

WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL

Held on Wednesday, January 7, 2026

DISCUSSION: Administrative

Mayor Jordan started the meeting at 7:30 p.m. Council Chambers via Zoom.

In attendance were: Councilmembers Frankie Santos Fritz, Amy E. Knesel, Danielle P. McKinney, Jenni A. Pompei, Kristen L.K. Weaver, and Mayor Emmett V. Jordan.

Councilmember Silke I. Pope was absent due to travel.

City Staff: Josué Salmerón, City Manager; James Wisniewski, Acting Public Information Officer; and Gizelle Alvarez, Constituent Services Coordinator.

Others present included Bill Orleans and others.

Greenbelt Council Standing Rules Review

The Greenbelt City Council held a work session to review and discuss proposed revisions to their standing rules, focusing on meeting efficiency and public participation protocols. The council debated time limits for regular meetings, with proposals ranging from 2 to 2.5 hours, and discussed the creation of ad-hoc working groups to handle specific topics. They also reviewed public comment policies, considering changes to the sign-in process and time limitations for speakers. The council agreed to explore implementing a formal public comment policy, including options for virtual participation, while maintaining a focused approach to public input channels.

The Greenbelt City Council discussed proposed changes to its standing rules, focusing on meeting duration and definitions of meeting types. The council agreed to consider two options for meeting length - 2 hours with 15-minute extensions or 2.5 hours with 30-minute extensions. They also reviewed proposed definitions for various meeting types, including work sessions, listening sessions, and town halls. The council expressed support for clarifying these definitions to set expectations for both council members and the public. They decided to further discuss and potentially vote on specific changes to the standing rules at their next meeting.

Council Rules and Meeting Scheduling

The council discussed proposed changes focusing on meeting structures and scheduling. Councilmember Pompei suggested reserving work sessions on the first and third Mondays for agenda and calendar reviews, while Councilmember McKinney proposed prioritizing upcoming agenda topics rather than exclusively reserving time for them. The council also considered scheduling work sessions to avoid conflicts with advisory board meetings, particularly for the Advisory Planning Board (APB) and Parks and Recreation Advisory Board (PRAB). They agreed to investigate potential changes to committee meeting schedules and to prioritize agenda items that require action or legislation in work sessions.

Temporary Working Groups Proposal

The Council discussed a proposal to create topical subcommittees consisting of up to three council members and staff or experts to conduct research and prepare legislation. While some members supported the idea of leveraging council members' expertise, others expressed concerns about limiting committee sizes and making the subcommittees ad hoc and time-bound. The group agreed to consider using the term "working groups" instead of "subcommittees" and to specify that these groups would be temporary and focused on specific research or legislative proposals.

Public Comment Process Standardization

The council discussed public comment policies, focusing on streamlining and standardizing the process. They agreed to implement a formal sign-in system for in-person comments and, potentially, a virtual sign-in for online participants. The council decided to limit public speaking to three minutes per person per topic, with no back-and-forth discussions allowed. They also considered consolidating public comment channels to email and in-person options to avoid confusion and ensure all comments are tracked effectively.

Public Comment Procedure Updates

The Council discussed changes to public comment procedures, focusing on implementing a sign-up system and time limits. They agreed to allow comments during the current petitions and request and allow people to comment once per agenda item, while also providing email and postal mail options for feedback. The Council also discussed seating arrangements, deciding to maintain the current practice of seating by vote order rather than making formal changes to the standing rules.

Meeting Conduct Policy Refinement

The Council discussed and refined a proposal to address disruptive behavior during meetings, incorporating a progressive action plan with escalating steps, from requesting order to potential expulsion. They agreed to modify the proposal by moving the recess option earlier in the process and ensuring that expulsion requires a vote from all but the disruptive member. The Council also reviewed a clause regarding council members' conduct outside public meetings, deciding to consult the city solicitor for guidance on structuring this provision while avoiding conflicts of interest. Finally, they approved adding the community pledge to regular meeting agendas, with a suggestion to remove/replace the Pledge of Allegiance.

Council Procedural Changes and Rules

The Council discussed several procedural changes, including eliminating the Pledge of Allegiance from meetings due to its controversial history and constitutional concerns. They agreed to prioritize scheduling work sessions and to allow the city manager to modify schedules with council concurrence between regular meetings. The Council also decided to standardize its correspondence practices, with outgoing official correspondence requiring a majority vote for multiple signatures. They modified the debate rules to limit speeches to 2 per member and 5

minutes per speech, while allowing extensions by majority vote. Finally, they streamlined the resolution process, allowing resolutions to be adopted on first reading except for annexation and charter amendments, which require two readings.

Council Meeting Rules and Scheduling

The council discussed several agenda items, including proposed changes to the standing rules and the need for a separate document outlining the roles and responsibilities of council liaisons to advisory boards. They agreed to vote on time restrictions for council meetings and to consider a proposal from Councilmember McKinney regarding communication with other public agencies. The council reviewed its upcoming meeting schedule, including presentations from various departments and organizations. They decided to reschedule the quarterly Public Works update to an earlier date and limit the presentation to 15-20 minutes. The council also discussed the need for a work session to review the budget, which is scheduled for March 23rd.

Budget Session Rescheduling and Prioritization

The council discussed rescheduling their budget work sessions to avoid conflicts with religious holidays and to allow more time for council members to review the budget document. They agreed to move the budget presentation to March 23rd and to skip the March 25th work session. The council also reviewed its calendar and discussed prioritizing meetings with various stakeholders, including NASA Goddard and the Greenbelt East HOA. They decided to remove some items from the "ready-to-be-scheduled" list until they could determine their purpose. The council concluded by suggesting they discuss the calendar earlier in future meetings to allow more time for meaningful discussion.

The meeting ended at 10:49 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Bonita Anderson
City Clerk