

**MINUTES**  
**College Park City Council Meeting**  
**Tuesday, March 7, 2023**  
**7:30 p.m. – 9:36 p.m.**

**This was a hybrid meeting: Online via Zoom;  
In-person in the Council Chambers of City Hall.**

**PRESENT:** Mayor Pro Tem Mitchell; Councilmembers Kabir, Kennedy, Esters, Whitney, Rigg, and Mackie. Councilmember Rigg was on Zoom.

**ABSENT:** None.

**ALSO PRESENT:** Kenneth Young, City Manager; Bill Gardiner, Assistant City Manager; Janeen S. Miller, City Clerk; Suellen Ferguson, City Attorney; Steve Halpern, City Engineer; Ryna Quinones, Communication and Events Manager; Michael Williams, Economic Development Manager; Valerie Graham, Student Liaison; Adrian Andriessens, Deputy Student Liaison.

Mayor Pro Tem Mitchell opened the meeting at 7:30 p.m.

A motion was made by Councilmember Rigg and seconded by Councilmember Esters to suspend the rules to move the City Manager's Comments to the first item on the agenda.

Kenneth Young, City Manager, made the following statement:

*This has been a very challenging and heartbreaking last few days for the City of College Park community, City Council, and our City employees. As this is an on-going and active investigation, I will keep my comments brief. The allegations against the former Mayor are abhorrent and disturbing. Any crime involving a child is heartbreaking. We can't imagine what the victims and their families must be facing. We thank the Prince George's County Police Department and the Prince George's County State's Attorney's Office for their work in this investigation, for their vigilance, and for their dedicated service and sacrifice for our residents each and every day.*

*The news has shocked our community, but we must remain strong and persevere through this difficult time. As we grapple with the news, we must ensure that the City government continues to work uninterrupted for our community. Tonight, the Council will consider the date for a Special Election to elect a new Mayor to serve until the General Election in the fall.*

*College Park is a strong and supportive community. We have encouraged staff to seek mental health support through the City's Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and we continue to encourage our residents to seek the support or care they need to cope during this distressing time.*

*The City has several ways for our residents to get the help they need at this time. For residents seeking mental health support, the City offers up to \$5,000 per household in approved mental health expenses either through reimbursement or paid directly to a mental health provider. In addition, the City's Department of Youth, Family Services and Senior Services offers emergency counseling resources for our youngest residents and their families, and the Seniors Program offers support for our senior population. More information is available on our website.*

*We are One College Park, and together, we will get through these challenges.*

**Announcements:**

Councilmember Kabir announced the North College Park Community Association monthly meeting on March 9.

Councilmember Kennedy said the NCPCA is offering Sunday Coffee at Proteus Bikes.

Councilmember Esters announced the Lakeland Civic Association meeting and reminded everyone that this weekend we spring forward.

Councilmember Whitney announced that tomorrow is Maryland Giving Day.

Councilmember Adams announced the Edmonston Road Sidewalk Project outreach event, and reported on the Discovery District event he attended.

Councilmember Rigg explained that he was attending virtually due to COVID.

Councilmember Mackie reminded everyone about the food scrap composting program.

**Proclamation:** Mayor Pro Tem Mitchell read the proclamation for Women's History Month

**Amendments To/Approval Of The Agenda:**

- Whitney/Kennedy: Split the Consent Agenda in two parts to allow Councilmember Whitney to recuse herself from 23-G-37. Motion passed 8-0.
- Adams/Esters: Remove the Closed Session from tonight's meeting. Motion passed 8-0.
- Mackie/Kennedy: To approve the agenda as amended. Motion passed 8-0.

**Statement on Public Comment:** Mayor Pro Tem Mitchell read a statement explaining the City's policy on Public Comment.

**Comments From The Audience:**

John Payne, resident, speaking on Consent item 23-G-46, regarding traffic studies: Speed bumps are not effective for traffic control unless they are high and abrupt and make everyone miserable. They are about as effective as potholes, and we are not asking for those. Look at other traffic calming strategies such as planters to narrow the street and planting the margins with trees to create a canopy.

Andrew Fellows, resident: Thanked the Mayor Pro Tem and Councilmembers for their service during this challenging time.

