

WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL
Held Wednesday, February 5, 2025

**Discussion: to receive an American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)
Update/Wrap-Up.**

Mayor Jordan started meeting at 7:30 p.m., held on Council Chambers and virtually via Zoom.

In attendance: Councilmembers Amy E. Knesel, Danielle P. McKinney, Jenni A. Pompei, Silke I. Pope, Rodney M. Roberts (7:34 p.m.), Kristen L.K. Weaver and Mayor Emmett V. Jordan.

City Staff: Josué Salmerón, City Manager; Tim George, Assistant City Manager; and Shaniya Lashley-Mullen, Deputy City Clerk.

Others present: Michael Hartman, Bill Orleans and others.

Greenbelt City Council Allocates Funds

Mr. Salmerón explained that American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds of nearly \$23 million had to be encumbered by December 31, 2025, with about 75% of projects completed and 25% in progress. Mr. George provides updates on the funding allocation, highlighting key initiatives such as food subsidy programs and the Learn to Earn program. He emphasized that over 130 projects have been completed, with some entering their planning phase and significant projects like ball fields and parks will continue throughout 2025.

Community Impact and Grant Programs

The Council discussed the impact of the \$22.8 million spent on the community highlighting that over 4,200 residents and 56 businesses received direct benefits. Mr. George mentioned the team's effort in setting up grant programs and presented a PowerPoint presentation detailing the projects and programs funded, including new playgrounds, road improvements, and police capabilities. He also discussed the public engagement process and the allocation of funds. The Council concluded by discussing final projects and reprogramming funds to address pressing needs.

Grants, Programs, and Future Challenges

Mr. George discussed allocation and impact of funds from various grants and programs. He highlighted the successful implementation of rental assistance program, that helped almost 1,350 residents and educational scholarships supporting 44 Greenbelt youths in college or technical education. Mayor Jordan and Ms. Pope suggested inviting scholarship recipients to a Regular Meeting to discuss the various scholarships. Mr. George also mentioned the business assistance programs who provided \$1.6 million in funding to local Greenbelt-based nonprofits and businesses. He also discussed the ongoing needs for social services and housing affordability, as well as the challenges in funding these programs in the future. Mr. Salmerón mentioned the successful implementation of the electric cart program, which will support the kayak program and help with park maintenance. He also discussed the potential for continuing some of the successful programs in the future despite the challenges in funding.

Workforce Education and Assistance Funding

The Council discussed the importance of workforce education and job opportunities for Greenbelt residents. They highlighted the success of connecting Greenbelt jobs with job seekers and the need for continued funding for this initiative.

Robert Goldberg-Strassler, a Greenbelt resident, discussed the need for rental assistance and food support based on emergency funds depletion and replenished. Ms. McKinney inquired about tracking and categorizing requests for help to which Mr. Salmerón responded that they were working on improving this process. The Council also acknowledged the hard work of city staff in implementing programs and serving residents over the past few years.

ARPA Funds Allocation and Projects

Bill Orleans, a Greenbelt resident, discussed the allocation of ARPA funds, questioning whether more funds were used for people's assistance rather than capital projects. He suggested a line item in the Complete Projects list to verify this. Mayor Jordan requested a timeline for massive projects like redoing the fields. He acknowledged the difficulty of calculating lost revenue due to COVID-19 but noted that many projects were deferred due to budget uncertainty.

Door Knocking Campaign and Website Updates

The Council discussed the success of their door-knocking campaign, which Mr. George pointed out led to an increase in education scholarships from 29 to 44. Mr. Salmerón suggested considering the potential for a similar campaign to increase voter engagement in future elections. Ms. McKinney expressed interest in maintaining the engagegreenbelt.org website as a storytelling tool and a dashboard for future projects. Mr. Salmerón discussed the possibility of archiving project summaries in the new website design. Mr. George acknowledged the need for more detailed information on the distributed direct assistance funds, and they planned to update all charts and graphics to tell the story of their projects better.

Informational Items: Maryland Bill, Council Rules, and Budget

Ms. Weaver discussed the potential support for a Maryland bill to fund waste food reduction and diversion. Mayor Jordan stated to have Carrington and the Association provide a quick synopsis and discuss the possibilities of the bill moving forward. The Council also discussed rescheduling a work session to revisit the Council rules due to Ms. Weaver's absence. They agreed to reschedule a meeting with the GHI Board, and Ms. McKinney requested an Advisory Board Chairs work session to clarify attendance and expectations. Lastly, the Council discussed the need for a list of work sessions or discussions for the upcoming budget season and decided to come back with suggestions and prioritize the available spaces.

Informational Items: Sinkhole, Storm Preparations, and Senate Bill

The Council discussed various updates and issues. Mr. Salmerón noted that a sinkhole was discovered at a playground at 2 Research Road, which has been closed off. Public Works are assisting in addressing the issue. He mentioned storm preparations were also discussed, with the Aquatic and Fitness Center opening at 8 a.m. to allow Public Works Department to inspect and address any issues. The senior condos on 7050 Greenbelt Road have received their building permit and construction equipment is on site. Mr. Salmerón stated that a meeting with the Director of Immigration Enforcement for State of Maryland was scheduled, and three Council

members were invited. Lastly, Ms. Pompei discussed Senate Bill 820, which would increase the maximum criminal fine or municipal infraction from \$1,000 to \$5,000 and will be tracked for potential action.

Mayor Jordan provided a report on the Maryland Municipal League (MML) Committee he had attended. The meeting ended at 10:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Shaniya Lashley-Mullen

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Deputy City Clerk