



**MEETING OF  
UNIVERSITY PARK MAYOR AND COMMON COUNCIL  
VIA VIDEO AND AUDIO CONFERENCE**

**7:30 p.m.  
May 15, 2023  
Minutes**

**1. CALL TO ORDER: *Mayor Biermann* at 7:30 p.m.**

**Present:** Mayor Biermann, Mr. Dubayah, Ms. Gathercole, Ms. Morrissey, Mr. Morgan,  
Mr. McGaughey, Ms. Wells and Mr. Sweet

**Absent:** None

**2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

**Moved by:** Mr. McGaughey

**Seconded by:** Ms. Wells

**Yea:** 7

**Nay:** 0

**Abstain:**

**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: *May 1, 2023***

**Moved by:** Mr. McGaughey

**Seconded by:** Ms. Gathercole

**Yea:** 7

**Nay:** 0

**Abstain:**

**4. PUBLIC COMMENT**

- A resident stated that he wanted to make a comment about some of the discussions that have taken place recently regarding the budget and Mayor Biermann's suggestion that there be a tax cut to help the lower income households in town. He thinks this is an admirable idea, but he suggested that a tax cut is not the best way to go about this. He thinks there are some other things that the town could look at to help people who are in need rather than an across-the-board tax cut of that sort which is going to benefit everyone instead of just the households who could use some extra help.
- A resident stated that she is interested in a discussion based on Ms. Morrissey's email about the \$100 tax rebate vs. fixing a number of problems that we have in town. She feels we need to fix the problems in town, such as the stormwater problems that affect several of our neighbors.
- A resident stated that he thinks the tax cut idea is inappropriate at this time because there are many areas, including the bridge, that need to be addressed to keep the town doing what is needed.
- A resident stated that he wants to state his opposition to reducing the tax rate at this time. More importantly, he said we should not leave money on the table as we have a lot of assistance from the federal government.
- A resident stated that under G-33, we have \$15,000 of ARPA funds committed to non-profits. He thinks the need is a lot more than that as they committed \$113,000 to non-profits in December 2021.
- A resident stated that she is not for the tax cut. She thinks it is not prudent right now. When we are

looking at non-profits, we should include the Anacostia Watershed Society because they have been supporting us for years.

- A resident stated that is in favor exclusive of a tax cut. She would rather spend money supporting our neighbors, our aging town infrastructure or establishing a more modern, accessible Town Hall.
- Mayor Biermann stated that using the term “tax cut” is the wrong way to look at it. You are adopting a tax rate. Whether that tax rate is the same or it’s higher or it’s lower, the tax rate that we adopt should be the tax rate that pays for the cost of operating the town. He feels that everyone should agree with that. He is also concerned that after all of this, we are only at \$100,000 to give back because this coming FY ’24, we are *literally* going to have about \$900,000 extra than we did two years ago. Over \$600,000 of that is coming from speed camera revenue. He stated that we are making significant progress on the pedestrian bridges. We recently paid to have our permit extensions put out for another six months and by May 26<sup>th</sup>, we are going to have two companies submitting proposals for putting those bridges in. You will note in the budget, there is funding for that. We are not cutting any services; and we are not proposing to leave any money on the table.
- Mayor Biermann gave a brief presentation on University Park home values and affordability.
- Ms. Wells stated that if we think of our budget as a one-year adventure, maybe we are taking in a little more money than we are going to spend this year, maybe that’s been true for a couple years. We have waited six years to accumulate enough money to replace the pedestrian bridges that were discussed years ago. We are looking at some major expenses in the future such as Town Hall and stormwater management.
- Ms. Morrissey said that Mayor Biermann threatened to veto the budget if we did not pass this tax rate decrease. What this means is that we would have to revert back to this year’s budget which would have no decrease and there would be a lasting ripple effect of doing that. Her understanding is that the County will increase our assessments for three years in a row. In her opinion, what would be a smarter thing to do would be to take the \$100,000 and put it into a designated reserve for stormwater management, Town Hall, the bridges, etc.
- Mayor Biermann said that \$100 or \$200 may not seem like a lot of money but if we had an extra \$50 per household, which is about as low as it can get, because a one cent change in our tax rate is effectively \$50 per household. He is advocating for people of a lower socio-economic status.