Lori Provost, resident: Note of appreciation for the City in making a difference for the youth of our community. She owns the Berwyn Ballet school. They began in 2020 and now have 153 students.

James LoBosco, Executive VP of Southern Management Companies: We stand with you, united behind you, and express our confidence as you guide us through these turbulent times.

Regina Holbert, owner of Hair & Space Beauty Bar: Grateful for the support from the City. Shocked about news of the former mayor and together we can get through these tough times.

Chloe Batsch, non-resident, Manager of Hollywood Shopping Center: We have appreciated the City's support. We have your back during these hard times.

Gary Michael, non-resident, involved in commercial real estate in the area: Despite the current turmoil, the future looks bright for the City of College Park in part due to the historic partnership with the UMD.

**Consent Agenda:** A motion was made by Councilmember Esters and seconded by Councilmember Mackie to adopt the Consent Agenda, which consisted of these items:

23-G-45 Award the renewal of insurance contracts with Cigna for Health Insurance; with Dominion and MetLife for Dental plans; with Chesapeake Insurance for Workers' Compensation; and with Local Government Insurance Trust for property and liability insurance, in a budgeted amount of \$1,964,897.

23-G-46 Approval of requests for the following Traffic Studies: Request for a Traffic Calming Study for 4600 block of Clemson; Request for a Traffic Calming Study for Rhode Island Avenue between Calvert and Harvard Road; Request for a Traffic Calming Study on Roanoke Place & 51st Avenue between Berwyn Road & Roanoke Place (Ghost Kitchen traffic) – Steve Halpern, City Engineer

The motion passed 8-0.

23-G-37 Approval of an amendment to the Property Use Agreement with the Hall:

A motion was made by Councilmember Adams and seconded by Councilmember Esters to approve item 23-G-37:

Approval of an amendment to the Property Use Agreement with The Hall to require compliance with the City noise ordinance restrictions, and approval of an Agreement with The Hall, the University of Maryland and the College Park City-University Partnership to enable live entertainment events at which patrons who are under the age of twenty-one (21) may remain after 9:00 p.m., in substantially the forms attached, subject to review by the City Attorney

The motion passed 7-0-1 with Councilmember Whitney abstaining due to her employment.

## Action Items

**23-G-50** Consideration of the Board of Election Supervisors recommendations for the Special Election for the office of Mayor

Ms. Miller was joined by John Payne, Chief of the Board of Election Supervisors. They said the BOES met last Friday to discuss a Special Election to fill the Mayoral vacancy caused by Mayor Wojahn's resignation last week. They reviewed the staff report and discussed the BOES recommendations.

Council discussed possible conflicts with the parade that is planned for the same day in north College Park; asked the BOES to provide clear guidance on how candidates can appropriately participate in the parade; expressed the need for parking management around City Hall on a busy Saturday for Election Day; asked about the timeframes for candidate paperwork that are being proposed.

Councilmember Adams opined that Ranked Choice Voting might have been consequential in this election if the City had implemented it.

Councilmember Esters asked if the City can do background checks on candidates?

Councilmember Kabir suggested equal advertising of the early voting date as the election date.

**A motion was made by Councilmember Mackie and seconded by Councilmember Whitney to approve the Board of Election Supervisors recommendations regarding the Special Election as follows: that Election Day be held on Saturday, May 6 from 10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. at City Hall, and that Early Voting be held on Tuesday, May 2 from 8:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. at Davis Hall.**

Comments from the audience:

Carol Macknis, resident: Concern about getting to City Hall when Rhode Island Avenue is closed for the parade; about parking for physically challenged people at the polling locations; and consider sending ballots by email like the County.

David Gray, resident: Asked about parking availability at City Hall; said the appointment to fill the potential 2<sup>nd</sup> Council vacancy should be someone who lives in the district where the vacancy occurs, and they shouldn't be allowed to vote on the budget.

**The motion passed 8-0.**

**23-G-47 Approval of a Beneficiary Funding Agreement to allocate American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) revenue loss funds to aid the Hospitality Industry in College Park in the amount of \$200,000 to Iron Rooster Hospitality, LLC.**

Mr. Williams gave the overview. He is seeking funding from ARPA funds for Iron Rooster, LLC, a sit-down breakfast restaurant going into The Hotel. Mr. Williams explained the benefit of having this restaurant come to the City. Owner Kyle Algaze was in the Zoom audience and made comments.

