

WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held Wednesday, July 23, 2014, for the purpose of meeting with the Greenbelt Access Television (GATE) Board.

Mayor Jordan called the meeting to order at 8:03 p.m. It was held in the Multi-Purpose Room of the Greenbelt Community Center.

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

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

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Robert Zugby, GATE President; Tom White, GATE Treasurer; George Kochell, GAVA/GATE Animation Instructor; Malia Murray, GATE Executive Director; Allen Haley, Susan Gervasi, Justin Baker and Bill Cornett, GATE Board members; Anjali Shastry, News Review; and Eric (no last name provided) and Bill Orleans.

Mayor Jordan opened the meeting with introductions. Mr. Zugby encouraged Council to visit the GATE studio following the work session.

Mr. White reviewed the GATE budget. He stated that significant equipment purchases (\$100K) had been made for cameras and computers which had exhausted GATE's reserves. He noted the new equipment was working well for GATE. Mr. White thanked Council for the annual contribution provided to GATE.

Mayor Jordan asked about the Utopia Film Festival budget. Ms. Gervasi responded that the budget had been cut in half.

Mr. Herling asked Mr. White to explain the cable television related payments in the GATE budget. Mr. White stated that GATE was entitled to one-third of the Public, Education, Government (PEG) fee. The second component is a City contribution to GATE of 20% of the general franchise fee the City receives.

Ms. Mach asked what happened to GATE's old equipment. Ms. Murray responded that some was donated to Club 125, some was being retained due to legacy issues and some would be sold.

Ms. Davis asked about the location for the 2014 Utopia Film Festival (UFF) since the Theater was being renovated. Ms. Gervasi responded UFF would utilize the Greenbelt Arts Center, the Municipal Building and Beltway Plaza. Ms. Davis asked if there were limits on how GATE could spend the payments it receives. Ms. Murray discussed the Community Access Preservation (CAP) Act and noted that GATE comingled the money they receive from the City.

Ms. Pope asked about member recruitment. Ms. Murray responded that GATE was placing recruitment ads in the News Review and membership was up to 50.

Mayor Jordan congratulated GATE on the new website. Ms. Murray responded that it had been up since March/April. Mayor Jordan asked about a published schedule. Ms. Murray responded that GATE broadcasts from 8:00am-1:00am seven days per week and the schedule is available on the GATE website. Ms. Mach suggested a small advertisement in the News Review that suggests folks visit the website for the schedule.

Mr. Putens requested a list of the Public Service Announcements produced by GATE.

There was discussion about difficulties with Comcast and Verizon providing public access channels with a detailed on-air schedule. Council and GATE expressed frustration with this situation.

Mayor Jordan asked about the educational offerings provided by GATE. Ms. Murray stated that since purchasing the new cameras, GATE had implemented more formal controls when equipment is checked out. She also indicated a more formal class structure had been established and indicated additional space was still needed. In response to a question, she noted the orientation and production assistant classes were offered for free, but the camera and editing classes had fees.

Ms. Gervasi discussed the UFF and announced some of the topics this year. She noted 80 or 90 films had been submitted. She thanked the City for installing promotional banners and stressed the need for more publicity. She commented on the 10 year anniversary this year. Ms. Mach asked about the UFF budget changes. Mr. Zugby responded that the current budget was more realistic than the prior year.

Mr. Kochell reported on the GATE/GAVA (Greenbelt Association for the Visual Arts) animation project. He reviewed the list of classes and events and reported on participation numbers. Mayor Jordan asked about outreach to elementary and middle school students. Ms. Murray responded that this was part of Barbara Simon's responsibilities. Mr. Zugby noted GATE was considering an outreach program to all the schools that would include the GATE/GAVA partnership.

Mr. Putens asked if GATE has ever considered doing a program on City Advisory groups. Mr. McLaughlin believed this was a City function and indicated he would discuss it with Beverly Palau, Public Information & Communication Coordinator. Ms. Murray stated she would be happy to help Ms. Palau with such a project.

There was discussion of a proposed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the City and GATE. Mr. Zugby believed GATE would exceed the service level listed in the draft MOU. He also believed a legal commitment was a violation of the separation between public access and government access. Mr. Zugby preferred to provide an annual report to the Council listing the services that GATE provided over the past year.

Mayor Jordan believed the delineation was clear. Mr. Roberts stated the MOU was a complicated situation and suggested that GATE pay rent and then charge the City for any services they provide. Mr. Putens recalled the discussion that led up to the draft MOU. He favored the inclusion of tasks rather than specific numbers. Ms. Davis also favored the rent payment/bill the City approach outlined by Mr. Roberts. Mr. White responded that this approach is clean, but might result in behavior changes by one/both parties. Mr. Herling thought this would change the tenor of the relationship and that motivations might be money related rather than a spirit of cooperation.

Ms. Pope did not believe the MOU would change the relationship. Ms. Mach believed the City could simply remove specificity from the MOU. Mayor Jordan stated that the need for the MOU was based on concerns expressed by citizens about GATE receiving free rent. Mayor Jordan asked about the estimated value calculations in the MOU. Ms. Murray and Mr. Cornett responded that the City costs did not reflect market value or overhead.

Ms. Mach asked if GATE would be comfortable with the MOU if item 2 (list of services GATE provides to the City) in the purpose section was removed. Mr. Zugby responded that he would have to take this back to the Board.

There was considerable discussion about GATE's funding and community concerns about how GATE was spending the money it receives from the City. Mr. Herling suggested GATE produce a program about GATE and what it does for the community.

Ms. Murray gave the Executive Director's report. She highlighted the services GATE had provided for the City. Ms. Murray reported on services provided to community organizations.

Mayor Jordan suggested that GATE participate in the upgrade of the Multi-Purpose Room at the Community Center.

Mr. Orleans asked about GATE's accounting firm. Mr. White responded that GATE contracted with a firm to file required state and federal tax forms. Mayor Jordan noted these tax forms were publicly available online.

Following the work session, Council toured the GATE studio and examined the new equipment.

The meeting ended at 10:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted

*David E. Moran
Assistant City Manager*