

Citizens Still Want Honesty

The Forest Heights Herald Examiner has always been quite honest in our reporting. No matter who you support, we have gained the reputation for being forthright in reporting facts to the residents of Forest Heights. In addition, we have been very effective in provoking our readers to thoughts and questions that every citizen of this town should be asking. What is beautiful and encouraging is that the citizens of Forest Heights continue to show their overwhelming support for our reporting. In fact, they are most appreciative for our honesty and are asking for more of it. The two major questions that keep surfacing are "Where is the Money?" and "What is going on with the new Mayor?".

We believe both of these questions are legitimate and related. As you know, the new mayor (Joyce Beck) ran on a platform that she would be honest, never lie, and open the town's financial books to the public. Well, she just has not done it and refuses to do it. Instead, she has said that she does not know where the money is. In fact, let's look at a brief synopsis of Mayor Joyce Beck's first 90 days in office.

1. Threatened to shut down the town saying we had no approved budget although a budget had already been passed.
2. Ensured your taxes would be increased for the next three years.
3. Secretly fired the Chief of Police. Illegally fired the Town Treasurer.
4. Illegally accessed confidential police reports, records and mail.
5. Misused town funds to pass out false and inappropriate information about citizens.
6. Refused to pay police officers their raises and attempted to stop the Town Council from voting to secure the Police Department.
7. Threatened, harassed and demoralized the town's employees.
8. Divided the town as evidenced by refusing to plan any activities on the McDonald's side of Forest Heights on the National Night Out saying "Those people don't participate...they will just have to come over here!"

Mayor Beck, get control of yourself; we want honesty! Everyone is not attacking you. You can't keep throwing stones and hiding your hand. Stop the games, lead with calm dignity and as we said to the former mayor "Show us the Money!"



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In this Edition

A Call	1
Town Council.....	1
Forest Heights.....	3
Demand	5
Business.....	7
Honesty.....	8

From the Editor **A Call To Service**



Councilman Myles Spires - Editor

Neighbors, in this time of crisis for our fellow Americans across the Gulf region, it makes me grateful to live in a community that no matter what is happening politically, I know we support each other. It is now time for us to expand our support to the relief effort. Soon, refugees from the New Orleans, Louisiana area will be arriving at the D.C. Armory.

It is my belief that the Town of Forest Heights should be a presence in the care and comfort of so many displaced human beings. Already, I have been in touch with organizers of relief efforts in the District and with other area officials with the aim of officially involving Forest Heights in some humanitarian undertaking on behalf of the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

I am calling on our Mayor, my fellow Councilpersons, and my fellow citizens of Forest Heights to take the time to coordinate an effort to let it be known that Forest Heights is alive and well and willing to spread our health and good will to others less fortunate than we.

On September 6, 2005, come out to the Town Work Session and let's put helping others on the Agenda!

Town Council Supports Police

Despite the Mayor's attempt to shut down a public hearing on the Budget and Public Safety and her unprofessional and petulant early departure from the hearing, Council President Larry Stoner stayed committed to the Town and chaired the meeting until business was concluded. The result was that the Town Council was able to show its support to the Forest Heights Police Department by approving a budget amendment that will raise the Police

THE COALITION OF CONCERNED CITIZENS' Forest Heights Herald Examiner

Departments salaries and provide two more officers to the Department. In addition, the Town Council passed a new ordinance which will prevent any further outside interference and inappropriate actions by the Mayor or any other Town Official.

As many already know, on July 26, 2005, the Mayor secretly fired our Chief of Police and attempted to coerce him into signing a resignation letter. When confronted with this fact in an open meeting, she first denied her actions but when confronted with the termination letter that she gave the Chief, she could give no explanation for her actions and has yet to offer a viable reason for the termination. This was on the heels of her July 20, 2005 misuse of public funds in disseminating questionable information related to police investigations in the Town.

