

**Town of Forest Heights  
Work Session- 7:30 PM  
Wednesday, January 5, 2022  
Meeting Minutes  
Virtual Meeting**

**Call to Order: 7:30 PM**

**Roll Call:** CW Hines, CW Brownson, CM Barnes, CW Noble, CM Atkinson, CM Lilly, Mayor Washington present. CM Atkinson not presented. Quorum established.

**Moment of Silence:**

**Pledge of Allegiance:**

**Approval of Agenda:** Motion by CW Hines to approve the agenda and the minutes from December 15, 2021; CW Brownson asked if Council President Hines conducted the meeting on December 15<sup>th</sup>. Mayor Washington affirmed that it was chaired by CW Hines. He moved to strike himself from the minutes. Motion to adopt the agenda as amended by CW Hines; seconded by CW Brownson.

**Public Period:** None

**Staff Reports:**

**Report of Officers and Committees** – (Can be picked up from the Clerk office and is also available on the Town Website)

**Public Works:** CW Noble noted some inconsistencies on the speed humps and bumps, such as yellow vs white arrows. She asked if there would be consistency. Mr. Vaughn responded that the speed hump on Ottawa was done recently, and their consistency was to paint them yellow. They have put out twice for contractors. Some of the bumps will be replaced with humps. CW Brownson asked if the Public Works Director or the Town Administrator would be the person to ask about Goode. Mr. Vaughn said either him or the Town Administrator. CW Brownson asked about the process of reporting and picking up incorrectly placed bulk trash. Mr. Vaughn answered that it was the responsibility of the residents to read the newsletter and follow the correct procedure. If they do not follow, Goode sends pictures and shows why trash was not picked up. Mattresses should be covered with plastic. Next step is getting Code Enforcement involved. Code Enforcement Officer Mr. Hawkins answered that he gives them a notice and has them bring it back and correct it. If they continue, they get fined.

**Code Enforcement:** CW Brownson asked about the difference between vacant and unoccupied property. Mr. Hawkins explained that a vacant property is one that has not notified the Town about its continued use after a certain period of time upon leaving the property. It cost a fee to register it as vacant, and also to board it. CW Brownson asked about the status of a property on Seneca and North Huron. Mr. Hawkins answered that someone lives there.

**Ombudsman's Report:** CW Brownson inquired about the cancelled citations on the report. Chief Rease responded, saying that these were due to various reasons such as police reports or if the tags were stolen.

**Police Chief's Report:** CW Brownson asked if the permit system residents and the process for out of state tags were for the same thing and if the residents would be involved in the process. Chief Rease answered that the Council and residents would be involved. They have spoken to residents who have complained about fake tags and improper out of state tags crowding out parking for residents. The plan would have all residents register their tags with the Police Department to free up parking. The process of tracking down out of state tags on their own would be cumbersome and require an officer to stop the vehicle for traffic violations. Instead, they want to register vehicles to the owners/residents.

**Town Administrator:** CW Noble asked if the Project Manager started work. Mr. Robinson answered in the affirmative and that he was on the call. Mr. Robinson introduced Mr. John O'Connor as the Town's project manager and started on Monday, January 3. He clarified the job description, including spending and allocating the American Rescue Plan Act funding as well as assisting the Town Treasurer. Mr. O'Connor introduced himself and expressed his eagerness in working with the Town.

**Ward Reports:**

**Ward I:** CM Barnes noted that in a snow emergency, people are supposed to park opposite the side of the light posts so that vehicles have enough room to pass through. He also noted that it was not happening during the snowstorm and stated that the residents needed to be informed.

CW Noble commented that it was a surprise snowstorm and suggested that going forward the Town should place out a flyer about snow protocol. CM Lilly suggested using the resident alert system for snow emergencies. Mr. Vaughn clarified that live Christmas trees go out with Yard Waste, and artificial trees go out with bulk.

**Ward II:** CW Brownson reported that she attended a meeting with PG County's Denise Ross, and they wanted to pass on the information that there is an indoor heated pool for seniors and people with disabilities at the Southern Regional Technology Complex Center on Bock Road.

