

# VILLAGE OF FRIENDSHIP HEIGHTS

## VILLAGE COUNCIL

MELANIE ROSE WHITE, *Mayor*  
MICHAEL MEZEY, *Chairman*  
BRUCE R. PIRNIE, *Vice Chairman*  
ALFRED MULLER, M.D., *Secretary*  
PAULA DURBIN, *Treasurer*  
MICHAEL J. DORSEY, *Parliamentarian*  
CAROLINA ZUMARAN-JONES, *Historian*  
JULIAN P. MANSFIELD, *Village Manager*

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## APPROVED MINUTES

### PUBLIC SESSION

### FRIENDSHIP HEIGHTS VILLAGE COUNCIL

Conducted via Zoom

February 14, 2022

#### **ATTENDEES:**

Melanie Rose White, Mayor  
Michael Mezey, Chairman  
Bruce Pirnie, Vice Chairman  
Paula Durbin, Treasurer  
Alfred Muller, M.D., Secretary  
Michael Dorsey  
Carolina Zumaran-Jones, Historian  
Julian Mansfield, Village Manager  
Beverly John, Recording Secretary from The Professional Documents Service

#### **CALL TO ORDER:**

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

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

The Council received comments from the following persons:

- Afsaneh Mirfendereski suggested that the Council proactively prepare an emergency plan for the Village.
- Barbara Tauben expressed concern about proposals/contracts or grant programs for services for the Village that may already be in place and provided by the County.
- Michael Dorsey noted that the COVID guidelines are changing, and suggested reconvening Open Session Council meetings at the Village Center.
- Alfred Muller stated the County may no longer require masks on or about February 21, 2022; and expressed condolences to Ms. Mirfendereski on the death of her mother.
- Carolina Zumaran-Jones recommended continuing to observe social distancing if Open Session meetings are reconvened in person; and recognized the work of Bruce Pirnie for spearheading the traffic safety initiative.
- Bruce Pirnie expressed appreciation for seeing the Chair in good health; and thanked Julian Mansfield for choosing the traffic safety signage.

- Michael Mezey reported the Village filed a notice of appeal concerning the 5500 Wisconsin Avenue project on January 27, 2022; announced that the Village testified before the County Council on the Willard Park budget, advocating for park expansion with a private house removed; and reported on his inquiry about whether the Village, as a special taxing district, would be eligible to benefit from State legislature House Bill 151 that expands a municipality’s authority to install STOP sign cameras and assess fines for violations. It was stated that Delegate Love indicated she would ensure “special taxing districts” would be included in the legislation if it moves forward.

**MAYOR’S ANNOUNCEMENT:**

Mayor White announced the first of two public hearings concerning the proposed Village Budget for FY 2023 would be held later during the Council Meeting. The second and final public hearing will be held during the Village Council Meeting on March 14, 2022.

The item regarding the possible provision of concierge services was removed from today’s lengthy Council agenda and will instead be discussed during a separate, Special Meeting of the Council before the next regular monthly Council Meeting in March.

The next distribution of COVID testing kits and masks will be offered at the Village Center on Wednesday, February 16<sup>th</sup> from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. No appointment is necessary.

**SECRETARY’S REPORT:**

**Dr. Muller moved, Mr. Dorsey seconded approval of the minutes as presented from the Council’s Public Session held on Monday, January 10, 2022. The motion carried unanimously (7-0-0).**

**Dr. Muller moved, Ms. Zumaran-Jones seconded approval of the minutes as amended from the Council’s Closed Session held on Monday, January 10, 2022. The motion carried unanimously (7-0-0).**

**Dr. Muller moved, Ms. White seconded approval of the minutes as presented from the Council’s Ad Hoc Committee Meeting held on January 11, 2022. The motion carried unanimously (7-0-0).**

**Dr. Muller moved, Ms. Zumaran-Jones seconded approval of the minutes as presented from the Council’s Communications Committee Meeting held on January 25, 2022. The motion carried unanimously (7-0-0).**

