

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

July 14, 2025 – 7:30pm

Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams

CALL TO ORDER: Mayor Dia Costello

Attendees:

- **Mayor:** Dia Costello
- **Councilmembers (CM):** Dan Spealman, Matt Stiglitz, Dawn Tanner, Julia Wilson
- **Town Manager (TM):** Susan Theis
- **Residents Present (virtually):** Aaron Hirsch, Gloria Levin, Jo Anne Murray, Emily Parsons

RESIDENT COMMENTS

- None

COUNCIL COMMENTS

CM Spealman:

- **Curb Painting Initiative:**

CM Spealman inquired about the curb painting process and volunteered to assist if training and materials are provided. He also proposed involving local teens under adult supervision. Mayor Costello supported the idea and suggested offering \$20/hour for participants, contingent on oversight and training. CM Spealman and Mayor Costello will meet to discuss further. The Mayor noted that curb painting is a painstaking and precise process, having done it previously. She stated it's important that those involved understand how to do the work correctly. A trial basis was proposed, with the Mayor providing guidance and CM Spealman overseeing the teen participants. Paint and materials will be needed.

- **Harvard Avenue One-Way Proposal (Follow-Up):**

CM Spealman inquired about the citizen proposal to make upper Harvard Avenue a one-way street. An informal count noted about 80 cars during peak hours and 20 during slower times. MCDOT has deferred the decision to the Town, stating the roads are under local jurisdiction. Mayor Costello will follow up with MCDOT's Mike Paylor for further recommendations. TM Theis will reach out to neighboring municipal managers for traffic consultant recommendations. The Town will need expert guidance on street markings and signage (e.g., "One Way," "Do Not Enter") to ensure clarity and prevent confusion.

- **MML Summer Conference:**

CM Spealman shared that the MML Summer Conference was a valuable experience. He commended the Town's strong representation—especially highlighting the Mayor and TM's contributions—and encouraged other Councilmembers to attend in the future.

CM Stiglitz:

- Asked about the curb cuts on the 6100 block of Princeton Avenue. WSSC is scheduled to complete the replacements in the coming weeks. A service ticket has already been issued.
- Requested clarification regarding a \$2,614 item listed as "Miscellaneous Revenue." TM Theis will follow up with LSWG for an explanation and report back to the Council.

CM Wilson:

- Reported the downed wire on Yale Avenue has yet to be removed. Verizon has been contacted, and a service ticket is in place. TM Theis will follow up again.

MAYOR UPDATES

- Thanked CM Stiglitz and CM Spealman for managing Town affairs during her vacation.
- Reported that the Fourth of July celebration was a great success and well attended. She extended special thanks to Angela Hirsch and Corinna Spealman for organizing the event.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES – June 9, 2025

Motion made by CM Stiglitz (approve as amended) Second CM Wilson Vote ALL.

CM Spealman submitted typo correction "Corrina" not "Carinna".

FINANCIAL REPORT – June 2025

Motion made by CM Stiglitz Second CM Spealman Vote ALL.

- CM Spealman & CM Stiglitz requested clarification on:
 - o Misc. Revenue (Code 11): \$2,614 expense. TM Theis will review QuickBooks and confirm with LSWG and will follow up with Councilmembers. TM Theis sent email on July 15, 2025 to Councilmembers.
- CM Stiglitz inquired about specifics of several payments since he no longer sign checks. TM Theis confirmed and answered all questions regarding expenses by vendor payments.

ORDINANCE 25-03 – Amendment to Town Code

Motion made by CM Wilson Second CM Spealman Vote ALL.

- CM Spealman – comments from CM Stiglitz at June 9 Council meeting noted unclear language regarding "\$15,000 competitive bid unless subsection the B or C." CM Stiglitz noted the revised version looks fine. Council voted to adopt Ordinance 25-03.

Noise Ordinance Discussion:

Background: The topic of noise control was first raised during the June Council meeting by a resident during the Public Comment period. In response, the Council placed the issue on the July agenda to allow for broader community input. The conversation will continue at the September Council meeting, which will include a public hearing.

The primary focus is whether to revise the current start time for construction and other noise-generating activities. Montgomery County currently allows work to begin at 7am on weekdays.

Council Discussion

Key Issues Raised

- **Start Time Impact on Contractors**

Mayor Costello reported that contractors indicated a later start time would increase project duration and cost for residents. A later start could result in more idling as crews wait to begin.

- **Concerns**

CM Wilson emphasized that both contractors and residents must follow the same rules, especially on weekends before 9am, when early activity has previously gone unenforced. CM Tanner agreed.

- **Enforcement Challenges**

Currently done by Mayor, need to notify Town and TM Theis if in violation. Enforcement options could include stop-work orders or by contacting Montgomery County. Permit guidelines and regular reminders in *The Echo* and sent to residents via Constant Contact were suggested.

