

WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held Monday, June 30, 2014, for the purpose of holding a stakeholder meeting with the Greenbelt Homes, Inc. (GHI) Board.

Mayor Jordan started the meeting at 8:01 p.m. It was held in the Council Room of the Municipal Building.

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

STAFF PRESENT: Michael P. McLaughlin, City Manager, and Cindy Murray, City Clerk.

GHI REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT: Steve Skolnik, Susan Ready, Chuck Hess, Bill Jones, Diana McFadden, Ed James and Frank DeBernardo, GHI Board; and Eldon Ralph, GHI General Manager.

OTHERS PRESENT: Kathleen Gallagher, Greenbelt News Review, Laura Kressler and Bill Orleans.

Pepco Electrical Rehab Project

Mr. Skolnik complimented Pepco on their efforts in completing all power equipment upgrades. However, he said Pepco has been unable to address the double pole issue since there had been no progress by Verizon or Comcast on the transfer of their cables and equipment to the new poles. Mr. McLaughlin said this is an area wide problem and had received so much attention that State legislation was introduced (but didn't pass) to address the problem. Mr. Skolnik mentioned that Comcast and Verizon rent the Pepco poles for their cables and equipment and there should be a way for Pepco to pressure them to address the problem. After discussion, Mr. Hess said he would provide a list of all double pole locations to the City. Council requested staff notify GHI when the next work session with Verizon and Comcast is scheduled. Mr. Putens suggested a letter be sent to Verizon and Comcast.

Repair of Comcast Cable Boxes

Mr. Ralph said GHI had tried unsuccessfully for many years to have Comcast properly maintain its cable equipment/boxes on GHI property. Beverly Palau, City Public Information and Communications Coordinator, said this is a City-wide and County-wide problem also and is a major topic during the current Comcast negotiations. Ms. Palau asked GHI to report any problem locations to her and she will contact the government relations representative for Comcast.

Marketing of Homes in Greenbelt

Mr. Skolnik said the GHI Marketing Committee has requested the City advocate a marketing plan for Greenbelt which is similar to the marketing plan developed for the City of College Park. Mayor Jordan reported the City had contracted with the Sage Policy Group for an Economic Development Strategy and GHI would be invited to participate in one of the upcoming focus groups scheduled by the consultant. Mr. McLaughlin added that funding had been included in the FY 2015 budget for an External Relations Contractor.

In response to a question from Mr. Herling, Mr. Skolnik reported that home sales in GHI are very strong right now.

Right-of-Way Issues

Mr. Skolnik reported on the collaborated efforts Tom Sporney, GHI, and Terri Hruby, Assistant Director of Planning, to eliminate encroachment problems of GHI homes by the re-designation of the right-of-way. He advised that work on eight properties had been completed and it is expected the work on an additional five properties will be completed within the next year. Mr. Skolnik estimated there are approximately another 20 properties that still need to be addressed.

Mr. Skolnik mentioned a number of GHI residents had expressed an interest in owning electric vehicles and GHI staff had been looking into the placement of charging stations. Since some of the charging stations may be in the City right-of-way, he advised that Ms. Hruby had been contacted and indicated that a memorandum of understanding would need to be in place for this to occur. Mr. Skolnik said the idea will go through the GHI Architectural Review Committee and then reviewed by staff. It would likely be forwarded to the City to review for code compliance.

Microphone System Serving the Greenbelt Community Center

Mr. Ralph reported on problems with the microphone system malfunctioning in the Community Center gym during the 2012 GHI annual membership meeting. Mr. McLaughlin said a staff person was made available for the GHI 2013 meeting to correct any problems and the City will work with GHI again in advance of the 2014 annual meeting. Ms. Davis said she attends many events in the Community Center gym and she wasn't aware of any problem with the system.

Mr. McLaughlin added that replacement of the microphone system is doable if necessary. Mr. DeBernardo said several residents had suggested the entire microphone system be upgraded for sound quality and screen projection equipment be included.

Mr. Skolnik asked whether GHI may be able to use the Theater for their meetings after the renovation is complete. Mr. McLaughlin said this could certainly be considered.

New Playground and Drainage Problems

Mr. Skolnik thanked the City for construction of the new playground behind 2 court of Laurel Hill Road. He said most residents are very happy with the playground but noted there is significant ponding of water on sidewalks and turf areas adjacent to the playground during rainfall. Mr. McLaughlin said Public Works has attempted to correct this problem by regrading but this has not been successful. He said it may be necessary to replace some of the sidewalk. Mr. Skolnik and Ms. Davis mentioned a monthly maintenance check of all playgrounds needs to be done.

Community Wide Home Improvement Program

Ms. Ready reported that the program, funded from GHI reserves, includes replacement of windows, doors and siding on the frame homes and is on-going.

Mr. Skolnik added that GHI was on the last phase of the pilot program for the installation of new heating and cooling systems to improve energy performance within a select group of homes. He said it was their intent to transition from a pilot program to a community-wide improvement program but, since this is unfunded work and debt will be incurred, it will have to be voted on by the membership at the GHI fall meeting.

Other Issues

In response to a question from Mayor Jordan, Mr. Skolnik said GHI is willing to meet with WSSC and reasonably discuss the proposed WSSC renovation project.

Ms. Davis asked about the GHI rental policy. Mr. Ralph said there are currently 18 rental units. He added that the GHI rental policy stipulation that owners must own their unit for one year before it can be rented is currently under review and could possibly be amended in the future.

Ms. Davis asked about vacant units. Mr. Ralph said GHI had a few vacant units and, in accordance with GHI policy, staff works with the owners of these units when they have been unoccupied for over two years.

Informational Items

Mr. McLaughlin provided an update on the City's emergency alert system.

Ms. Davis reported the caterer for the Green Ridge House Anniversary dinner had problems using the stove hood vent and dishwasher and no one on site could assist them.

The meeting ended at 10:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Cindy Murray
City Clerk*