**Dr. Muller moved, Ms. Durbin seconded approval of the minutes as presented from the Special Council Meeting held on January 25, 2022. The motion carried unanimously (7-0-0).**

**Dr. Muller moved, Ms. Zumaran-Jones seconded approval of the minutes as amended from the Council’s Finance Committee Meeting held on February 1, 2022. The motion carried unanimously (7-0-0).**

**TREASURER’S REPORT:**

Treasurer Durbin presented a summary of the Council’s financial standing as of January 31, 2022. Total cash on hand in the General Fund was \$6,318,927.96. Total cash on hand in the Capital Improvements Fund was \$11,300.45. Total cash on hand in the OPEB Trust Fund Reserve was \$1,335.24.

**Summary Review of the Draft Budget for FY 2023:** Mr. Mezey provided a summary review of the draft budget based on a proposed tax rate of \$0.04 per \$100 of assessed property value.

There were no comments made concerning the draft budget. The second and final public hearing regarding the draft budget for FY2023 will be held during the March 14 Council Meeting.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

**Report from the Community Advisory Committee (CAC):** Dr. Muller reported that the Community Advisory Committee (CAC), chaired by Joe Bucherer, met on February 9, 2022. Discussion topics included:

- (1) A roundtable discussion on news and events in the community.
- (2) Maryland legislative action regarding sprinkler systems in high rise buildings.
- (3) The sale of Willard Towers.
- (4) A large sink hole near the Barlow Building.
- (5) Snow removal services, which were adequate. However, an icing issue was noted on North Park Avenue.
- (6) A smash and grab at the MyEyeDr. on Willard Avenue.
- (7) Mechanical and infrastructural updates.
- (8) Acknowledgment of the Village Center for the distribution of COVID test kits and masks.
- (9) Increasing the identity of the Village within the community.

The next meeting of the CAC will be held live on Wednesday, March 2, 2022 at 5:30 p.m. in the Village Center.

**Report of Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights (CCFH):** Mayor White reported on the January 19, 2022 CCCFH meeting. Discussion topics included:

- (1) A meeting of the Montgomery County Civic Federation on policing. An increase in violent crimes, robberies, carjackings, auto theft, and aggravated assaults was reported.
- (2) ThriveMontgomery is ongoing and could continue into the summer.
- (3) River Road as a growth corridor. A River Road Coalition is addressing the issue.
- (4) An update on the 5500 Wisconsin Avenue development.
- (5) A daycare center proposed for the Collections at Chevy Chase.
- (6) Willard Avenue Park.

The minutes from the CCCFH meeting can be found on the website of the Citizens Coordinating Committee. The next meeting of the CCCFH will be held on Wednesday, February 16, 2022 at 7:30 p.m.

**Report of Council Ad Hoc Committee:** Dr. Muller reported on the January 11, 2022 meeting covered in the minutes. Discussion topics included:

- (1) Litigation and insurance questions concerning the concierge and grant proposals were sent to the Village attorney, Ron Bolt, for comments.
- (2) Dr. Muller asked that a Public Meeting/Special Meeting be held prior to the March 2022 Council Meeting in order to update the public and full Council on the options for such a new Village amenity.

**Report of Council Communications Committee:** Dr. Muller reported, during their meeting held on January 25, 2022, that the committee had delegated the Village Manager to consult with a webmaster to research options for a website and report back to the Council.

**Report of Council Finance Committee:** Ms. Durbin reported the committee met on February 1, 2022: Discussion topics included:

- (1) A reserve issue that was recently raised prior to the February 1<sup>st</sup> meeting.
- (2) An overview of the increased income received by the Village.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

**Discussion of COVID Testing and Resources for Village Residents:** Mr. Mansfield reported the fifth distribution of kits and masks was held on Friday, February 11. The first two events involved the distribution of test kits, and the last three events involved the distribution of test kits and masks. A total of 4,800 masks and 2,600 test kits were distributed. The Village has approximately 1,200 test kits from the County in inventory. Additional kits are available from the County, if needed. Mr. Mansfield did not recommend purchasing additional kits, but recommended options for distributing the surplus of masks. A decrease was noted in the demand for testing kits. Purchasing pulse oximeters by residents, for home monitoring of their lung function, was suggested by Dr. Muller.

