

WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held Wednesday, August 19, 2015, to receive a briefing on the Greenbelt Station Park Site Plan.

Mayor Jordan started the meeting at 7:58 p.m. The meeting was held in Room 201 of the Greenbelt Community Center.

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

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

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Norman Rivera and Justin Frye, Woodlawn Development Group; Bill Wilkerson, Greenbelt News Review; Kristen Weaver, A.J. Stephens, Jennifer Livingston, Thurston Livingston, Michelle Spezzacatena, Mary Dell Jenkins, Sason Jon Najmi, Wesley Ellis, Raegan Conlin, Kevin Conlin, and others.

Ms. Bellah explained that the development agreement between the City and Woodlawn Development Group (WDG) outlined the provisions for recreational amenities in the Greenbelt Station South Core Development, including 2.27 acres of land dedicated as a City owned and operated neighborhood park.

Ms. Craze and Ms. Bellah reported that WDG and staff have worked together for several months to transform the base concept plan for the park into a detailed design plan. Staff members from Greenbelt Public Works and Recreation Department were included in this effort. Additionally, the detailed design plan was reviewed by the Advisory Planning Board (APB) at their August meeting and is scheduled for review by the Park and Recreation Advisory Board (PRAB) at their September meeting. Ms. Craze said staff and APB are both pleased with the plans. She added that the proposed amphitheater, which will be the first in the City, could be used for performing arts productions, movies, etc.

Ms. Bellah and Mr. Frye provided a presentation of the site plans. They said it is hoped to get the project underway in the fall so it is available for use next spring.

Ms. Mach said she liked the proposed plans but was anxious to hear comments from PRAB after their review in September.

Mayor Jordan shared Ms. Davis' comments she had provided in advance of the meeting. He said Ms. Davis liked the plans, including the amphitheater, and suggested consideration of a water feature be included in the future.

Mr. Putens and Ms. Pope asked about a dog park. Mr. Frye said this idea was discussed with the APB. He relayed concerns regarding locating the dog park in the central park area and said there may be opportunities for a dog park in other areas of the development.

Mr. Putens said he would like to hear from the residents regarding the proposed park plans. He suggested WDG place the park plans in the sales office for residents to view and also suggested they hold a meeting to explain the plans to the current residents. Ms. Craze said the park plans can be posted on the City's website.

Mayor Jordan asked if there were plans for public art in the park. Mr. Frye said as part of the Development Agreement, funding is provided for public art. Ms. Bellah said the Recreation Department and Arts Advisory Board would be consulted for their input into the type of art.

Several residents expressed frustration that the location of the park was never clearly communicated to them when purchasing their homes. They expressed concern that the park would attract people from outside their community and noted they were already experiencing problems with public parking. Ms. Craze explained the City's history of integrating parks into the neighborhoods so residents can walk to them. She said the Greenbelt Station park will only be an open play area and will never be programmed for recreation sports.

Mr. Roberts commented on the need for an open area/park for Greenbelt Station residents. He expressed concern about the amphitheater and suggested a decision on that be delayed until more residents are in place and can express their opinions. Mr. Rivera said the amphitheater doesn't need to be included in the initial park plans.

Thurston Livingston, 5317 Stream Bank Lane, asked when the trail for Greenbelt Metro would be in place. Ms. Craze said dealing with WMATA is a very slow process and estimated it would be more than one year before the trail was constructed. She added that WDG is required as part of the County Conceptual Site Plan conditions to provide shuttle service if the trail is not in place when the 200th building permit is issued. Mr. Livingston and several other residents requested that the shuttle service be provided now.

Jose Berrious, 5437 Stream Bank Lane, expressed frustration that the sales staff from Ryan Homes and NV Homes is not relaying accurate information regarding the timeline for the trail construction to home purchasers. He also said the sales advertising (signs) should not say "Metro Access" if there is no Metro access.

Mr. Putens said he was concerned about the apparent communications problem between WDG and Greenbelt Station residents and stressed the need for improved communications.

A. J. Stephens, 5523 Stream Bank Lane, reported on residents' concerns with 1) the walking trail to Greenbelt Metro not being in place; and 2) the homeowners association being unresponsive to phone calls. He suggested WDG take a proactive effort and provide residents with accurate information on the trail and other amenities.

Mr. Berrious said Greenbelt Station residents want to move forward with the basic layout of the park but to hold off on details, such as an amphitheater until later. He said he hoped the park would be in by spring 2016.

Michelle Spezzacatebam, 8133 Greenbelt Station Parkway, said she thinks Greenbelt Station residents are concerned the amphitheater will attract people into Greenbelt Station and there are public parking problems.

Sason Najmi, 8119 South Channel Drive, said the design of the park was very good.

There was discussion from residents regarding parking concerns/problems in Greenbelt Station. In response to a question from Mayor Jordan, Mr. Frye said on-going construction was contributing to some of the parking problems.

Informational Items

Several informational items were discussed.

The meeting ended at 10:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Cindy Murray
City Clerk*