND AWARDS: Mayor Wojahn read the Proclamation for Children's Mental Health Awareness Month.

AMENDMENTS TO AND APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA: A motion was made by Councilmember Rigg and seconded by Councilmember Mitchell to approve the agenda without amendment; motion passed 8-0.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON CONSENT AGENDA AND NON-AGENDA ITEMS:

David Dorsch, resident: Scooters are being left all over the City; he sees them in the gutter.

PUBLIC HEARINGS: Mr. Fields gave an overview for both public hearings. The FY '22 budget proposes maintaining the current real estate property tax rate at \$.32.5. The Constant Yield rate is \$.31.31 per \$100. The difference on a property valued at \$350K is a \$42 increase. The proposed budget is \$29.43M; there is a proposed transfer of excess fund balance of \$4.95M for future capital projects; the CIP budget is \$21.09M; and Debt Service is \$1.48M. Budget adoption is scheduled for May 25.

Councilmember Kabir asked about the Constant Yield Tax Rate. Staff did not recommend lowering the City's tax rate to the Constant Yield, but now we have received funds from the American Rescue Plan; does that change the recommendation? We are transferring a significant amount of money to the reserves.

Mr. Fields said one of the prohibitions of the American Rescue Plan is that we can't use it to support a tax decrease. The rate was decreased two years ago. We can look at it; we just received guidance from US Treasury about use of the funds.

Mayor Wojahn said funds can't be used directly or indirectly to offset a reduction in tax revenue in states and territories, so we need clarification on whether municipalities can do so.

Councilmember Mitchell said this is a good question; NLC is offering webinars. She said many families are struggling. If we can think of ways to stretch out the process for their payments it might help.

Mr. Fields said property taxes are paid to the County, not the City, but we can speak with them about that. With American Rescue Plan dollars, we can come up with programs to help those families who are in need.

Councilmember Rigg asked about the impact of the Homestead Tax Credit on a person's tax bill. Mr. Fields said the HTC in essence provides a constant yield rate because our rate is set at a zero percent cap.

Councilmember Dennis asked about the legal advertisement rules that are required for the Constant Yield rate.

Councilmember Kabir said not all of our residents get to take advantage of the Homestead Tax Credit.

A. Constant Yield Tax Rate Public Hearing:

David Dorsch, resident: The City should give taxpaying residents the same financial consideration they give to large developers. Council should reduce the tax rate so that the owners do not have to pay more taxes than they did last year. The taxable base has increased with all the new construction. The City does not need the money.

Judith Campbell, resident: (inaudible)

Mary King, resident: The Constant Yield Tax Rate should be allowed to adjust down. Redevelopment is bringing a lot of tax revenue to the City. We freely give out money.

Mary Cook, resident: Agrees that if we can give big tax breaks to developers let's give something to our residents.

B. FY '22 Budget Ordinance 21-O-7, an Ordinance of the Mayor and Council of the City of College Park, Maryland to adopt the Fiscal Year 2022 General Fund, Capital Projects Fund and Debt Service Fund budgets for the City of College Park.

Mary King, resident: Let's keep building the roads and keep the infrastructure in the budget.

PRESENTATIONS: Presentation from the Guilford Run Watershed Group - County Council Member Dannielle Glaros and intern Rachel Bustamante: CM Glaros said at the end of last year she began working with others to take a watershed approach to flooding issues in her district. Mayor Wojahn, Steve Halpern and Bill Gardiner have participated in those meetings. Ms. Bustamante reviewed the PowerPoint.

Councilmember Glaros said these discussions have been very fruitful and now there is a need to bring on a consultant to conduct a holistic view of hydrology to address flood management in addition to the Calvert Hills Drainage Improvement project. We know that new development does a better job in managing stormwater than existing conditions, but there may be additional alternatives we should consider. For example, should we be asking more of our redevelopment projects? We should further engage the University of Maryland because they are required to meet state guidelines, not County guidelines, which are stricter. She added that ARP (American

Rescue Plan) funds can be used for stormwater management and encouraged the City to think big and bold about how we use those dollars.

Councilmember Rigg spoke in support of the City hiring a consultant to do the hydrology study that was recommended. Much more needs to be done to protect the community from future flooding. We should consider using some of the ARP funds for this purpose.

Councilmember Mackie added that there have been flooding problems in District 4 as well.

Councilmember Kabir asked if we can also use bond bill money for this purpose?
Councilmember Glaros said the \$5M bond funds need to go to a CIP project.

Councilmember Glaros mentioned upcoming legislation: increased funding for the rain check rebate and helping residents better prepare their property for future flooding events.

Next steps: Mr. Gardiner said we will have two future Worksession discussions about 1) continuing programs to assist our residents, businesses and non-profit organizations, and 2) to think about larger projects that would have a greater impact to the City as a whole.

