

WORKSESSION MINUTES
College Park City Council
Tuesday, August 4, 2020
7:30 P.M. –11:03 P.M.

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, this was a Virtual Meeting

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

ABSENT: None.

ALSO PRESENT: Scott Somers, City Manager; Bill Gardiner, Assistant City Manager; Yvette Allen, Assistant City Clerk; Suellen Ferguson, City Attorney; Bob Ryan, Director of Public Services; Terry Schum, Director of Planning; Miriam Bader, Senior Planner; Adam Rosenbaum, Student Liaison; Julia Nihkinson, Deputy Student Liaison.

Mayor Wojahn opened the Virtual Worksession at 7:30 p.m.

CITY MANAGER’S REPORT: Mr. Somers stated that the City fared well with the storms on Monday and Tuesday morning. Another Continuing the Conversation Town Halls on Community and Race Relations in College Park will be held on August 20, 2020. The City has issued twenty-eight Business Assistance Program Grants and eighteen Resident Assistance Program Grants. Reminded everyone to visit the City’s COVID-19 page on the website for the latest updates on the City’s status and resources. Mr. Somers will send Council a list of business who were awarded and/or applied for a grant. Extra postcards flyers regarding the COVID grant program will be delivered to Council. If any resident sees a clogged storm drain, please call our Public Works Department.

Bill Gardner, Assistant City Manager, announced that presentation from Jeff Parks and Jessica Brown of Performance Breakthroughs, Inc. on the results from focus groups and survey responses regarding the City’s 2020 – 2025 Strategic Plan has been rescheduled for Wednesday, August 19 at 6:30 p.m.

AMENDMENT TO/APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA:

A motion was made by Councilmember Mackie and seconded by Councilmember Rigg to approve a letter in Special Session to the College Park Property Owners requesting they work with their student renters and consider allowing them to terminate leases or sublet to other students who wish to remain in the community.

A motion was made by Councilmember Rigg and seconded by Councilmember Kennedy to approve the City to sign on to the Supreme Court Amicus Brief Opportunity in Case Challenging Philadelphia’s Non-Discrimination Provisions.

Motion passed 8-0. Motion to approve the agenda as amended (Dennis/Kennedy) passed 8-0.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

1. Presentation from Tom Diehl, Principal and Project Manager of GreenPlay, LLC on the Senior and Community Recreation Needs Assessment:

Tom Diehl of GrenPlay gave an overview of the of the Senior and Community Recreation Needs Assessment: Discussion on need for more communication, meeting space, lack of available programs and other services available to meet the needs of the community. The next steps will be finalizing the report and bringing some recommendations to the table.

2. Current Status of Coronavirus Restrictions and Roles of City and County in Enforcement:

Suellen Ferguson reviewed the memorandum that was in the packet. There was discussion on who to call if residents have concerns if people and business are not following the County and State Executive orders. Staff was asked to update the City's website to list the current rules and procedures on who to contact if there are violations. Prince George's County will also be adding additional inspectors to make sure that business are in compliance. Several virtual meetings will take place in the near future with the County and UMD. Please view the City's website at <https://www.collegeparkmd.gov/312/COVID-19-City-Updates> for current updates.

3. Consideration of Declaring Juneteenth a City Holiday

Mr. Somers reviewed the staff report. The Human Resources staff surveyed other local municipalities to compare the number of paid holidays they provide to employees and to learn which municipalities are considering adding the Juneteenth holiday. The City provides basically the same holidays as do other municipalities except for the two holidays given every four years for the presidential election and presidential inauguration. Human Resources discussed with union leadership if they would be interested in trading the two presidential holidays which occur every 4 years for the Juneteenth holiday which would occur every year. Union leadership was interested, but union membership was not since they felt this may become a federal holiday. Council agreed with declaring Juneteenth a City Holiday and allowing staff to negotiate with union membership. Staff will prepare a Resolution approving the Juneteenth a holiday for an annual holiday on June 19 and negotiate formally with the bargaining unit before June 19, 2021 to "trade" the two presidential holidays (election and inauguration).

