

WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL
Held Wednesday, August 7, 2024

Discussion: All Resident Voting Initiative.

Mayor Jordan started the meeting at 7:30 pm., held on the Council Chambers and via Zoom.

In attendance: Councilmembers Amy E. Knesel (7:31 pm) Danielle P. McKinney, Jenni A. Pompei, Rodney M. Roberts (7:31 pm) Kristen L.K. Weaver; and Mayor Emmett V. Jordan. CM Silke I. Pope and Amy E. Knesel (Absent)

City Staff: Josué Salmerón, City Manager and Shaniya Lashley-Mullen, Deputy City Clerk.

Others present: Chair Steven Gilbert, Beth Terry, and Nicole Shyong, Board of Elections; Bill Orleans, Michael Hartman, and others.

Non-Citizen Resident Voting Discussion

Council is reviewing a 2023 election question that received nearly 1,600 votes supporting a Charter amendment to allow all residents regardless of citizenship to vote locally. The Board of Elections is preparing amendments to the City Code and Charter.

Mr. Gilbert shared that the Charter is more complicated to amend than the City Code and the City can set its own regulations.

The Council discussed clarifying voter registration requirements and allowing non-citizen residents to vote. The Council also addressed the public availability of non-citizen registration lists, balancing legal requirements with privacy concerns.

The Council discussed Greenbelt's residency requirements including necessary documents. Mayor Jordan asked the municipal Council's subordination to state law leading to a review by City Attorney Mr. DeLoach.

Mr. Gilbert clarified that individuals must be at least 16 to register and vote. He shared 15-year-olds who turn 16 by election day should be allowed to register. Council addressed legal concerns about a proposed law change regarding non-citizen voting. Clarifications on its legality and managing the increase in eligible voters including 16 and 17year old were discussed.

A new resident and immigration legal social worker proposed using immigration status for voting eligibility instead of citizenship. The Council also considered same-day voter registration to enhance equity in voting, although it is not currently allowed for state elections. Cynthia Newcomer, a Greenbelt resident, praised the Board of Elections' efforts, and Mayor Jordan confirmed plans to implement voting system improvements in the next city election, including potential changes to the City corporate limits.

Informational Items

Mr. Salmerón provided updates on the potential impact of Hurricane Debbie and praised the Public Works Department for its storm preparation efforts. Ms. Weaver provided information about the Urban Sustainability Directors Network letter that the Greenbelt Advisory Committee on Environmental Sustainability (Green ACES) had received. Lastly, the Council debated whether to extend an invitation to Chief Green, who is currently engaged in legal action against them, ultimately deciding to allow the public to hear directly from them.

The meeting ended at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Shaniya Lashley-Mullen

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Deputy City Clerk