CONSENT AGENDA: A motion was made by Councilmember Kennedy and seconded by Councilmember Esters to adopt the Consent Agenda which consisted of the following:

21-G-66	Approval of free parking in the Downtown Parking Garage on summer Saturdays, and weeknights after 5:00 p.m. from May 23 to August 22, 2021.
21-G-67	Approval of minutes from the March 23, 2021 Regular Meeting; and the March 27, 2021 Budget Worksession.
21-G-68	Approval of a Contract amendment, subject to approval of the City Attorney, with MCCi for Laserfiche scanning services as identified in Exhibits J, K and L, in an amount not to exceed \$70,000, for the Planning and Community Development; Youth, Family and Senior Services; and Public Services departments, subject to funding, and authorize the Interim City Manager to sign the contract.
21-G-28	Award of contract in substantially the form attached to Mead and Hunt in the amount of \$100,957.74 for design of the Hollywood Road Sidewalk
21-G-70	Confirmation of Megha Sevalia as Student Liaison and Hayden Renaghan as Deputy Student Liaison for the term June 1, 2021 to May 30, 2022.

**The motion passed 8-0.
ACTION ITEMS**

21-G-69 Motion to make the fees and fines from Ordinance 20-O-02 (Bulk Trash) effective as of July 1, 2021.

Mr. Marsili reviewed the staff report and the results of the one-year pilot program. This ordinance was an important step to change behavior to divert waste out of our landfill to meet the goals of our strategic plan.

Councilmember Kabir said we should include an educational component in our notices to inform residents how they can recycle.

A motion was made by Councilmember Kennedy and seconded by Councilmember Rigg that the fees enacted with Ordinance 20-O-02 become effective on July 1, 2021.

Councilmember Kennedy said her personal habits have changed in the last two years since we have been discussing this.

Councilmember Day said when we started this process two years ago, he took a lot of heat to make sure we got the data we needed. He thanked Mr. Marsili and the team for putting together the pilot to make sure we are meeting the intended goals.

Councilmember Kabir is glad we have added the hardship exception but if there are problems we can consider another adjustment.

Councilmember Dennis said if staff can come up with practical means of diverting items from bulky trash it will be a big step toward making the necessary cultural changes.

Councilmember Mackie said a lot of residents have had trepidations about this and it helped that staff took the time to address the issues. She said this might be a work in progress but we are getting there.

The motion passed 8-0.

21-O-06 Introduction of Ordinance 21-O-06 to amend the Bulk Trash Ordinance (20-O-02) to allow for a waiver of certain bulk trash collection fees in cases of a hardship.

Mr. Marsili said this ordinance will create a waiver of the bulk trash fees in the case of a hardship. He described examples of a waiver.

A motion was made by Councilmember Dennis and seconded by Councilmember to introduce Ordinance 21-O-06 which provides for a waiver of fees imposed for collection of bulky trash in certain circumstances, with an effective date of July 1, 2021.

Mayor Wojahn announced that the Public Hearing will be held on May 25, 2021 at 7:30 p.m.

21-O-08 Introduction of Ordinance 21-O-08 to make provision for the notification of residents when a request for an exemption from the prohibited vehicle ordinance is received.

Mr. Ryan said this will establish a process to give neighbors prior notification when a resident requests approval to park a prohibited vehicle on the street.

A motion was made by Councilmember Kabir and seconded by Councilmember Mitchell to introduce Ordinance 21-O-08, an ordinance to amend Chapter 184-8, Parking Restrictions, to require prior notice of the meeting at which the Mayor and Council intend to take action on an application for prohibited vehicle parking.

Mayor Wojahn said the Public Hearing will be held on May 25, 2021 at 7:30 p.m.

GENERAL COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE:

Megha Sevalia, next year's Student Liaison: Ms. Sevalia introduced herself and said she is looking forward to working with the Council during her coming term as Student Liaison.

ADJOURN: A motion was made by Councilmember Rigg and seconded by Councilmember Mitchell to adjourn the meeting, and with a vote of 8-0, Mayor Wojahn adjourned the meeting at 9:35 p.m.

Janeen S. Miller
City Clerk

Date
Approved

CLOSED SESSION
May 4, 2021

On Tuesday, May 4, 2021, at the conclusion of the Worksession, a motion was made by Councilmember Dennis and seconded by Councilmember Esters to enter into a Closed Session. Mayor Wojahn read the following closing statement:

Pursuant to the statutory authority of the Maryland Annotated Code, General Provisions Article, §3-305(b), the Mayor and Council of the City of College Park are providing notice that they will meet in a Closed Session after the meeting to consult with Counsel to obtain legal advice and to consult with staff, consultants, or other individuals about pending or potential litigation. The Mayor and Council will not return to public session after the Closed Session ends.

The motion passed 8-0 and the Regular Meeting was adjourned at 9:11 p.m.

At 9:16 p.m., the Mayor and Council reconvened in a Closed Session. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the meeting was held virtually. Mayor Wojahn was the Open Meetings Trainee.

Mayor Wojahn and Councilmembers Kabir, Kennedy, Dennis, Esters, Day, Rigg, Mitchell and Mackie were in attendance. In addition, the meeting was attended by Interim City Manager Bill Gardiner; Public Works Director Robert Marsili; Assistant Public Works Director Frank Pacifico; City Attorney Suellen Ferguson; and City Clerk Janeen Miller.

The Mayor and Council were briefed on a contract dispute that has the potential to evolve into a litigation matter. The City Attorney advised the Council.

The City Attorney advised the Mayor and Council about a recent settlement in another matter.

No action was taken.

At 9:37 p.m., a motion was made by Councilmember Kabir and seconded by Councilmember Rigg to adjourn the Closed Session, and with a vote of 8-0, the meeting was adjourned.
