

BUDGET WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL

Held Wednesday, April 23, 2025

Discussion: Recreation Department FY 2026 Proposed Budget and Project and Proposed City Code Update

Mayor ProTem Weaver began the meeting at 7:30pm., held in Council Chambers, via Zoom.

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

City Staff: Josué Salmerón, City Manager; Bertha Gaymon, Treasurer; Bonita Anderson, City Clerk; Greg Varda, Director of Recreation; Andrew Phelan, Assistant Director of Recreation Facilities & Operations; Anne Oudemans, Assistant Director of Recreation – Programs; Trevin Green, Community Center Supervisor; LaToya Fisher, Recreation Program Supervisor; Nicole DeWald, Arts Supervisor; Megan Searing Young, Museum Manager; Gilberto Cabrera, Assistant Director of Community Development; and Shaniya Lashley-Mullen, Deputy City Clerk.

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

Recreation Department Budget and Operations

Mr. Salmerón provided the Council with an overview of the proposed FY 2026 budget, which faces a \$4 million deficit, mainly due to revenue loss from the indoor pool closure. Mr. Varda noted the Recreation Department's proposal for a 2% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for non-classified staff, which the Council approved. He also suggested forming a Special Events Team and discussed the impact of lost American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding on programming.

Arts Team Expands Programs and Partnerships

Ms. DeWald emphasized the Arts Department's dedication to fostering community connections and personal development through programs for all ages. They employ 53 teaching artists and support 78 local artisans via their annual art fair. Upcoming events include a photography exhibition by Daniel Towers, an art studio open house, and a Chinese dance concert. Despite challenges with resources, the team aims for equitable access to recreation programs and is exploring partnerships for after-hours activities. Michael Hartman Ct Gardenway, suggested enhancing the auditorium's seating and acoustics, praising the range of recreation programs offered.

Aquatic Programs

Mr. Parks announced the outdoor pool will open by Memorial Day weekend with changes to the lesson schedule. He applauded staff maintenance efforts during renovations. Mr. Varda addressed the stagnant grant from the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission and the Council agreed to prioritize. Additionally, Mr. Phelan shared that the aquatic and fitness center survey will happen every other year. Judith Davis, Greenbelt East, recognized the valuable contributions of park rangers and their new programs.

Greenbelt Museum Budget and Fundraising

Ms. Searing Young discussed the Museum's connection with the city, noting its ownership while the Friends provide support. The Museum aims to raise \$220,000 primarily through grants and is considering digitizing its Archives. Bill Orleans suggested the Museum play a larger role in overseeing the Tugwell Room at Greenbelt Library. Ms. Searing Young agreed could be a possibility of curating resources for postgraduate students seeking Museum information.

Community Center Vital Space Discussion

Ms. Oudemans reviewed the Therapeutic Recreation budget for active aging and inclusion programs, which recently received an award from the Maryland Municipal League. Mr. Green shared the Community Center is expanding its Saturday hours and looking to promote its meeting rooms. Ms. Pompei highlighted the Community Center is a vital, well-maintained space that meets many community needs.

Recreation Center Accomplishments and Budget Discussion

Mr. Phelan reported on updates at the Springhill Lake Recreation Center including gym resurfacing, new furniture, a completed playground, and solar lights. The center adjusted hours for preschool Storytime. Ms. McKinney inquired about the FY 2026 maintenance budget and Ms. Davis noted the new soccer field and concerns about reduced training and membership funds.

Recreation Department Budget and Events

Ms. Fisher reviewed the Recreation Program budget, highlighting popular summer camps and events like the Labor Day Festival and Blues Festival. Mr. Varda plans to hire a team to manage these events and discuss costs related to the farmers' market.

Recodification of City Code Discussed

Ms. Anderson and Mr. Cabrera updated the Council on recodifying the City Code. Mr. Salmerón mentioned an agreement with Muni code and the need for compliance edits in Chapters 4, 14, and 20 the latter needing County approval. He highlighted the importance of adopting the International Building Code and addressing gender-specific language in the Charter. The Council agreed to make minor edits and plans to complete the updates in seven months.

Council Discusses Upcoming Meetings and Agenda

Mr. Roberts requested postpone the closed session until the mayor is present. The Council discussed upcoming meetings, a pay-as-you-throw trash proposal, GHI's request on waste rates, and potential delays in the Buddy Attic Master Plan approval. They also reviewed legislative priorities with Mr. Carrington.

The meeting ended at 10:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Shaniya Lashley-Mullen
Deputy City Clerk