

Village of Friendship Heights
May 19, 2025 Meeting Transcript

[00:00:42.11] - Speaker 3

My name is Francine Klein, and we're here today to start the new council. I want to thank everyone who is here, including everyone who served on the former Council. It's a pleasure to see you and to know that the business will continue. My role tonight is to handle the election of officers, and we'll be selecting seven officers tonight: mayor, chairman, vice chairman, secretary, treasurer, parliamentarian, and historian. So I'm going to start with the position of mayor, and I'm going to ask if there's a nomination from the council for the position of mayor.

[00:01:47.00] - Speaker 4

Yes, there is. I am very proud to nominate a truly dedicated public servant, Roy Schafer, for mayor.

[00:01:54.12] - Speaker 3

Thank you, Martha. Is there a second to that nomination?

[00:02:00.04] - Speaker 2

I second.

[00:02:01.29] - Speaker 3

And that is Allison All. Thank you, Allison. Is there any discussion? Hearing no discussion, I move to a vote on the selection of Roy Schafer as mayor. All in favor, raise your right-hand and say Aye.

[00:02:19.17] - Speaker 4

Aye. Aye.

[00:02:22.12] - Speaker 3

Carries unanimously, or is there a negative? You abstain. Okay. 6, Yays, and one abstention. Next, we move to the position of chairman. Is there a nomination for a position of chairman?

[00:02:45.15] - Speaker 7

I nominate Martha Salt.

[00:02:50.17] - Speaker 3

Thank you. Roy. Roy Schafer nominates Martha Salt. Is there a second for that?

[00:02:58.25] - Speaker 8

I second the nomination.

[00:03:00.19] - Speaker 3

Thank you, Vic Baisle. Any discussion? Hearing none, I ask that there be a vote. On Martha Salt as chairman. All in favor, raise your hand and say, Aye. Aye. Aye. Anyone saying nein or abstaining? No. Okay, carries. Next, we get to vice chairman. Is there a nomination for vice chairman?

[00:03:41.24] - Speaker 8

I nominate Francine Klein.

[00:03:46.03] - Speaker 3

Thank you, John. Is there a second for that nomination?

[00:03:49.26] - Speaker 4

A second. Martha Sold.

[00:03:51.19] - Speaker 3

Thank you, Martha. Any discussion? Hearing none. I call for a vote. All in favor, please raise your hand and say, Aye. Aye. Aye.

[00:04:05.07] - Speaker 4

Thank you.

[00:04:13.11] - Speaker 3

Next, we have the A Nomination for the Position of Secretary. Is there a nomination for the position of Secretary?

[00:04:21.03] - Speaker 4

Aye. Allison Alt nominate Vik Baisal for Secretary.

[00:04:24.13] - Speaker 3

Allison Alt nominates Vik Baisal.

[00:04:28.00] - Speaker 7

I second that nomination.

[00:04:29.20] - Speaker 3

Thank Thank you, Roy. Is there any discussion of the vote? Any discussion of the nomination? No. Anyone in favor? Raise your hand and say yay. Yey. Yey. Carries. Next is the position of Treasurer.

[00:04:50.28] - Speaker 7

I nominate John Conlo.

[00:04:53.24] - Speaker 3

Thank you, Roy. Is there a second? Yes. Al? Al Mulish seconds. Any discussion on the nomination? Hearing none, I ask for a vote on the nomination. All in favor say yay.

[00:05:14.22] - Speaker 4

Yey. Yey.

[00:05:16.08] - Speaker 3

Thank you. Next, we get to Treasurer. We just did Treasurer, sorry. Parliamentarian. Is there a nomination for parliamentarian?

[00:05:34.04] - Speaker 8

Yes. I nominate Allison Alt.

[00:05:37.16] - Speaker 3

Thank you, John. Is there a second? I second the nomination. Thank you, Vick. Any discussion about the nomination? All in favor say yay. Yay. Thank you. Finally, we get to Historian. Any nomination for the position of Historian?

[00:06:05.23] - Speaker 4

I, Allison.

[00:06:06.18] - Speaker 2

I'll nominate my neighbor here, Al Mueller for Historian.

