

Town of Riverdale Park
Work Session Minutes
September 19, 2022
7:30 p.m.

In Attendance

Mayor Alan K. Thompson
CM Richard Smith, Ward 1
CM Aaron Faulx, Ward 2
CM David Lingua, Ward 3
CM Thomas Sadiq, Ward 4
CM Hala Mayers, Ward 6 (left at 10 p.m.)

John N. Lestitian, Town Manager
Jessica Barnes, Town Clerk/Director of Administrative Services
Ryan Chelton, Director of Development Services
Rosa Guixens, Acting Chief of Police
Gentry Jones, Deputy Director of Finance Services
Ivy Lewis, Director of Public Projects and Services
Paul Smith, Director of Finance and Employee Services

Absent

CM Karen Mejia, Ward 5

Call to Order

Mayor Thompson called the Work Session to order at 8:51 p.m.

Agenda Approval

There were no changes to the agenda or stated conflicts of interest.

Discussion Items

1. Fence Permit Request: 5902 Cleveland Avenue; 6-foot wood fence

Administrative Services Director Jessica Barnes provided an overview of the fence permit request for 5902 Cleveland Avenue.

CM Smith asked that the fence permit application be added to the Consent Agenda for the October Legislative Meeting. There were no objections.

2. Rezoning application for the Lofts at Riverdale Park

Development Services Director Ryan Chelton provided an overview of The Lofts at Riverdale Park, a potential development project in Town.

CM Smith discussed his concerns regarding the project.

Mayor Thompson discussed his conversations with County CM Glaros.

Town Manager Lestitian reported that the Town Attorney had conducted an initial review of the zoning regulations.

CM Faulx stated that he was concerned about transparency and Town Manager Lestitian stated that the developer was aware that the Town was not pleased by their changes to the project.

3. FY2023 Revenue Update

Deputy Director of Finance Services Gentry Jones provided an overview of the revenue categories in comparison to the previous three fiscal years.

CM Lingua thanked Deputy Director Jones for clarification regarding the impact of delayed the property taxes.

Mayor Thompson asked about the decrease in personal property taxes and Deputy Director Jones discussed the change in the threshold for exemption from personal property taxes.

4. Riverdale Park Resilience Initiative: Town Code Amendments

Development Services Director Chelton discussed the proposed revisions to the Town Code related to the Riverdale Park Resilience Initiative which was developed to address issues related to flooding.

Mayor Thompson asked about the structure of the fines.

5. RISE Zone Rental Assistance Fund Update

Director Chelton provided an update on the RISE Zone Rental Assistance Fund and stated that staff would work with the Town Attorney to develop a subrecipient agreement in the amount of \$50,000 for the University of Maryland to administer the Fund.

Mayor Thompson and CM Lingua stated that they hoped that the Town received applicants for the program.

6. Blighted Properties

Director Chelton provided an overview of the recommended changes to the Town Code to address blighted properties in Town.

CM Faulx stated that College Park had a similar Code regarding bamboo, and he was supportive of the concept.

CM Lingua discussed concerns regarding a property on Riverside Drive and Neighborhood Improvement Specialist Jermaine Dixon provided an overview.

Mayor Thompson asked if a lien had been placed on the property as outlined in the International Property Maintenance Code and Director Chelton provided an overview of the action taken.

Mayor Thompson discussed the responsibility of a property tied up in probate court and Town Manager Lestitian provided an overview of similar situations and the possibility of billing fines as property taxes. Mayor Thompson stated that the ideas were good.

CM Lingua discussed his concerns regarding the six-month time period to address issues due to how difficult it could be to obtain a building permit from the County within that timeframe. Town Manager Lestitian noted that some repairs could be done without a permit. CM Lingua stated that there would need to be some flexibility when the Code language was drafted. Town Manager Lestitian stated that there would be opportunities for further discussion.

Neighborhood Improvement Specialist Steven Smith discussed deadline extensions for property owners who were making good faith efforts to resolve the issues with their property.

Town Manager Lestitian made a statement regarding an officer involved shooting in the 4700 block of Oglethorpe Street and stated that the Town's thoughts and prayers were with the family impacted and the officers involved.

