

Meeting Summary for February 2025

Town Council Zoom Meeting

Feb 10, 2025 07:29 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada) ID: 297 850 640

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Quick recap

The February Town Council meeting focused on the adoption of Robert's Rules of Order, the new meeting format, and the concerns raised by residents about the unintended consequences of adopting these rules. The council also discussed various town projects and initiatives, including the Meadow Restoration plan, the street lighting committee's efforts, and the proposed zoning changes for the commercial corner. Lastly, the council discussed the process of converting a previously discussed resolution into an ordinance regarding vacant property registration and maintenance standards, and the requirements for an internal inspection to ensure compliance with fire safety and pest control measures.

Next steps

- Eva to create and distribute a one-page informational flyer about bulletin options to all residents.
- John to have the town attorney review the proposed vacant properties ordinance.
- Mary to work on adding language to the vacant properties ordinance regarding enforcement of inspections.
- Peter to obtain bids for resurfacing the basketball court.
- Jean to identify potential funding sources if the basketball court resurfacing cost exceeds \$5,000.
- Planning Commission to continue discussions on amending ordinances to require only town permits for fence installation.
- Planning Commission to use survey funds to accurately survey town property lines along Railroad Street.
- Playground Work Group to develop a comprehensive playground plan for Council review and approval.

- Playground Work Group to propose budgeting funds for fiscal year 2026 to begin implementing the playground plan.
- Gateway Committee to continue discussing the pros and cons of creating a 10-foot cleared strip along both sides of Railroad Street.
- Historic Preservation Commission to continue working on a proposal for installing commemorative language at former sites of historic buildings.

Summary

February Town Council Meeting Overview

In the meeting, John convened the February Town Council meeting, with all council members present. The agenda was approved, with the next meeting scheduled for March 10th. John also introduced Robert's Rules of Order, which the council will use for the first time, acknowledging that there will be a learning period as they become familiar with the rules.

New Meeting Format and Rules Discussion

John discussed the new meeting format, emphasizing the importance of written input from residents and the need for residents to remain muted during the meeting. He also clarified that residents would only be allowed to speak once during the public appearances section. John encouraged residents to provide their input in writing, either before or after the meeting, and noted that the Council would be able to request information from knowledgeable individuals during the meeting. Paula then spoke on behalf of herself and others, expressing concerns about the unintended consequences of adopting Robert's rules and suggesting specific changes to the rules and their communication. She requested a written response from the Council addressing their suggestions.

Inspection Proposal, Playground Plans, Budget Process

In the meeting, Robert Booher proposed broadening the inspection requirement for vacant houses to include a full house inspection, suggesting this would provide more information about the house's status. Jonathan expressed excitement about the playground work group's collaborative efforts and plans to develop a master plan for the playground. Jean, the town treasurer, discussed the public utility property tax, special un-budgeted funds, and the sale of equipment to free up space. She also mentioned the approval to release restricted revenue for this year's expenses. Jean then outlined the budget process, which involves her putting together a draft budget, John and Jean making tweaks, and the Council reviewing and finalizing it. Lastly, John recognized the Commission and committee chairs for attending the diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging workshop, and Peter discussed the proposed zoning changes for the commercial corner.

Meadow Restoration, Street Lights, and Committees

John reported on the Meadow Restoration plan, which is in its first phase and scheduled for tree removal, weather permitting. He also discussed the street lighting committee's efforts to improve Pepco's process and potential purchase of street lights. The shared use path committee's report was submitted, and a letter was sent to Eli Glaser regarding the Washington Growth Connector. The forest conservation review for the mandatory referral was incomplete, but MCDOT is working to complete it. John also sought volunteers for the Historic Preservation Commission and the Board of Zoning Appeals.

Continuing Bulletin Distribution and Format

In the meeting, Eva proposed a motion to continue offering paper copies of the monthly bulletin for pickup in the town office, continue emailing the bulletins, work on making the bulletin easier to read on tech devices, and mail out a one-page informational flyer to all residents. The motion was seconded by Barbara and supported by the council. The council also discussed the issue of some residents not receiving the email bulletins, with John mentioning that they are still trying to understand why this happened. Kathy acknowledged the work of Marilyn Fry in changing the format of the bulletin. The motion was passed unanimously.

Basketball Court Resurfacing and Bidding

The meeting discussed the resurfacing of the basketball court at the playground. Peter mentioned that he had received quotes from two contractors and that the court needed to be resurfaced, which could cost around \$5,000. However, one contractor estimated the cost to be around \$15,000. The council agreed to postpone the decision until they receive the bids and find additional funding if necessary. The council also agreed to follow the proper bidding process if the cost exceeds \$5,000.

Vacant Property Ordinance Conversion Discussion

The council discusses the process of converting a previously discussed resolution into an ordinance regarding vacant property registration and maintenance standards. Mary Warfield moves to lay the original resolution on the table, which is unanimously approved, and then introduces a motion to adopt the new ordinance. The council agrees that the town attorney, Sue Ellen, should review the ordinance to ensure consistency with existing regulations. Barbara raises a question about the process of involving the town attorney in reviewing ordinances, and John explains that it's important to have legal review, especially when motions are materially altered during meetings.

Internal Inspection Compliance and Enforcement

The team discussed the requirements for an internal inspection to ensure compliance with fire safety and pest control measures. They considered the feasibility of such inspections, the potential for resistance from homeowners, and the need for a clear enforcement

mechanism. The team agreed that the mayor would be responsible for initiating inspections and determining compliance. They also discussed the possibility of issuing citations and fines for non-compliance, with the understanding that the town would need to go to court to enforce these measures. The team decided to add more explicit language to the ordinance regarding the consequences of non-compliance with inspection requirements.

Postponing Motion

In the meeting, John proposed to postpone the motion to allow time for the town attorney to react and come up with language to amend it slightly. The motion was unanimously approved to postpone until March 10th. John also discussed the process of voting in favor of an ordinance, which includes a public hearing and notice.

Town Reports

He then moved on to the Town Council reports, highlighting Eva's work on the playground work group, Peter's discussion on the pros and cons of creating a cleared strip along Railroad Street, and Barbara's proposal for commemorative language at the former sites of historic buildings. Peter also emphasized the need for more volunteers for the trash pickup on Railroad Street. The next meeting was scheduled for March 10th.

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