[00:06:11.17] - Speaker 3

Thank you, Allison. Is there a second? I second the motion. Thank you very much, John. Is there any discussion of the nominee? Hearing none, I call for the vote. All in favor say yay. And it carries. That's my job here tonight with the election of Mayor Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary Treasurer, Parliamentarian and historian. I turn leadership of the meeting over to the chairman, Martha Salt. Thank you, Martha.

[00:06:57.10] - Speaker 4

Thank you very much. I I can speak for everyone. We're all very happy to work with each other and working with the residents of Friendship Heights and happy to work with the staff. We look forward to a very productive two years. There is a lot on our agenda, and we will be getting right to it. The second item on our agenda is comments from the public to the council. We'll be using the usual format. If you've signed up, we will call your name and three minutes at the microphone. Other first name I have, excuse me, is Roger Cucetti.

[00:07:51.29] - Speaker 6

Thank you very much, Roger Cuceti at 5,500 Friendship Boulevard. My comments will be brief. They're not substantive. They're procedural. Of course, first, congratulations to all of you. We now get to watch you guys cooperate with each other and solve problems, whereas we can just stand up and throw out crazy ideas and criticize you for not doing things. So our life is easy, your life gets complicated. My suggestion is I've made before, but I think it's appropriate at the start of this new council, to not only allow, but to encourage and facilitate written comments, or

you could call written testimony. There are three benefits in my judgment to having written testimony. Number one, you may not have to listen to me every month because I may well put my comments in writing. Number two, it permits people who can't come to the meetings or connect on Zoom to participate. Number three, it permits us to avoid the three-minute limit, although there should be some limit on the length of submissions. What's key to doing it, however, is not making it secret. Testimony should be public and easily accessible to anybody who goes to the website or has has an interest.

[00:09:30.13] - Speaker 6

I hope you'll consider it. I think there are benefits all the way around for everyone by not only allowing but encouraging written testimony. Thanks very much. Good luck to all of you.

[00:09:45.18] - Speaker 4

Thank you. I can assure you we will seriously consider your suggestion. Dan Dozier.

[00:09:59.21] - Speaker 2

First First, I want to congratulate. I'm Dan Dozier. I live in the Carlton, and congratulate the newly elected council, and thank the previous members for their service. The second thing is I want to echo Roger's suggestion. I think it's a really good idea to encourage written submissions, but I add a caveat to it. The council ought to respond to those suggestions rather than it disappearing into the neither, either. And in particular, it's difficult to respond, perhaps to verbal suggestions, comments here, people, but it isn't so difficult to respond to writing. So at the very least, I think the council ought to respond to the written suggestions. And again, congratulations. Thank you.

[00:10:52.12] - Speaker 4

Thank you. I'll respond to you later. Bobby Pestrung.

[00:11:04.26] - Speaker 2

Good evening. Congratulations to you all. As I've mentioned to most of you, I'd be happy to talk with you offline to share insights and observations as it might be helpful. I live at 4701 Willard Avenue. The village invests hundreds of thousands of dollars in certificates of deposit every year, and I believe greater care should be exercised with paperwork associated with these investments. This council might wish to receive regular information about these investments as they mature. So I make three points in this regard. First, exercise caution if asked to sign

documents related to the village's investments in certificates of deposit. Second, there is an unfulfilled request for public documents from the village. And third, there's been a failure to inform authorized village Council members and Finance Committee members about a reinvestment of a certificate of deposit, which matured on May seventh. Regarding the first point, the village may invest funds in certificates of deposit not needed immediately for either the operating or capital budgets. Other options are available for funds needed for those budgets. One or more members of this council may be authorized by the Village Council to interact with Mr. Brian Cusky, who at the present time manages the investment of Village funds in certificates of deposit.

