

# 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

April 11, 2022

#### **ATTENDEES:**

Michael Mezey, Chairman  
Melanie Rose White, Mayor  
Bruce Pirnie, Vice Chairman  
Paula Durbin, Treasurer  
Alfred Muller, M.D. Secretary  
Carolina Zumaran-Jones, Historian  
Julian Mansfield, Village Manager  
Lt. Chris Hackley, Montgomery County Police Department  
Robert Bryant, Recording Secretary from The Professional Documents Service

#### **ABSENT:**

Michael Dorsey

#### **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:

- Roger Cochetti expressed appreciation that rumble strips were installed at Hills Plaza and South, and suggested the installation of rumble strips on every corner on S. Park Avenue. (2) Mr. Cochetti stated the new website is a notable improvement, but suggested the incorporation of a search feature and a way for people to leave comments for the Council. (3) Mr. Cochetti reported the D.C. Planning Office has released a new small area plan for upper Connecticut Avenue. He expressed opposition to the population density predictions included in the plan, as he believes there will be greater congestion. Mr. Cochetti suggested that Friendship Heights appoint someone to represent the Village to the D.C. Planning Office.
- Cameron Moody relayed his concerns that many Friendship Heights residents seem to be opposed to development, and about inaction that leads to empty storefronts.

**MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Mayor White announced a shredding truck will return to the Village on Tuesday, April 12, 2022 from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. The truck will be parked on Friendship Boulevard adjacent to the Village Center. Village residents will be able to take advantage of the free service.

The Village is again participating in National Prescription Drug Takeback Day on Saturday, April 30<sup>th</sup> from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Village Center. A Montgomery County police officer will be present to collect unwanted and/or expired prescription drugs for proper disposal.

**DISCUSSION - RECENT CRIME INCIDENTS IN THE VILLAGE**

Lt. Chris Hackley of the Montgomery County Police Department reported the recent purse snatching incident at 4701 Willard Avenue was classified as a robbery. The two suspects attempted to commit another robbery and were later identified. Arrests are imminent.

Lt. Hackley reported the police department has received five pickpocketing reports in the last 30 days. He strongly encouraged everyone to avoid allowing people into their personal space; encouraged ladies to keep their purses around their shoulders or in another spot on their person rather than carrying them in-hand; and encouraged people to carry their wallets in a spot other than in their back pockets.

Thefts of auto are the biggest crime trend each year in Montgomery County. Lt. Hackley offered statistics regarding automobile thefts from 2021, with 52% (119) of the 229 vehicles stolen in 2021 having the keys left inside. Thus far in 2022, there have been 60 stolen vehicles reported - of which 40 had keys left inside prior to being stolen. In addition, 48 catalytic converters have been stolen from vehicles, with catalytic converters from Toyota Priuses being the most highly targeted. Lt. Hackley urged everyone to avoid leaving their vehicles running or their keys inside; to keep their vehicles locked upon exiting; to perhaps have a daily alarm set as a reminder to lock their vehicles at a specific time; and for interested persons to investigate the installation of a catalytic converter shield on their vehicle. Valuables should be stored in the trunk of a locked vehicle or not at all. Prevention, the implementation of deterrents, and reporting incidents to the police department are keys to lowering the crime rate in the area.

There has been a surge in violent crimes nationwide. However, specific to the 2<sup>nd</sup> District of Montgomery County, the crime numbers from 2021 are being maintained or are slightly lower.

Lt. Hackley encouraged everyone to shred or securely store any documents that contain personal information, as there has been an increase in forgeries, mail thefts, identity thefts, and scams. He also suggested the use of a P.O. Box for more secure mail delivery.

A commercial burglary occurred at the Saks Fifth Avenue on Superbowl Sunday 2022 which resulted in the loss of more than \$75,000 in merchandise. Commercial burglaries also occurred at DePandi, AcquaLux Nail Spa, Potomac Pizza, the Bethesda Park Target and an adjacent nail salon. A witness was able to get license plate information for the suspects who burglarized Saks Fifth Avenue, which is across Wisconsin Avenue from Friendship Heights Village. As a result, three arrests have been made since Sunday,

February 13, 2022. The arrests of five additional suspects are being pursued. A suspect has also been identified in the nearby Potomac Pizza incident, with an arrest imminent in that case. The burglaries at the Target and adjacent nail salon have resulted in the identification and arrest of a suspect who was found with two firearms. Lt. Hackley reported there have been no reports of commercial burglaries during the most recent 30 days.

Following his presentation, Lt. Hackley answered questions posed by those in attendance.

- It is legal to carry a defensive spray, with no permit required to do so.
- Robberies are more often performed by groups rather than individuals.
- The police department is in need of additional officers, as the department lost 90 officers in 2021 (55 due to retirement and 35 as a result of resignation).
- The installation of cameras might serve as one way to deter crime.
- Lt. Hackley encouraged a resident who spoke about speeding in the area and the potential installation of speed bumps to email the Traffic Complaint Officer. Lt. Hackley will provide contact information for that individual to the Council for sharing with Friendship Heights residents.
- Anyone who experiences issues on the Metro should reach out to Metro Transit Police.

Dr. Muller suggested having the officers who use the Police Field Office on North Park Avenue park in front of the building for greater visibility.

Prior to departing, Lt. Hackley left a stack of business cards at the front of the room for those persons in attendance. He announced the police non-emergency number as (301) 279-8000.

