

VILLAGE OF FRIENDSHIP HEIGHTS

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*

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APPROVED MINUTES

PUBLIC SESSION

FRIENDSHIP HEIGHTS VILLAGE COUNCIL

Conducted via Livestream

Monday, June 12, 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

Atara Margolies, Planner with the Montgomery County Planning Department

Larissa Klevan, Master Plan Supervisor with Montgomery County

Robert Bryant, Recording Secretary

CALL TO ORDER

The Council Meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m.

CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chairman Pestronk offered preliminary comments concerning new, random, seating for Councilmembers and an agreed upon practice whereby Councilmembers will be recognized by raising their hands if they wish to speak after the public comment period.

Chairman Pestronk asked residents to sign in if they wish to speak, and they will be called in the order listed. Councilmembers may wish to comment after the public comment period. Mr. Mezey asked to speak about former Councilmember Bruce Pirnie.

With the Council's involvement with the 5500 Wisconsin Avenue development finished for the time being, expert counsel will be identified for any forthcoming land use issues as they arise for the Village. An attorney with land use experience had been engaged for the purpose of assisting the prior Council and the Village staff with work associated with the 5500 Wisconsin Avenue development. That engagement is considered complete. Village Manager Julian Mansfield will return with a recommendation to the Council during a future meeting.

Mr. Pestronk offered advance notice that, in addition to a meeting about Page Park that will be proposed at this meeting, another meeting will be proposed in the Fall to hear from residents about their views on development in the Village and nearby areas. He suggested that the community will be better able to present its views after having this consideration.

There would be no reports presented during the Committee Reports portion of the meeting, as no committees had met since the Council may on May 15, 2023.

The Village Manager has been asked to give a brief report at each Council meeting.

The Design Study Update was moved up on the agenda to occur ahead of "Comments/Questions To and From the Council."

Mr. Pestronk and several Councilmembers wish to schedule regular office hours each month to hear from members of the public. Mr. Pestronk announced his availability on Thursday, June 22, 2023 from 2:00 p.m. until 4:00 p.m. in a location to be determined. Anyone who would like to meet with Mr. Pestronk should email him at rpestronk@friendshipheightsmd.gov.

UPDATE - URBAN DESIGN STUDY

Atara Margolies, Planner with the Montgomery County Planning Department, introduced herself and Ms. Larissa Klevan before summarizing the work of the Planning Department. The Department develops: a) master plans (county-wide or for one specific area); b) reviews development applications; and c) conducts studies on various topics. Studies can be technical or wide-ranging. Studies do not recommend changes in relation to zoning, and do not recommend new policies to be implemented by the Council.

Ms. Margolies then presented an update on the Friendship Heights Urban Design Study from the county's Planning Department. The Planning Department has changed its focus from a site analysis to a more holistic study of Friendship Heights. The goal of the new study is to analyze how people currently experience Friendship Heights as an urban area. A community engagement effort will kick off in fall 2023. It has been 25 years since any field planning work has been done for Friendship Heights. The study's findings will highlight the urban design strengths and challenges of the community; and will inform any future planning efforts. Ms. Margolies differentiated a study from a sector plan. A study provides information without any recommendations. When the timeframe for a future sector plan is known, it will be published. The findings will tentatively be presented to the Planning Board on Thursday, July 13, 2023 (see agenda at: <https://montgomeryplanningboard.org/agenda-item/july-13-2023/>). Following that, no additional action will be taken until the fall. The analysis and engagement will then be wrapped up by the end of 2023; and a report will be published to the Planning Department's website in a downloadable format. Ms. Margolies' email address is Atara.Margolies@montgomeryplanning.org. More information on the study can be

found at: www.montgomeryplanning.org/FHUDS.

Ms. Margolies' presentation can be found at:

<file:///Users/marthasolt/Documents/Friendship%20Village%20Council/Planning%20Bd%20staff%20presentation%206.12.23%20updated.pdf>

Ms. Margolies then responded to questions and comments raised by the Council and the public:

