

WORKSESSION MINUTES
College Park City Council
Tuesday, September 21, 2021
7:30 p.m. – 10:45 p.m.

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, this was a Virtual Meeting.

PRESENT: Mayor Wojahn; Councilmembers Kabir, Kennedy, Dennis, Esters, Day, Rigg, Mitchell, and Mackie.

ABSENT: None.

ALSO PRESENT: Bill Gardiner, Interim City Manager; Janeen S. Miller, City Clerk; Suellen Ferguson, City Attorney; Terry Schum, Director of Planning; Bob Ryan, Director of Public Services; Teresa Way-Pezzuti, Director of Human Resources; Megha Sevalia, Student Liaison.

Mayor Wojahn opened the Virtual Worksession at 7:30 p.m.

City Manager's Report: Mr. Gardiner said on Thursday October 7, 11 a.m. - 2 p.m., the County Health Dept is holding a mobile COVID vaccine clinic in north College Park; he made several election announcements; and said there will be three community clean-up days at DPW in October.

Amendments to /Approval of Agenda: A motion was made by Councilmember Mitchell and seconded by Councilmember Esters to approve the agenda without amendment. The motion passed 8-0.

Enter into Special Session: A motion was made by Councilmember Dennis and seconded by Councilmember Rigg to enter into Special Session. Motion passed 8-0 and Council entered Special Session at 7:34 p.m.

21-G-112 Approve the appointment of Kenny Young as the next City Manager and approve an employment agreement in substantially the form provided to the Mayor and Council.

A motion was made by Councilmember Mitchell and seconded by Councilmember Day to approve the appointment of Kenny Young as the next City Manager and approve an employment agreement in substantially the form provided to the Mayor and Council.

The motion passed 8-0.

Mr. Young will begin on Monday.

Adjourn Special Session: A motion was made by Councilmember Dennis and seconded by Councilmember Mitchell to adjourn the Special Session. The motion passed 8-0 and the Special Session was adjourned at 7:41 p.m.

Discussion item - Stakeholder Discussion about Housing Matters: College Park policy options for neighborhood stabilization, for those neighborhoods trending toward rentals; Discussion of affordable housing policies, programs and initiatives; Discussion of strategies to provide affordable housing (student and other). Guest: Eric Olson, College Park City University Partnership.

1. Mr. Ryan reviewed the PowerPoint about options to support neighborhood stabilization.

Wojahn:

- DC charges an increasing amount for every parking permit you request. As you request over two or three permits, the rate for each permit goes up.
- We can't address neighborhood stabilization issues without addressing affordable housing for students.
- Make sure we are making the best use of the tools in our toolbox – have we fully utilized the Unruly Social Gathering Ordinance? Should CEOs wear body cameras so we have the evidence?
- Is a violation of the noise ordinance also a violation of the Unruly Social Gathering Ordinance?

Rigg:

- Can we address the County's zoning cap of 5 unrelated tenants in a single-family house?
- Address the economics. We tried Rent Stabilization before but stepped back from it. Is it something to consider again?
- Can we implement policy differentially in certain neighborhoods or even on certain streets that are turning toward rentals based on some measurable metric.
- Bifurcate the economic considerations from the compliance/enforcement side – suggests we focus on market interventions at this time. We have addressed the compliance/enforcement side and for the most part it works.
- The lower rent/lower frills housing is found in the dormitories.

Esters:

- We don't want to penalize homeowners in the process. We don't want to move the problem.
- Discussion of inspections to find homes with more than five unrelated and how to prosecute zoning violations through the County.
- Can we work with UMD to restrict homes being advertised as 9-bedroom homes?
- Can we consider tax credits to encourage affordable student housing.
- What is the University doing to deal with housing, and how are we working together to address affordable housing for students.

Mitchell:

- We need to drill down on the term “five-unrelated”
- Do we have houses that are grandfathered in to allow more tenants?
- Parents that buy house for a child going to UMD then turn them into rental – that’s considered owner-occupied. They can have two tenants without City inspections/permits. If they have three, they should go through the licensing process. Ryan – there are some R-18 zoned properties where more than 5 can legally live there.
- Have we ever denied a Residential Occupancy Permit to an owner who abuses the system? Seldom – it is not done lightly because you could be putting people out on the street.

