

The Town of

GLEN ECHO

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TOWN COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
MARCH 11, 2024

CALL TO ORDER: MAYOR DIA COSTELLO, 7:30 PM

PRESENT

Mayor: Dia Costello

Councilmembers: (CM) Dan Spealman, Julia Wilson, and Dawn Tanner; CM Matt Stiglitz absent

Town Clerk: (TC) Emily Parsons

Residents: Aaron Hirsch (University), Corrina Spealman (University), Charlotte Fryar (Vassar), Alex Boyar (Cornell), Caroline Lacy (Harvard)

Guests: Christy Hughes (Irish Inn owner), Katey Boerner (GEPPAC director)

OPPORTUNITY FOR COUNCIL TO HEAR RESIDENTS' COMMENTS:

Mayor Costello offered an opportunity to take comments from residents. There were no comments at this time.

OPPORTUNITY FOR COUNCIL COMMENTS:

Mayor Costello offered an opportunity to take comments from the Council. CM Wilson reported that March 3's Winterlude (Town party and fundraiser) was a big success: 200 luminaries, 9 chilis in the competition, over \$900 raised for Greentree Shelter, and great teen volunteers organized by resident (and teen) Corrina Spealman. The Mayor wondered if there was a way to get the next wave of Town teens involved in volunteering. CM Wilson said that the event garnered three new members for the Livable Town Committee, but also noted that some residents said the wintery party didn't feel so wintery on a warm evening in March. The committee will consider making the event a little earlier next year. That said, CM Wilson noted this year's high turnout was due in part to the balmy weather.

MAYOR UPDATES AND OLD BUSINESS:

Mayor Costello said that she attended a meeting with the NPS and WMATA on February 21. Though this project (dismantling the trestle bridge near town) is still delayed pending the historical review process assessing of the old trestle bridge, the Mayor said it would most likely move forward at some point. With many construction projects already going on in that area—construction of a new home, aqueduct work along MacArthur Blvd—the Mayor has asked WMATA to consider demolishing the bridge at Walhonding Road first so that we can benefit from what they learn during that process. After mentioning that there had just been another break-in at Glen Echo Park, the Mayor noted that the February 13 public safety discussion the Town had with Officer Johnson had led her to consider license plate readers at the tops of Town streets. Improving Town lights remains a goal for the Mayor for the same reason (public safety). Mayor Costello reported that so far all is going smoothly with the home construction at 43 Wellesley. TC Parsons will not remain in the position, so the Mayor went over a delegation of some duties to CMs during the transition, until a new Town Clerk is hired. CM Spealman will oversee any RFPs and ARPA funds; CM Wilson will oversee Town Hall rentals; CM Tanner will oversee environmental issues; and CM Stiglitz will handle the financial reports. Resident Corrina Spealman has volunteered to help with making packets for the CMs for the meetings. The Mayor made note that a new painting had been donated to the Town by Nancy Long and was now hanging in the stairwell of Town Hall. It depicts a tree that once stood by her home at 35 Wellesley, now called 6006 Cornell.

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES: ACTION ON JANUARY 8, 2024 MEETING

Motion to Approve the 1/8/24 Minutes: CM Wilson; 2nd CM Tanner. 3-0 in favor.

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES: ACTION ON FEBRUARY 12, 2024 MEETING

Motion to Approve the 2/12/24 Minutes: CM Wilson; 2nd CM Spealman. 3-0 in favor.

TREE ORDINANCE COMMITTEE UPDATE: Costello

Mayor Costello has met with a group of interested residents twice to work on a new framework for the ordinances affecting trees in Town. She said they are now talking about trees that are 18 inches or more in diameter measured at 4 ½ feet above the ground with no reference to the height of the trees. Residents would apply for a no-fee permit for a tree removal and within 60 days, the Mayor will either issue or deny the permit. The permit can still be fast-tracked if the tree is dying, falling, infringing in utility wires, etc. The Mayor may choose to hire an arborist for a second opinion. There was discussion about encouraging people to replace felled trees with new native trees either on their property or somewhere else in Town. CM Wilson said this was a “pipe dream” because it is very difficult to care for a new tree in the first years and would be unrealistic if the tree was across Town from the resident. CM Tanner asked if they had considered having a “tree fund” that someone removing a tree would need to donate to. The Mayor said she would consider something like that. She asked Katey Boerner if the Park needed more trees planted. Ms. Boerner said they did occasionally and also that the County or organizations like rotary clubs sometimes gave them trees. The Mayor asked if the Council thought the Town should hire an arborist to walk around Town and assess the tree canopy and make suggestions. Alternatively, the Town could hire an arborist and let residents sign up to have a tree on their property assessed. CM Wilson said it would not be fair if only some residents received

the service and wanted to know how much it would cost. This discussion will continue at the March 18 budget work session.

COMMUNITY GARDEN: Aaron Hirsch

Mayor Costello asked Mr. Hirsch how many strong commitments he had for the community garden. He said he's got 24 people who have expressed interest in plots and 6 people who have given money totaling \$1230. He added that they have hosts lined up for a progressive dinner fundraiser on April 13 and an application in for a \$5000 mini-grant from Chesapeake Bay Trust. That application however is missing a required letter saying that the Town gives permission for the use of the land for a community garden. The Mayor said she talked to the Town lawyer Ron Bolt, who told her it could either be a Town-run entity—Community Garden Committee—or the group needs to be hosted by a third party, a non-profit that could offer the business framework. Either way, the group would need a governing body—president, treasurer, etc. Mr. Hirsch said they had set that up and after the February 12 meeting had decided that the funds for the garden would go through their treasurer Mark Brewster (Wellesley). There was agreement with the committee members present that approval to use the land would bring more money in from residents. Mr. Hirsch still asked that the Council consider fronting some of the start-up costs, though in the end he might not need any Town money—if the grant is awarded and money from interested participants pours in.