[00:12:32.18] - Speaker 2

The paperwork one or more of you may be asked to sign, if it's identical to paperwork I was asked to sign, has errors in it. The village is misidentified and characterized, and the types of investments which can be made by Mr. Cusky are contrary to current and previous village policy. Before you sign the paperwork, digitally or otherwise, confirm that these errors have been corrected. If they can't be corrected, ask the village manager It is my initiative to identify another broker to handle these investments. Other brokers exist. The current investment policy specifies that the village manager should have a list. Regarding the second point, consistent with village policy, I asked the village manager for a copy of the present document which Council member Schafer signed with Mr. Cusky. I had previously informed him and other Council members of the errors noted above. Mr. Schafer had suggested that I share the paperwork publicly on a previous occasion. The village manager informed me that he's not authorized to see the document. Mr. Cusky won't release the document without authorisation from Mr. Schafer. Mr. Schafer is apparently not given that authorisation. The document has not been released. The document isn't a private arrangement between Mr. Schafer and Mr. Cusky or his firm, it's a public document.

[00:13:49.20] - Speaker 2

I ask this council to assure that document is released. Regarding the third point, following a problem of notification with maturing CD last fall, Mr. Schafer committed publicly at a Finance Committee meeting to inform Finance Committee members when a future CD matured. That notification never took place with a CD which matured since then on May seventh. Three council members were authorized by the previous council to oversee investments and certificates of deposit, Mayor White, Mr. Schafer and me. I never received notification from Mr. Schafer about maturing certificates or his plan to reinvest the funds in a new certificate of deposit. I suggest that present council I'm sure the present investment policy is followed and that members of the current Council and Finance Committee are kept up to date on maturing CDs and any

recommendations to reinvest them. Aside from certificates of deposit, other investment options are available for these funds. At the suggestion in previous meetings from Mr. Cuceti, I've sent a copy of these comments to the info at friendshipheightsmd. Gov, so that all these comments I know will be distributed to you. Again, thank you. We'd be happy to talk further with you about my comments.

[00:15:05.09] - Speaker 5

Madam Chair, could we possibly have a fuller discussion of this? Because I'm not aware of everything the former chairman just said. Could we possibly have it on the agenda next time?

[00:15:22.01] - Speaker 4

We can look into it. I'm wondering if we can resolve this offline, though. Thank you. Mr. Dorsey.

[00:15:41.27] - Speaker 1

Mike Dorsey, 4620. First, I want to congratulate Dr. Mueller. To go up against seven people on a ticket, a gang of seven, and to come out on top the way you did with 251 is outstanding. It's outstanding. And what I would say is that whenever seven people have to come together to try to put one person down, it's not a good look. For the village. Seven people, eight people running for seven positions, and you need seven of you, pretty weak. However, so I just want to read to you to something the Supreme Court said in 1964, New York Times Company versus Sullivan. Justice Brennan wrote, In our profound national commitment to the principle that debate on public issues should be uninhibited, robust, and wide open, and that it may well include vehement, caustic, and sometimes unpleasantly sharp attacks on government officials. So what I'm saying to you is When seven people have to come together to run against one, I don't respect you six. Now it's the gang of six, not the gang of seven. And so I don't respect you. And from what I just heard there, I don't trust you. So at every meeting, I will be here, and I will call you out whenever it's appropriate, and I will use names.

[00:17:25.16] - Speaker 1

At the last council meeting, a resident stood up and said, We shouldn't use What's his name? Well, I'm going to name names when it is appropriate. Now, what bothers me the most is if you'll target one man to push him aside or keep him down, what will you do? Who's your next target? Who's your low-hanging fruit? Is it our staff? That's a question. Yeah, you'll sit there like that. That's why I don't respect you and I don't trust you.

[00:18:04.12] - Speaker 4

Yes.

[00:18:07.20] - Speaker 3

Sir, I'm sorry we've never had a chance to talk. You don't know me. You've never been to a meeting. That's okay with me. Yeah, it is okay. It is okay with me that I haven't been to a meeting. I intend to learn the way I've learned my whole life. I've had a career of service for 50 years in public service, and I ran not to put anyone down, but to lift this community up, which I love and which I am dedicated to. I'm the board president at the Elizabeth, and I did not join with these other fine people to put anyone down. I joined to help this community continue to thrive, and that's what I'm dedicated to doing. So thank you very much. I'm sure you'll get to know me better, and you'll see that I have as much integrity and desire to have us do well as you do. So thank you very much..

