

REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

MONDAY, MARCH 21, 2022

CALL MEETING TO ORDER:

The Regular Meeting of the Bowie City Council was held on Monday, March 21, 2022, in the Council Chambers at City Hall. Mayor Adams called the meeting to order at 8:02 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG:

Mayor Adams led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

QUORUM:

In attendance were Mayor Adams, Councilmembers Boafo, Esteve, Gardner (logged on at 8:08 p.m.), Harrison, and Woolfley, City Manager Lott, Assistant City Manager Mears, City Attorney Levan, City Clerk Hernandez, and Staff.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION:

1. Milly Hall, Dunstable Ct. – Asked how would the Mayor and Mayor Pro Tem seats be filled if the current elected officials should win the seats they are running for currently.
2. Karen Williamson, Dunwood Valley Dr. – Comment attached.
3. Jeffrey Cooper, Dunwood Crossing Dr. – Commented about creating legislation to address squatters in vacant properties.
4. Rhonda Billingslea, Durham Dr. – Commented on concerns of trash and traffic on Rt. 214.

PRESENTATIONS:

Ms. Elveeda Dixon representing the Bowie Diversity Committee read excerpts on Women's History month, Irish American month and Disability month.

COUNCIL ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Mayor Adams had Chief Nesky make brief comments in regard to the disturbance that occurred at Party HQ and truancy issues at Bowie High School. Chief Nesky is meeting with owners of Party HQ this week and will inform Council of results.

Mayor Pro Tem Boafo commented that the City is due to receive \$2M from the \$1.5T dollar spending bill signed by President Biden. These funds will be earmarked for the upgrades to the City's water lines.

Councilmember Woolfely responded to the question Ms. Hall asked during Citizen Participation. The remaining Councilmembers would interview potential candidates and appoint to fill the vacancies for the duration of the term.

Councilmember Harrison mentioned that she attended a meeting with WSSC along with Councilmember Gardner to discuss the possibility of them servicing the City owned water lines and would like to have staff proceed with having WSSC attend one of Council's meetings in April to have further discussions.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT:

City Manager Lott reported that the pilot community workforce initiative that was adopted by Council will be incorporated in the phase II of the water system repair and the annual street paving contracts. He also briefed Council on the 3.5-mile plan for the phase II repairs to the city's water lines which is now in the design phase and should be completed by mid-June 2022. An RFP will be sent out at the end of June and it will take about 45 days from beginning to end of the RFP process. Construction should begin in mid-September 2022 and should be completed in 9-10 months.

CONSENT AGENDA:

Mayor Pro Tem Bofo made a motion to approve Consent Agenda items: A) Approval of March 7, 2022 Meeting Minutes; B) Adoption of Resolution R-8-22 Approving Departure BD-4-21, a Request by Green Branch, LLC and GBR Mill Branch, LLC for Departure From Section 27-558(a) of the Prince George's County Zoning Ordinance to Permit a Reduction in the Dimensions of Standard-Sized Perpendicular Parking Spaces From 9.5 Feet by 19 Feet to 9.0 Feet by 18 Feet for the Multi-Family and Townhouse Sections of Mill Branch Crossing Proposed in Detailed Site Plan #DSP-20003. Councilmember Woolfley seconded the motion. Motion passed 6-0.

NEW BUSINESS:

A. Presentation on Tanglewood Park from City's MAPS Subcommittee - Mr. Bill Lussier, member of the MAPS Subcommittee presented to Council concepts the subcommittee would like Council to take into consideration in order to be able to re-designate Tanglewood Park as a City park. Volunteers have taken the initiative to clean up some of the old trails to make them usable again and their goal is to preserve the primitive nature and natural beauty of the park.

Mayor Pro Tem Bofo asked City Manager Lott what the process would be to re-designate the park as a City park. City Manager Lott responded that Council would have to provide guidance to do so and a 3-year CIP project would have to be phased into the budget to allow for any type of repairs or upgrades.

Councilmember Harrison asked if there were any other grants available besides from the state or federal level. City Manager Lott responded that there are some that the City can apply for through Department of Natural Resources and Maryland Department of the Environment, he will have staff from the Grants Department look into them.

B. Excalibur Road Traffic Complaints and Concerns – Mayor Pro Tem Bofo commented that he has received complaints from several residents with concerns on the amount of cars that are speeding on Excalibur Road and would like for Council to consider adding speed barriers on that road to discourage the speeding.

Public Works Director, Mr. Jose Aldayuz explained that Excalibur Road does not meet the criteria for speed barriers and suggest that the Police Department could probably install speed cameras on that road to discourage the speeding.

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Council concurred to have the Police Department focus on speed control with speed cameras since Excalibur does not meet the criteria for speed barriers.

ADJOURNMENT:

Mayor Pro Tem Boafo motioned to adjourn the Regular City Council meeting. Councilmember Gardner seconded the motion. Motion passed 6-0. The meeting adjourned at 9:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Awilda Hernandez, MMC
City Clerk

Karen Williamson
14206 Dunwood Valley Drive, Bowie, Md 20721
202-492-4775

March 19, 2022

Reference: A citizen participation letter

Dear City Councilmembers and Bowie City Staff,

I am sending this letter to address my concern and to be on record.

I have had the privilege to live in a wonderful residential community in the city of Bowie. I have had the privilege of living in a community where my growing children could walk the roads and experience a safe environment to play basketball, ride bikes, make lifelong friendships and develop their transitions to adult life. I have had the privilege of being in a housing residential community of like-minded residents who have extreme pride in their homestead and who have invested in the maintenance and enhancement of the community.

