

WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held Wednesday, March 12, 2014, for the purpose of holding a stakeholder meeting with representatives of the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center.

Mayor Jordan started the meeting at 8:00 p.m. It was held in the Multipurpose Room of the 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; Terri Hruby, Assistant Director of Planning & Community Development; and Cindy Murray, City Clerk.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Dr. Joseph Spence, Beltsville Area Director, and Dr. Erin Connor, Acting Beltsville Area Director, United States Department of Agriculture - Beltsville Agricultural Research Center; Cary Coppock and Bill Orleans.

Dr. Spence introduced Dr. Erin Connor who was appointed Acting Area Director about one year ago. He reported on the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) plans to consolidate their existing nine regions throughout the country and the Beltsville Area will be merged with the North Atlantic Area. The headquarters for the region will remain at the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center (BARC). Dr. Spence said the new region will be the second largest region of the ARS.

Ms. Mach asked if the merger would help protect BARC. Dr. Spence said the merger will provide more protection. He noted that BARC will go from having just the support from local legislators to the support from legislators throughout the new region.

In response to a question from Mayor Jordan, Dr. Spence said BARC had experienced tough financial problems with funding cuts a few years ago but FY 2014 had been very good with all funding cuts restored plus an additional \$1.2 million. He said BARC is now seen as one of the premier sites of the ARS.

Mr. Putens asked how many people work at BARC. Dr. Spence said approximately 960 federal employees and approximately the same number of non-federal employees.

Dr. Spence and Dr. Connor reported on several research projects being conducted at BARC including research on stink bugs, bedbugs, insect repellants, ticks/Lyme disease, dairy animals, invasive plants and invasive insects and citrus crops.

Dr. Spence advised there are approximately 500 unoccupied buildings at BARC with approximately 200 of these buildings on the demolition list. He noted that some of these buildings are just storage areas, holding pens for animals, etc. Dr. Spence said they are actively trying to secure funding (estimated to be \$30 million) for renovation of Building 307, the old

Human Nutrition Center. Mr. Roberts suggested BARC attempt to obtain State funding to repair buildings instead of tearing them down. He further stated that he would like to see all forested and wetland areas of BARC become part of the National Wildlife Service.

Dr. Spence reported the Farm Bill authorized BARC to lease extra space to private research companies. Dr. Connor said that a conservation type group had expressed an interest in leasing the old visitor's center.

Mayor Jordan asked about superfund sites at BARC. Dr. Spence reported that 50-60 superfund sites on their property are continually monitored and two to three sites are actively being worked on at any given time. He noted that the State of Maryland has been a very good partner in this effort.

Mr. Roberts asked about tree removal by Beaver Dam Road and Research Road (old dump area) and asked if the area will be reforested. Dr. Spence and Dr. Connor said this tree removal may have been part of a superfund site cleanup but will check and report back to Council.

Mayor Jordan asked if BARC had any concerns regarding the impact of traffic when the InterCounty Connector (ICC) is complete. Dr. Spence expressed concern with the existing traffic problems on Powder Mill Road at the Baltimore Washington Parkway (Park Service/Federal land) and Beaver Dam Road (County road). He suggested the establishment of a joint jurisdiction task force (City, County, State, BARC, NASA/Goddard Space Flight Center, Federal Highway Administration, etc.) may be beneficial to cooperatively determine the best solutions to existing traffic problems as well as plan for the future.

In response to a question from Ms. Davis, Dr. Spence reported that the deer hunting program would continue and advised they are establishing a goose hunting program to deal with a large non-migratory goose population. He added that BARC did not have any beaver problems at this time.

Ms. Davis asked about stream monitoring on BARC property. Dr. Spence said the streams are monitored by an ecology committee as well as research groups.

Cary Coppock, 9-D Ridge Road, asked and was provided answers about the future of dairy research at BARC.

Council thanked Dr. Spence and Dr. Connor for attending. Dr. Spence expressed his appreciation to Council for their support of BARC.

Mr. Putens asked about ARS grants for municipal projects and mentioned that the Greenbelt Volunteer Fire Department and Rescue Squad have been looking into expansion possibilities. Dr. Spence said the ARS World Development Service offers grants for municipal projects in rural areas. He will check if there were any grants opportunities that may be available for Greenbelt.

Informational Items

Ms. Mach reported that she had briefly attended the Parent-School-Community District 2 Meeting sponsored by School Board Member Peggy Higgins at Greenbelt Middle School prior to this meeting.

Ms. Davis provided an update on SB 600/ HB 742 regarding development of the University of Maryland Golf Course.

The meeting ended at 9:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Cindy Murray
City Clerk*