- Martha Solt sought clarity about language noted on the Planning Department's website. Ms. Margolies responded. Ms. Solt inquired whether the Planning Board could provide an example of a similar study they performed for another neighborhood. Ms. Margolies referenced the downtown Wheaton study (found at: <https://montgomeryplanning.org/planning/communities/midcounty/wheaton/wheaton-plan/wheaton-downtown-study-2022/>).
- Michael Mezey asked whether the study and its results will mean greater density in the Friendship Heights area. Ms. Margolies stated the study will not result in recommendations. Rather, it will document the existing conditions and collect thoughts from the public.
- Roy Schaeffer inquired whether the Planning Department incorporates a market study into their process. Ms. Margolies explained a market study will be part of the sector plan. Mr. Schaeffer asked whether trends will be forecasted. Ms. Margolies explained that would depend on the study.
- Dan Dozier asked whether the Planning Department will also look at D.C. as part of their process. Ms. Margolies replied in the affirmative, and stated they are in regular contact with D.C.'s Office of Planning.
- Roger Cochetti asked whether any of the work for the study would be contracted out, or would be performed 100% by county staff. Ms. Margolies stated the majority of the work will be done by Planning Department staff members.
- Dr. Al Muller sought clarity about the parcels to be included in the study. Ms. Margolies indicated the staff will not be looking at specific sites as part of the process.
- Mr. Pestronk asked about the lead time if a sector plan was needed. Ms. Margolies stated the length of time to complete is typically two and a half years on average. There is usually at least six months of lead time prior to pre-engagement.

COMMENTS/QUESTIONS TO AND FROM THE COUNCIL

Chairman Pestronk announced that any members of the public may submit comments to the Council at info@friendshipheightsmd.gov. Please include your name, address, date of the Council Meeting, and the topic. Comments may also be dropped off in person at the Village Center. Please provide comments by 5 pm Thursday. Mr. Pestronk requested that the Communications Committee, at a future time, provide pros and cons for posting public comments online.

- Gaye Passes read, in part, a letter previously sent to the Council following the May 2023 election. Ms. Masses appreciated the green area in Page Park prior to the renovation, emphasized the change election, and wanted to ensure that the Council involves the community before making major decisions.
- Clara Lovett offered information obtained from another meeting concerning Willard Avenue Park; the Blue House, the Reynolds House, is now up for consideration for historic preservation. Some time ago, the County bought two rundown properties at the intersection of River Road and Willard Avenue. These properties could be an opportunity to expand Willard Avenue Park and provide a site for a dog park, if desired.
- Jean Allen relayed her disappointment that no one capitalized on extending the woods. She wrote the previous Council with concerns about the park and the excessive use of concrete. She then inquired whether it would be possible to reassess Page Park

by gathering input from residents about their preferences for the park.

- Joan Wheeler asked how the completion of Page Park will be determined; and what would happen if a large portion of the trees and bushes failed. Staff was asked to followup with Ms. Wheeler.

- Pamela Harris spoke in favor of honoring the nature and culture associated with Page Park; and would like to see a democratic process undertaken in relation to decisions about the park. She thinks that did not occur previously. She would like more respect for culture and nature.

- Lynn Connor suggested minor modifications that could be made for the Page Park designs. She raised a safety concern that children could fall down at the back of the park and suggested a natural barrier to prevent that. She noted that certain areas are over-planted.

- Roger Cochetti spoke in honor of preserving the checkerboard patterned high-rise and low-rise structures to ensure views of the sky are not lost. Mr. Cochetti stated the Friendship Heights area is the most densely populated area in the entire region. Therefore, he would be opposed to the development of high-rises, or an increase in the population density. Rather, he would like to see a library, arboretum, botanical garden, pickleball court, soccer field, playhouse, or movie theater implemented in the area.

- Michael Dorsey inquired about the return on the Council's financial investments for the month. Mr. Dorsey spoke in favor of the aesthetic appeal of Page Park, and stated that everyone was given an opportunity to weigh in on the matter. Mr. Dorsey would like to see tables and chairs placed in the park to encourage greater use.

- Channel Gutari inquired if there are any resources available to renters to limit rent increases.

- Pat Donovan spoke about Page Park with appreciation, but suggested having mulching or some other footing installed where the children's play area will be implemented until the equipment is in place. Also, Ms. Donovan expressed concern that dogs are beginning to ruin the grass and plantings in Page Park. She urged the Village to do something to control dog access at Page Park.

- Cameron Moody likes Page Park. He encouraged millennials in the area to join residents of The Elizabeth's for their meeting each month at an area restaurant. Others in that group reported favorably on Page Park. Mr. Moody also encouraged everyone to look toward the future and support development in Friendship Heights - particularly for the commercial corridor.

- Dr. Al Muller asked the Council to consider adding speed bumps to two more Village intersections in order to improve pedestrian safety - specifically at N. Park and Friendship Boulevard, and at N. Park and Shoemaker Farm Lane. Dr. Muller suggested the addition of more trash cans and pet waste stations at various locations; and that each condominium building add a pet waste station at the entrance to their building.

- Dan Dozier thanked Cameron Moody for his comments regarding density within the Village and believes many people live in Friendship Heights because of the urban character of the neighborhood. He suggested that the big issue will be Geico. Mr. Dozier noted there are no representatives from three buildings on the Community Advisory Committee - specifically from the two Highland House properties and The Carleton. The purpose of the Community Advisory Committee is to hear from the community.