- **Compromise Proposal**

Several Councilmembers expressed support for a 7:30am start time on weekdays as a reasonable compromise. Weekends would remain at 9am start.

- **Public Engagement/Comment**

The Council agreed to follow the Town's input through a public hearing process. There was consensus that any ordinance must be enforceable, clearly communicated, and fair.

Next Steps

TM Theis will reach out to neighboring municipalities (e.g., Town of Chevy Chase) to gather feedback on enforcement practices.

Additional Notes

- Three active projects (43 Wellesley Circle, 6103 Princeton, and 7370 MacArthur Blvd) have already been permitted. They will be informed of any changes to the ordinance.

Conclusion

The Council is actively considering a change to the noise ordinance that would adjust the weekday start time for construction to 7:30am. The discussion will continue at the September Council meeting, where

further public input will be welcomed. If approved, the ordinance will be drafted in October and considered for adoption in November.

Composting Program Discussion

Overview of Options

CM Wilson presented information comparing composting service providers:

- **Compost Crew** (based in Montgomery County)
- **Monster Organics** (based in Virginia)
- **Veteran Compost** (also considered, but significantly more expensive)

A detailed spreadsheet was shared comparing pricing, services, and bin sizes.

- **Compost Crew** currently services 8 households in Town (as of 8/20/25).
- Pickup day is **Wednesday**.

Pilot Program Proposal

Two funding models discussed:

1. Town-funded service – Free to residents, Town covers costs.
2. Resident-paid bins (one-time fee) – Gives residents “skin in the game” while the Town covers recurring service costs.

CM Spealman and CM Stiglitz stressed the need to:

- Establish clear parameters for a successful program.
- Determine if cost savings could be achieved by reducing trash pickup to once per week in the future.

Estimated Costs & Participation

- Estimated costs:
 - 25 households = approx. \$5,700 annually
 - 100 households (maximum projection) = approx. \$23,000 annually
- CM Spealman noted that current trash pickup costs about \$3,600/month, so offsetting some of this with reduced waste could help justify composting costs.
- The goal would be to get a minimum of 25 committed households to launch.

Councilmember Input

- **CM Wilson:** Composting is inevitable, much like recycling. People may be more likely to join once they see neighbors participating.
- **CM Tanner:** Has a backyard compost setup but would still participate in the program. Supports Green Team involvement.

- **CM Stiglitz:** Asked about typical food waste output (e.g., for a family of 4) and emphasized the need for clear justification if participation remains low.
- **Mayor Costello:** Interest has been low in the past, but public attitudes may have shifted.

Next Steps:

1. **Educational Campaign:**
 - Article in *The Echo*
 - Information table and sign-up opportunity at Summer Picnic & Town Yard Sale
 - Composting demos from vendors, if possible
2. **Resident Survey:**
 - Survey distributed after the picnic
 - Include in newsletter and via mailing list
 - Offer SurveyMonkey link and hard copies at Town events
 - Ask residents:
 - Would you sign up if offered?
 - Level of interest: Very interested / Maybe / Not at all
3. **Administrative Steps:**
 - Prepare a budget amendment if needed
 - Issue an RFP via eMMA
 - Invite both Compost Crew and Monster Organics to present at a future Council meeting

Conclusion

The Council is exploring options for launching a Town-sponsored composting pilot-program, to begin with minimum of 25 households participating. Councilmembers generally support moving forward however, a decision on whether to proceed—and under what terms—will depend on survey results, resident interest/involvement, vendor presentations, and final pricing information.

Town Hall Renovation Ideas - Planning Discussion

Overview of Proposed Renovations

- JoAnne Murray presented preliminary renovation concepts and emphasized a step-by-step approach to avoid duplicating or undoing completed work.
- FY26 Budget currently includes \$30,000 for improvements; however, several residents expressed concern that this amount may be insufficient.

Safety Concerns = Priority

- **Electrical Issues:**
 - Some outlets do not function; others are not grounded (lack three-prong capability).
 - Recommendation: Bring in a licensed electrician for assessment.
- **Fire Safety Concerns:**
 - **Fire Doors:** Upstairs fire exit door opens outward and blocks stairs which is a major safety hazard and must be corrected, likely a significant expense.
 - **Existing wooden shelving and coat hooks** do not meet fire code
- **AV Equipment Upgrades** for meetings and events

- **Keypad Door Entry System** for renters to access Town Hall
 - Current door is too narrow to accommodate standard keypad (needs at least 4" clearance)
- **Implementation:**
 - Begin selected upgrades in FY26; continue with additional improvements in subsequent years.

Additional Recommendations—perhaps upgrading lighting and addressing harsh, unshielded exterior security lighting, which may violate MoCo code on light trespass.

Usage & Justification

- **Mayor Costello:**
 - Called for clarity on how the Town Hall is being used to inform priorities:
 - Who is using it (residents vs. non-residents)?
 - What is it being used for?
 - How often is it used?
 - **CM Wilson** volunteered to compile usage data from the past two years using online and rental applications as source data.