Items Added to the Agenda

Letter to College Park Property Owners requesting that they work with their student renters and consider allowing them to terminate leases or sublet to other students who wish to remain in the community.

There was discussion on if this letter was going to be sent to all property owners and apartment complexes. Since the COVID grant program does not apply to residential business, they would not be able to apply for a grant. There was additional discussion on

A motion was made by Councilmember Rigg and seconded by Councilmember Kennedy to enter into a Special Session. Councilmember Kabir questioned why Council is going into Special Session to vote on an item that is on the agenda for next week.

Roll call vote to go into Special Session:
Councilmember Kabir – No

Councilmember Kennedy – Yes
Councilmember Brennan – Yes
Councilmember Dennis – Yes
Councilmember Day – Yes
Councilmember Rigg – Yes
Councilmember Mitchell – Yes
Councilmember Mackie – No
Motion passed 6-2-0 to enter into Special Session.

Mayor and Council went into Special Session at 10:38 p.m. *See Special Session Minutes of August 4, 2020*

4. Requests for/Status of Future Agenda Items – None

5. Mayor and Councilmember Comments

Councilmember Kabir announced the Community Police Meeting: Webinar (every 2nd Monday of the month at 7:30 p.m.)

Councilmember Mitchell thank all who reached out to her and offer their condolences.

ADJOURN: A motion was made by Councilmember Mitchell and seconded by Councilmember Rigg to adjourn into Closed Session to discuss the appointment of individuals over whom this public body has jurisdiction. Mayor Wojahn said the Council will not return to public session after the Closed Session. The motion passed 8-0-0 and the Worksession was adjourned at 11:03 p.m.

Yvette Allen
Assistant City Clerk

Date
Approved

SPECIAL SESSION MINUTES
College Park City Council
Tuesday, August 4, 2020
10:38 p.m.

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

ABSENT: None.

ALSO PRESENT: Scott Somers, City Manager; Bill Gardiner, Assistant City Manager; Yvette Allen, Assistant City Clerk; Suellen Ferguson, City Attorney; Bob Ryan, Director of Public Services; Terry Schum, Director of Planning; Miriam Bader, Senior Planner; Adam Rosenbaum, Student Liaison; Julia Nihkinson, Deputy Student Liaison.

During the regularly scheduled Worksession of the College Park Mayor and Council, a motion was made by Councilmember Rigg and seconded by Councilmember Kennedy to enter into a Special Session to approve several time-sensitive matters. The possibility of the Special Session was listed on the Worksession agenda. The motion carried 6-2-0 and the Council entered Special Session at 10:38 p.m.

Roll call vote to go into Special Session:

Councilmember Kabir – No

Councilmember Kennedy – Yes

Councilmember Brennan – Yes

Councilmember Dennis – Yes

Councilmember Day – Yes

Councilmember Rigg – Yes

Councilmember Mitchell – Yes

Councilmember Mackie – No

Motion passed 6-2-0 to enter into Special Session.

Mayor and Council went into Special Session at 10:38 p.m.

ACTION ITEMS

20-G-133 Approval of a letter to the College Park Property Owners requesting that they work with their student renters and consider allowing them to terminate leases or sublet to other students who wish to remain in the community.

A motion was made by Councilmember Rigg and seconded by Councilmember Kennedy to approve a letter to the College Park Property Owners.

Councilmember Rigg stated that the letter speaks for itself. Students are asked to sign a lease one year in advance and this is a reasonable task on behalf of our students.

There were no comments from the audience.

Councilmember Brennan does not support the letter as drafted. Landlords should be seeking ways to allow their tenants to sublet. We should not overstep our role as a government by interceding in legal agreements. We are not offering any relief to our landlords nor are we decreasing our taxes during this pandemic. We need to help both the landlord and the tenant.

Councilmember Day can't support this letter as written.

Councilmember Mitchell would like more time to discuss this issue.

