

WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL
Held Wednesday, May 1, 2024

MEETING: Center City Homeowners and Condominiums Associations

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

In attendance were: 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: Josué Salmerón, City Manager; Terri Hruby, Planning and Community Director; Jamarie Spencer, Public Information Producer; and Bonita Anderson, City Clerk.

Also present: Dr. Lois Rosado, Charlestowne Village Condominiums; Robert Goldberg-Strassler, Boxwood Village; and Bill Orleans.

Mayor Jordan began the meeting with introductory remarks.

Dr. Rosado noted Charlestowne Village's current concern is the increased insurance rates. The cost of their master insurance has increased from \$49,000 to \$109,000 yearly. This has a significant effect, especially for their senior residents. Another concern is utility companies has digging constructions and the return to normal process is often delayed, causing the repair work to be done by Charlestowne Staff.

Further discussion regarding rising costs of goods and services nationwide leading to higher insurance rates, utility bills, and other expenses. Mr. Roberts mentioned that his GHI co-op fee is now higher than his mortgage payments, raising concerns about Greenbelt's affordability. Mayor Jordan warned that increasing overhead costs could deter potential new members from buying homes.

Mr. Goldberg-Strassler stated that he resigned from the Boxwood Village Civic Association some time ago and that the board is no longer active. He expressed concerns about the plan to refurbish the WSSC water tower. The community feels that they need to receive timely information. Lack of this information prevents effective responses to actions taken by WSSC. Additionally, residents living near the tower worry about their property values' impact. Ms. McKinney noted that two (2) companies are involved in this project. One company is constructing a temporary cellphone tower and their contractors communicated with Ms. Hruby submitting construction plans. The second company, WSSC Water, is responsible for the refurbishment of the water tower.

The low participation in Homeowners Associations (HOAs) and Community Organizations (COAs), Ms. Knesel asked if these groups are struggling to re-engage the community post-COVID-19 and if this disengagement is seen in other areas.

Mr. Goldberg-Strassler, assists in organizing Labor Day Festivals noted that more groups have participated in festival of the past. For instance, Eleanor Roosevelt High School used to have three (3) to four (4) booths, but no more. Additionally, participation from civic associations and churches in Festivals has diminished compared to previous years.

Mr. Roberts argued COVID-19 is not to blame for this disengagement but rather Greenbelt community has lacked engagement for 30 to 40 years. Ms. Weaver shared having a booth at the Labor Day Festival may not be most effective or straightforward method for fundraising. She emphasized that we must reconsider our approach to community engagement and that changes do not necessarily equate to declining community involvement. She highlighted the presence of community engagement in various online platforms, such as the Buy Nothing Greenbelt group.

Mr. Goldberg-Strassler noted the community's strong desire for engagement reflected in rising event participation. Ms. McKinney added residents take pride living in Greenbelt and its diversification requires varied engagement approaches.

Mr. Salmerón recognized the challenges in communicating with various community segments shared that the city is improving its social media presence. He stressed the importance of using multiple strategies as no single approach is sufficient. He also noted that the proposed Fiscal Year 2025 budget includes funds for constituent services to strengthen connections with HOAs and COAs.

Ms. Pope suggested sending a letter to Senator Alonzo Washington to inquire about implementing a cap on these rate increases. She also recommended that this issue be discussed at the next meeting of the four cities coalition. The meeting ended at 8:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Bonita Anderson

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City Clerk