Next Steps

- JoAnne Murray will meet with Mayor to prioritize plans and budget.
- Council revisit renovation priorities in September Council meeting
 - Discuss adjusting budget for Town Hall improvements
 - Potentially issue RFPs based on finalized drawings and safety assessments

CONSTRUCTION UPDATES

6103 Princeton Avenue:

- Oil stains on Princeton down onto University Avenue and Town has asked numerous times for these to be removed from Town streets and will continue to do so until it has been corrected by Sandy Spring Builders.

7370 MacArthur Boulevard:

- Concrete stains on Bryn Mawr Avenue – McFarland Woods has been asked to remove from street. TM Theis will continue to follow up until this is corrected.

TOWN OPERATIONS REPORT

ADMINISTRATIVE

Audit & Financial Management

- On July 10, Mayor Costello and Town Manager Theis met with SEK to discuss the upcoming FY25 Town Audit.
- The audit officially began on August 11. TM Theis has been working with LSWG to prepare documentation. SEK is scheduled to present the audit findings at the October Council meeting.

Hybrid Council Meeting Setup

- On July 8, Montgomery Municipal Cable (MMC) provided and installed equipment in Town Hall to enable hybrid Council meetings.
- MMC will attend the September 8 Council meeting to assist with the new system and ensure everything functions properly.

Snow Removal Contract – Level Green

- The Level Green snow removal contract for the upcoming season was approved by Council, with pricing unchanged from last year.
 - CM Spealman: Supportive of renewing the contract.
 - Mayor: Expressed satisfaction with last year's performance—highlighted good communication, conservative salt use, and effective service during icy conditions.
 - Requested continued attention to post-sledding conditions at the sledding hill.
 - CM Stiglitz & CM Wilson: Agreed with renewal.
- Council unanimously approved the contract renewal for winter 2025-26.

Stormwater Restoration Grant

- The Town has been awarded a Stormwater Restoration Grant (No. 24-520) in the amount of \$150,000 from the Maryland Department of General Services.
- TM Theis is currently completing the required documentation and forms to proceed through the Grant Intake Process, pending review by a Grant Administrator.

Town-Wide Vegetation Cutback

- The annual vegetation cutback is to be scheduled for September, to be performed by Level Green. The work will include trimming any vegetation encroaching on sidewalks or blocking roads and signs within the Town right-of-way. Residents will receive a 30-day advance notice will be sent to residents. The Mayor requested holding off on notifications until after summer vacation.
- CM Stiglitz & CM Spealman emphasized the importance of proper resident notice, especially when private property is involved. Suggested:
 - Identifying problem areas using a walk-through or "finger test."
 - Notifying residents before any cutback occurs, allowing homeowners to address the issue themselves.
 - Residents should not be charged for Town-initiated trimming.

Tree Maintenance

- Lee's Tree Service has been engaged to prune trees in the right-of-way.

Street Sweeping

- TM Theis will contact Level Green and Quiet Sweep to obtain quotes for street sweeping services and follow up at the September Council meeting.
- The current budget allocation is \$3,000.

INFRASTRUCTURE:

Irish Inn Parking Lot

- The current rent of \$300/month has been paid through September 2025.
- Mayor Costello and Town Manager Theis met with Patrick Murphy, General Manager of the Irish Inn, to discuss a potential lease renewal and rent increase effective October 1, 2025.

SOCIAL:

- **August 24:** Annual Summer Picnic and Pie Contest, 5-7pm. Vendors – Clayboy's Shave Ice to arrive from 6-6:45pm, California Tortilla to provide food, Andy's Parties/Great Event for Kids will have a water slide (2 hours) and bring water, sodas & juice boxes. Council agreed to bring back annual pie contest and CM Stiglitz suggested renaming the event in honor/memory of Jan Shaut. The Mayor will notify her daughter, Chelsea and get approval for the newly named pie contest – The Jan Shaut Annual Pie Contest. Senator Sara Love and Delegate Marc Korman will be in attendance. TM Theis will notify police and fire of the event and road closure of upper Harvard Avenue.

RESIDENT COMMENTS

Gloria Levin: noted was in touch with Katie Borner, GE Park regarding sale of Nancy Long artwork. Katie contacted Town Hall for availability at the end July/August for Town Hall use. Proceeds of sale 80% C&O Canal Assoc & 20% GE Park Carousel – late July does not leave much time to organize and many residents are on vacation. Mayor will contact to discuss plans, and TM Theis will follow up to previous email from Katey Boerner.

Thanked Mayor and Councilmembers for their service on behalf of our Town.

AJOURNMENT: 9:34PM

Mayor adjourned and All in Favor

Minutes Prepared by: Susan Theis

Approved:

Date: 9-15-2025



Mayor, Dia Costello