

WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held Monday, August 6, 2018, to discuss Economic Development.

Mayor Jordan started the meeting at 8:03 p.m. The meeting was held in the Council Room of the Municipal Building.

Present were Councilmembers Colin A. Byrd, Leta M. Mach, Rodney M. Roberts, Edward V. J. Putens and Mayor Emmett V. Jordan. Ms. Judith F. Davis was on travel. Ms. Silke I. Pope was absent.

Staff members present were Nicole Ard, City Manager, and Bonita Anderson, City Clerk.

Also present were Konrad Herling, Bill Orleans, Ed Duckle, Tom Taylor and Ed Fallon.

Economic Development

Mayor Jordan noted that there has been a series of discussion on economic development policies and goals for the City over the years.

Ms. Ard presented a PowerPoint titled “Economic Development Principles” for Council consideration. The presentation components were to support an economic development policy reviewing Council’s established 2018 work plan priorities, a vision, Council desired outcomes, and an action plan. She shared the draft vision statement “Conserve Greenbelt’s appeal as a desirable, attractive, historic, charming small town with progressive, thoughtful planning and City services that generate increased revenues and opportunities for individuals and businesses to thrive. That revenue and opportunity should further support the community’s long-term sustainability, as well as improve city services, social equity and quality of life.” Ms. Mach requested that the need for support of citizen and community involvement should be added to the vision statement. Ms. Ard outlined activities to date, upcoming activities like the hiring of the economic development coordinator and topics such as industry clusters, housing, business survey, business outreach, workforce development, marketing, incentives, social equity, the Arts and quality of life. Ms. Ard also outlined examples of performance measures.

Mayor Jordan distributed a draft copy of his potential economic goals and initiatives for the City to Council. Mayor Jordan reviewed his recommendation of targeted industry clusters which included advance technology, hospitality/hotels, along with tourism/arts and finance/banking. There were additional discussion about the recommended actions on attracting new businesses, retention and expansion of existing businesses. Mr. Putens suggested consolidation of the targeted industry clusters by agencies, i.e. (Aerospace, Engineering, Robotics) under government and (Human Health Services, Food and Drug Administration) under medical. He also suggested that with each Federal agency working together that the City needs to offer similar services as a cooperative.

Mr. Roberts had some concerns about the availability of space within City limits for additional apartments, including redevelopment of public spaces. He also expressed concern about the deterioration of Beltsville Agriculture Research Center (BARC). Mayor Jordan recommended

that the Council schedule a Work Session with BARC to discuss the appearance and the upkeep of their facilities.

Ms. Ard presented some of the activities that the new coordinator will focus on, which will consist of the development of a brand name for Greenbelt and building relationships with businesses and stakeholders. She identified that the improvement for access to assistance for repair and renovation of homeowner occupied spaces, support for transportation access and advocacy for affordable senior housing. Ms. Ard also identified the redevelopment of existing buildings and public spaces. Mr. Roberts suggested repurposing of existing buildings instead of redevelopment. Ms. Ard indicated various means to assist with businesses relating to grant funding and loan programs. She noted the implementation of the Greenbelt Road Corridor Study (MD/193), as a part of the roadway improvements. Mayor Jordan indicated concentration on the Medical Mile, which constitutes a large part of the City's tax revenues. He also discussed a medical incubator in the City and working with Doctors Hospital, to maintain medical personnel in the City. Mayor Jordan stated that the Sage report proposed tax break incentives to encourage larger developers to re-develop large commercial space. He also noted the importance of incentives for small businesses. Ms. Ard shared that she is seeking feedback from the Council about the potential future incentives.

Mr. Herling noted that the targeted industry clusters need to include the County's Green Tax Credit for Green Businesses. He also noted the rising cost of transportation and housing. He urged that the Council consider affordable housing and transportation by implementing shuttle services. Mr. Roberts expressed his concerns about affordable housing and that GHI in the past use to be an affordable place to live. Ms. Mach stated that the City needs to look into limited equity cooperative housing. Mr. Putens inquired about the definition of affordable housing in Greenbelt. It was noted that 30 to 40% of an individual's income for housing is considered affordable.

Mr. Fallon read to the Council the current demographics of Greenbelt. He also noted that Greenbelt's percentage of home ownership was below average and that 55% are renters. He urged that the Council focus on the renter community. It was noted that Franklin Park is a transient place. Mr. Roberts suggested that if Franklin Park Apartments transition their units for people to buy, that there would be an increase in voter turnout.

Mr. Byrd expressed his interest in consulting with the economic coordinator about the execution of the goals.

Mr. Orleans expressed his concern about seeking a brand for Greenbelt. He stated that Greenbelt's established brand is "Green" and he recommend that Council do not endorse the branding suggestion. Mr. Orleans also indicated that the retention of the tree canopy is the best economic development the City should focus on.

Mr. Taylor is in favor of the direction of the Council goals. He also noted his support for shuttle services for the community.

Mr. Roberts noted that Greenbelt was not built for profit, that it was built to be an affordable

place to live. He also noted that there has been a lot of change in the City and that the focus should be on affordability. Mayor Jordan noted that over time, the fees for homeowner associations and cooperatives have increased due to overhead cost to maintain the property.

Mr. Byrd encourages the City's engagement with commercial stakeholders about the revitalization of commercial property. Mayor Jordan noted that the owner of Beltway Plaza is engaged with the City and was unable to attend the meeting. He also noted that collaborating with neighboring communities is important. The Council would like to move forward on the community and economic development goals.

Informational Items

Mayor Jordan noted the different activities and events for National Night Out in the City.

The meeting ended at 9:37 pm

Respectfully Submitted,

*Bonita Anderson
City Clerk*