7. VeoRide Update

Director Chelton discussed a draft agreement with VeoRide and asked for input from the Mayor and Council.

CM Sadiq stated that adding more micro mobility options would be good for the Town and CM Faulx agreed.

CM Lingua discussed his concerns regarding an agreement with VeoRide to include the use of public rights-of-way to conduct business and suggested that the Town look at the approach taken by the City of College Park.

CM Sadiq shared his experiences with VeoRide and geofencing. CM Sadiq recommended including the Town Center and the MARC train station in the VeoRide service area.

CM Lingua stated that more clarification was needed, and that the Town should consider aspects of VeoRide's agreement with the City of College Park.

Town Manager Lestitian stated that staff would go back to VeoRide with feedback from the Mayor and Council and draft an agreement for the Mayor and Council's review.

CM Lingua suggested not expanding the current zone and providing more specifications regarding the range of the vehicles. CM Lingua discussed his concerns regarding leaving vehicles in the public right-of-way throughout the community.

Mayor Thompson stated that the consideration of a shorter window of time for pick-up of the vehicles could be included in an agreement. CM Lingua suggested that the Capital Bikeshare agreement be reviewed.

CM Smith stated that he would like to see clarity on response time, but he supported CM Sadiq's recommendation.

Mayor Thompson stated that it sounded as if there was interest from the Council in possibly extending the area covered only if the conditions were tightly regulated. There were no objections.

8. Neighborhood Safety Camera System Request for Proposal DPW 2022-003

Project Specialist Nouman Haider provided an update on the Neighborhood Safety Camera System Request for Proposal, DPW 2022-003.

CM Smith asked about the purpose of the cameras and Mr. Haider provided an overview. Town Manager Lestitian stated that the project would address the fear of crime and the perceived fear of crime and discussed the related budget amendment.

CM Smith asked if the Maryland Public Information Act would apply to the cameras and Town Manager Lestitian replied in the affirmative.

CM Smith stated that he was concerned about collecting video of the public and did not want to infringe on civil liberties. Town Manager Lestitian replied that the cameras would not be covert and would be noticeable for the community.

Mayor Thompson asked about the data retention framework and Town Manager Lestitian stated that the information was not available yet.

CM Smith stated that he wanted to be sure that the vendor could not use the information at a later time for commercial purposes. Mr. Haider clarified that the Town would own the system.

9. Recommendations regarding Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) FY2024 Budget

Mayor Thompson stated that, in his experience, the list of recommendations from the Town was a bit daunting and comments were limited to only 3-5 minutes last year. Mayor Thompson asked if the list of recommendations could be paired down or if some of the topics could be combined.

CM Smith stated that he was willing to combine the Ward 1 items.

CM Lingua stated that the Riverside Neighborhood Park requests had been included in previous recommendations and the restrooms at the park had been closed for six years.

Mayor Thompson suggested that CM Lingua attend the hearing as well to allow for an additional 3-5 minutes of testimony from the Town.

CM Lingua stated that item number 6 on the list could be removed and suggested that the language for item 5 could be adjusted to reflect just overall support and encouragement.

Mayor Thompson stated that he would attend the October 18th public hearing and CM Lingua stated that he may attend October 4th public hearing. CM Smith stated that he could also assist with testimony, if needed.

10. Changes to Ethics Ordinance

Administrative Services Director Jessica Barnes discussed the notification from the State Ethics Commission regarding required changes to the Town's Ethics Ordinance as a result of legislation adopted by the Maryland General Assembly. Director Barnes discussed the nine changes outlined by the State Ethics Commission as well as the legislation drafted by Town Attorney Fred Sussman to address the required changes.

There were no questions from the Mayor, Council, or public.

11. Update on Council Appointed Committees

Mayor Thompson provided an update on Redistricting Committee and draft ward boundary maps.

CM Smith stated that Director Barnes would assist with scheduling the first meeting of the Town Seal Design Committee.

Mayor Thompson and Director Barnes provided an update regarding the appointments to the Board of Elections.

12. Minutes

Mayor Thompson asked that the Council make staff aware of any changes needed to the minutes.

New Business

There were no items of new business.

Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 10:46 p.m.