

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

November 10, 2025 – 7:30 PM

Hybrid Meeting (In-Person and via Microsoft Teams)

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Dia Costello called the meeting to order at 7:30pm.

Attendees:

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

RESIDENT COMMENTS

- Karim Khalifa had a comment regarding the Town Noise Ordinance and indicated he would raise it at the appropriate time during the Council discussion.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

- **CM Wilson:** Has heard some town-wide leaf collection complaints and requests for more frequency for street vacuuming. Mayor said the Town will reassess in January. Road work signage needed on MacArthur Boulevard when working on and blocking Town streets. TM Theis will inform contractors. Holiday gift cards collected for S.O.M.E. (So Others Might Eat) by December 9, 2025. CM Wilson will send information for TM Theis to send notice to residents via Constant Contact. Reminder gas-powered leaf ban went into effect on July 1, 2025.

MAYOR UPDATES

- Increased security in the parking lot at Glen Echo Park. Fortunately, no recent incidents but MCPD hopes to patrol area twice a week.
- Thank everyone for Halloween party success.
- Ask Council about Holiday Brunch on 12/20 – Mayor proposes the Town to provide pancakes vs. Mr. Omelette waffle bar (without waffles = save \$915) to provide community engagement. Council decided to include waffle bar and Mayor will make gluten-free pancakes with help of CM Tanner.
- One-way Harvard Avenue – Mayor asks Council if the Town should put study on hold until Post Office lease renewal December 2026, or move ahead. Council decided to wait because any change in road traffic if the post office does not renew could make significant impact on the Town.
- 11/10 met with Jo Anne Murray, resident and architect, regarding proposal of \$2,920 to assist with RFP for new Town Hall fire doors. Jo Anne expects to submit specs & drawings by Friday, November 21, TM & Mayor to review and submit via eMMA by Monday, November 24; 30 days for response and Town receive bids by December 31.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES – October 14, 2025

Motion made (to approve with edits) by CM Stiglitz. Second CM Spealman. Vote: All in favor.

FINANCIAL REPORT – October 2025

Motion made by CM Stiglitz. Second CM Spealman. Vote: All in favor.

CONSIDERATION & VOTE ON AMENDMENT TO THE TOWN NOISE ORDINANCE

A motion was made and supported to introduce a noise ordinance amendment that would change the current weekday start time from 7:00am to 7:30am, with a formal vote in November.

Discussion Points:

- **CM Stiglitz:** Recommended clarifying that the Town follows County noise ordinances except for the time adjustment.
- **Karim Khalifa:** expressed concern and impact for workers schedules if start times shift.
- **CM Spealman:** suggested clarifying changes in language, including specificizing “motorized” equipment. Vote to approve amended ordinance. Motion was made to modify the proposed amendment to the Noise Ordinance with CM Spealman’s changes: CM Spealman, seconded by CM Wilson. All vote in favor.
- Council then held a vote after final discussion of the adjusted proposed amendment. Motion made by CM Stiglitz. Second CM Wilson. Vote: 1 in favor and 3 oppose. Motion did not pass. Mayor expressed her appreciation for thoughtfulness around this issue.

TREE PERMIT CRITERIA DISCUSSION

Summary: The Mayor and Council continued the discussion of revising the Town Code to require a permit (versus current permission, with 60-day notice) for tree removal based on size and circumstances (e.g., Building Code and Vegetation Control).

- **CM Stiglitz** noted inconsistencies in current documentation and suggested a code cleanup consolidating all tree-related requirements in one ordinance. **TM Theis** will revise the draft and comments before forwarding them to Town Attorney Ron Bolt.
- **The Mayor and TM Theis created criteria for establishing a tree permit.**

Town Tree Ordinance Proposed Criteria – Permit Process

- A no-fee permit will be required for the removal of a tree that meets the minimum requirements established by the Town. The permit application must include the reason for removal.
- Tree removal may be approved under existing criteria that address safety concerns.
- Current proposed Mitigating Factors in Favor of Tree Removal: Tree Ordinance Amendment 22-05
 - Whether the tree is diseased, insect-infected, or injured beyond restoration
 - Whether the tree is in danger of falling, presents a threat of injury to life or property
 - The extent to which tree removal is necessary to achieve Montgomery County and Town permitted development, redevelopment, land use, utility construction or utility maintenance, and the extent to which there is no reasonable alternative
- If no safety risk is involved:
 - Determine whether the tree meets the size restriction: any tree measuring 10 inches or more by a caliper measurement or 30 inches in circumference at 30 inches in height.
 - The Town will review the request with the homeowner to understand the reason for the proposed removal.
- The Town may approve tree removal on the condition that the homeowner submits and follows a Replanting Plan (see attached - to include native trees that are at least two and one-half (2 ½) inches in diameter at the time of installation; address measures regarding stormwater management concerns; list of tree recommendations).
- In cases of emergency or imminent safety concerns, the Town will fast-track the permit review and approval process.
- No tree removal may proceed without an approved Town permit.

- The Town reserves the right to hire an independent arborist to provide assessment and guidance in cases where a conflict arises between the Town and a resident.

Tree Ordinance – Drafting and Refinement

- Transitioning from “permission” to **no-fee permit requirement** for *any* tree removal meeting certain size criteria (caliper measurement and height).
- Need for consistent terminology (caliper vs. diameter).
- Ordinance intended to unify currently scattered tree-related rules across multiple code sections.
- Safety-risk removals to receive *expedited approval*.
- Discussion about when the town could require or encourage replanting plans.
- Addressed hypothetical development conflicts (e.g., large tree conflicting with home construction).
- Agreed to refine criteria and clarify thresholds before drafting ordinance language.

