

# VILLAGE OF FRIENDSHIP HEIGHTS

## VILLAGE COUNCIL

MELANIE ROSE WHITE, *Mayor*  
MICHAEL MEZEY, *Chairman*  
CAROLINA ZUMARAN-JONES, *Vice Chairman*  
PAULA DURBIN, *Secretary*  
KATHLEEN G. COOPER, *Treasurer*  
BRUCE R. PIRNIE, *Parliamentarian*  
MICHAEL J. DORSEY  
JULIAN P. MANSFIELD, *Village Manager*

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## APPROVED MINUTES

### PUBLIC SESSION

### FRIENDSHIP HEIGHTS VILLAGE COUNCIL

Conducted via Zoom

March 8, 2021

#### ATTENDEES:

Melanie Rose White, Mayor  
Michael Mezey, Chairman  
Paula Durbin, Secretary  
Bruce Pirnie, Parliamentarian  
Michael Dorsey, Council Member  
Julian Mansfield, Village Manager  
Robert Shapiro, Assistant Village Manager  
Anne O'Neil, Program Director  
Sabrina Hamm, Recording Secretary from The Professional Documents Service  
20 Additional Participants at Highest Court

#### ABSENT:

Carolina Zumaran-Jones, Vice Chairman

#### CALL TO ORDER:

Mr. Mezey called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

#### MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Mayor White called for a moment of silence to be observed in memory of Ms. Kathy Cooper who passed away on Saturday, March 6, 2021. Ms. Cooper had been a dedicated and conscientious member of the Village Council from 2015 until her resignation in January 2021. In addition to her Council work, Ms. Cooper had served for many years as a member of the Willoughby's Board of Directors.

The Mayor also announced that the second and final public hearing on the proposed Village operating budget for FY-22 would take place later during the meeting and that the Council would vote on the budget and tax rate following the hearing.

**REPORT OF MEETING WITH PLANNING BOARD STAFF: POSSIBLE DEVELOPMENT OF 5500 WISCONSIN AVENUE PROPERTIES:**

Mr. Mezey recounted the history of the proposed development and reported on the recent meeting held with the staff of the County Planning Board. The developer had previously requested a meeting as it was in the process of purchasing all real property from the medical building at 5530 Wisconsin Avenue to the corner of South Park Avenue, including the Courtyard Hotel. The developer claims it will retain the hotel and construct a new building on the remainder of the site. Those present during the meeting with the developer had shared their concerns.

Since COVID restrictions were enacted, there have been no further discussions. However, there was a recent announcement that the Donohoe/Carr Group was recently reported to have closed the deal for the site. A meeting was then scheduled and held with the staff from the County Planning Board to discuss the site, and to give participants the opportunity to raise any concerns. The developers will be required to meet with the Village Council at various points during the planning and development processes.

**COMMENTS/QUESTIONS TO AND FROM COUNCIL:**

The Council received comments from the audience.

**SECRETARY'S REPORT:**

**Ms. Durbin moved, Mayor White seconded, to approve the minutes from the Council's Public Session held on February 8, 2021 as presented. The motion carried unanimously (5-0-0).**

**Ms. Durbin then moved, Mr. Mezey seconded, to approve the minutes from the Closed Session held on February 8, 2021 as amended. The motion carried unanimously. (5-0-0).**

**TREASURER'S REPORT:**

Mayor White presented the financial summary for period ending February 28, 2021.

Noting that for nearly two years the house owned by the Village at 4602 Willard Ave. has had a rental sign posted, Mr. Dorsey inquired about efforts to find a commercial lessee and whether the Council should consider renting the property as residential. Mr. Mansfield explained that the real estate broker has reported receiving queries but no offers for consideration by the Council.

Mr. Dorsey also noted the money being received from Chevy Chase Land, subsidizing the bus service, is not being listed in the financial report as revenue. Mr. Shapiro explained that, after consulting with the Council's auditor, that money is being shown in the financial report as a subsidy to the bus (\$38,900 minus the amount obtained from Chevy Chase Land).

In response to Mr. Dorsey's question about the Council's interest income, Mr. Shapiro explained (1) that interest rates are extremely low at the present time and, (2) as a government agency, the Council's options for investment are limited by law.

The final public hearing was then held on the budget proposed for FY-22 based on a tax rate of \$0.04 per \$100 of assessed property value, the current rate. Comments were limited to three minutes per person; no one was permitted to cede their time to another speaker.