**Discussion of Revision of Village Website:** Mr. Mansfield reported meeting with a website consultant (Avik Nandy) who worked on the Village site in 2015, and analyzed the current Village website and presented recommendations for the Council's consideration. Limitations were noted with the current hosting company. A general website redesign is under consideration, and template options were presented. Mr. Mansfield recommended accepting the high-end option. Ms. Zumaran-Jones also reviewed the recommendations and templates and shared her preference for the "WordBench" theme and the WordPress hosting plan. She agreed with Mr. Mansfield to accept the high-end service noted in the consultant's proposal. A discussion was held concerning whether the commercial functionality of WordPress (versus Pantheon) would meet the Village's needs.

**Ms. Zumaran-Jones moved, Dr. Muller seconded the selection of the WordBench theme and the WordPress (WP Engine) hosting plan for the Village website, contingent upon the commercial component meeting the Village's monthly and yearly needs; and to retain Avik Nandy's services at the highest proposed level. The motion carried unanimously (7-0-0).**

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**Discussion of Assistant Village Manager Position:** Mr. Mansfield presented an overview of the revised job description. Additions to the job description included

some financial analysis and IT support. The position will not include the title of “Finance Director”. The recommended starting salary is comparable to that of a GS-13/1. The goal is to advertise the opening as soon as possible, with a goal to fill the position during the March 2022 Council Meeting.

Council members held a discussion concerning the skills needed for an Assistant Village Manager, to include possessing adequate written communications. The ideal candidate should have at least five years’ experience.

Revisions were also suggested to the job description such as being more specific regarding the IT support needed; adding backup support for drafting the Friday memos whenever the Village Manager is absent; adding regular inspections of the grounds/buildings and reporting the findings to the Village Manager; and generally editing some of the language. **Mr. Mansfield will consult with Mayor White on the recruitment process.**

**Discussion of Support for State Legislation on Tax Reduction for Retirees:**  
Mr. Dorsey led a discussion on the State legislature bill regarding tax reduction for retirees (HB420/SB405).

**Mr. Dorsey moved, Ms. Zumaran-Jones seconded support of HB 420/SB405 (“The Retirement Tax Elimination Act of 2022”); and to send a letter to the District 16 State Senator, State Delegates and County Executive to support passage of the bill. The motion carried by a vote of four in favor (Dorsey, Jones, White, Muller) three opposed (Mezey, Durbin, Pirnie), and zero abstained.**

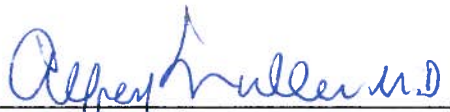
**Discussion of Village Charter Amendment to Expand Procurement Authority:**

**Mr. Dorsey moved, Dr. Muller seconded sending a letter to Delegate Korman accepting his assistance with drafting legislation that will enable the Village to address emergency needs in the future. The motion carried unanimously (7-0-0). During discussion, Mr. Dorsey reminded Council that the Village Charter does not presently allow them to spend over \$5,000 without seeking bids. even during an emergency. The Village Manager agreed that the Charter should be amended by the State legislature to raise this limit.**

**ADJOURNMENT:**

**Mr. Dorsey moved, Ms. Durbin seconded entering Closed Session at 9:28 p.m. pursuant to Maryland Code, General Provisions Article, Section 3-305(b)(3), to consider the acquisition of real property for a public purpose; and matters directly related thereto. The motion carried unanimously (7-0-0).**

Respectfully submitted:

  
Alfred Muller, MD, Secretary