

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

September 8, 2025 – 7:30pm

Hybrid Meeting (In-Person and via Microsoft Teams)

CALL TO ORDER: Mayor Dia Costello called the meeting to order at 7:35pm. The meeting began late due to technical difficulties with the hybrid meeting equipment. Montgomery Municipal Cable (MMC) staff arrived later to assist TM Susan Theis with troubleshooting several issues during the meeting.

Attendees:

- **Mayor:** Dia Costello
- **Councilmembers (CM):** Dan Spealman, Matt Stiglitz, Dawn Tanner, Julia Wilson
- **Town Manager (TM):** Susan Theis
- **Residents Present (virtual):** Patrick Hooper, Gloria Levin, Emily Parsons

RESIDENT COMMENTS

- No initial comments due to audio issues. MMC was en route to assist but delayed in traffic.
- After technical issues were resolved, residents were again invited to comment.
 - **Gloria Levin:** Deferred her comments to the end of the meeting (30-minute mark).

COUNCIL COMMENTS

- **CM Spealman:** Requested discussion on curb painting, composting, and expressed concern that the fence may be being built and enquired regarding permit submission. Mayor clarified the resident is replacing the removed fence with new lamp posts, no permit needed.
- **CM Wilson:** Announced the Minnehaha Creek/NPS Cleanup scheduled for Saturday, October 4, organized by Town Event Squad in partnership with the Little Falls Watershed Conservancy. A notice will be sent via Constant Contact to recruit volunteers.

MAYOR UPDATES

- **Town Picnic:** The summer picnic was a success. Thirteen pies were entered in the Jan Shaut Annual Pie Contest, judged by Senator Love, Mayor Costello, and CM Spealman. The Shaut family expressed gratitude. Clayboy's Shave Ice and California Tortilla catered for 80–90 attendees.
- **Yard & Art Sale (September 27):** Mayor organizing event this year but will recruit a resident to lead for next year as former resident, Jan Shaut, was the previous organizer.
 - Art Sale: Features the Nancy Long Art Collection. Katey Boerner (GEPPAC) is coordinating with the estate attorney and resident, Tisha Anderson, who has been housing the artwork. All proceeds to GEPPAC per the estate attorney.
- **Town Hall Renovations:**
 - Fire doors, front entrance, and office doors to be replaced for safety with \$30,000 is budgeted for FY26.
 - Payment of \$2,160 made to JoAnne Murray for finalized architectural plans from previous work.
- **Town Hall Usage & Rental Rates:**

- Data collection done for FY25 and FY26 (to date) to determine frequency and types of use.
- Currently used consistently by Ballet Petite, Michelle Brafman's classes, and English Country Dancers
- Consider raising rental fee from \$150 to \$200 for non-residents.
- **October Agenda Item:** Discuss future use and fee structure.
- **AV System Upgrade:**
 - Current system is outdated and inadequate for presentations or events.
 - Estimate: \$11,000–\$15,000 from Media Craft. TM Theis will solicit additional bids.
 - CM Wilson and Spealman suggested simpler technology and input from residents with AV experience (ask Aaron Hirsch, Andy Malmgren).
- **Town Security**
 - Discussion prompted by resident Mike Durante's car theft in July 2025.
 - Mayor exploring potential installation of license plate readers which would be used for data gathering—not live monitoring.
- **Finance & Accounting:**
 - Transitioning from LSWG services to in-house processes to improve efficiency and reduce expenses.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES – July 14, 2025

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

FINANCIAL REPORT – July 2025

Motion made by CM Stiglitz Second CM Spealman Vote ALL.

FINANCIAL REPORT – August 2025

Motion made by CM Stiglitz Second CM Spealman Vote ALL.

