

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held Tuesday, September 8, 2009.

Mayor Davis called the meeting to order at 8:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL was answered by Councilmembers Konrad E. Herling, Leta M. Mach, Edward V. J. Putens, Rodney M. Roberts and Mayor Judith F. Davis.

ALSO PRESENT were Michael McLaughlin, City Manager; David E. Moran, Assistant City Manager; and Cindy Murray, City Clerk; Kevin Hammett, Janet Jacobs-Parker and Dea Zugby, Community Relations Advisory Board; Robert Zugby and Bill Orleans.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: Mr. Roberts moved to add “Request of Town of Upper Marlboro – Opposition to Zoning Change” to the agenda. He noted that the zoning change is up for vote by the District Council tomorrow. Mayor Davis asked if there was unanimous support for this addition to the agenda of the meeting. Mr. Putens seconded. Mayor Davis commented that unanimous support for this addition was needed to add it to the agenda of the meeting. The motion passed 5-0.

Mr. Putens moved to approve the agenda as amended. Mr. Herling seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

RECENT GRAFFITI INCIDENT AT CRESCENT AND HILLSIDE UNDERPASS:

Mr. McLaughlin reported the Greenbelt Police were advised of a graffiti incident in the underpass at Crescent Road and Hillside Road on the morning of August 30, 2009. He explained the graffiti included language that was racial in nature and specifically mentioned a person that has expressed an interest in running for Council. Mr. McLaughlin said the graffiti was removed the same day by the Public Works Department and the person referenced in the graffiti had been notified. He added that the graffiti incident was being classified as a hate crime and is being investigated but there were no leads at this time.

Mayor Davis said this special meeting had been called to determine what actions Council would take regarding this issue. She referenced a draft statement that had been prepared by staff for Council’s review and edits.

Ms. Mach moved that Council make a statement regarding the incident indicating this type of behavior is not acceptable. Mr. Herling seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

At Mr. Herling’s request, Mr. McLaughlin read the draft statement prepared by staff.

Mr. Putens said he was concerned the statement was not strong enough and recommended it indicate that the City plans to prosecute the responsible individual(s) to the fullest extent. Mr. Roberts suggested a reward be offered for information leading to an arrest. After discussion regarding the amount of the award, it was decided to determine the normal range of a reward for a crime solver tip and offer the top end of the range. Ms. Mach suggested including the phrase “as always, the city plans to prosecute to the full extent of the law” in the statement, along with a notice of a reward. Mr. McLaughlin said the amount of the reward and the proper legal wording would be determined by staff tomorrow after checking with the Police Department.

Mr. Hammett reported on the ideas considered by members of the Community Relations Advisory Board (CRAB) in the drafting of the Greenbelt Community Pledge several years ago in response to a

previous hateful attitude. He recommended the sentence “A violation against one is a violation against all” be added after the reference in the statement to the Community Pledge.

Mr. Zugby, 94 Ridge Road, suggested changing the wording “racial incident” to “racist incident.”

Mayor Davis read the final version of the statement.

Over the weekend of August 29, graffiti was placed on one of Greenbelt’s pedestrian underpasses. The graffiti was racist in nature and was directed at a person who is considering running for City Council in the upcoming November election.

We, the City Council, believe actions of this type are abhorrent and do not reflect the values of diversity of our Greenbelt community as stated in the Greenbelt Community Pledge. A violation against one is a violation against all.

This graffiti is a hate crime and will be handled as such by the Greenbelt Police Department. As always, the city will fully prosecute this action. A reward of “to be determined tomorrow” is being offered for any information leading to an arrest. We urge anyone with information about the act to report it to the Police.

The motion passed 5-0.

Mayor Davis said the incident has been forwarded to CRAB to determine if further actions should be taken.

REQUEST OF TOWN OF UPPER MARLBORO – OPPOSITION TO ZONING CHANGE

Mr. McLaughlin explained a letter had been received from Stephen Sonnett, President of the Board of Commissioners of the Town of Upper Marlboro, requesting support for the Town’s opposition to a proposed zoning change that is up for vote by the District Council tomorrow. He said the change would rezone an existing residential property to commercial office in Upper Marlboro and the Town wants to keep the property zoned residential.

Mr. Roberts moved to send a letter of support for the Town of Upper Marlboro to the District Council opposing the proposed zoning change. Mr. Herling seconded.

Mr. McLaughlin expressed reservations about interjecting Greenbelt’s viewpoint in issues of another community but noted if the District Council goes against the Town of Upper Marlboro’s request, then it would be in direct conflict with the Adopted Master Plan.

Ms. Mach suggested the focus of the letter should be the disregard of the municipality’s request and disregard for the Master Plan.

Because the hearing was scheduled for tomorrow, Mr. McLaughlin said he would send an email out this evening or first thing tomorrow morning to the District Council indicating Council’s support for the Town of Upper Marlboro’s opposition to the proposed zoning change. He said he would follow up the email with a letter. Mr. Roberts requested County Councilmember Turner also be notified. Mr. McLaughlin and Mayor Davis both said they would call Councilmember Turner.

The motion passed 5-0.

ADJOURNMENT: A motion to adjourn the regular meeting was made by Ms. Mach and seconded by Mr. Putens. The motion passed 5-0.

Mayor Davis adjourned the special meeting of Tuesday, September 8, 2009, at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Murray
City Clerk

"I hereby certify that the above and foregoing is a true and correct report of the regular meeting of the City Council of Greenbelt, Maryland, held September 8, 2009."

Judith F. Davis
Mayor