

Town of University Park

Council Committee on Police, Traffic and Public Safety

April 12, 2023

7:30 p.m.

Meeting Notes

Members Present: Gathercole, Morgan, McGaughey, Wells, Sweet

Agenda

1. The February 8th meeting notes were approved.
2. Chief Baker was unable to attend the meeting but asked a statement be read that the Town is experiencing an increase in motor vehicle accidents, especially in Wards 2, 3 and 6. He is asking Town residents to slow down and obey all traffic control devices. There has also been an increase of hit and run vehicle collisions as well as operators side swiping parked vehicles and leaving without notifying the owner or waiting until police arrive. There is increased traffic enforcement throughout the Town with officers issuing written warnings and traffic citations to enhance traffic safety.
3. Ward 4 Councilmember Nat Morgan said residents on Wells Parkway, who live near the cul-de-sac and the playground, are having problems parking in front of their homes due to people from other areas taking up their spaces. These residents do not have driveways adding a burden for these homeowners. It was also mentioned by Councilmember Wells that the problem exists on the opposite side of Wells Parkway, although these residents do have driveways. It is believed much of this parking comes from parents picking up their children from school, visiting the cricket field and the playground. The Committee would like to encourage people to park at the school on weekday evenings and weekends as well as park on Underwood Street by the school during the daytime. It was decided the committee would like to have parking permitting using the UP stickers. The committee recommends the Police Chief develop a plan identifying problem parking areas, incorporating UP parking stickers to control parking in various areas and increase parking controls on areas around our schools (UP Elementary and Northwestern High School) then bring the plan to the Committee for review who will then present to the Council. It was also noted that in the draft budget parking enforcement was zeroed out for 2024 and that funding should be provided.
4. Mary Sue Twohy and Joe Thompson of the Sustainability Committee spoke of the negative impact that Artificial Lighting at Night (ALAN) would have on our Town park. Lighting pollution is a serious threat to wildlife causing disruption of behavior, injury and death to many different species. Currently, our naturally dark habitat sustains Maryland native ecosystems of individual but interconnected species of animals and insects to live healthy life cycles within their preferred home of mature tree canopy and riparian landscape. Installing ALAN would impact all species in a detrimental manner causing disruption of behavior, injury and death to many different species as well as causing species to vacate University

Park. Mosquitos biting season is also extended when there is artificial night at light. The committee mentioned there should be signage that the park is closed at night.

Joe Thompson mentioned the Sustainability Committee and the Tree Committee are alarmed that lights in the park was placed in the budget without input from the community. He said there is a process issue and we need to have conversations about how we want to use the park from the perspective of habitat, storm water management, amenities and discussions of public safety. We need to approach how we manage the park in a coherent way and appropriately fund it rather than randomly doing things without community input. The park plan can be paid for through infrastructure money and if we have a coherent park plan we can use the plan to gain grant money as well as do capital planning in Town. It would involve hiring an expert who specializes in putting together these types of plans and with coordinating input from the public as well as from committees.

Councilmember Sweet stated that parents have asked for lights in the park during the Fall during soccer season and that he no longer jogs through the park during dusk as there are people sleeping in the park. Councilmember Wells went back through the Newsletters and Council meeting minutes back to September of 2021 and could only find one crime incident that was in the park. She would like data and wonders if there is so much crime why it is not being reported and why we are not hearing about it. We will ask the Chief to discuss crime in the Park after dark at the next PTPS meeting.