

WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held Wednesday, September 2, 2015, to discuss the Pepco Reliability Enhancement Program – Phase II.

Mayor Jordan started the meeting at 8:05p.m. The meeting was held in Room 201 of the Greenbelt Community Center.

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

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael McLaughlin, City Manager and David Moran, Assistant City Manager;

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Tami Watkins, Government Affairs Manager – Pepco, Marty Lieb, Forester/Arborist - Pepco; and Jerry Pasternak, Vice President – Pepco; Ethel Dutky, Advisory Committee on Trees (ACT); Marc Seigel, Derek Thompson, William Orleans and James Giese, News Review

Mayor Jordan provided a summary of Pepco's request to conduct vegetation management work in the City. He noted that Council had discussed this at a work session on July 22.

Mr. Roberts asked about a meeting with Greenbelt Homes Inc. (GHI) to learn about their response to Pepco's request. Ms. Davis responded that GHI was meeting tomorrow night on the issue.

Mr. McLaughlin indicated that Pepco had submitted seven plans dealing with seven feeders that serve and/or pass through Greenbelt. He summarized the feedback from civic associations indicating that: Boxwood was supportive of tree removal with one exception. Charlestowne Village was supportive of tree removal on Lakecrest Drive and Lakeside residents particularly those on Maplewood Court wanted those street trees to stay.

Mr. Roberts stated that most of the trees identified for removal could be trimmed to the 15 foot requirement.

Ms. Dutky and Mr. Townsend explained that many of the trees marked for removal had defects in them.

Ms. Davis expressed frustration with the intimidating tone of an email that Mr. Pasternak had sent earlier in the day. Mr. Pasternak responded that it was not his intent. He stated that Pepco had a schedule and needed to make their schedule clear.

Mr. Herling suggested Pepco implement more outreach to homeowner associations and a friendlier approach. He noted that Council could not make a decision at work sessions. Mr. Roberts reiterated that Council could not make any decisions at work sessions.

Mr. Putens stated he was hearing that Pepco representatives were not informing customers that a replacement tree was available. Mr. Pasternak stated this was not the case.

Ms. Mach asked for clarification on tree replacement. Mr. Pasternak stated they were not obligated to make replacements for trees removed on private property, but sometimes it was helpful. He indicated that sometimes residents don't want a tree replaced.

Ms. Pope reiterated that the Lakecrest Drive trees needed to be replaced.

Mayor Jordan expressed frustration that Pepco had not provided a City-wide map showing the overall impact of this project, including work on private property.

Mr. Townsend stated that the five plans recommended for Council action had not been reviewed by ACT. He noted that ACT had focused on Feeder 15741, but that plan was not yet ready for Council discussion.

Mr. Roberts asked how Pepco's plan would reduce the tree canopy percentage. Ms. Dutky indicated that the ACT and Public Works were committed to replacing trees and maintaining the City's tree canopy. Mr. McLaughlin stated that Public Works was tasked with developing a Tree Master Plan. Ms. Davis stated that much of the tree canopy was in large park areas and didn't believe there would be a huge reduction in the canopy percentage.

Mr. Herling noted a review of the Maryland Public Service Commission's Rule Making (RM) 43 and asked if there were comparable rules from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Mr. Pasternak indicated that a DNR representative was part of the work group that developed RM 43.

There was discussion of tree watering. Ms. Davis stated that the City uses the water bag as well as a water truck. Ms. Dutky stated that some trees have to be watered for 3 years.

Ms. Pope observed that her homeowner association had replaced trees and then watered them. Her association eventually started using the water bags on these trees.

Mayor Jordan asked how much more time staff needed to make recommendations on the two remaining feeders. Mr. McLaughlin responded that it was possible that Feeder 15741 would be ready by September 15, but Feeder 15742 would take longer and he could not provide a timeline.

Mr. Roberts was not satisfied that the City might lose a small percentage of its canopy. He wanted to know the exact impact. Mr. Roberts suggested use of aerial/satellite imagery to assess the impact.

Mr. Putens stated that his homeowner association was working to replace trees on their property. He stated they had planted over 600 trees and increased the canopy. Mr. Putens indicated problems with Bradford Pears breaking.

Mayor Jordan asked about Windsor Green's experience with Pepco during the previous vegetation management project. Mr. Thompson described his experience with the process. He indicated that the process with Pepco did not start very well, but after Mr. McElroy got involved, cooperation improved. He stressed that information flow and quality was not good and Pepco appeared to be in a rush.

Council proceeded to review each of the plans. Under Feeder 15738, Council asked for a legend. Mr. Pasternak responded that the yellow ovals were trimming/pruning and the yellow triangles were removals. Mr. Townsend explained the "edge effect" when trees at the edge of wooded area are removed, leaving what had been interior trees exposed.

Under Feeder 15739, it was noted there was only linear trimming work being proposed.

Under Feeder 15740, it was noted that 10 trees were slated for removal. These trees were not in the lines yet, but would reach them soon.

Under Feeder 15744, there was concern about removals on Franklin Park property. Ms. Mach and Mayor Jordan asked about the difference between a linear and wall trim. Mr. Leib responded that it really pertained to the rate paid the contractor.

Under Feeders 34028 & 34021, it was noted these are sub-transmission lines. Mr. Putens indicated the trees impacted were mostly pines. Mr. Leib noted this was deeded work.

Mr. Seigel stated that when surveying his neighbors, they didn't want to lose the canopy in their Court.

Mayor Jordan asked how long it would take to perform the work if Council gives approval at the next Regular Meeting on September 15. Mr. Leib stated that it depended on the amount of changes to the plans. He believed the work could be underway in October if there weren't that many changes.

Mr. Pasternak thanked Council for their time and feedback. Mayor Jordan thanked Pepco for their efforts.

Ms. Davis thanked ACT, Brian Townsend and Public Works for their work and efforts to review the proposals.

Information Items

Ms. Pope raised an air conditioning outage concern at Springhill Lake Elementary and asked staff to contact her. She also mentioned concerns about the playground.

Mayor Jordan relayed an email from Principal McNeill that Homecoming was upcoming and 1,000 alumni were coming. He also indicated that Adam Ortiz had reported progress on the North County Animal Shelter study.

Ms. Mach suggested the City obtain enrollment numbers from the school system.

Ms. Davis suggested that Council Members see the film Rosenwald. She also reported on the Maryland Municipal League (MML) Legislative Committee meeting indicating that marijuana and zoning would be an issue this year. Ms. Davis commented on the Program Open Space (POS) commission and a potential POS formula change. Ms. Davis indicated that police body cameras were discussed. She stated that the Maryland Association of Counties (MACO) was trying to get a larger share of the Highway User Revenues. She reported that January 13 was the MML General Assembly opening day reception at the Calvert House. Ms. Davis reviewed the 2016 MML Legislative Action Requests with Council.

The meeting ended at 10:10 p.m.