

January 10, 2022 Town Council Meeting Summary

(held by Zoom Video Conferencing)

- Approved the Town Meeting Minutes of December 13, 2021.
- Approved installing a bump-out at the intersection of Howard Avenue and Fawcett Street to improve pedestrian and vehicle safety. The project will coincide with planned ADA improvements along Fawcett Street.
- Concurred to send a letter of support to Montgomery Planning for the proposed Crossroads at Kensington project, 10619 Connecticut Avenue. In addition to general support of the project, the letter will request that Montgomery Planning encourage additional green infrastructure beyond the County's requirements within the International Green Building Code (IgCC).
- Held a Public Hearing on Ordinance No. O-03-2021 - An Ordinance to Amend Chapter IV, "Traffic and Vehicles", Article 3, "Traffic Control", Section 4-302, "Speed Limits in the Town of Kensington", to reduce the speed limit along Town maintained streets from 25 miles per hour to 20 miles per hour. *The Public Hearing will be left open until 4:00 pm on Friday, February 11, 2022.*

Town Council Meeting January 10, 2022, 7:02 pm, by Zoom Video Conferencing

Mayor Furman, Council Members Bartram, Crimmins, Engle, Hill-Zayat; Assistant to the Town Manager Marini, and Clerk-Treasurer Engels were present via Zoom. Town Manager Hoffman was necessarily absent. A moment of silence was observed.

The Minutes from the December 13, 2021, Town Council Meeting were reviewed and approved. See Council Actions.

From the Mayor and Town Council

Crossroads at Kensington 10619 Connecticut Avenue

Council Member Crimmins reported the Development Review Board (DRB) met on January 4, 2022, to review changes the developer made to the proposed project, Crossroads at Kensington, and that the DRB voted unanimously to recommend the Council send a letter of support to Montgomery Planning for the upcoming hearing on February 3, 2022. The proposed building is set back 30 feet from Connecticut Avenue and includes a reduction of curb cuts; a separated bike lane, sidewalk, and buffer; an increase in square footage of the outdoor plaza area for dining; and the redesign and change of traffic flow to the bank drive-thru lane to improve queuing.

Council Member Engle stated he acknowledges it may be too costly for the developer to pursue the LEED Silver designation, but requested the developer provide more detail on how they are exceeding the County's minimal green building requirements outlined in the International Green Building Code (IgCC).

Claudia Wolff supported the developer providing more specificity on their green building techniques; stated concerns over egress to Metropolitan Avenue and questioned whether improvements were made to the aesthetic of the building.

Council Member Bartram stated the egress to Metropolitan Avenue was discussed at the DRB meeting and will be revisited if it becomes a pass thru lane.

Council Member Crimmins stated changes have been made to the aesthetic of the building design and a visual will be added to the website.

Jack Gaffey stated he supports the project and the buffer they are providing between Connecticut Avenue and Plyers Mill Road and the sidewalks.

Chris Zappi supported the bike lanes and noted concerns over the Metropolitan Avenue and Plyers Mill Road intersection.

The Council concurred to send a letter of support to Montgomery Planning as proposed by the DRB including addressing green building standards. See Council Actions.

Council Member Hill-Zayat noted that free Covid tests were being handed out at the Kensington Park Library Monday, January 10, through Saturday, January 15.

Mayor Furman discussed the possibility of the Town handing out Covid tests, as Montgomery County is providing tests for municipalities to distribute to County residents.

Council Member Crimmins recognized Phil Kirlew, the former General Manager of ServPro, who left the position for a new job and will be missed.

Mayor Furman noted that Bethesda Magazine recognized GIGS for “Best New Spot for Live Music Outdoors,”; the Farmers’ Market as a “Reader’s Choice” ; and Frankly Pizza, Pink Dot, and Sunflower Consignment were recognized as well.

Proposed Charter Resolution for Voter Qualification

Council Member Bartram discussed the proposed Charter Resolution to be introduced at the February 14, 2022, Council meeting. The change would allow a non-citizen who is a lawful permanent resident or authorized to work in the United States to vote in Town elections.

Jack Gaffey stated that voting is a privilege restricted to citizens and did not support the proposed revision.

Joe Campbell questioned the motivation to move forward with the Charter Resolution since the survey had a low response rate and did not show a majority favored non-citizen voting.

Clinton Manning stated the Town is not harmed by expanding voting and supported the change.

