

TOWN OF BETHANY BEACH
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
JUNE 18, 2021 at 2:00PM

The meeting could be viewed on two internet platforms:

The Town's Website at: www.townofbethanybeach.com - click on the Government Tab, then go to the left side of the page and click on Live Video Broadcast

or

Go to our YouTube page at: www.YouTube.com/BethanyBeachGov

While this meeting is being broadcast you may send questions or concerns regarding topics on this meeting's Agenda to: questions@townofbethanybeach.com

Members present for the meeting were: Rosemary Hardiman, Mayor; who presided; Lew Killmer, Jerry Morris, Faith Denault, Bruce Frye, Joseph Healy and Patrick Sheplee.

Also present was: Cliff Gravier, Town Manager; John Apple, Assistant Town Manager and Molly Daisey, Town Clerk.

Mayor Hardiman called the meeting to order at 2:00.

Mr. Gravier advised members of the public how to access the meeting online and how to submit a comment.

Approval of the Agenda

Mr. Killmer moved approval of the agenda. Mr. Morris seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Approval of minutes of Regular Meeting held on May 21, 2021

Mr. Killmer so moved. Mr. Healy seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Approval of the Financial Report

Mr. Morris advised that this report covers the budget thru May 31, 2021. The Town is 16% thru Fiscal Year 2022.

Operating Budget Revenue

The Town has collected 47.7% of the budget revenue compared to 34.8% at this time last year.

Operating Budget Expenses

The Town has expended 13.7% of its budget expenses, compared to 12% at this time last year.

Recognizing that the report is subject to audit, Mr. Morris respectfully moved that the Council accept and approve the unaudited report. Mr. Killmer seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Mr. Healy asked that when the year end report is done, he would like to review the context to see where the Town stands for long term planning aspects. Where the Town is at the end of year, and what is coming up in the next five, and the next 5 to be able to look 10 years out. Mr. Morris stated that will be done at the next budget meeting.

Announcements

Mr. Killmer announced the passing of former Council Member, Mr. Jerry Dorfman on Thursday, May 27, 2021 at the age of 86 after a long and courageous battle with cancer.

Report from the Planning and Zoning Commission Meeting

Mr. Killmer gave a report on behalf of Mr. Boswell. The update of the 10-year Comprehensive Plan continues, including updating goals that were set in the plan, and adding new goals in the 2022-2032 Plan. This should all be done by the fall, and then go to the Town Council for approval.

Report from the Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Committee

Ms. Denault gave the following report. The Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Committee met on June 17, 2021. All members were present except for Mickey Hinman who was excused. Sgt. Patrick Foley of the BBPD reported that the PD noticed that several employees from the business next door were riding bikes to and from work that were not equipped with flashing lights, so the PD proceeded to equip all their bikes. As a result of their efforts, the owner of the business sent a letter of appreciation to the PD for “really helping to improve the safety for these kids when they have to ride home at night in the dark”. Sgt. Foley then stated that they conducted a surprise “pop-up” safety checkpoint that resulted in 25 bikes being stopped and equipped with flashing lights. He mentioned that Chief Redmon was able to acquire 300 lights via a grant for these safety check points. He went on to state that the PD, also via a grant, dedicates over 80 overtime hours during the summer months to educate the public on pedestrian safety tips. The PD also surveyed businesses and distributed pamphlets regarding safety tips for any of their employees (and public) who may bike to and from work. The PD has a large presence on both Instagram and Facebook where they publish safety and educational information to the public. The Committee asked if the State law requiring anyone under the age of 18 to wear bike helmets could be posted on there as it was felt that visitors may be unaware of this State law. John Apple displayed maps of various streets in town where road and signage improvements have been made or are in development such as the Collins Street pathway, proposed crosswalk off Kent Avenue at the library to Wellington Parkway. This walkway will include an RRFB system to facilitate pedestrian crossings., and upgrades to the crosswalks on Rt. 26 at the Wawa and in front of DiFebos. Mr. Gravier discussed several other projects under consideration such as proposing to the Town Council that an elevated walkway like the one at the Nature Center be constructed between 2nd St. and the walkway at Central and Rt. 1. This would allow people on the North side of 26 to avoid having to cross 26 to

