

VILLAGE OF FRIENDSHIP HEIGHTS

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VILLAGE COUNCIL

MELANIE ROSE WHITE, *Mayor*

ROBERT PESTRONK, *Chairman*

MARTHA SOLT, *Secretary*

ROY SCHAEFFER, *Treasurer*

PAULA DURBIN, *Parliamentarian*

CHERYL TYLER

MICHAEL MEZEY

JULIAN P. MANSFIELD, *Village Manager*

APPROVED MINUTES

PUBLIC SESSION

FRIENDSHIP HEIGHTS VILLAGE COUNCIL

Conducted via Livestream

Monday, May 15, 2023

A video of the meeting can be found at:

<https://www.regionalwebtv.com/village-of-friendship-heights>

ATTENDEES:

Melanie Rose White, Mayor

Bobby Pestronk, Chairman

Martha Solt, Secretary

Roy Schaeffer, Treasurer

Paula Durbin, Parliamentarian

Michael Mezey

Cheryl Tyler

Julian Mansfield, Village Manager

Jason Goldstein, Assistant Village Manager

Robert Bryant, Recording Secretary

CALL TO ORDER:

The Council Meeting was called to order at 7:31 p.m.

Ms. Tyler provided an overview of 2023 election results for the Friendship Heights Village Council and thanked people for voting; noted the large turnout in the election; shared that the Council By-laws require that Council members vote to fill various positions; noted that residents spoke loudly and clearly in the election, desiring a fresh new look and ideas, resulting in four new people.

APPOINTMENT OF VILLAGE COUNCIL OFFICERS

The Village Council officers were appointed as follows:

Mr. Pestronk moved, Mr. Mezey seconded appointing Paula Durbin to serve as Parliamentarian. The motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Solt moved, Ms. Durbin seconded appointing Roy Schaeffer to serve as Treasurer. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Schaeffer moved, Mr. Mezey seconded appointing Martha Solt to serve as Secretary. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Pestronk moved, Mr. Mezey seconded appointing Melanie Rose White to serve as Mayor. The motion carried unanimously.

Ms. White moved, Ms. Durbin seconded appointing Bobby Pestronk to serve as Chair. The motion carried unanimously.

No motions were approved to appoint a Vice Chair or Historian. Therefore, those positions will remain vacant.

COMMENTS OF THE NEWLY APPOINTED CHAIRMAN

Mr. Pestronk offered opening remarks as the newly appointed Chair of the Village Council; he committed the Council to doing our best for the Village in a respectful and informed manner, to continue to address the quality of life in the Village and find ways to improve it, hoping to maintain interest from the community.

COMMENTS/QUESTIONS TO AND FROM THE COUNCIL:

- Mr. Pestronk noted a new opportunity for residents to provide comments of any length addressed to the Council; they should be hand written or in .pdf format, with resident's name, address, the date of the relevant Council meeting and topic of comment; addressed to Jason Goldstein, in person or emailed to info@friendshipheightsmd.gov, by Thursday 5 p.m. in the same week as the Council meeting; while typically not part of the official minutes of the meeting since no action will typically be taken in response to your comments, these comments will become part of the official record of the meeting and subsequently available on the Village website.
- Afsaneh Mirfendereski commented on the high voter turnout to which she and others contributed; welcomed the new hybrid formatting for Council Meeting; suggested a) publishing residents' comments in the Village newsletter and b) concerning Page Park, she noted that designs were submitted by lawn maintenance firms (who do not specialize in garden design, not qualified landscape architects), that permits were not sought, that the large amount of cement in the park was objectionable to many people, and commented that some residents of the Village would like to see Page Park restored to its original, natural identity in the presence of a qualified landscape architect.
- Roger Cochetti congratulated the newly elected Council members; commented that the web presence for the Village has matured 20 years during the recent two years; agreed with the Chairman's suggestion of allowing members of the public to submit written or even videographic

testimony; suggested allowing committees to also submit written or videographic testimony; and urged the Council to treat the overdevelopment of high-rise buildings in Friendship Heights as a serious matter.