[00:19:07.16] - Speaker 5

Madam Chairman, I would like to point out that there were unpleasant things said in the campaign, but the campaign is over, and our job, each of us, is to come together and work as a team to try to do what is best for the village, and I intend to do that.

[00:19:26.08] - Speaker 4

Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you. I think we're all It's an agreement. I think we're ready to move on to the Treasurer's report. Hi.

[00:19:43.29] - Speaker 8

Very briefly here, our operating budget for the 10 months through April is in pretty good shape. Revenues are up 267,000 from our budget estimates. Expenditures are down, 210,000 from budget estimates. So all told for fiscal year 25, thus far, estimates are that we have a \$477,000 surplus over budget based on our results through April 30th. The next two months will tell the full story, but things are looking pretty good on the operating side. Revenue gains are primarily due to unanticipated increase in income tax revenue. The increase is probably largely due to people taking gains on stock market earnings. Going forward in the next fiscal year, the revenue picture is probably more worrisome, especially in DC and Southern Maryland, where so many federal employees and contractors are losing their jobs. On the expenditure side, across the board, many of our expenditures are coming in under budget. Leading expense savings so far this year compared to budget estimates include the police patrol, \$67,000 under budget, bus

contract, \$12,000 in savings, center special events, \$12,000 in savings. We're doing pretty good overall on the expenditure side as well. On the capital side, we spend approximately \$47,000 through April.

[00:21:21.03] - Speaker 8

That includes the replacement of the AC unit in the village center, among other small items. Going forward, we still have a lot of work to do to develop a more robust multi-year capital plan and budget. In terms of reserve funds, our total reserves as of April 30th are approximately 3.5 million or 400,000 over the 3.1 million that we started the year with, and that largely reflects the positive budget results I just mentioned. That number will likely go up by another million dollars this month, reflecting the funds we received from Donohoe for the village's sale of development rights to the 5,500 Wisconsin Avenue project. That's basically my report. Any other comments?

[00:22:13.26] - Speaker 5

Madam Chair, I believe, if I understood you correctly, that we will be getting the million dollars. We have gotten it. We got it last Monday. Sorry, Mr. Meesey has left. He negotiated that when they were offering \$250,000 dollars. So it shows what persuasion can occur. And as far as I know, the total amount in our combined reserves is something like, I think you said \$4.5 million. I hope that going forward, and I know you just inherited this, that you will let the council, and more importantly, the residents, know how much money we have at each meeting and also how much is in each CD. I think Mr. Perstrunk's comments were aimed at trying to find out when the CDs run out and then leave it not to the Treasurer, with all due respect to the Treasurer, but to the entire Council, I would hope the Treasurer will advise what protected investment it should be. But I think it would be nice if the entire Council approved where the money goes. And thank you for your report which you just inherited.

[00:23:34.11] - Speaker 4

And we passed an investment policy that addresses some of what you're recommending at the last meeting. The next item on the agenda is approval of the minutes from the April 14th Council meeting. And at that time, I was the secretary, so I move that the Council adopt the minutes of April 14th.

[00:24:02.01] - Speaker 7

I'll second.

[00:24:04.22] - Speaker 4

I'll call for a vote to approve the minutes, and I believe a number of people were not there, so I'll start with the call for the vote. Those who approve say yes, yes, two, and no. Abstain. Abstain.

[00:24:30.15] - Speaker 5

The rest of us were not there, so I think the proper thing would be to abstain, and you and the mayor.

[00:24:39.12] - Speaker 4

Thank you. For those who want to abstain, can you raise your hand? It's not clear how you're voting, John. Well, I probably. Okay, thank you. It's forward. The next item on our agenda is discussion vote on reappointing the Ad-Hoc Committee on Climate Change and Environment. And as it's true for every committee, the mayor has the authority to appoint or reappoint members of the Ad-Hoc Committee on Climate Change and Environment. Those members are Patricia Kenessa, Chris Nauer, Sonja Starns, and Thomas Brodie. That's a nomination from the mayor. Does the council approve? So I'm calling for a vote. Those who say approve, say yes.

[00:25:41.15] - Speaker 5

Yes. Okay.

