

## Ward 5 Citizen Forum Minutes May 11, 2026

Approximately two dozen people attended the May meeting. Thank you for your interest, questions and feedback!

### 1) Zone change proposals-

An overview was provided and the packet with the proposals was passed around so the documentation and the number of changes could be seen. The timeline of the zoning background and lack of minutes of those meetings was made known. A summary was provided of the two public meetings held so far. It was noted that over 100 signers on a petition have called for the process to stop and have called for the master plan to be completed & explained before the zoning changes are proposed. The current zoning map and the proposed zoning map were set up for viewing. Attendees found the map difficult to read. Two ward 5 residents volunteered to look at the proposals in more depth with me between now and the next public hearing at the Ordinance Committee on September 17<sup>th</sup>. The public hearing of the planning board on the zoning proposals will be held at 5:30 May 12<sup>th</sup> at city hall room 6 and I will attend.

### 2) Treasurer & Auditor appointments-

The city council did appoint an Auditor at our last meeting. She is qualified but was the only candidate put forth to the city council. It would have been a better process if at least two candidates were put forth.

Treasurer-Our current unqualified treasurer continues in a temporary appointment by the mayor. I am trying to have the city council appoint the treasurer as required by our charter (our foundational ) document) as voted by our residents in January 2025. While there has been a vote to consolidate the treasurer and collector positions it would be possible to appoint the collector as the treasurer with no requirement for her to resign as collector. It will come up at the next city council meeting on May 19<sup>th</sup>.

### 3) Budget Meetings-

Budget meetings will be held on May 20<sup>th</sup>, June 1<sup>st</sup> & June 10<sup>th</sup> at 6PM. Please zoom in or attend to learn about spending plans and anticipated tax increases.

Please watch, ask questions and give feedback at the June 10<sup>th</sup> budget hearing at 6PM. It is your tax money.

#### 4) Elmwood Forest-

Main updates are: a lawsuit has been filed opposing the sports complex there & HEDIC has approved a one year extension on the sale of the property to March 24, 2027. A point was raised that the area may be a habitat for the Bald Eagle which may influence what can be developed there.

#### 5) School Committee Update-

An update was read to the group from Ward 5 School Committee member Jens Michaelson- he addressed the teachers contract -to be voted on this week (Thursday) & noted para professional negotiations were happening now. He mentioned savings in the school budget by cutting two highly compensated positions and noted cost increases of health insurance and transportation that will affect the budget. He stated the increased funding that will result in more money and a higher match from the city will end next year, so if city spending stays level in the future it may lead to more stable tax rates. His phone # is 413-520-9835.

Please let me know if you have any corrections or additions.

Submitted by Linda Vacon

Your Ward 5 City Councilor

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