

WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held Wednesday March 18, 2015, for the purpose of meeting with School Board Representative Lupi Grady.

Mayor Jordan started the meeting 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, Silke I. Pope, Edward V.J. Putens, Rodney M. Roberts and Mayor Emmett V Jordan.

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

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Lupi Grady, School Board Representative; Bill Orleans, Linda Levine and Kate McElhenny, Greenbelt residents; and James Giese, News Review

Mayor Jordan welcomed Ms. Grady and stated that Greenbelt valued the relationship with the Board of Education.

Ms. Grady provided an update on the Budget. She indicated the Board of Education had approved a \$1.93 Billion budget which was a 7.5% increase. She stated the Board had asked staff what it would take to make Prince George's one of the top ten school systems in the country and the Budget reflected a step toward this goal.

Ms. Grady indicated the Board was working on a strategic plan. She stated literacy was a top priority. She stated that capital projects were a strong area of interest for her personally. Ms. Grady reported the northern part of the County was experiencing the greatest overcrowding.

Ms. Grady expressed a desire to increase teacher pay and provide more funding for neighborhood schools. She indicated schools were struggling to obtain basic supplies. She hoped there would be more arts and technology programs.

Ms. Grady stated that some of her concerns were improving transportation and providing healthy food choices for students. Ms. Grady noted enrollment had increased by 3,300 this year and discussed the challenges this presented to the school system.

Mayor Jordan asked about the new governance structure of the Board. Ms. Grady responded that it was a large Board but she appreciated the different perspectives.

Mayor Jordan asked about the relationship with municipalities. Ms. Grady stated that similar to Greenbelt, she had been meeting with other municipalities in her district.

Ms. Davis stated that school maintenance had been lacking. She asked if funding for guidance counselors would increase. Ms. Grady stated this was part of the budget discussion. Ms. Davis asked about increasing apprenticeship/vocational programs. Ms. Grady responded that different options were valuable for our children. Ms. Davis asked for an update on moving the bus lot

next to the middle school. Ms. Grady asked the City to forward any prior correspondence on this matter.

Ms. Mach asked about providing consumer financial literacy classes and asked if this was an option. Ms. Grady responded this had not been discussed.

Ms. Pope stated that the two music teachers at Springhill Lake Elementary had left and now there was only a part-time teacher. Ms. Grady responded that the Board had discussed music programs. Ms. Pope indicated the playground at Springhill Lake Elementary was in disrepair and that maintenance was a problem at the school.

Mr. Herling asked about starting the school year after Labor Day. Ms. Grady responded that the Board had opposed this initiative. Mr. Herling discussed the value of arts and the connection between music and math. He asked about student teacher ratios. Ms. Grady responded it was different at each school and indicated each school makes decisions about priorities, but ends up having to cut something.

Mr. Roberts stated that when he went to school, art and vocational programs were abundant. He was pleased there was a move back towards these programs. He expressed concern about maintenance at the schools. Mr. Roberts asked about the synthetic field proposal. Ms. Grady responded she opposed it. Ms. Grady stated there was a backlog of capital projects and maintenance issues. She stated that facilities needed to look to the future. Mr. Roberts asked about use of in-house maintenance staff. Ms. Grady responded that both in-house and contract personnel are used.

Mr. Putens stated that there have been maintenance issues for years. He indicated particular problems at Springhill Lake Elementary School and stated the conditions there were pathetic.

Mayor Jordan relayed some infrastructure concerns at Eleanor Roosevelt High School particularly related to HVAC systems.

Mayor Jordan expressed the City's concern that students residing at Greenbelt Station could not attend Greenbelt Schools. Ms. Mach agreed and referenced a memo she distributed earlier in the meeting. She stressed the need for Greenbelt children to attend Greenbelt schools and cited Advisory Committee on Education (ACE) programs and other benefits such as creating a sense of community.

Mayor Jordan asked about Common Core test scores. Ms. Grady believed there was a move away from teaching to the test. Mayor Jordan asked about PARCC (Partnership for Assessment for Readiness for College and Careers) scores and how Prince George's would compare to other jurisdictions. Ms. Grady responded the expectation was scores would go down.

Ms. Davis discussed the need for basic supplies and cited some of the ACE grant requests for basic supplies.

Mayor Jordan expressed appreciation to Ms. Grady for meeting with Council. Ms. Grady thanked Council for the dialogue.

Mr. Orleans asked if there was a County wide average for class sizes. He also asked how many teachers use their own supplies. He also asked about County Executive Baker's tax increase proposal. Ms. Grady responded the Board was not aware of his proposal in advance. She reiterated that class sizes vary by school.

Ms. McElhenny asked if there could be a budget presentation to parents. Ms. Grady responded that the Board was concerned that the Budget was not user friendly. Ms. McElhenny expressed concern about the number of testing days

Mr. Putens stated that education in Greenbelt is very important and invited Ms. Grady to attend the April 30 Four Cities Meeting. Mayor Jordan suggested an education summit for her district.

Mr. Herling referenced the business coffee in April. He also suggested there were partnership opportunities at the Theater.

Information Items

Ms. Mach shared that an National League of Cities (NLC) staffer was terminated and wondered if anyone else had heard anything. Ms. Pope asked about concrete work and digging occurring in Franklin Park. Ms. Davis asked about a list of preferred trees and suggested it be shared with Homeowner Associations.

Council Reports

Ms. Davis reported on the Maryland Municipal League (MML) Legislative Committee meeting. She shared information on a bill related to Uber and Lyft car services. Ms. Davis provided an update on some of the bills that the City was following. Mayor Jordan announced a Prince George's County Municipal Association (PGCMA) meeting in Landover Hills at 7:00pm on March 19.

The meeting ended at 10:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*David E. Moran
Assistant City Manager*