**SECRETARY'S REPORT:**

**Dr. Muller moved, Ms. Durbin seconded approval of the minutes as amended from the Council's Public Session held on Monday, March 14, 2022. The motion carried unanimously (6-0-0).**

**Dr. Muller moved, Ms. Durbin seconded approval of the minutes as presented from the Council's Closed Session held on Tuesday, March 15, 2022. The motion carried unanimously (6-0-0).**

**Dr. Muller moved, Mr. Pirnie seconded approval of the minutes as presented from the Parks & Grounds Committee meeting held on Monday, March 21, 2022. The motion carried unanimously (6-0-0).**

**Dr. Muller moved, Ms. Durbin seconded approval of the minutes as presented from the Council's Closed Session held on Wednesday, April 6, 2022. The motion carried unanimously (6-0-0).**

**TREASURER'S REPORT:**

Treasurer Durbin presented a summary of the Council's financial standing as of March 31, 2022. Total cash on hand in the General Fund was \$6,399,321.94. Total cash on hand in the Capital Improvements Fund was \$11,303.04. Total cash on hand in the OPEB Trust Fund Reserve was \$1,335.54.

**Ms. Durbin moved, Ms. Zumaran-Jones seconded acceptance of the Treasurer's Report as presented for the period ending March 31, 2022. The motion carried unanimously (6-0-0).**

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

**Report from the Community Advisory Committee (CAC):** Dr. Muller reported the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) met on Wednesday, April 6, 2022. Discussion topics included:

- (1) The recent incidents of crime discussed earlier during the Council Meeting.
- (2) The installation of a traffic hump at Hills Plaza and South Park Avenue.
- (3) Proposed changes to improve the Village's identity (e.g., signage).
- (4) The state mandate for the installation of sprinkler systems in all buildings by a specific date.

The next meeting of the CAC will be held on Wednesday, May 11, 2022 at 5:30 p.m. in the Village Center. There will be a guest speaker from a consulting organization working with the Friendship Heights Business Improvement District (BID) Alliance.

**Report from the Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights (CCCFH):** Mr. Mezey reported the CCCFH met on Wednesday, March 16, 2022. Discussion topics included:

- (1) Details of the Westbard redevelopment project.
- (2) A proposal to permanently reduce Little Falls Parkway to a two-lane road - one lane in each direction - with the closed lanes serving as a space for pedestrians and cyclists.
- (3) Endorsing the idea of a dog park at the Willard Avenue Park site.
- (4) The establishment of groups to screen and ask questions of candidates running for County Council.

**Report from the Parks & Grounds Committee:** Mr. Pirnie reported the committee met on Monday, March 21, 2022. Discussions were mainly focused on modifications to the Page Park design. Input was offered by representatives from GreenSweep.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

**Update on 5500 Wisconsin Avenue Development Project:** Mr. Mezey reported on the Council's negotiations with the developer of 5500 Wisconsin Avenue. The Planning Board approved the sketch plan proposed by the developer in spite of objections concerning the building height and potential parking/traffic problems from the Village Council. The Council decided to file an appeal with the court. In order to negotiate an agreement, the Council has been holding meetings with the Donohoe developers.

**Discussion of Revisions to Page Park Redesign Project:** Jedd Narsavage of GreenSweep presented the proposed changes to the Page Park design plan via a live teleconference call. He also responded to questions and comments posed by Council members.

**Mr. Pirnie moved, Dr. Muller seconded approval of the modified design plan for Page Park; and to ask GreenSweep to prepare a final cost estimate for the project. The motion carried by a vote of five in favor, one opposed (Paula Durbin), and zero abstained (5-1-0).**

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**Discussion and Vote - Proposals for Village Infrastructure Assessment:** Mr. Mansfield requested and received a proposal of \$12,000 from A. Morton Thomas to perform an assessment of the Village's infrastructure. A. Morton Thomas conducted the previous study approximately 20 years earlier. The Village then advertised for additional bids and received one from Bengal Engineers for \$12,000, and one from Jeezny Sourcing for \$20,013.68. The assessment will cover the three Village parks as well as the streets, curbs, sidewalks, crosswalks, signs, storm drains, streetlights, the Village Center, and the house at 4602 N. Park. The assessment will also include the provision of cost estimates for recommended improvements and an implementation schedule.

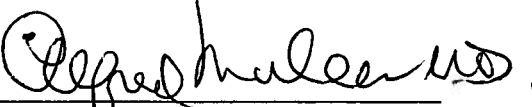
**Dr. Muller moved, Ms. Durbin seconded agreement with management's recommendation to contract with A. Morton Thomas to perform an assessment of the Village's infrastructure at a cost of \$12,000. The motion carried unanimously (6-0-0).**

**Discussion and Vote - Recognition Plaque for Cleo Tavani at Page Park:** Ms. Zumaran-Jones moved, Ms. Durbin seconded the planting of a tree in a prominent area of Page Park with a visible plaque in honor of Activist Cleo Tavani (the person in whose honor the park was originally named) along with the women who assisted her (Barbara Hendley and Barbara Tauben). **The motion carried by a vote of five in favor, one opposed (Dr. Muller), and zero abstained (5-1-0).** Dr. Muller suggested a more appropriate honor for Ms. Tavani would be the Elizabeth Scull Community Service Award.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

**The April 11, 2022 Council Meeting was adjourned at 9:33 p.m. with the unanimous consent of the Council.**

Respectfully submitted:

  
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Alfred Muller, MD, Secretary