

WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL
Held Wednesday, April 17, 2024

DISCUSSION: Public Works/Capital Projects Proposed FY2025 Budget

Mayor Jordan started the meeting at 7:30 pm. On site Council Chambers and via Zoom.

In attendance: Councilmembers Amy E. Knesel, Danielle P. McKinney, Jenni A. Pompei, Silke I. Pope, Rodney M. Roberts, Kristen L. K. Weaver, and Mayor Emmett V. Jordan.

City Staff: Tim George, Assistant City Manager; Bertha Gaymon, City Treasurer; Terri Hruby, Planning Director; Brian Kim, Acting Public Works Director; Brian Townsend, Assistant Public Works Director; Dr. Luisa Robles, Sustainability Coordinator; Kevin Carpenter-Driscoll, Environmental Coordinator; Jamarie Spencer, Production Assistant and Bonita Anderson, City Clerk.

Others present: Judith Davis, Michael Hartman, Kevin Lockhart, Bill Orleans, and others.

City Manager Josué Salmerón's budget proposal entails a 2.7 percent increase in Public Works budget with expenditures increasing from \$4.586 million in adopted budget for this fiscal year to \$4.711 million in FY25 which begins on July 1, 2025. A breakout of expenditures by major budget category is shown in table on page 12.

Public Works Department has a wide range of responsibilities including as follows:

- Maintenance of all city buildings and grounds
- waste collection and recycling
- sustainability
- Greenbelt Connection
- Maintaining 26 miles of city streets
- 532 acres of City Parks

Staffing will decrease by (1) as supervisory positions for Parks and Playgrounds for horticulture merges.

Public Works Budget and Sustainability Discussion

City Council recently held a work session to discuss the budget for the Public Works Department. Acting Public Works Director Brian Kim and his team presented their proposed budget and capital projects during this session.

Council reviewed budget highlighting the importance of significant grant funding and need to invest in Aging infrastructure. Also the challenges posed by retirements and departmental reorganization, as well as the necessity of adapting to advancing technology.

Additionally, the council addressed issues related to the Greenbelt Aquatic and Fitness Center, the need for new software to replace Facility Dude, and the goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2080. Ms. McKinney expressed concerns regarding the overall sustainability of the city.

Performance Measures, Land Acquisitions, and Merging Departments

During the council meeting, there was a discussion about performance measures related to volunteer hours, full-time equivalents (FTEs), and athletic fields. It was clarified that FTEs are not the actual performance measure; instead, the focus is on the accumulated volunteer hours. Mayor Jordan addressed potential land acquisitions, including a plot near Motiva and wetlands close to Greenbelt Station. The use of school property for athletic fields was also discussed, with a decision to continue the conversation with the recreation department. Judith Davis congratulated Dr. Robles and her team on their sustainable achievement and reminded the Public Works Department of their status as first responders. Finally, there was a discussion about merging horticulture and playgrounds under one supervisor, which would also oversee the additional horticultural staff mentioned on page 41.

Sustainability Initiatives and LED Light Discussion

Dr. Robles discussed several sustainability initiatives, highlighting the successful reduction of electricity and fuel usage within the community. He also mentioned the upcoming ribboncutting ceremony for the USDA funded community composting program and provided updates on the progress of the Pepco solar farm project. Additionally, there was a discussion about the potential replacement of light poles with LED lights, which involved considerations for cost sharing and management among the Four Cities Coalition. Finally, the impressive waste collection efforts of the eight-member crew were recognized and acknowledged.

City Recycling and Composting Efforts Discussed

Ms. Weaver discussed the city's recycling and composting initiatives, noting a slight decrease in the recycling rate alongside an increase in the landfill rate. She emphasized the importance of diverting waste from landfills and encouraged residents to participate in curbside composting and electronic recycling events. Mayor Jordan also considered the possibility of implementing bulk trash pickups in various parts of the city and mentioned the potential for a food scrap pickup service after a successful pilot project.