The new law which took effect on August 29, 2005 clearly spells out the roles of the Chief and all subordinate officers in the Department. No longer will any town official who is not a police officer or official, be legally allowed to access police related mail, rap sheets, or any other police record. Many town residents applauded this new law citing accounts that the Mayor and her associates had been opening police mail, councilpersons mail, and reviewing confidential police reports, records and investigations in an attempt to gain political leverage. Violation of this new law carries with it a fine up to \$500 and/or 30 days in jail.

The town should be especially grateful to its committed citizens who stayed and participated in the process. Especially commendable was the input of former Councilwoman Anne Reifschneider, former Mayor Kemp Cooke, and citizen Andrea McCutcheon whose contribution was invaluable.

Forest Heights Emergency Ordinance Establishing a Police Department Summary

The Forest Heights Town Council, Prince George's County, Maryland, has enacted an emergency ordinance, Article 1, section 1.8 of the Town Code of Ordinances, establishing the Forest Heights Police Department. The ordinance provides for the appointment of a Police Chief by the Mayor with the approval of the Town Council, defines the authority of the Police Chief and subordinate ranks, and establishes protocols for investigations, access to police records and the police facility. It provides for a \$500 fine and or 30 days in prison for a violation of the ordinance. The ordinance became effective upon enactment on August 29, 2005. The text of the ordinance can be obtained at the Forest Heights Municipal Building.

Town Council Getting Business Done

No one can dispute that our town has gone through an tremendous transition in the way business is conducted. Since May 11, 2005 the new mayor and Town Council had been engaged in power struggle. However, we are proud to report that the Town Council has taken the high ground in accomplishing the Town's business. Although there is still tension in the air at the meetings and the Mayor still feels slighted (mainly because she feels that some council members have loyalty to the former mayor), the Town Council is moving ahead to ensure that the quality of life for all Forest Heights residents improves.

Despite the new mayor's refusal to participate in honest and civil discussions, banging the gavel at meetings when things are said with which she does not agree, rudely interrupting other town council members as they speak, and outright wrapping up recording equipment in an attempt to shut down public hearings without following proper procedures, the Council is getting business done.

It is unfortunate that the new mayor is forcing the Council to act without her participation but, the Town Charter allows the Council to move forward without the Mayor's participation. More importantly, the citizens' demand and deserve the Town Council's vigilance in handling town business. What has the Town Council accomplished in the last 90 days:

1. The Town Council has passed a budget for the town to function (the mayor voted to approve this budget but refused to implement the raises to the employees (police in particular) that were in the budget).
2. The Town Council amended the Police Budget to ensure salary increases were accurate and to hire 2 new police officers (the mayor refused to vote for the amendment and attempted to stop the council from meeting to vote. Now it is up to her to give the police their raises).
3. The Town Council has passed a law that bans town official interference in running of the police department (the mayor attempted to stop the council from meeting to vote on passing the law—hopefully, she will abide by the law).

The Town Council needs your continued support in getting business done and asks you to come to the town meetings and call on the mayor to participate. The time for squabbling is over. The Town Council is getting business done and the citizens would like to see the Mayor onboard.

unnecessary. However, our town charter requires that the Town Council have rules to run the meeting. Giving the latest turn of events and the craziness of the recent meetings, I see why.

Hopefully, the Mayor, Council and residents will begin to abide by these rules so that we can get down to handling the town business with some efficiency.

These six basic elements are in no way all the rules to meeting but are key to any meeting being conducted in an orderly fashion. To further explore the rules that the Forest Heights Mayor and Town Council are supposed to use to conduct business, I encourage you to read The Town Charter and *Roberts Rules of Order*.

So now, let's stop the confusion.