- Ken Niles also congratulated the newly elected members of the Council; and urged the Council to move forward with patience and prudence in relation to the Page Park project to avoid unnecessary spending, given that over \$800,000 has already been spent; acknowledged that adjustments may need to be made, but tearing up the park would not be appropriate.
- Peter McCann raised concern that residents of the Village are not being consulted regarding major expenditures, suggested the Council do that, and requested the implementation of a formal procedure to seek input on large procurements going forward.
- Michael Dorsey inquired if residents would be allowed to weigh in during Old Business regarding Page Park; congratulated those who were elected to the Council; approved of Page Park renovations, and recognized the work of the prior Council.
- Prem Garg offered congratulations to the Council, commented on the Council's unanimous decision to acquire the Red House despite vocal opposition; and urged the Council to make the acquisition a useful asset to the community.
- Dan Dozier asked the Council to offer greater detail concerning the purpose of any Closed Sessions; and urged the Council to report more transparently about expenditures, as they are being paid using public dollars.
- Dr. Al Muller also congratulated the newly elected members of the Council; urged the Council to recognize the good qualities of the neighborhood; spoke in favor of preserving and adding new amenities; encouraged the Council to make use of the staff's historic knowledge and advice; and urged the Council to listen to constructive suggestions and operate with open minds while standing firm against some who think democracy is represented by those who simply speak the loudest and longest. He noted the quote outside the Village Center: "The greatest gift in life is the gift of friendship."
- Joan Wheeler urged the Council to give focus to the GEICO plan, as it will have a major impact on the community.
- Charlie Schwartz requested a detailed explanation about the Page Park project - specifically the status of the permit process and whether a permit has been granted; why work had to pause for a period of time; and what the additional costs will be. Mr. Schwartz opined that the contract is inadequate, and suggested having the contractor speak during an upcoming Council Meeting.
- Chris Knauer also congratulated the newly elected members of the Council; expressed concern about development plans for Friendship Heights and other organizations involved in development; expressed concern that shopping carts are being left along the street; and emphasized that the Village Council has influence on many matters.

- Joe Bucherer encouraged everyone to give the new Page Park a decent chance, as it is receiving greater use than at previous times; recalled the discussions about the park were exhaustive; and encouraged everyone to regularly attend Council Meetings to remain informed about all of the Council's discussions.
- Cameron Moody praised the Page Park renovations.
- Pat Donovan complimented Page Park renovations and appreciates the accessibility.
- Kathy Bovello expressed appreciation for the shrubbery in Page Park.

MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Mayor White did not offer any formal announcements.

SECRETARY'S REPORT:

Mr. Mezey moved, Ms. Tyler seconded approval of the minutes as amended from the Council's Public Session held on Monday, April 10, 2023. The motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Durbin moved, Mr. Mezey seconded acceptance of the minutes as distributed from the Parks & Grounds Committee Meeting held on Monday, April 17, 2023. The motion carried unanimously.

TREASURER'S REPORT:

Treasurer Schaeffer presented a summary of the Council's financial standing as of Sunday, April 30, 2023.

Mr. Schaeffer suggested looking at the Council's procedures for handling and spending money at the Municipal level, as well as possible changes concerning how the budget is presented and money is invested.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Parks & Grounds Committee Report: Ms. Durbin summarized the discussions held during the April 17, 2023 committee meeting. They considered equipment for the space in Page Park designated as a play area, and decided to leave the final selection of equipment to the Council. Ms. Durbin provided a verbal overview of the available equipment options, shared concerns about some space constraints and age appropriateness of equipment, and inquired whether the current Council is required to consider and abide by the recommendations of previous Councils and Parks & Grounds Committees. **The Council will discuss the question raised by Ms. Durbin.**

Community Advisory Committee (CAC) Report:

Joe Bucherer reported the following information from the May 10, 2023 CAC meeting:

- The CAC agreed to continue refining and tracking awareness to its identity report.
- The CAC will focus on Village safety as one of its primary topics in the next Council term.
- The CAC would like to reinforce its recommendation to consider adding speed bumps and signs in previously suggested locations - specifically North Park and Willard, Shoemaker and Willard, and Shoemaker and North Park.
- The next meeting of the CAC will take place on Wednesday, June 14, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. via Zoom. Mr. Bucherer encouraged members of the Council to attend.

OLD BUSINESS:

Page Park Project - Selection of Equipment for Children's Play Area: The Council agreed by unanimous consent to defer a decision concerning selection of the children's play area equipment for Page Park.

Update on Page Park Project: Mr. Mansfield reported receiving an email update from the GreenSweep representatives which was forwarded to members of the Council. The planting process is well underway. The irrigation system is scheduled to be installed during the week of May 22nd, and is expected to take up to two weeks to complete. The turf installation will then take place. Site furnishings will be ordered (e.g., benches for the perimeter of the park, patio tables and chairs, and trash receptacles). The materials are expected to be delivered in five to 10 days, and will be installed upon delivery.

The permit was applied for in late April 2023. However, it was found there is an additional requirement that was not previously disclosed by the County. The plans for the pergola must be signed and sealed by the licensed architect or engineer. Because GreenSweep does not have such individuals on their staff, assistance was requested from the Village's engineering firm. A response is pending.

Mr. Mansfield answered questions posed by Council members concerning the irrigation system; permit; and payment for the work. **Ms. Solt will meet with the Village staff to obtain a detailed report for presentation during the next Council Meeting.**

NEW BUSINESS

Village Representation on the Citizens Coordinating Committee of Friendship Heights (CCCFH): Mr. Mezey moved, Ms. Durbin seconded re-appointing Melanie Rose White to serve as the Council's representative to the CCCFH. The motion carried unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. Mezey moved, Ms. Durbin seconded adjourning the Council Meeting at 8:42 p.m. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted:



Martha Solt, Council Secretary