Kennedy:

- This is City-wide data so doesn’t indicate what is happening in certain neighborhoods. Census data will provide that level of detail.
- Can we encourage the development of large apartment complexes without all the luxury amenities to keep rents low?

Kabir:

- Supports lowering the 5-unrelated maximum.
- Supports staff recommendation to relax eligibility criteria for City’s homeownership grant program.
- Rental property information on our website is outdated
- County’s Nuisance Abatement Ordinance – have we been using it to the fullest extent? Put information on the City website.
- We should support affordable student housing closer to campus – perhaps a tax incentive? The UMD should contribute to this goal.

Day:

- Resume “Knock and Talks” with the large group like we used to do.
- Educate ourselves better about frat house programs to monitor alcohol abuse.
- Address long term owners who are leaving their home and are paid a premium by an investor – how can we counteract that?
- Calculate number of driveway spaces at a rental home and subtract that from the number of street permits they can receive.
- How can we counteract the renters who hide the extra tenants because they know that the inspectors are coming? Surveillance? Unexpected inspections?
- Investors can beat people to the table every time – how can we slow that process down so that an owner occupant has the opportunity to put an offer together.
- Bring back the conversation of Rent Stabilization.

Mackie:

- We need to be mindful of our infrastructure to take care of our residents.
- How can we help Code Enforcement address shabby rental housing?

- Can we require landlords to pay a maintenance fee for lawn maintenance so that it is not left to the renters?

Sevalia:

- Some of these proposals may make it harder for students to find housing. Consider international students.
- Housing occupancy percentages in apartment buildings v. single family homes?
- Some students are willing to break occupancy limit because it is their only affordable option; we need to address the cause, not just the problem.
- Is the current student housing need being met? Not just the number of beds, but are they affordable?
- Increased supply is not driving rents down; rents are not lower in the newer housing stock

2. Mr. Olson, CPCUP:

A. Community Preservation Trust/Housing Trust:

- CPCUP or a spinoff organization would buy the house/land. The land stays with the nonprofit so the purchase price is just for the house, making it more affordable.
- Find out about the homes before they hit the market
- A housing trust can also build housing on vacant land

B. Current homeownership program that offers \$15,000 down payment.

- 74 houses have been purchased with this program.

3. Ms. Schum reviewed the outline for strategies around affordable housing/workforce housing:

Wojahn:

- Compile the strategies in a matrix to identify City, County, Legislation, etc. and what we need to do to make them happen.
- Should we consider an affordable housing strategic plan, like Hyattsville did, and could they look at affordable student housing.

Dennis:

- Request for more information about the AARP Age Friendly grant.
- Discussions in the Restorative Justice Steering Committee about a land trust concept.

Rigg:

- Made the case for action because we are losing our neighborhoods as we speak. Avoid analysis paralysis and move forward where we can.

[10:30 Motion to extend the meeting, Kennedy/Rigg, 8-0.]

Requests for/Status of Future Agenda Items

- Wojahn – Add request for Shop Made Maryland business to go into the new City Hall building; Day/Mitchell 8-0.

- Mitchell – Information report/status update on the traffic back up on Cherry Hill Road at the Starbucks; Mackie/Esters 8-0.
- Rigg – Proclamation on next week’s agenda-Rett Syndrome Awareness Month in October; Rigg/Day 8-0.
- Dennis – Discuss letter from residents at the Metropolitan re parking; Dennis/Esters; 8-0 pending agenda request form.
- Use of ARPA funds; Rigg/Mitchell 8-0

Mayor and Councilmember Comments:

Dennis – tomorrow’s coffee club at 9 a.m.

Rigg – last week’s CHCA ice cream social

Mackie – Terps are doing great

Adjourn Worksession: A motion was made by Councilmember Rigg, seconded by Councilmember Mitchell, to adjourn the Worksession. Passed 8-0; meeting adjourned at 10:45 p.m.

Janeen S. Miller
City Clerk

Date
Approved