

WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held Wednesday, October 9, 2013, for the purpose of meeting with the Roosevelt Center Merchants.

Mayor Davis started the meeting at 8:01 p.m. It was held in the Multipurpose Room of the Greenbelt Community Center.

PRESENT WERE: Councilmembers Konrad E. Herling, Emmett V. Jordan, Leta M. Mach, Silke I. Pope, Edward V.J. Putens, Rodney M. Roberts and Mayor Judith F. Davis.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: David Moran, Assistant City Manager, Celia Craze, Director of Planning and Community Development; and Cindy Murray, City Clerk.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Terri Rutledge, New Deal Café; Joe Timer, Greenbelt Consumer Cooperative; Cindy Comproni, Greenbelt Federal Credit Union; George Boyce, Club 125; Susan Stewart, Bill Orleans, Molly Lester, Bill Norwood and others.

Informational Items

Ms. Mach mentioned several upcoming Cooperative Month events including movies at Beltway Plaza and Greenbelt Theater. She also announced that she and Sylvia Lewis will be interviewed by Vernon Oaks, President of the National Association of Housing Cooperatives, on WOL-AM1450 radio tomorrow.

Noting several recent retirements and upcoming retirements, Mr. Putens requested Council receive a briefing on succession plans in place for the City.

Mayor Davis provided an update from the Council of Governments (COG) Board Meeting including a letter sent from COG to Members of Congress encouraging them to take steps to reopen the federal government.

Mayor Davis commented on the Walk to School Day which was also attended by Ms. Mach and Mr. Jordan. She mentioned the Third Annual Raphael's Walk/Run Race at Greenbelt Elementary School is scheduled for October 19.

Roosevelt Center Merchants Update

George Boyce, Club 125, reported that the Club has been open for four months and currently has 60 members ages 7 to 85 years of age. In addition to the electronics and robotics work at the club, he said the Club also hosts a knitting group and family game nights. Mr. Boyce advised there are three robotics teams at Club 125, two teams at Magnolia Elementary and new teams have started at Hyattsville, Bladensburg and Kenmoor Elementary Schools. He said Club 125 was planning a science fair on December 8th and a larger science festival in April 2014. In response to a question from Mayor Davis, Mr. Boyce said they had done some advertising in the News Review, but because of cost, they are now contracting with a company to issue press releases throughout the Baltimore-Washington Area.

Terri Rutledge, New Deal Café, reported on the success of the festivals and thanked the City for their support with setting up the stages, risers, refuse and recycling containers, etc. She said additional

risers may be required for some upcoming events. Ms. Rutledge reported that all the debts for the New Deal Café had been paid. She also mentioned the Café had been experiencing numerous roof leaks after the recent rains and contractors sent by Mr. Christacos advised the roof can no longer be repaired and replacement is needed.

Joe Timer, Greenbelt Consumer Cooperative (CO-OP), reported that they had a good year and were continuing to make equipment upgrades to be as efficient as possible. He noted they had recently updated their website and were now on Twitter and Facebook. Mr. Timer said that the annual meeting will be held on November 2 in the Community Center and the Jim Cassel's Award will be presented at the meeting. He also said that CO-OP had sublet the space vacated by the Post Office to the Restoration Church.

Cindy Comproni, Greenbelt Federal Credit Union, reported the Credit Union was doing well and mentioned the Community Shredding Day scheduled for October 19. She said their staff was busy with Greenbelt Homes Inc. home loans and assisting members who are now furloughed government employees.

Ms. Comproni and Ms. Rutledge reported the Roosevelt Center Merchants Association (RCMA) hasn't been active for about three years. Ms. Comproni said she will be working with Bob Davis of CO-OP to set up a RCMA meeting and hoped several new merchants, such as Solar Nails, Club 125 and Meli Melo Pizza, would participate. Council requested that they be notified when the meeting was scheduled.

Mr. Jordan asked about the Greenbelt Community Development Corporation (GCDC) Buy-Local campaign. Mayor Davis suggested Council discuss the Buy-Local campaign at the work session with GCDC. There was discussion regarding the City's welcome packets.

Mr. Roberts asked if rents were remaining stable. Ms. Comproni and Ms. Rutledge said most tenants had long term leases with an annual increase which was the normal process.

Ms. Mach suggested a kiosk at the Center would be useful for marketing and promoting the Center merchants and events. She mentioned that if the RCMA had interest in a kiosk, they could apply for a Greenbelt Community Foundation grant.

Ms. Comproni also reported the back door of the Credit Union had been blocked with assorted clutter and soda crates (not from the New Deal Café). The City will have an inspector check on the situation this week. It was mentioned that a bike rack is also needed in this area.

Mr. Putens asked whether the merchants experienced increased revenue during the Labor Day Festival. Mr. Timer said CO-OP's experiences a mix, with regular customers tending to stay away because of the restricted parking, but festival participants coming through the store. Ms. Rutledge reported the New Deal Café has a greater crowd during the Festival. Noting greater parking difficulties, Ms. Comproni asked if more public parking spaces are being reserved for the Festival. Mr. Moran said staff would check on this. Ms. Pope added that many reserved spaces are not used.

Theater Renovation Update

Celia Craze, Director of Planning and Community Development, said work is expected to begin on the Theater renovation project early in 2014 and it is expected the theater will be closed for approximately six months. Council requested the Center merchants be notified when the closing date was determined.

Use of Centerway for Special Events:

As requested by the Vegan Fest organizers, Mr. Moran advised that permission has been granted for four parking spaces to be blocked on Centerway to allow food trucks to participate in the festival. The Center merchants didn't express concern regarding the loss of the spaces. There was discussion regarding health department permits for the food trucks. Mr. Moran said he would check and report back to Council.

Ms. Comproni mentioned there had been a problem with festival participants setting up (encroaching) in front of the Credit Union which restricts access to their door and ATM machine. Ms. Rutledge said she was not aware of this problem but will take steps to be sure it doesn't continue to happen. It was suggested that the permit issued by the City should include a map or additional guidance for applicants. Ms. Comproni added that she was often not aware in advance that an event was scheduled. Mr. Moran advised that the permit clearly states that the applicant must notify all merchants in advance of their event.

Mayor Davis asked how event organizers should deal with the removal of unruly patrons. Mr. Moran advised the Police Department should be contacted if event organizers feel threatened or harassed. Mr. Herling asked if the City regularly monitors the decibel levels at open festivals. Ms. Craze said that measurements had been taken in the past and none were ever found to be near the level of concern.

Council thanked everyone for coming.

The meeting ended at 10:16 p.m.

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Respectfully submitted,

*Cindy Murray
City Clerk*