City Finances, Performance, and Recycling Rates

Council reviewed City finances and performance measures pointing out a notable increase in operating deficit. The deficit has risen by approximately a quarter of a million dollars. They deliberated on whether service fees should be increased to cover additional costs. Council emphasized the importance of using clearer wording in reports to better represent areas and commercial businesses. They also raised concerns about street maintenance budget, specifically regarding use of chemicals and rock salt. Finally they acknowledged a discrepancy in reported recycling rates and agreed on need for more precise language in future communications.

Improving Accessibility in Public Spaces

The Council expressed concerns about the current lack of progress in improving the accessibility of public spaces, particularly bus stops and playgrounds. They recommended revising performance measures to better reflect the actual state of accessibility, including the number of accessible spaces that still need improvement. The Council emphasized the need for an accessibility checklist to be used during assessments of bus stops. Accessibility was highlighted as a crucial data point to be collected during the GIS field study for budgeting purposes. They clarified that while not all bus stops are fully accessible, the Council is prioritizing accessibility in road repairs and sidewalk connection projects. The accessibility of playgrounds was also identified as a priority.

Improving Budget Presentation and Cemeteries

The Council held a discussion on how to enhance the presentation of data and performance measures in the budget document. They emphasized the importance of showcasing achievements instead of merely listing outputs. The members agreed to consider more effective ways to highlight the positive impacts of their work on the city.

Additionally, the Council addressed the need to maintain and preserve the city's cemeteries. They mentioned a \$70,000 grant that has been allocated for a comprehensive study on the best methods for caring for these sites. Questions were also raised concerning the capacity and future maintenance requirements for the city's electric and hybrid vehicles. Furthermore, issues related to the Roosevelt Center were discussed.

Trash Container, Pest Control and Infrastructure

Council discussed the need to relocate a trash container at Roosevelt Center to enhance its appearance. They also reviewed the budget for pest control and talked about the upcoming opening of the farmer's market. A significant portion of meeting focused on deteriorating infrastructure at various facilities:

- Animal shelter
- Community center
- Aquatic and fitness center
- Council emphasized the necessity for a new animal shelter (highlighted the urgent need to replace the pool lining at the aquatic and fitness center which is expected to lead to several months of closure.)
- Requirement for chiller replacement at Community Center as part of a system redesign.

Council's Project Updates and Improvements

Council reviewed several ongoing and upcoming projects. Two major initiatives currently in progress include the replacement of the indoor pool and chiller, as well as Capital Projects aimed at utilizing earmarks or bond bills. Community Development Block Grant for street improvements is also expected to be addressed soon.

Market Street project, which involves curb replacement, is underway, and the renovations for playgrounds and basketball courts are anticipated to be completed within the next couple of weeks. The Council noted the increased ridership of the Greenbelt Connector during COVID-19, along

with the ongoing assessment of roads using advanced technology. Plans for road improvements in the coming year were also discussed, as well as several issues that need to be resolved.

Basketball Court Assessments and Projects

Council addressed the assessment of basketball courts, particularly the inactive status of the court at Mandan Park. It was clarified that the decision to classify the court as inactive was an error that needs to be rectified. Additionally, the council discussed the Street Survey project, which pertains to the street maintenance budget, as well as the miscellaneous concrete repairs project, which includes sidewalk repairs. Terri explained the process of compiling capital project funds and highlighted several ongoing projects, including the Hanover Parkway bike and pedestrian trail and the Red Oak mitigation plan. The council also reviewed deadlines for the vision action plan grant.

Next Steps

1. Council will consider incorporating bulk trash pickups in different parts of the city after the pilot project is completed.
2. Staff will address the wording used in the budget to accurately reflect the city's service area for recycling and waste collection.
3. Ms. Hruby will draft a revised Easement agreement for the Greenbrook Trail and bridge, working with the HOA and their attorneys to formalize the city's responsibility for the entire trail system and bridge.
4. Ms. Hruby will share with Mr. George and Ms. Gaymon potentially moving \$200,000 for Greenbelt West Funding from Program Open Space to Capital Projects may be more appropriate given use of Program Open Space funds. The meeting ended at 9:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted by,

Bonita Anderson

Bonita Anderson,
City Clerk