Council expressed excitement about Iron Rooster coming to the City and agreed that the success of The Hotel is important to the City. There were questions about how the requested dollar amount was determined, and questions about the amount of ARPA funds remaining. Councilmember Adams wants to discuss how we can make economic development grants available in the future after ARPA funds are spent. Mr. Williams responded that the Economic Development Visioning Workshop next week will begin to address this. Council asked if we have missed an opportunity to help businesses in other parts of the City? Mr. Williams explained the advertising of the ARPA assistance programs. There was discussion of what would happen if there wasn't a restaurant in that space.

**A motion was made by Councilmember Rigg and seconded by Councilmember Adams to approve the allocation of a \$100,000 grant of ARPA revenue loss funds as soon as is feasible to the Iron Rooster Hospitality, LLC restaurant to aid the Hospitality Industry in College Park, subject to Iron Rooster Hospitality, LLC entering into a Beneficiary Agreement in substantially the form attached as approved by the City Attorney; and to further move that the Council consider a grant of an additional \$100,000 upon due consideration of the City budget and other economic development needs and plans as the City discusses an Economic Development plan later this month.**

Councilmember Rigg said there may be other more urgent uses for the ARPA funds that come forward. His motion is to grant \$100K now and look more holistically at our budget before supporting the full amount.

**James LoBosco – Southern Management VP:** He said the hospitality industry had its best year in 2019, and its worst year in 2022. The industry is struggling to recover. If not for the ARPA funding we wouldn't have been able to attract GrillMarx or Iron Rooster to The Hotel. Having the restaurants in The Hotel allows them to attract other

conferences. The Kapnos space has been vacant for 5+ years and the equipment will most likely need to be replaced.

**David Gray, resident:** This property received a Revitalization Tax Credit. He is tired of being told that he has to pay more taxes because of the tax credits.

Mr. Algaze said the restaurant will give jobs to the local community.

The motion passed 7-0-1, with Councilmember Whitney abstaining due to her employment.

### **Discussion Items.**

#### **A. Legislation:**

Council discussed several bills.

A motion was made by Councilmember Whitney and seconded by Councilmember Esters to send letters of support on 3 mental health bills, SB 582/HB 1148, SB 534 and SB 3/ HB 271, that were supported by MAYSBE. The motion passed 8-0.

A motion was made by Councilmember Whitney and seconded by Councilmember Kennedy to send a letter in support of HB 297 and SB 292 Criminal Law - Victims of Child Sex Trafficking and Human Trafficking - Safe Harbor and Service Response. The motion passed 8-0.

Councilmember Mackie requested more information on SB 11.

Councilmember Adams asked about HB 892/SB 813 - Environment Comprehensive Flood Management Grant Program funding, which is still in committee. He does not believe College Park is included and asked staff to follow up with the bill sponsor.

#### **Future Agenda items:**

A motion was made by Councilmember Mitchell and seconded by Councilmember Whitney to add regulation of Air BNBS. Motion passed 8-0.

#### **Comments From The Audience:**

**David Gray** – There may be other things we can spend ARPA funds on that also create jobs and might not be as risky as this restaurant.

**Tom Litke** – He asked if the economic development session open to the public, and Mr. Young answered yes.

**Council Comments/Reports:**

Councilmember Kabir commented on events of the last week.

Councilmember Kennedy discussed the CPCUP presentation next week.

Councilmember Adams thanked everyone for keeping tonight's meeting constructive

Councilmember Rigg agreed and added the City will continue, we are bigger than one person and one issue.

Councilmember Mackie gave kudos to staff and mayor pro tem.

Mr. Young thanked staff for their extra efforts.

Mayor Pro Tem Mitchell said this shows that we are resilient.

**ADJOURN: A motion was made by Councilmember Mackie and seconded by Councilmember Adams to adjourn the meeting, and with a vote of 8-0, the meeting adjourned at 9:36 p.m.**

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Janeen S. Miller, City Clerk