**Ward III:** CW Hines reported on the big success of the toy drive and food drive, and thanked the community for coming out, as well as the staff for their work.

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**Mayor's Report:** Mayor Washington announced the newsletter will be out shortly. The newsletter will now be delivered in English and Spanish.

**Legislation:**

**Resolution 01-22:** A Resolution to approve a spending plan for the Town's allocations of American Rescue Plan Funds; introduced by CW Noble; motion by Mayor Washington to waive the full reading; seconded by CW Hines; discussion.

CW Brownson asked why previous funds were listed, and what were behind the household assistance, internet access programs for seniors, and other line items. CW Noble addressed the use of funds. It was written prior to getting the funds. The purpose to allocate the funds were to show where it came from and where the money has been spent before getting into federal funding. This was a way to remind the Council that the Town has used COVID relief funds before. Mr. Robinson elaborated, stating that it should serve as a first draft to how the Town spent the CARES act funding as a prelude to how it will spend the ARPA funding. He went through the federal categories of how funding could be spent. This included infrastructure, which the CARES Act did not allow.

CW Brownson asked where the amounts and categories came from. Mayor Washington responded that they put out a survey on all social media, online, and on electronic billboards, and got little feedback. CW Noble also added that the plan needed to be flexible. The Mayor responded to requests that staff do the plan. The Mayor and CW Noble worked with staff to create the working document presented. CW Brownson responded, saying that she thought the resolution was to create a line item for ARPA funds. Mayor Washington stated that the resolution is to adopt a plan.

CW Brownson expressed her opinion that the survey was not advertised enough. Mr. O'Connor explained the spending plan process for ARPA. He noted that it was more effective to communicate to the citizens after a foundation had been implemented. Without that, it would be difficult to communicate specific strategies.

CW Brownson asked if the resolution could be amended to include funds for public outreach. Mayor Washington responded that it could be amended as many times as possible before or after passage. Mr. O'Connor added that the foundation allows for public outreach. He cautioned against overly specific funding at this stage.

Town Treasurer Mrs. Vaughn observed that there is another set of funding that is due to the Town in July.

CW Brownson stated that she "could not buy into the categories".

Mayor Washington proposed moving from household eviction prevention, citing redundancy. He proposed moving \$40,000 from Line 2.5-Household Eviction Prevention to Line Item 1.2-COVID testing. He also proposed moving \$10,000 from Line Item 2.5 to Line 7.1-Administrative Expenses. CW Noble stated she felt 2.2 and 2.5 were distinct items. CW Brownson added that rent/mortgage assistance may not be the only reason for eviction, citing court costs.

Mayor Washington suggested adopting the plan as is and amending afterward as needed. Motion to adopt Resolution 01-22 by Mayor Washington; seconded by CW Hines; discussion.

CW Brownson commented that the Town had a big infrastructure need. She expressed concerns that it might be spread out too thin. Mayor Washington elaborated on prioritizing projects such as Cree Drive. The Town Treasurer reminded the council that the infrastructure funding must meet clean water guidelines as established by the Treasury.

CW Noble noted that the town lobbying firm, Greenwill Consulting, is also seeking funding through the Maryland Legislature. Mr. Robinson elaborated on the Town's prioritization process for infrastructure. Vote; (6 yes; 1 no) motion passed.

**New Business:** Mayor Washington made a statement continuing the local state of emergency and announced the purchase of 1,500 COVID-19 home testing kits by the Town. Governor Larry Hogan has implemented a 30 day state of emergency following the latest surge. Mayor Washington announced that this was done quickly due to the time sensitive nature of the decision. He modified an existing proclamation in order to acquire the tests without council signatures, but also spoke with Council President Hines and CM Lilly. It will be received within 3-10 business days. The kits will last until the end of 2023, need to be kept in a cool dry place, and not be exposed to direct sunlight.

CM Lilly announced that the Town was proposing to organize a drive up event where residents could show ID and receive a limited number of tests. Usage would be tracked to avoid the same household repeatedly visiting the drive thru.

**Meeting Adjourned:** 9:07 PM