The Mayor raised an idea she got from other nearby mayors: the Town budget could contain a line item for some grant money available to residents who wish to apply for it. She'll explore this while working on next year's budget. She noted that several residents have expressed support for the garden, while arguing against paying for it with Town funds. CM Wilson stated that it was good for the community at large, including residents who choose not to participate. Irish Inn owner Christy Hughes expressed disappointment that the Town was going to let the land be used by residents free of charge instead of letting him rent the land for more parking. He added that parking is a serious issue in that area and will be exacerbated by a community garden. He also noted that the plot where the garden will be is littered with beer cans most mornings. Katey Boerner of GEPPAC agreed that there could be issues with vandals having just experienced several break ins at Glen Echo Park, noting that it's very dark over there. She also said that the Town can do what it wants with its own land, but emphasized the congestion and noise that happens in what is essentially a staging area for the Park. There is also some flooding there they should be aware of.

The Mayor read the letter of commitment allowing the Community Garden Committee to begin using the land. This is the same letter that will be submitted to the Chesapeake Bay Trust.

Motion to Approve the letter and use of Town land for a community garden: CM Wilson; 2nd CM Speelman. 3-0 in favor.

The Mayor stipulated that she wanted some additions made to the bylaws contract, including possible gardening hours, parking rules, and what a disbanding of the garden would look like. The Council is still deciding if a lease agreement is necessary. The Council was not ready to vote to use Town funds for the community garden. CM Speelman said he didn't feel comfortable having the Town be the backstop for whatever shortfall the organizers experience. He said a one-time amount would be preferable, but then Mr. Hirsch reiterated that the garden organizers might not even need any funds from the Town. It was agreed that the discussion about any Town funds going to the start up of the community garden would be revisited at the April Council meeting.

FINANCIAL REPORT FOR THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY: TC Parsons

Expenses: There was nothing unusual this month. Aside from the regular financial report generated by LSWG, it should be noted:

Bolt Legal Expense was \$726 for February: discussions with Mayor about community garden and tree removal ordinance

OIPA Expense was \$0

Motion to Approve the February Financial Report: CM Spealman; 2nd CM Tanner. All in favor.

NEXT MEETINGS: BUDGET WORK SESSION, MARCH 18 MEETING; BUDGET INTRODUCED, APRIL 11; BUDGET HEARING & ADOPTION, MAY 13

The budget work session will start at 7:30 at Town Hall. Residents may attend but only to listen. After the budget has been introduced and prior to adoption on May 13, residents can weigh in via email or at the hearing. [Post-meeting, the date of the April Council meeting was changed from April 8 to April 11.]

OPERATIONS REPORT: Social; Infrastructure; Administrative: TC Parsons

Winterlude: March 3 on Harvard starting at 5; fundraiser for Greentree Shelter; luminaries, fire pits, chili contest

Summer Picnic: June 23, 5 PM

Infrastructure:

Elevator: Is currently out of order. Kencor says we need a new electrical board. It's on order. Mayor Costello has written the RFP for an elevation uninstall and install which will be posted on the Maryland Marketplace (eMMA) and copies will be sent to the companies that have come to see our lift in the past month.

Post Office: We are pricing replacing several broken accordion-style doors. We hope to use Edgar Mendez, whose hourly rate is much lower than CASE. He works with Patty Sieber and is licensed and insured. Edgar's estimate is about \$2500 compared to CASE at \$5200.

Administrative:

Auditor Search: We've gotten three proposals, one of which came from one of the recommended firms (SEK CPA's and Assoc.) We need to select one. The RFP asked for firms to bid a one-year, plus a two-year contract.

Landscaping: Level Green has submitted a new proposal for March 2024 to Feb. 2025. The costs reflect a 3% increase. We discussed starting leaf pickup in October and keeping five pick ups. The Mayor asked Dave Briggs to submit a proposal for snow removal later in the year.

REVIEW MAINTENANCE AGREEMENT WITH LEVEL GREEN (LANDSCAPING AND LEAF COLLECTION):

The Mayor said that the new contract represented a 3% increase or about \$1000 over last year's cost. Generally everyone has been happy with the service. CM Wilson said that she's heard from residents who are not happy with how the pocket parks have been maintained. Mayor Costello said we could get a quote from Shimizu Landscaping to spruce up the little parks at Princeton and University.

Motion to Approve Level Green Maintenance Agreement: CM Spealman; 2nd CM Tanner. 3-0 in favor.

REVIEW AUDITOR RFP RESPONSE; SELECT A NEW AUDITOR:

The Town received three proposals for Town auditing services. Each proposal gave a fee for each of the next three years. At the February meeting, CM Stiglitz asked if we were locked into a contract for all three years. The RFP specifies that it is for a one-year, plus a two-year contract.

Motion to Approve SEK as new auditor: CM Wilson; 2nd CM Tanner. 3-0 in favor.

OPPORTUNITY FOR COUNCIL TO HEAR RESIDENTS' COMMENTS:

There were no comments.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion to Adjourn: CM Spealman; 2nd CM Tanner. 3-0 in favor. Meeting Adjourned 9:16 pm

Minutes Prepared by: Emily Parsons, Town Clerk

Approved: Dia Costello Date: 4-15-2024

Mayor, Dia Costello