walk up to the light. Town is still waiting for DP&L to provide electric to the flashing crosswalk lights on Route 1. Mr. Graviet also mentioned that Del Dot has become more amenable to working with towns on walkway installations and lowering speed limits on some town streets. The suggestion is to post speed limit signs of 15 MPH to give the BBPD some room to enforce speed limits. Mr. Rosenblatt made a motion to the Committee to offer a recommendation to the Town Council that the Committee endorses Mr. Graviet's two proposed projects, the pathway between 2nd and Central and for the installation of 15 MPH speed limit signage on some designated roadways throughout town. The Motion was unanimously approved by the Committee Members and a formal recommendation will be prepared and presented to Council.

The discussion then turned to the use of technology in helping to further educate residents and visitors on safety tips. We then discussed the development of a volunteer group to address a continuing campaign for Pedestrian and Bicycle safety. One recommendation was to utilize the mobile flashing signs with reminders for biker and vehicles to "share the road" and the need for everyone to always be aware of what is going on around them in terms of vehicle and bike traffic.

Report from the Town Manager

Mr. Graviet stated that in July, he will be suggesting to the Council the consideration to post lower speed limits on the residential speed limit signs, which now are at 25 miles per hour. Right now, tickets can only be written for speed over 25 miles per hour. The Town continues to get speed complaints on residential streets. We do go out and measure the speed and find out that maybe only 1% of drivers are going over 25 miles per hour, the rest being under 25 miles per hour. The problem is that the streets are not designed to accommodate vehicles traveling at 25 miles per hour. Lowering the posted speed limit to 15 miles per hour will also assist in writing tickets to those going over 25 miles per hour. Letting that be a reminder to travel more slowly. Especially in the summertime, the streets in Bethany are not equipped to handle the speed of 25 miles per hour. We will be vetting this with the T2 center from the University of Delaware and the Town's solicitor.

Yesterday at the Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Committee meeting there was a discussion regarding creating a pathway, similar to what is currently at the Nature Center, which is elevated where it needs to be, where there is marsh. A path that would go from west side of 2nd street to the east side of Central for pedestrian and bicyclist. That would connect Evans, Tingle, the Villas of Bethany West, and would allow them and the people in Lake Bethany to walk down to the east side of town using the new crosswalk at Rt. 1 and Central. This was something proposed many years ago by a former mayor. This would be a huge safety benefit for pedestrians and bicyclists. It's also a great accommodation for the residents that live north of Rt. 26. Hopefully this is something the council will favorably consider. We are currently putting together a grant request to send to DNREC to help fund (50%) of a plan we will create for this pathway and to restore the Dematatis and Walcek properties, which total of about 14 acres. A significant portion of the property contains phragmites. One thing that could be done to restore the area, and make the marsh more viable, creating a 'sponge' (something

phragmites does not do, but counters that) by killing the phragmites and replanting with native species in that entire area. At the same time, we will look at what we could possibly do with the Audubon Society to create an area that would attract birds, allowing for bird and nature watching. A path and restoration of the marsh are ways to make it more natural than it is currently. Again, a significant portion of the area contains invasive phragmites, which has basically destroyed the eco system there. More details will come once a grant review or plan and diagram are completed, possibly in July.

Rt. 26 is DELDOT's roadway. The Town will ask them to take a look at the arrows for bicyclist traveling on Rt. 26. DELDOT is going to be doing a very detailed, onsite assessment of Rt. 26 this summer.

The new wiring has been mostly completed at Town Hall to convert over to the new phones system.

We hope by the end of July to have 6 to 8 charging stations installed in the vicinity of Garfield and Pennsylvania Avenue!

Lake Bethany Land Spit

Unfortunately, we have not received the needed DNREC approval for this project to move forward. Next week we will ask the Mayor to contact our State Legislators and ask for their help before more trees wash into the Loop Canal.