Council Member Bartram stated expanding voting is being considered as there are long term Residents that are active in Town issues, own property, and are part of the community.

Council Member Hill-Zayat stated it is a very long process to obtain citizenship and the proposed charter revision would make it more inclusive for those invested in the Town to vote in Town Elections.

Council Member Engle stated information was gathered from the survey and it is important to continue discussion in an open public process.

The Council concurred to have the Town Attorney prepare a Charter Revision to be introduced at the February 14, 2022, Council Meeting to allow lawful permanent residents or those authorized to work in the United States to vote in Town Elections.

From the Town Manager and Staff

Howard Avenue at Fawcett Street – Pedestrian Improvement Project

Assistant to the Town Manager Marini discussed sidewalk improvements to be completed in the coming months by the Town's contractor, NZI Construction, on Armory Avenue, Mitchell Street, and Fawcett Street. Improvements include making sidewalks ADA accessible by changing the grade of ramps, ensuring ramps lead into crosswalks, and replacing areas of the sidewalk that have been raised by tree roots. A crosswalk will also be added to the intersection of Mitchell Street and Fawcett Street as part of the process of making the area a designated School Zone, due to the proximity of Brookewood School on Armory Avenue.

Assistant to the Town Manager Marini requested that the Council approve a proposal recommended by the Town's Traffic Engineer, Joe Cutro, to install a bump-out at the intersection of Howard Avenue and Fawcett Street to improve pedestrian and vehicle safety. The project would coincide with the sidewalk improvements already being conducted on Fawcett Street.

Council Member Engle wanted to verify that installing the bump-out would not eliminate the possibility of installing a three-way stop at the intersection in the future.

Council Member Crimmins stated that the decision not to implement a three-way stop was based on the results of a traffic study conducted by the Town's Traffic Engineer. The study results indicated that the volume and speed of traffic in that area did not warrant a three-way stop at that time, but that could change. Council Member Crimmins also mentioned the prospect of adding angled mirrors to increase visibility for cars pulling out onto Howard Avenue.

The Council supported the proposal to install a bump-out at the intersection of Fawcett Street and Howard Avenue. See Council Actions.

Council Member Engle announced there would be a Mobility and Traffic Committee meeting on Wednesday, January 19, 2022, at 7:00pm via Zoom.

Public Appearances

Jack Gaffey noted the upcoming astronomical event - a full moon on Monday, January 17.

Joe Campbell requested an update on the bridge projects.

Leslie Olson stated she is concerned about pedestrian safety and the lack of signage near construction projects when access to the sidewalk is limited.

Ordinance No. O-03-2021 – A Public Hearing was held on Ordinance No. O-03-2021 to Amend Chapter IV, “Traffic and Vehicles”, Article 3, “Traffic Control”, Section 4-302, “Speed Limits in the Town of Kensington”, to reduce the speed limit along Town maintained Streets from 25 miles per hour to 20 miles per hour. The Public Hearing record will be left open until 4:00 pm on Friday February 11, 2022. See Council Actions.

Leslie Olson and Chris Zappi spoke in support of the measure.

Don May stated there would not be any harm in lowering the speed limit on Town roads to 20 mph from 25 mph.

Joe Campbell expressed concern about the ability to enforce the new speed limit.

Council Actions

Council Member Crimmins moved to approve the Town Meeting Minutes from December 13, 2021. The motion passed unanimously.

Council Member Crimmins moved to send a letter on behalf of the Development Review Board to support the proposed development, Crossroads of Kensington, at 10619 Connecticut Avenue to Montgomery Planning in advance of the February 3, 2022, Hearing, and to incorporate those concerns discussed this evening including providing more detail on green building construction. The motion passed unanimously.

Council Member Crimmins moved to authorize a bump-out at the intersection of Howard Avenue and Fawcett Street to improve pedestrian and vehicle safety in conjunction with other sidewalk improvements. The motion passed unanimously.

Council Member Crimmins moved to hold the record open on Ordinance No. O-03-2021 to amend Chapter IV, "Traffic and Vehicles", Article 3, "Traffic Control", Section 4-302, "Speed Limits in the Town of Kensington", to reduce the speed limit along Town maintained Streets from 25 miles per hour to 20 miles per hour until 4 pm on February 11, 2022. The motion passed unanimously.

Council Member Hill-Zayat moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:25 pm. The motion passed unanimously.