I am Karen Williamson, an owner of a home in Woodmore Highlands community, district 3. I have lived in the community for over 20 years. My husband and I knew we had found the "Camelot" of our time for our family when we moved to Woodmore Highlands, and we knew we were blest. Through the years we have been the benefactors of having good family structured relationships with our neighbors. We share information and resources to keep our lives running. At times, the older children of the neighborhood had been the babysitters to the smaller ones during school weeks while the parents had to work outside of the community to maintain the cost and expectations of being homesteaders. My home has been the residence to my husband, our children, our grandchildren, and me. Community is everything and Bowie has been a haven of most things good in a community.

I started by telling you about many things "good" in my community life here in Woodmore Highlands first to set your mind around what I have considered to be a dream life. But in 2018-2022, I have had to live in a nightmare that I would have never been able to dream of in my wildest dream. I had been a resident that has had to live with a SQUATTER issue right next door to my estate home. It has been one of the most anxious times of my community life. It has been a time of simply feeling a lack of safety even within my home; not to mention the coming and going from my home. I have experienced feeling overprotective of visitors at my home and praying that an incident did not cause harm to anyone visiting us. Yes, ONE home caused mayhem for all the surrounding neighbors. We lived with this daily feeling of threat for over two years. Today, I want to share with you a few of the events and actions we experienced:

- We experienced the shock of learning that someone(s) had taken over the residence of 14208 Dunwood Valley Dr.
- We experienced daily watching of that home to be sure we were not outside if we saw someone in the driveway of the home.
- We experienced seeing a cord or cabling running straight out the cable utility box into the home of 14208 Dunwood Valley Dr, this was not normal for any of our neighboring homes.

- We experienced watching many cars coming and going from the residence at 14208 Dunwood Valley Dr, which was very suspicious because the durations of visits were minutes.
- We experienced our Woodmore Highlands HOA seek getting us help to secure our safety in our homes which reside near the home of 14208 Dunwood Valley Drive. Our Architectural Committee chairman shared regular updates with us to explain that the HOA leadership was not able to secure the home, and that the foreclosing Bank owners were out of touch and reach of our leadership to get them to address and secure the home at 14208 Dunwood Valley Drive.
- We experienced seeing the squatters being removed from the home at 14208 Dunwood Valley Dr. in handcuffs. The squatters had barking dogs that sounded very aggressive and frightening, which were removed by Bowie Animal control. Please understand that even walking by that home was a fear. The squatters returned within days and removed the boards from the windows and front door. I must add that the dogs were allowed outside at late night hours, I recall this because of the loud barking at very early morning hours.
- We experienced the home of 14208 Dunwood Valley Dr being boarded up like a condemned building in a blighted area of urban decline. Driving by the home was a feeling of shame and despair. I sometimes felt teased when others of the home residences offered condolence.
- We experienced while sitting on the deck during one of the best days of the spring listening to a small child screaming to the top of her voice and the sounds of those aggressive dogs barking and growling at the child. Our hearts dropped, I stopped in a paralyzing moment, just frozen; my husband did not hesitate to call 911 for a child safety and wellbeing check at the 14208 Dunwood Valley Dr. We remained outside to listen and if in normal circumstances, we would have run over to the residence to assist; but we did not know what to expect and we felt fearful. When the Bowie police checked at the home of 14208 Dunwood Valley Dr. for the child wellness, we watched from the deck. The police returned afterward to our home to report that they did not find a harmed child. Did the police see the child, we will never know?
- I personally watched one day to see who was leaving the home of 14208 Dunwood Valley Dr, only to see a rear car tag frame that displayed the wording of my sorority's name. Talk about being very ashamed and embarrassed. I search my sorority directory for any address of this location, but I did not find such. Believe me, this was still a very low day for me.

Enough said of my experiences of the past. The residence of 14208 Dunwood Valley Dr now has a new homeowner. A young family to look forward to a great experience living in a wonderful community of homesteaders. What does the new homeowner deserve for their hard-earned dollars and the city that provide governance?

I call upon the city manager with the city staff, the City Councilmen, and the Mayor to make formable changes in the way that foreclosed properties are managed in the city. Our residents deserve to know that its leaders either hired, elected, or appointed can created an environment where property assets are cared for and are expected to answer to maintenance of safety and security. We need legislation, we need to set a precedence, and we need collective accountability. The banks and their serving agencies must be responsible for the safety and security of foreclosed homes. Residents deserve better. The City of Bowie deserves better. There are models that exist in Maryland governance for such issues and matters. We need our City of Bowie to support a record change.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Karen Williamson

Resident at Woodmore Highland Community

Cc:

Mayor, City of Bowie, Honorable Tim Adams
District 3, City of Bowie, Councilman Adrian Boafo
District 2, City of Bowie, Councilman Dufour Woodley
District 4, City of Bowie, Councilman Roxy Ndebumadu
Member at Large, City of Bowie, Councilman Ingrid Harrison
Member at Large, City of Bowie, Councilman Henri Gardner
City Manager, City of Bowie, Mr. Alfred Lott
Assistant City Manager, City of Bowie, Mr. Daniel Mears
City Clerk, City of Bowie, Awilda Hernandez
Woodmore Highland President, Mrs. JoAnn Marshall-Hobbs