Councilmember Rigg stated that we should consider the needs of the people who live in the City. Landlords are in a better position to go into a business loss than a student resident.

A motion was made by Councilmember Kabir and seconded by Councilmember Dennis to table the motion to allow more discussion on this item. He said we need to consider offering other assistance or initiatives to our landlords.

Mayor Wojahn stated he has heard from several residents that stated that they must now come back to College Park because they are stuck in a lease. By not taking a position on this, we are not helping our tenants.

Adam Rosenbaum, Student Liaison, stated that the SGA may be willing to sign on to this letter as well.

Councilmember Rigg stated that it's imperative that we move on this letter now and not table.

Councilmember Kennedy doesn't feel we should delay and will support this letter.

Mayor Wojahn stated that this letter is asking landlords to consider letting tenants out of their lease. This letter is urgent and if we want to postpone, he will sign the letter on his own.

Roll Call vote to table until next week:

Councilmember Kabir – yes
Councilmember Kennedy – no
Councilmember Brennan – no
Councilmember Dennis – yes
Councilmember Day – no
Councilmember Rigg – no
Councilmember Mitchell – yes
Councilmember Mackie – yes

**Tie vote 4-4-0 - Mayor Wojahn – No
Motion to table until next week fails.**

Main Motion:

Councilmember Brennan is interested in having a detailed discussion on this contentious subject. This letter is mostly hollow without offering a relief package to our landlords. Most landlords are compassionate to the situation; however, they are also mindful of their own obligations.

Councilmember Kennedy stated that the COVID relief money hasn't been used to the full extent and could possibly be used for landlords that are feeling the hardship of allowing tenants out of their leases.

Councilmember Day stated that Business Assistance Program Grants should be used for business first.

Councilmember Dennis will be voting against this letter and would like to continue discussion on relaxing the Business Assistance Grant program to offer assistance to landlords.

Vote On Main Motion:

Councilmember Kabir -no
Councilmember Kennedy – yes
Councilmember Brennan – no
Councilmember Dennis – no
Councilmember Rigg – yes
Councilmember Day – no
Councilmember Mackie – yes
Councilmember Mitchell – no

Motion fails 3-5-0.

Mayor Wojahn informed Council that he will sign the letter in his own capacity. Suellen Ferguson stated that an individual may send a letter on their own capacity, but the letter needs to be clear that it's coming from them and not Council.

[At 10:47 PM a motion was made by Councilmember Kennedy and seconded by Councilmember Brennan to suspend the rules to extend the meeting. Motion passed 8-0-0]

20-G-134 Consideration of authorizing the City Attorney, on behalf of the City, to sign the Supreme Court Amicus Brief in support of the City of Philadelphia in a Case Challenging Philadelphia's Non-Discrimination Provisions

A motion was made by Councilmember Rigg and seconded by Councilmember Kennedy to support the Amicus Brief in support of the City of Philadelphia in a case challenging Philadelphia's Non-Discrimination Provisions.

Suellen Ferguson gave an overview of the Amicus Brief. The City of Philadelphia provides social services in placement of foster children. An association refused to consider same sex couples as parents suitable for placement of foster children, stating they believe certifying same-sex couples would "endorse" the couple's relationship as acceptable, which is barred by their religious beliefs. Philadelphia terminated its relationship for these services. This collision between religious beliefs and Philadelphia's need to act in a non-discriminatory way is relevant to decisions the City of College Park makes.

No comments from the audience.

Councilmember Mackie stated that this item is on the agenda for next week and since the residents thought it was on the agenda for next week, she would like to have it stay on next week's agenda.

A motion was made by Councilmember Kabir and seconded by Councilmember Mitchell to postpone this item until next week. Motion passed 8-0-0.

ADJOURN: A motion was made by Councilmember Dennis and seconded from Councilmember Day to adjourn from Special Session. Special Session adjourned at 10:55 p.m.

Yvette Allen
Assistant City Clerk

Date
Approved