Next Steps

- Incorporate these provisions into the current Town Tree Ordinance and update ordinance to ensure consistent language with all tree related ordinances (e.g., Vegetation, Building Code, etc.) for Council review before sending to Town Attorney, Ron Bolt.

TOWN OPERATIONS REPORT

ADMINISTRATIVE

- Public Information Act (PIA) Requests:
 - *SmartProcure*: Completed request for Town expense data from June 20, 2025, to October 22, 2025 (previously requested in June 2025).
 - *University of Florida*: Completed request for Town election results from 2010 to present, including dates, offices, names, vote totals, and total ballots cast.
- Tree Ordinance:

Enclosed is a summary from the September 30 Special Council Meeting/Work Session, which includes a list of native tree species and trees currently found within the Town, as provided by residents Holly Shimizu and Mary Parsons. Also enclosed are the proposed criteria outlining the No-Fee Permit requirements for tree removal within the Town.
- Town Permits:
 - *6103 Princeton Avenue* – Fence permit approved 10/23.
 - *43 Wellesley Circle* – Applied to the County for a fence permit; Town permit process explained via email 10/27.
 - *5 Vassar Circle* – Applied to the County for a fence permit; spoke with contractor 11/3 regarding Town process.
 - *7370 MacArthur Blvd* – Updated project completion date: January 15, 2026.
- Composting Program:

A draft resident interest survey has been prepared in SurveyMonkey for distribution via Constant Contact. Meeting scheduled for 11/7 with Matt Costello to create a version in Office 365.
- Town-Wide Vegetation Cutback:

Notices were sent to residents on October 13, 2025, allowing a 30-day period for pruning trees on private property. A walkthrough with Lee’s Trees is scheduled for 11/12 to confirm completion of resident maintenance pruning. Town right-of-way tree work will be scheduled afterward.
- Fall Leaf Collection: New Dates Scheduled

Level Green Landscaping has scheduled curbside pickups for November 24 and December 22. Dates are posted on the Town website, and notices have been sent via Constant Contact. Reminder notices will go out the Friday prior to each collection.

- **Accounting Transition:**
Transition from LSWG to in-house accounting became effective October 1. At the Mayor's suggestion, CM Stiglitz will review monthly financial reports in advance of Council meetings to support accountability.
- **Stormwater Restoration Grant:**
Continuing work on the \$150,000 Maryland Department of General Services grant (No. 24-520). Required forms are being completed for submission through the Grant Intake Process. Delegate Marc Korman's office has offered assistance.
- **MEA Grant:**
Solar Technical Assistance request to be submitted for the installation of solar panels on the Town Hall roof. Deadline: December 5, 2025.
- **Out-of-Office Notice:**
 - November 13 – Attending LGIT Annual Meeting in Annapolis.
 - November 26–30 – Thanksgiving holiday/vacation.

An out-of-office auto-reply will be in place directing residents to contact the Mayor in case of emergency.

INFRASTRUCTURE

- **Irish Inn Lease:**
Town Attorney Ron Bolt has drafted a new one-year lease for parking lot rental at \$437/month, including a 3% annual increase provision. 11/6 spoke with General Manager Patrick Murphy and will return signed agreement.
- **Town Hall Renovation:**
Jo Anne Murray has submitted a proposal and scope of work for replacement of Town Hall fire doors. Email sent 11/6 to schedule a meeting with the Mayor to discuss.
- **Traffic Engineering – Harvard Avenue One-Way Proposal:**
Cost proposals vary as follows:
 - Mead & Hunt: \$14,000–\$20,000
 - Traffic Group: \$6,500
 - STS Consulting: \$3,200
 - Joe Cutro: \$2,000

At the October Council meeting, members raised additional questions before proceeding; no follow-up items were sent to the Town Manager. The Mayor has suggested possibly deferring this project until the Post Office lease renewal in December 2026, as it may impact traffic planning.

SOCIAL

- **Halloween Event (10/31):**
The Halloween Pizza Party at Town Hall (5–6pm) was a great success, with over 60 residents and guests attending.
 - Thank you to CM Spealman for assisting with barricades and setup and returning to GE Park.
 - Thank you to the Mayor for suggesting the screening of *It's the Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown*.
 - Thanks also to Matt Costello for managing the video and music setup in Town Hall.
- **Holiday Brunch (12/20):**
Scheduled from 10 AM–12 PM. Mr. Omelette is confirmed for the omelet station. Council input is requested on whether to include the waffle bar (as last year) or instead host a resident pancake breakfast.

- Waffle bar cost: additional \$915.
- Angela Hirsch will again lead the graham cracker/gingerbread house activity and plans to recruit a family with young children to take over this activity next year.

RESIDENT COMMENTS

- Gloria Levin suggested adding cookie exchange and introduce “new resident recognition” at yearly holiday brunch. Create a private recommendations page on the Town website and/or listserve for contractor/service referrals. CM Stiglitz suggested adding a link to the Town website sharing the County libraries references for free online list of services. TM Theis to add link to Town website page. Improve reporting of malfunctioning streetlights to reduce wasteful daytime operation. TM Theis reported streetlight location and pole number to PEPCO and received notification it had been fixed – will report again.
- Karim Khalifa will share NPS report with the Town to assist with the MEA grant for solar panels.

ADJOURNMENT

Time: 9:12 PM

Motion to Adjourn: Approved unanimously

Minutes Prepared By: TM Susan Theis

Approved: *Dia Costello*

Date: 12-15-2005

Mayor: Dia Costello

