

WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held Thursday, March 6, 2014, for the purpose of meeting with the Greenbelt East Advisory Coalition (GEAC).

Mayor Jordan started the meeting at 7:34 p.m. The meeting was held in the Greenbriar Community Room.

PRESENT WERE: Councilmembers Judith F. Davis, Leta M. Mach, Edward V.J. Putens and Mayor Emmett V. Jordan. Council Members Rodney M. Roberts, Konrad E. Herling and Silke I. Pope were detained and arrived later in the meeting.

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

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Terry Benedik of Greenbriar; Rohanie Bacchus of Greenspring II; Charlene MacAdams of Greenwood Village; Tom Crandall of Greenbelt Lake Village; Marcia Cain of Hunting Ridge; Pat McCoy of Greenbelt Lake Village and Randall Evans of Windsor Green. Fred Edwards and Bill Orleans, residents.

Mr. Crandall began with introductions.

GEAC asked if the City Council supported adopting CB 89-like legislation to prohibit landlords who have not paid their common ownership community fees or have violated the covenants or By-Laws of their common ownership communities from legitimately leasing a residential unit?

Mayor Jordan stated that Council was keenly aware of the problems that occur with associations getting delinquent payments. He referenced the City Solicitor's opinion that the City did not have standing to pass similar legislation. Mayor Jordan stated that the County was not enforcing CB-89.

Mr. Putens noted that some people were renting their houses even though they were delinquent in mortgage and homeowner association fees.

Ms. Davis noted that the first line of defense was the homeowner or condominium association.

Mr. Crandall asked how associations were monitoring this situation. Ms. MacAdams responded that Greenwood Village maintains a list and reports it to the City. Mr. Putens stated that Greenbrook Estates had taken people to court.

Mayor Jordan and Ms. Davis reiterated that the County was not enforcing CB-89.

GEAC asked about verification procedures used to determine that a landlord's tenant is a family member.

Mayor Jordan responded that if there was a complaint the City would follow-up on it. He noted the difficulty in verifying family status and also cultural differences. There was discussion of the definition of a family member.

Ms. Davis stated that Berwyn Heights had a stricter definition.

In response to a question, Mr. McLaughlin reported that the City issues about 400 licenses annually. Mr. Evans asked about the availability of rental license information to communities.

GEAC asked about the loss in city real estate tax income, due to the drop in the tax assessments value for homes in Greenbelt East and elsewhere in Greenbelt, and its impact on the city budget and City services?

Mayor Jordan responded that the City had managed over the past 5 years without significant reductions in service, but had not been able to implement new programs and services. Several Council members noted the three year assessment cycle and hoped revenues would improve in the future. Mr. Roberts stated that housing sale prices were increasing. Mr. Putens stated that the cuts were significant and that a tax increase might be proposed. Mr. Crandall indicated that Greenbelt Lake Village revenues had dropped.

GEAC asked about unwanted solicitors and illegal hand bills in their communities and wondered if the City was continuing to act on hand bill violations?

Mr. McLaughlin responded that the City continues to enforce handbill violations.

Ms. Davis reported that she continued to report handbill violations. She stated that solicitors are reported to the Police Department and have to have permission.

Mr. Edwards noted that he had reported the same problems to the police and code enforcement and gotten the same response. He understood it was a difficult enforcement issue and wanted it established that the City's enforcement power was limited.

Mr. Putens asked for clarification of the City's hawker/peddler permit and what it meant for communities with "no soliciting" signs.

GEAC asked about finalized plans for using the former Greenbelt Middle School?

Ms. Mach stated that Board of Education was renovating the old school and planned to move the French immersion program there in the fall. Mayor Jordan expressed concern that there would be no ball fields or amenities for the French immersion program.

GEAC asked about City Police Department crime statistics with some geographic detail for residential communities in Greenbelt East, particularly those near Schrom Hills Park and the Mandan Road Ball field?

Mayor Jordan stated crime was down 32%. He indicated there was an attrition challenge in the Police Department. Mayor Jordan stated that Police Department staff were working to provide neighborhood crime statistics.

Ms. Cain asked about the availability of the weekly reports. Mr. McLaughlin believed these were available on the website and agreed to provide information to Ms. Cain.

Mr. Putens asked what the holdup was in making the data available. Mr. McLaughlin responded that this project was being tested.

Mr. Herling referenced the City basketball court at Mandan Field and noted that it needed to be accessible and more visible.

GEAC asked about poor lighting and limited visibility along Hanover Parkway:

It was noted that cost to add lighting is very expensive. Mayor Jordan noted that Pepco has been reluctant to make efficiency upgrades.

Ms. MacAdams stressed the need to at least put one light in at the most problematic area.

Mr. Roberts suggested a light that was solar powered.

GEAC asked about snow removal on sidewalks adjacent to City streets and State highways.

Mr. McLaughlin stated it was the responsibility of the adjacent property owner. Ms. Davis referenced the City's snow removal plan.

Mr. Evans reported on the sidewalk along Greenbelt Road. It was noted that the cost was significant to pay someone to remove the snow along this sidewalk.

GEAC asked about the City's process to monitor proposed legislation (at county and state levels) of interest to the common ownership communities.

Mr. Moran described the City's efforts to review legislation impacting Greenbelt, specifically noting the City's support for House Bill 602.

Ms. MacAdams asked about the stream restoration at Greenbriar Park. Mr. McLaughlin responded that this item was on Council's agenda and if approved, would be presented to Greenwood Village.

The meeting ended at 9:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*David Moran
Assistant City Manager*