

WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL

Held Wednesday, September 4, 2024

Meeting: Greenbelt Homes, Incorporated (GHI) Board of Directors (stakeholders)

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

- In Attendance:** Councilmembers Amy E. Knesel, Jenni A. Pompei, Silke I. Pope (virtual), Rodney M. Roberts, Kristen L.K. Weaver and Mayor Emmett V. Jordan. Danielle P. McKinney (Travel)
- City Staff:** Josué Salmerón, City Manager; Megan Searing Young, Museum Director and Shaniya Lashley-Mullen, Deputy City Clerk.
- Others present:** GHI Board of Directors: Stefan Brodd, Nancy Boyd, Debbi McKinley, Chuck Hess, Philip Larkin, and Sabrina Baron; James Claggett, GHI General Manager and others.

Mr. Brodd provided the Council with information about Greenbelt Homes Inc. (GHI), including their membership, land ownership, subsidiary apartment buildings, and rental policy for members. He identified aging pipes and GHI's relationship with the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) as significant issues and discussed efforts to make homes more affordable.

Mayor Jordan and Mr. Salmerón discussed the successful grant program for first-time homebuyers that the city had created and supported with the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding. Mr. Brodd also addressed staffing issues, which Mr. Claggett noted that GHI has 43 employees.

Status of Negotiations with WSSC Re: Replacement of Water Supply Pipes for GHI's Masonry Homes

Mr. Brodd addressed the ongoing issue of replacing water supply pipes for GHI masonry homes, a point of contention between WSSC and the City for several years.

Mayor Jordan advised that the City draft a letter supporting GHI and participate in the discussions. Mr. Brodd stated the plan was to re-engage with WSSC and negotiate a solution with the support of a new general manager, Mr. Claggett, and a lawyer familiar with WSSC's operations. Mr. Roberts explained that the city is an equal party to the 1958 agreement with WSSC and should take a stronger stance in the negotiations.

Maintenance and Repair of Stormwater Main Pipes in the GHI Community

Mr. Brodd discussed the stormwater system, with the city owning the main pipes and GHI responsible for the lateral pipes. He is seeking information on possibly conveying the system to the County's responsibility and the status of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the city.

Mayor Jordan and Mr. Salmerón both expressed hope in re-engaging the engineering firm, Charles P. Johnson & Associates, to resolve these issues and ensure the stormwater system meets the County's design standards. Ms. McKinley and Mr. Salmerón discussed and follow up the minimum size pipe standard that the County would accept and the City would address the infrastructure challenges. Potential grant opportunities were discussed.

Mayor Jordan highlighted the importance of coordinating efforts to avoid duplication and conflicting funding sources. He noted that the City hired a Grant Coordinator, Cary Eure, to streamline the application process for larger federal and state grants.

Update Re: Installation of Light Fixtures in the City Park between 11 and 13 Courts of Ridge Road

Mayor Jordan explained that, due to budget constraints, installing the light fixtures in City Park between 11 and 13 courts of Ridge Road is outside the FY 2025 Budget. He advised that there weren't any electrical sources near the ballads, and the project cost would be \$35,000. J Davis, Greenbelt East, stated that Public Works staff has ideas for installing light fixtures and requested that the Council have a work session to discuss the concept and cost in depth. Mr. Brodd explained that GHI members have expressed safety concerns at that location. Ms. Pope agreed with Ms. Davis and requested a solution be sought sooner.

Mayor Jordan requested that the installation of light fixtures be made a priority work session. Mr. Salmerón explained that this will be discussed as part of the ARPA reallocation of funding to provide more precise pricing for all projects to facilitate better decision-making.

Measures to Improve Cell Phone Services, Especially during Emergencies

Mr. Brodd discussed concerns about inadequate cell phone service in Greenbelt, particularly regarding emergency number access. Mr. Salmerón stated the possibility of considering switching to a different provider to improve service due to the current provider's problematic issues. There was a discussion regarding the potential of small-cell installations. Mr. Hess emphasized the importance of this issue for safety reasons.

Possibility of Storing GHI Historical Records at the Greenbelt Museum

Mr. Brodd discussed the possibility of storing GHI historical records at the Greenbelt Museum, given these documents' unique and valuable nature. The records are stored in GHI's administrative offices but are not set up for document conservation or research

access. Ms. Baron added that she has contacted Ms. Searing Young and discussed possibly establishing a foundational collection for the research archive that would be available for the public once the Greenbelt Museum expansion is complete. She stated that the Greenbelt Museum could obtain grant funding to care for the documents.

The idea was positively received, with the Council suggesting that interns from the University of Maryland's history and library science program could assist with digitizing and organizing the documents. Ms. Searing Young also clarified that their current off-site storage is for 3D objects, and the archives are still on-site in their offices.

Parking Concerns Related to Reconstruction of Greenbelt Museum Addition and Walkway

Mr. Claggett shared that at a recent GHI Board meeting, members had expressed concerns regarding limited parking during the reconstruction of the Greenbelt Museum. Ms. Searing Young explained that Museum staff directs visitors to park in either the Community Center or Library parking lot and use the pathway system to the Museum. She noted that the approval of the permits was tabled due to the parking concerns that the GHI members raised. Mr. Brodd pointed out that a proposed solution was to limit Westway to residential parking during a certain timeframe.

There was a discussion regarding the fundraising progress of the Greenbelt Museum Addition project.

WMATA's Proposed 2025 Better Bus Plan and its Impacts to GHI

Mr. Brodd raised concerns about WMATA's proposed 2025 bus plan, particularly the loss of certain routes and the potential rerouting of bus traffic onto Westway. He asked for the City's support in having additional discussions with WMATA. Mr. Hess expressed concern that a bus stop will be added in front of the Museum, which in turn will eliminate a parking space on Westway.

Mayor Jordan agreed to work together to address these issues. Based on a question asked by Mayor Jordan, Mr. Claggett provided the Council with an update on the apartments. This included installing two new boiler systems; the rent has increased by 3% from last year.

Prince George's County Fire Department Summer Staffing Plan at the Greenbelt Fire Station

The Council also addressed concerns about the Prince George's County Fire Department's staffing plan and the Greenbelt Fire Station emphasizing the need for adequate safety measures.

Mayor Jordan explained that the City is hosting a Town Hall on Thursday, September 12 at 6:30 pm, at the Greenbelt Fire Department, 125 Crescent Road, and encouraged

residents to attend the upcoming Town Hall to voice their concerns. He noted that the staff had invited Chief Green. The Council expressed frustration about communication and budget constraints advocating for improved collaboration and legal action. Bill Orleans, a Greenbelt resident, suggested housing the GHI archives in the Community Center to preserve historical records.

Informational Items

Mr. Salmerón provided the Council with updated information and a preliminary agenda, which will include an information session and a panel discussion involving representatives from various organizations regarding the Town Hall meeting that is scheduled to be held at the Greenbelt Fire Department, 125 Crescent Road on Thursday, September 12, at 6:30 pm.

Mayor Jordan proposed planting memorial trees in partnership with the Rotary Club for International Peace Day in honor of Mr. Kap Kapastin. Lastly, the Mayor express their appreciation for the staff's work on the Greenbelt Labor Day Festival.

The meeting ended at 9: 28 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Shaniya Lashley-Mullen

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Deputy City Clerk