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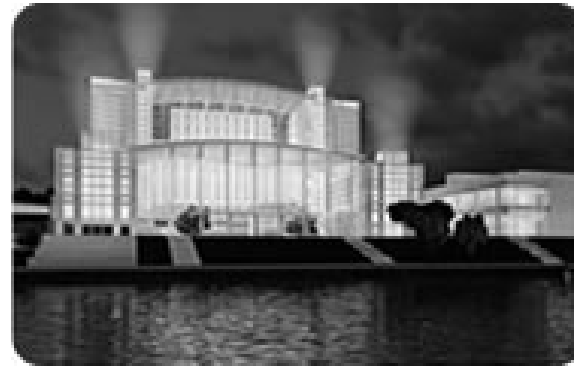
Forest Heights: The Gateway to Southern Maryland

Take a walk throughout the town of Forest Heights and you will recognize a quaint beauty that rivals any other location in the Washington Metropolitan area. Our tree lined streets and access to national waterways and nature preserve, are just two things that make our town prime property. Sure our



town has its challenges in terms of crime and some political infighting but all in all, this is a beautiful place to live. If you consider where we are, and where we are going, you will have to agree that Forest Heights is the Gate-

way to Southern Maryland.



As we all know, the development around us is phenomenal. If we just start with the Wilson Bridge, we should be aware that with the completion of that project comes a whole new look at Forest

Continued page 4

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ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES

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Bonita Anderson, Town Clerk

Joyce A. Beck, Mayor

Heights. Forest Heights has always been accessible but now it becomes recognized. We are the town next to the Wilson Bridge and when that bridge is completed, the value of our town will come into focus.

If the bridge project is not enough, consider the National harbor project. It will be located just minutes away from Forest Heights on a scenic mile long stretch of the Potomac River. National Harbor is designed to be an exciting urban-waterfront community that will serve the area's 33 million annual visitors. National Harbor will combine retail, dining, entertainment, office and residential, along with the largest combined hotel and convention center on the Eastern Seaboard.



Can you imagine what that means for the people of Forest Heights?

This town is destined for greatness. We are on the brink of being recognized as a crown jewel in Prince George's County, Maryland. We really should be excited about our town and prepare for a time where folks are longing to live here. Yes, many of us will bail out as soon as the price is right. Still, we must work together now to make sure that the price is right. Already, we have seen incredible increase in market value of our homes. Now let's get the quality of life to match the price. Residents of Forest Heights, we are sitting in the right place at the right time.

To ensure that we do not get overlooked in this development we need to be proactive. On a community level, we must be careful keep our town presentable. Company is coming and we need to be prepared. Encourage one another to:

1. Stop littering in our community.
2. Instill appropriate values and academic excellence in our children.
3. Take care of our property.

We want to also be sure that our town government does everything that it can to make Forest Heights more attractive. Demand financial and political excellence from our officials. We owe it to ourselves. Let's encourage our town officials to do right by us and make us the attractive town that we need to be in order to maximize our benefit from the development around us.

Demand for An Explanation ANSWERED

In recent weeks, the demand for an explanation for how the Town Council and Mayor are to conduct meetings have increased. Therefore, we are reprinting this article with the hope that our readers will have some clarity in understanding where the confusion lies in our meetings. In fact, last year, the Town Council adopted *Roberts Rules of Order* to conduct all of their meetings.

The following is a quick synopsis of how business is supposed to be conducted at our town meetings.

1. The Mayor (or the Council President in the mayor's absence) "chairs" the meeting. This is the person that holds the gavel, calls the meeting to order and keeps the meeting moving along according to the agenda. The gavel should be used only to gain attention for some declaration (calling the meeting to order, asking for a motion to adjourn the meeting, declaring a member out of order with cause).
2. The agenda is the list of items that are scheduled to be covered during the meeting.
3. The agenda can be amended but must be done at the beginning of the meeting before it is adopted.
4. All actions of the mayor and council during the meetings must be executed by a vote. This includes amending the agenda, adopting the agenda, adopting a resolution, etc.
5. A vote is made by someone first making a motion. Once the motion is seconded by another member of the council, then the chair calls for the vote. At that point any member can call for discussion. This is where the discussion between council members takes place and it is not supposed to be interrupted by people who are not on the council without another approved vote by the council.
6. The actions of the Mayor and Town Council should be consistent with the Town Charter. Who determines if the Mayor and Town Council are taking actions that are in line with the Town Charter? First the Mayor and Town Council — together. But if someone disagrees with the action that they take, then the Circuit Court for Prince George's County will make the decision.

Unfortunately, there are those who feel that rules to conduct meetings are