Parking

As you know we have changed our Parking Regulations in our beachfront lots and street ends allowing residents to park there who display a residential parking permit. We said this was a trial to measure residential use and also to see what the impact might be on revenue. To date, and comparing data from 2019, overall meter use or pay to park use is up by 11%. Hopefully this holds through the summer.

Kent Avenue

Last month the Council passed a Resolution asking DELDOT to lower the speed limit on Kent Avenue to 25mph. I'm pleased to tell you that DELDOT has posted the new limit.

Public Works

Because we continue to compete with incredible unemployment benefits, we have not been as fortunate as would like in hiring seasonal Public Works employees. In 2019 we had 16 seasonal employees and this year we have 9. This has already had an impact in a number of areas that we are now literally working overtime to overcome. First and most obvious is the fact that we have not installed Mobi-mats at our beach access points and have not yet cleaned our beach. For those who are not aware we actually clean our beach 3 to 4 nights a week during the summer. We use a tractor and a specialized type of cleaner designed specifically for cleaning the beach. The cleaner itself is only 12 feet wide and depending on the width of the beach a cleaning can take between 2 to 4 hours. Again, because of staffing we have not been able to do a clean yet this year but hope to have it cleaned this evening.

This is also a time of the year when we use extra staff to clean many of our drainage swales on the west side of Route 1. Because we are short staffed we have contracted with a local company to bring their crews to clean these swales before too much more time passes. We will use the crews to complete these cleanouts and hope this alleviates some of the standing water issues we have begun to see recently.

We have a real need to increase seasonal staff and I'm particularly glad that we have scaled back our Special Events this summer because our lack of seasonal staff would have made set-up and cleanup after those events extremely difficult.

We have not stopped advertising in the local papers for help and we are going to begin to use some of the popular digital platforms to advertise for help.

Discussion, Consideration, and Possible vote on Setting a Date for the Town Council Election – Saturday, September 11, 2021 –12:00 Noon to 6:00 p.m.

Ms. Hardiman stated that under the Town Charter, the Town Election is scheduled to be held on the first Saturday after Labor Day at a time and place determined by the Council. Anyone wishing to file as a candidate for the election must file a written notice of intention (Application for Candidacy) in the Town Manager's Office at Town Hall no later than 4:30 p.m. on Wednesday, July 28, 2021. Ms. Hardiman made a motion that the Town Council Election be held on Saturday, September 11, 2021 from 12:00 Noon to 6:00 p.m. Mr. Morris seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Discussion, Consideration and Possible Vote on Appointments to the Election Board and Election Officers

Ms. Hardiman made a motion to approve the following individuals to serve as members of the Election Board and Election Officers. Mr. Morris seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Election Board

Charles McMullen, Chair
Chris Aumiller

Election Officers

Suzanne Evans
Andrea Gowetski
Jan Kinsella
John Gaughan
Carole Calef
Denise Folliard
Marissa Miller

Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Vote on Setting a Date for the Town Council Organizational Meeting – Monday, September 20, 2021 at 10:00 a.m.

Ms. Hardiman stated that the Charter requires an Organizational Meeting be held no sooner than 7 days after the Election at the next practical date. Ms. Hardiman made a motion to have the Organizational Meeting on Monday, September 20, 2021 at 10:00 a.m. Seconded by Mr. Sheplee it was unanimously approved.

Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Vote on the Purchase of a 2013 Chevrolet Silverado in the amount of \$27,500

This is for a used vehicle with very few miles with a trade in value of \$31,000, with a private sale value being between \$32,000 and \$35,000. Purchase of this will be split between the Water Dept. and the general revenue budget. This will replace a truck in the water department, and that truck will go to the lifeguards. After the season this vehicle will be cleaned and stored until the summer season, with the hope that the vehicle will last longer. Mr. Sheplee made a motion to approve the the purchase of a 2013 Chevrolet Silverado in the amount of \$27,500. Mr. Morris seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

There being no further business, Mayor Hardiman asked for a motion to adjourn. Moved by Mr. Killmer and seconded by Ms. Denault, the motion was unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at 2:41 pm.

Respectfully submitted:

*Molly Daisey,
Administrative Assistant*