

WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL was held Wednesday, August 30, 2023, to meet with Greenbelt's Prince George's County School Board Representative, Jonathan Briggs.

Mayor Jordan started the meeting at 7:30 p.m. The meeting was held virtually via Zoom.

PRESENT WERE: Councilmembers Judith F. Davis, Ric Gordon, Silke I. Pope, Rodney M. Roberts (8:16pm), Kristen L. K. Weaver, and Mayor Emmett V. Jordan.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Tim George, Interim City Manager, and Shaniya Lashley-Mullen, Deputy City Clerk.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Jonathan Briggs, Prince George's County School Board Representative; Stephenie Arcido, Robert Snyder, and Jenni Pompei, Advisory Committee on Education Members; and others.

Mr. Briggs provided the Council with an update, including a meeting with ten principals within District 2. It has been a good start for the beginning of the school year. However, he and his colleagues have received phone calls regarding bus transportation and bus routes.

There was a discussion regarding the Prince George's County School Board members. Mr. Briggs explained that there are 14 total seats on the School Board; four are appointed, nine elected, and a student member. He noted that there was legislation passed that the School Board would be fully elected in the FY 25 school year.

Based on a question asked by Mayor Jordan, Mr. Briggs referred Council to the School Board Transportation Department to provide additional details on students being able to ride The Bus Route 11 for free. The School Board is having a special meeting tomorrow to address some transportation issues.

There was a discussion regarding traffic issues. Mr. Briggs stated that traffic issues are resolved with a coordinated approach, with the School Districts, police departments, and the Transportation Department, to ensure traffic is running smoothly.

Ms. Davis inquired about the bus driver shortage and whether there were any incentives for hiring additional drivers. Mr. Briggs replied that the School Board is short 50 plus drivers, but he will follow up with the exact amount. He said the Board still needs to decide on the right approach.

Ms. Pope stated that there is a teacher shortage and inquired how the School Board is incentivizing and attracting teachers. Mr. Briggs indicated that this is a national issue. He noted that the School Board has many career and technical education-focused programs. Mr. Briggs explained that steps were taken with the Educators Association to increase wages.

There was a discussion regarding staff shortages. Mr. Briggs explained that there is a national issue with the need for school nurses and specialty programs. Based on a question by Mayor

Jordan, Mr. Briggs stated that crossing guards are hired through partnerships with the local police department or potential volunteers.

Mayor Jordan inquired about the status of metal detectors. Mr. Briggs stated that a metal detector pilot program was installed in nine schools during the summer. Eventually, the program would be installed at all the schools.

There was a discussion regarding changes in school boundaries. Mr. Briggs explained the recommended boundary changes for Phase 1, which included Greenbelt Elementary School, Magnolia Elementary School, Greenbelt Middle School, Buck Lodge Middle School, and William Wirt Middle School. Council expressed their concerns and stated that Council wanted Greenbelt students to attend Greenbelt Schools. Mr. Briggs advised that Eleanor Roosevelt High School, Greenbelt Middle School, Greenbelt Elementary, and Springhill Lake Elementary are overcrowded.

Mr. Briggs explained the timeline for Eleanor Roosevelt High School renovation under the modernization and building Cycle 3 phase of the Capital Improvement Plan and provided an update on the Springhill Lake Elementary School construction project.

There was additional discussion regarding overcrowded Greenbelt schools. Mr. Briggs explained that the boundary initiative and new construction are ways to address and alleviate school overcrowding.

Ms. Weaver inquired if urban heat island effect and greening of schoolyards are included as part of those plans when schools are being redesigned. Mr. Briggs answered that it is included in the blueprint, the Climate Action Plan, and the Capital Improvement Program.

There was a discussion regarding the clear backpack policy.

Ms. Arcido advised that the Advisory Committee on Education (ACE) is a liaison between parents, schools, and the community. She explained that ACE provides two grants to the schools and educators for improvement activities, after-school programs and field trips, as well as awards to outstanding Greenbelt students and educators. Ms. Arcido inquired about the reconstruction at Springhill Lake Elementary School. Mr. Briggs stated that he would follow up with Ms. Arcido.

Based on a question asked by Ms. Davis, Mr. Briggs stated that he has yet to meet with the principal at Eleanor Roosevelt High School about the School Resource Officer but will follow up with Council once confirmed. Ms. Davis stated there had been truancy issues and no cooperation from the principal. Ms. Pompei suggested inviting the School Resource Officer to a Council meeting to explain his duties at Eleanor Roosevelt High School.

Konrad Herling, a Greenbelt resident, inquired if there is a goal for the School Board regarding lowering the student-teacher ratio to make it more effective for the teachers and students. Mr. Briggs stated that is the School Board's goal and that is the purpose of the boundary initiatives program.

There was a discussion regarding the utilization of the Greenbelt Middle School ballfield.

Ms. Arcido inquired if the Community School initiative provides incentives to attract teachers. Mr. Briggs answered that the Community School liaison is not responsible for hiring, and teachers at traditional and community schools are paid the same. He stated that he would follow up with Ms. Arcido.

There was additional discussion regarding utilizing the Greenbelt Middle School ballfield and rehabbing the field using American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding. Mayor Jordan suggested that this could be one of Mr. Briggs's initiatives during his term to have the Greenbelt Middle School ballfield rehabbed. Council stated that it would be a partnership between the City and the Board of Education to rehab the ballfield.

Mr. Briggs explained that he is the Board liaison to the Board of Education Parent and Community Council. Districts 2, 5, and 6 have openings. He said he would provide the Council with more information.

The meeting ended at 9:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Shaniya Lashley-Mullen  
Deputy City Clerk