[00:25:42.22] - Speaker 7

Thank you. Yes. That does not close out the nominations. We knew that the existing members wanted to continue, so we're doing that. But if anybody is interested in joining the Climate Change and Environment Committee, just please submit a brief statement of interest, maybe some biographical information to the Village Manager, and we can consider that at the June meeting.

[00:26:10.19] - Speaker 5

I'm sorry. We can consider it while I couldn't hear you.

[00:26:13.27] - Speaker 7

We'll consider any additional expressions of interest in joining the committee we'll take up in June. So this does not close off the nomination.

[00:26:23.08] - Speaker 4

Thank you. We'll move on to the next item, and we have a number of what I call housekeeping matters. So the first relates to our representative on the Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights. And I move that Mayor Roy Schafer take up this position. Our prior mayor, Melanie White, did that for many years. So I move that Roy take that position. Does anyone want to second that? I second. Francine seconds. Is there a discussion? No. Okay, I'll call for the vote to appoint Mayor Roy Schafer as the Village of Friendship Heights, Representative to the Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights. All those in favor, raise their hand and say yes. One abstinent. And six, yes. So it passes. The next item is to move to Appoint the Mayor, Chairman and Treasurer as Signers for Financial Accounts. I make that motion. Is there anyone seconding? Thank you. I call for the vote to appoint the Mayor, Chairman and treasurer as Signers for Financial Accounts for the Village. So all in favor say yes. Any nos or abstains? Thank you. That's unanimous. We're going to proceed with a few committees. Not all the committees that exist in the village or will exist are going to be addressed tonight, but some of them we'd really like to get them staff to keep moving.

[00:28:37.17] - Speaker 4

I believe the mayor has a nomination for the Finance Committee.

[00:28:44.10] - Speaker 7

Should I do them All or one at a time?

[00:28:47.05] - Speaker 4

All the names.

[00:28:48.01] - Speaker 7

No, all the committees.

[00:28:48.28] - Speaker 4

One committee at a time, please.

[00:28:51.03] - Speaker 7

For finance, obviously, the chairman, I'm nominating the Treasurer John Conlo. I'm also appointing myself as the prior and Council member Alt.

[00:29:04.21] - Speaker 4

Thank you. The committee would approve that as a whole. Is there any discussion on that? Okay, thank you. All who approve say yes. Yes. Yes. Thank you. That's seven to zero. Mayor, I think you have a nomination for Parks and Grounds.

[00:29:35.27] - Speaker 7

For Parks and Grounds, I'm appointing as Chairman Council member Sult, also myself. Council member Sult, and I are the two returning Council members, so we have the most institutional knowledge of what's going on with that. Also appointing Vic Baisal as the third member.

[00:29:55.01] - Speaker 4

Thank you. All those in favor say yes. Yes.

[00:30:01.01] - Speaker 5

Excuse me? Yes. The chair for that committee was not specified as- Council member Solt.

[00:30:05.27] - Speaker 7

Martha Solt.

[00:30:07.07] - Speaker 4

Okay. Thank you. We have one more committee for the evening, and that is public safety.

[00:30:20.24] - Speaker 7

Okay. I'm nominating for Chair Francine Klein, and I'm also recommending Council members Muller and Alt.

[00:30:30.20] - Speaker 4

Thank you. All those... Is there a discussion? Okay. All those in favor say yes. Yes. Thank you. I think we're good. That is the end of our formal meeting. I would like to really express my desire to be open to all of you. Please, we'd appreciate you sending comments comments and suggestions by email along the lines of what our earlier commenter said or something very

simple, and we will make sure every single council member sees it. And thank you very much. Is there anything else, mayor?

[00:31:17.28] - Speaker 7

We've agreed to move up the start time for these meetings to 6: 30. The goal is not to have longer meetings. It's to get out earlier. So the June meetings and future meetings will start at 6: 30.

[00:31:34.07] - Speaker 4

Can't. Then evening without another congratulations to my fellow council members and happy to be working with you and looking forward to the next two years. I'm open to a motion to adjourn. Thank you. Everyone, thanks for coming. Thank you..