**5. ADOPTION OF LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION 23-O-03: FISCAL YEAR 2024 BUDGET**

**Motion:** To adopt Legislative Resolution 23-O-03, Fiscal Year 2024 Budget.

**Moved by:** Mr. Sweet

**Seconded by:**

**Yea:**

**Nay:**

**Abstain:**

Mr. Sweet asked Attorney Ferguson and Mr. Baden budget questions regarding the tax rate, tax cuts, possible public hearings. Attorney Ferguson explained the process for changing the budget with a budget amendment if necessary. Mr. Baden explained the tax rate and the constant yield rate. The Council is proposing to keep the rate at the Constant Yield which means we’ll get the same amount of property tax in fiscal year 24 as fiscal year 23. The Mayor is proposing a four-cent tax decrease below constant yield rate and it’s now down to two cents which equates to \$100,000.

*The earliest date this may motion may be considered for passage is May 15, 2023*

**Motion:** To create a new line item, P-26 for the Emergency Alert System and fund it with \$2,200.

**Moved by:** Mr. McGaughey

**Seconded by:** Ms. Gathercole

**Yea:** 6

**Nay:** 1

**Abstain:**

**Motion:** To add \$1,000 to line item G-21, Publications.

**Moved by:** Mr. McGaughey

**Seconded by:**

**Yea:**

**Nay:**

**Abstain:**

**Motion:** To adopt a motion to give \$15,000 to the Capital Area Food Bank.

**Moved by:** Mr. McGaughey

**Seconded by:** Ms. Wells

**Yea:** 7

**Nay:** 0

**Abstain:**

**Motion:** To increase the amount for line item G-7 from \$5,000 to \$7,500 to cover committee activities that we know of as well as to encourage more activities.

**Moved by:** Mr. Dubayah

**Seconded by:** Ms. Morrissey

**Yea:** 7

**Nay:** 0

**Abstain:**

**Motion:** To add \$4,000 to a new line item for increasing tree cover through the planting of trees on private property or through the resident tree reimbursement program, Legacy Tree Program.

**Moved by:** Mr. Dubayah

**Seconded by:** Ms. Morrissey

**Yea:** 7

**Nay:** 0

**Abstain:**

**Motion:** To adopt a motion that we set the tax rate at the constant yield tax rate.

**Moved by:** Ms. Morrissey

**Seconded by:** Ms. Wells

**Yea:** 5

**Nay:** 2

**Abstain:**

**Motion:** To adopt the budget as amended tonight, including the constant yield tax rate.

**Moved by:** Ms. Wells

**Seconded by:** Ms. Morgan

**Yea:** 7

**Nay:** 0

**Abstain:**

## 6. DEPARTMENT REPORTS

### A. REPORT FROM THE TOWN ATTORNEY ~ *Suellen Ferguson*

Nothing to report.

**B. REPORT FROM THE TOWN CLERK ~ *TC Hegeman***

- All permits approved administratively are in the packet.

**C. REPORT FROM THE CHIEF OF POLICE ~ *Chief Harvey Baker***

- Crime report: A total of two incidents.
- Movie Night in the Park this Friday from 6-9 p.m.
- Several trainings this month –including In Service training, Tasers, Community Engagement, Crisis Intervention, Mental Health Assessment, and Virtual and Inclusive Leadership

**D. REPORT FROM THE TOWN TREASURER ~ *Dan Baden***

- April 2023 Treasurer’s Report was distributed and discussed.

**E. REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS ~ *Michael Beall***

- The roads contractor is expected back on Thursday or Friday to begin construction of the Micro Bio Retention and to finish up any miscellaneous things that still need to be done.
- The VEO Ride Bike Share East Scooter Station is live at the corner of Woodberry and College Heights Drive.
- The two previous low bidders for the pedestrian bridge project will again submit their proposals. We anticipate those proposals to come in in the vicinity of the \$300,000 that is budgeted. They originally bid within \$75 of each other in November 2019.

**7. ADJOURNMENT: by consent at 10:00- p.m.**

**\*\* A Closed Session may be called \*\***