- Michael Mezey recognized Bruce Pirnie for his four years of service and hard work as a member of the Friendship Heights Village Council.

MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mayor White invited everyone to join the annual Independence Day celebration on Tuesday, July 4th from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Village Center. More details will be available in the July 2023 newsletter.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Ms. Solt moved, Mayor White seconded approval of the minutes as approved from the Council's Public Session held on Monday, May 15, 2023. The motion carried unanimously.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Treasurer Schaeffer reported no decisions have been made about re-laddering the Council's Certificate of Deposit structure. Once the new Finance Committee is in place, they will consider the matter.

The Council is moving toward the use of a different payment system for processing approvals electronically. However, under the By-laws only two signers are authorized automatically, the Treasurer and the Chairman. **Mr. Schaeffer moved, Ms. Solt seconded the motion to add Melanie Rose White and Paula Durbin as authorized signatories for the Council's banking accounts. The motion carried unanimously.**

Mr. Schaeffer reported the funds for the sale of the development rights to the Red House, \$1 million, has been paid and is now in escrow. When the rights are formally transferred to the developer, which is several months away, the Friendship Heights Village Council will then receive payment.

The Fiscal Year ends in two weeks. The Council's 2023-2024 budget (effective July 1, 2023) can be found on the Home page of the Village Council's web site.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

No reports were presented.

VILLAGE MANAGER'S REPORT

Mr. Mansfield reported the development process has begun for Active Net for Village residents to sign up and pay for classes, programs, activities online. A series of design and implementation meetings will be held as the platform is developed. The goal is to have the program up and running in late July 2023 in time for the fall season of classes.

Mr. Goldstein reported the Council is further expanding the innovation and technological applications on the website. A streetlight outage map is being developed, and will be added to the website for residents to report light pole outages or damage within an estimated 30 days.

OLD BUSINESS

Friendship Heights Urban Design Study: Please see "Update - Urban Design Study" within these minutes.

Page Park Project: Jedd Narsavage of Greensweep, the Page Park contractor, provided a wide-ranging update on the project. Mr. Narsavage reported that residents had multiple opportunities to provide feedback on the Page Park project and that many changes were made based on resident input, some of which were explained.

The remaining items will be: the placement of tables and chairs for the patio (anticipated to begin on Tuesday, June 13, 2023); the placement of wood chips in the play area while a decision by the Council is pending on the equipment. Mr. Narsavage reported that dogs were ripping up the plantings. He recommended the posting of signs to keep dogs out of the plantings.

The permitting process has been the biggest frustration. Mr. Narsavage reports that he inquired with

Council and Village management at the beginning of the process as to what permits were necessary. He was told that no permits were necessary because Greensweep would be operating under the authority of the Village of Friendship Heights. Greensweep learned that that was incorrect information, and now they are trying to get a permit. The main problem is the pergola structure. Mr. Narsavage reports that they sent all information to the county's point of contact. Only after several meetings with the contact from Montgomery County did Mr. Narsavage learn that particular information needed to be provided in "signed and sealed plans" by a professional engineer. Greensweep is now working to obtain the necessary documents from a professional engineer. The engineer has been working on the project but, as of the date of the Council meeting, has not yet begun calculations. Mr. Narsavage reports that Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services will not conduct any type of review until all necessary information, including the signed and sealed plans by the engineer, are received. Mr. Narsavage listed all the information he provided to DPS. Installation of the handrails awaits approval by the county. Mr. Narsavage notes that these problems are a delay, but nothing prevents residents from using the park. He further added that, had Greensweep gone through the long process to obtain a permit earlier, that the community would not have a park now.

GreenSweep recently completed installation of the irrigation system and installed sod in the rear section of the park. Several benches and trash cans were also installed in various locations. A dogwood tree and a few plantings are still to be installed.

Following his presentation, Mr. Narsavage answered questions posed by Council members:

- Mr. Mezey asked about the status of the handrails (handrails will be installed after the permit has been issued; a few other things are being held up because of the permit);
- Ms. Durbin asked why a new irrigation system was necessary (because the old system is not compatible with the new plan);
- Ms. Tyler asked about how the new furniture will be held down (benches are anchored in place; while tables and chairs are movable);
- Ms. White asked whether the tables can be used by persons with mobility challenges (yes);
- Ms. Solt asked when the engineer's signed and sealed plans might be done; (not known);
- Ms. Solt asked about cost; at the beginning of the project, it wasn't anticipated that permits would be needed and that an engineer's report would be needed, and there are some handrails that weren't anticipated, to what extent is Greensweep planning on charging the Village extra for those things (there was one change order so far, for the ramp into the play area; Greensweep has a cost estimate for the additional handrails; that's the only possible outstanding additional expense out there; Mr. Pestronk added that the county could require changes that would involve additional costs, something we cannot know at this time; (Mr. Narsavage does not anticipate changes);
- Mr. Schaeffer asked whether the time frame to obtain the permit would be days, weeks, or months; (it is hoped that the engineer will have things ready in a few weeks for submission to the county);
- Mr. Schaeffer asked whether, besides that, there is anything else to be filed; (no);
- Mr. Schaeffer asked about the worst case scenario with respect to the county's requested changes; (not known);
- Mr. Schaeffer asked what the county's timeline would be after the engineer's report is filed; (30-45 days; until the application is wholly complete, the County doesn't look at any parts of it; other departments within Montgomery County will also have to review the application);
- Ms. Durbin suggested that the plaque in honor of Cleo Tavani, previously approved by the Council, be installed now;
- Ms. Solt asked whether dogs that are observed damaging plants in Page Park are leashed (yes);
- Mr. Mezey asked about foliage on the pergola and whether the stop work order prohibits that work; (no, but Greensweep is holding off on that); and
- Mr. Pestronk asked about the purpose of several pipes in the middle of the children's play

area; (an underground drainage system).

NEW BUSINESS

Scheduling a Special Village Council Meeting on Page Park: Various motions were raised for holding a Special Village Council Meeting in July 2023 for receiving public feedback on Page Park. All iterations of the motion failed for lack of majority.

Renewing Lease with Tenant at 4602 N. Park Avenue: Mr. Schaeffer moved, Ms. Durbin seconded the approval of a one-year lease extension with City Line Studios at a rental rate of \$3,000 per month - effective September 1, 2023 - with removal of Paragraph 23 as well as the words “of the” from Article VIII. The approval will be conditional upon a review by the Council’s attorney. The motion carried unanimously.

Council Committee Assignments: Mayor White moved, Mr. Mezey seconded establishing the Public Safety Committee as a permanent/standing committee of the Council. The motion carried unanimously.

Mayor White moved, Ms. Durbin seconded appointing the following Council Committee assignments:

- Communications - Martha Solt, Chair; Assisted by Paula Durbin and Mayor White
- Finance - Roy Schaeffer, Chair; Assisted by Michael Mezey and Bobby Pestronk
- Parks & Grounds - Paula Durbin, Chair; Assisted by Michael Mezey and Roy Schaeffer
- Public Safety - Cheryl Tyler, Chair; Assisted by Bobby Pestronk and Mayor White
- Personnel - Melanie Rose White, Chair; Assisted by Michael Mezey and Martha Solt

The motion carried unanimously.

Appointment of Members to the Community Advisory Committee (CAC): Mayor White moved, Ms. Durbin seconded reappointing the current Community Advocacy Committee members to a two-year term renewal. Those persons included:

Joe Bucherer 4601 North Park Ave.
Cameron Moody 4601 North Park Ave.
David Churchill 4515 Willard Ave.
William Corey 4620 North Park Ave.
Sheila Footer 4615 N. Park Ave.
William Lewis 4620 North Park Ave.
Ken Niles 5500 Friendship Blvd.
Ethel Pacheco 5500 Friendship Blvd.
Sandra Schwarzbart 4701 Willard Ave.
Evan Smith 4701 Willard Ave.

The motion carried unanimously.

Mayor White moved, Ms. Durbin seconded appointing Cheryl Tyler as the Council’s liaison to the Community Advisory Committee. The motion carried unanimously.

Repair and Paint Village Center’s Exterior Walls: After sending the project out to bid, six proposals were received for repairing and painting the Village Center’s exterior walls.

Mr. Mezey moved, Ms. Durbin seconded accepting the bid from Bloomes Contracting to perform the work at a cost of \$36,825. The motion carried unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

The June 12, 2023 Council Meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent at 10:16 p.m. A Closed Session was not required following the Public Session.

Respectfully Submitted:

 7/19/2023

Martha Solt, Council Secretary

Addendum to Minutes of the Friendship Heights Village Council Meeting
June 12, 2023

Minutes of the meeting of the Friendship Heights Village Council dated June 12, 2023 are a correct representation of what occurred at the meeting. After that open council meeting, Village staff, Council Members Mezey, Durbin, and Pestronk, Mr. Jedd Narsavage, Vice President of Greensweep (the contractor used for renovation of Page Park), and Chris Allen, from Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services met concerning Page Park.

At that meeting:

- Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services (DPS) directed the Village of Friendship Heights to close Page Park to public use. ***This information conflicts with portions of the Village Council minutes that indicate that Page Park is open to public use.***
- Tables and chairs are to be removed from Page Park to discourage public use of the park. ***This conflicts with portions of the Village Council minutes that describe the condition of Page Park.***
- Page Park will remain closed until all DPS requirements are met.