**Mayor White moved, Ms. Durbin seconded, to approve the FY-22 budget as presented. The motion carried unanimously (5-0-0).**

**Ms. Durbin moved, Mr. Pirnie seconded, to approve the proposed FY-22 tax rate at \$0.04 per \$100 of assessed property value. The motion carried unanimously (5-0-0).**

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

**Report from the Community Advisory Committee:** Mayor White reported the Community Advisory Committee met on Wednesday, March 3, 2021 and discussed the following:

- (1) The location of the Village Council election and whether judges and clerks are required by the Council's Charter.
- (2) Notice that the building owner will not improve the pathway to the Chevy Chase office building. Residents were encouraged to avoid that shortcut.
- (3) A suggestion that the Village shuttle bus continue to include the Westbard Giant even after a new grocery store has opened at Chevy Chase Center.
- (4) The brightness of the driveway lighting at 4620 N. Park, with follow-up to take place with a member of the 4620 board.
- (5) The revival quarterly lunches for the building managers in the Village.

The next meeting of the Community Advisory Committee will be held on Wednesday, April 7, 2021, at 5:15 p.m.

**Report from the Program Advisory Committee:** Mayor White reported the Program Advisory Committee met on Thursday, March 4, 2021. Suggestions concerned the following:

- (1) An Audubon bird walk followed by a casual lunch.
- (2) The distribution of white masks for residents, particularly children, to decorate, then hang across the width of the Center auditorium.
- (3) A seminar titled "Let's Organize Our Tax Paperwork".
- (4) A seminar on the history of orchids.
- (5) An art display titled, "Look on the Bright Side".
- (6) A Q&A on navigating vaccine websites.
- (7) Recruitment of volunteers to write letters to residents of Brighton Gardens.

The next meeting of the CAC will be held in May 2021.

**Report from the Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights (CCCFH):**

Mayor White reported the (CCCFH) met on Wednesday, February 17, 2021, and discussed the following:

- (1) A review of the documents, requested under the Public Information Act, regarding the Capital Crescent Trail Crossing at Little Falls Parkway and leading to the consensus that the desired information had not been provided. All documents received have been placed on the CCCFH web site.
- (2) The Zoning Text Amendment, 20-01 (ZTA 20-01), filed with the Planning Board, on whether solar panels can be installed on the agricultural reserve. Sixty local organizations supported the revised bill.
- (3) A recap of the Council Hearing on ZTA 20-07. During the hearing, 49 residents testified for two minutes each, with 22 people testifying against the ZTA. The 27 in favor were speaking as individuals who wanted affordable housing.

The CCCFH also met on Tuesday, March 2, 2021. Representatives from the County Executive's Office were present to discuss the 30-year Thrive Montgomery 2050 plan. Those interested should visit the CCCFH website.

The next meeting of the CCCFH will be held on Wednesday, March 17, 2021, at 7:30 p.m.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

**Update on the Community/Village Response to the Corona Virus:**

Mr. Mansfield reported the Council's ongoing, full-scale push for a vaccine clinic at the Village Center or the Center at Wisconsin Place, including by reaching out to County, State and federal elected officials. The State and County continue to prioritize communities considered underrepresented and disadvantaged. The Council will report new developments as information becomes available. **Following an initial motion from Mr. Dorsey that was later rescinded, the Council agreed to forward to all members any letters to elected officials.**

**Programs**

Ms. O'Neil reported that online classes, tours, lectures and tutorials continue, and summarized the offerings.

**Discussion: Publication of Candidates' Statements for Village Council Election:**

The Council reached consensus that The League of Women Voters would produce a publication including a photograph of each candidate and a statement from each that would be published as submitted, with no external editing. The purpose is to inform voters of their choices in the May election.

Mr. Mansfield obtained clarification from The League that Village residents acting as judges may witness the ballot count at the Village Center from a safe distance.

**Discussion: Village Security Measures:**

**The Council agreed by unanimous consent to refer the detailed proposal from Securitas to the Infrastructure Committee for review.**

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**Discussion and Vote: Fountain and Irrigation Maintenance Contract:**

**Mr. Dorsey moved, Mr. Pirnie seconded, to offer a three-year contract to Culler Irrigation Company for maintaining fountains and irrigation in the**

**three public parks and the house at 4602 N. Park at a cost of \$12,822 annually. The motion carried unanimously (5-0-0).**

**ADJOURNMENT:**

**There being no further business before the Council, Mr. Dorsey moved, Mayor White seconded, to adjourn the meeting at 9:22 p.m.**

Respectfully Submitted:

  
Paula Durbin