TREE PERMIT CRITERIA DISCUSSION

- **Summary:** Mayor and Council discussed revising code to require a permit (not just permission) for tree removal based on size and circumstances (e.g., Building Code and Vegetation Control).
- **Key Issues:**
 - Confusion over current language and conditions (e.g., tree caliper, construction).
 - Replanting plans if trees are removed – determine criteria
 - Need to define invasive species, size thresholds, and resident responsibilities.
 - CM Stiglitz noted inconsistencies in existing documentation and suggested cleanup of code sections.
 - Special Council meeting scheduled for September 30 at 7:30pm. Green Team and Residents will be invited to attend working Council meeting.

NOISE ORDINANCE AMENDMENT DISCUSSION

- **Current Rule:** 7am start; proposed change to 7:30am.
- **Summary:**
 - Council reviewed regional municipal standards (7am–8am start times).
 - General consensus: No strong feelings; change would be minor.
 - Enforcement and variance procedures discussed.
 - Town Attorney, Ron Bolt to draft ordinance language.
 - Decision to proceed with public hearing in October and potential vote in November.

UPPER HARVARD ONE-WAY PROPOSALS

- **Summary:**
 - Mayor consulted with Montgomery County and traffic engineer, Mike Paylor and determined no need for county approval but appreciated the notice.
 - Traffic study proposals estimated between \$6,500–\$20,000.
 - Residents of Harvard Avenue to be consulted.
 - Council agreed to gather more data before moving forward and proposals.

TOWN OPERATIONS REPORT

ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES:

- **Hybrid Meeting Tech:** Meetings are now hybrid for free from Montgomery Municipal Cable.
- **Tree Maintenance Walkthrough:** With Lee's Trees on 7/25 & 7/29 to identify overgrown trees in the right-of-way.
 - Residents will receive 30-day notices for required trimming.
- **Composting:**
 - Monsters Organic vs. Compost Crew: pricing
 - Survey drafted for resident interest; to be sent after *The Echo* article in October.
- **Curb Painting:**
 - Challenges include standardization (e.g., 20–30 ft from corners, 5 ft from driveways).
 - Town considering professional services; TM Thies to get bids.
- **Leaf Pickup Dates:** Level Green curbside collection scheduled for October 13, November 10, December 15.
- **Accounting Transition:** Training sessions on 9/18, 9/30, and 10/6 with LSWG to support the Town's transition to in-house accounting. The training covered the use of Bill.com for submitting, approving and processing Town invoice payments electronically. Additionally, training included the use of QuickBooks Online for performing monthly reconciliations of financial statements, including those from bank accounts, investments, and credit card transactions, as well as how to generate monthly financial reports.
- **Town Hall Rental Usage Data:** Attached reports for FY25 and FY26.

INFRASTRUCTURE UPDATES:

- **Irish Inn Parking Lot:**
 - Current lease: \$300/month since 2006, paid through September 2025.
 - Mayor is working on a fair formula regarding monthly increase.
 - MR Bugs removed wasp nest on 8/15 for est. \$195 – yet to receive invoice.
- **Street Sweeping Quotes:** Level Green – \$2,050; Quiet Sweep – \$1,350. Council to consider for Spring 2026.

SOCIAL EVENTS

- **August 24 – Summer Picnic & Pie Contest:** 80+ attendees. 13 pies judged. School supply donations delivered to Greentree Family Shelter.
- **October 31 – Halloween Party:** Pizza party at Town Hall.

RESIDENT COMMENTS: Gloria Levin

- Expressed concern over recurring technical issues during hybrid meetings; difficult to hear and follow discussion.
- Emphasized need to comply with Open Meetings Act and improve meeting accessibility.
- Voiced support for one-way street on Harvard Avenue; concerned about fence damage and neighborhood safety.
- Highlighted civic engagement challenges and the need for better communication to encourage resident involvement in local governance.

ADJOURNMENT

Time: 9:46 PM

Motion to Adjourn: Approved unanimously

Minutes Prepared By: TM Susan Theis

Approved: Dia Costello

Date: 10 - 23 2025

Mayor: Dia Costello