

WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held on Monday, March 2, 2026, to discuss the Establishment of Unified Collective Bargaining Protocols.

Mayor Jordan started the meeting at 7:30 p.m. The meeting was held in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building, 25 Crescent Road, and via Zoom.

PRESENT WERE: Councilmembers Frankie Santos Fritz, Amy E. Knesel, Danielle P. McKinney, Jenni A. Pompei, Silke I. Pope, Kristen L.K. Weaver, and Mayor Emmett V. Jordan.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Josué Salmerón, City Manager; Jamarie Spencer, Production Assistant; and Bonita Anderson, City Clerk.

OTHERS PRESENT WERE: Jackson Lewis, legal counsel; Steve Silvestri; Blaine Taylor; Michael Hartman; Bill Orleans; and Trent Leon-Lierman.

The Greenbelt City Council held a work session to discuss expanding collective bargaining rights to city employees beyond the existing FOP contract with the police department. The council considered establishing up to three bargaining units: police, public works, and a residual unit for other employees, while debating the process for union recognition and certification. Key concerns included managing multiple bargaining units, maintaining competitive compensation across departments, and ensuring fair representation for seasonal and part-time employees. The council also discussed the potential impact of strikes and intimidation tactics in union elections, with some members expressing concerns about management's role in the union certification process.

Expanding Employee Bargaining Rights

Council held a work session to discuss the possibility of expanding collective bargaining rights for employees beyond the Fraternal Order of Police, which currently represents police officers. Legal counsel Steve Silvestri and Blaine Taylor presented two main options: creating a single unified bargaining unit or allowing for separate units. They emphasized that the ultimate decision should be made by employees through an election process. The council is considering changes to both the city code and charter to facilitate these expanded bargaining rights, aiming to reach a consensus that would allow the city solicitor to finalize a draft for formal introduction.

Bargaining Units Election Process Review

Council discussed the election process for bargaining units and considered whether the City Council should be the final decision-maker or if an external labor expert should be involved. They reviewed the current language in the code regarding bargaining units, which permits the formation of multiple units based on functional departments or job classifications. Additionally, the council noted that the last update to the charter and code for collective bargaining was made to allow the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) to establish a union. They aimed to move forward with codifying any outstanding points.

Union Recognition Process Resolution

Council discussed the process for recognizing union units, including voluntary recognition and labor commissioner certification. They identified a conflict in the language concerning collective bargaining agreements, particularly between Sections 213-232 and Section 237. To resolve this issue, they proposed allowing voluntary recognition while maintaining the validity of collective

bargaining agreements. The council agreed to reserve the right to voluntarily recognize units, similar to their previous action with the Fraternal Order of Police, while ensuring that any such agreements would remain valid.

Labor Commissioner Selection and Bargaining Units

Council discussed the process of selecting a labor commissioner and the potential for allowing multiple bargaining units for city employees. They reviewed the unusual nature of having widespread collective bargaining for all employees, which would require considerable staff preparation and financial resources. Councilmember Pompi reminded the group that these topics had already been addressed in a previous meeting and expressed support for establishing multiple bargaining units with a third-party arbiter. The council also considered the potential challenges and costs associated with implementing such a system, including the possibility of including public works, police, and a third unit for other city employees.

Employee Bargaining Units Discussion

Council discussed the pros and cons of prioritizing larger units versus smaller ones in employee negotiations, noting potential skill and market conflicts with residual units and the need for market-based compensation. They considered how police raises might affect other employees and the financial sustainability of multiple bargaining units. The council suggested extending collective bargaining rights to all employees while managing the number of units, potentially through legislative measures.

Public Works Union Representation Discussion

Council addressed employee representation rights and collective bargaining units within the Public Works Department, considering voluntary union recognition and secret ballot elections. Trent Leon-Lierman noted that Public Works employees initially showed interest in union formation, while the potential for representation by other unions like AFSCME was also discussed.

Municipal Employee Union Restructuring

Council contemplated limiting bargaining units to three: FOP, Public Works, and a residual unit for others. They emphasized employees' rights to choose their unions while expressing concerns about the financial implications of multiple units. A minor revision to the draft was agreed upon to facilitate their approach.

Bargaining Rights for Part-Time Employees

Council reviewed collective bargaining representation for part-time, seasonal, and temporary workers. They agreed that regular part-time employees should be included, but temporary workers should not. They also recognized the need to clarify the code regarding seasonal workers and align definitions with state pension requirements.

Employee Classification and Union Eligibility

Discussion on employee classification focused on distinguishing full-time, seasonal, and part-time workers. With around 54 sworn officers but over 250 total employees, the council aimed for equitable cost-of-living adjustments, particularly for seasonal workers. There was a request for access to a comprehensive summary of changes to the Greenbelt City Code.

Competitive Wages and Market Alignment

Council highlighted the necessity of maintaining competitive wages due to changing market demands, advocating for regular compensation studies every three years. Concerns about losing trained employees to better-paying jurisdictions were raised, along with considerations on the implications of more bargaining units for public hearings and stability in collective agreements.

City Budget and Union Relations

Council discussed budgetary challenges and the need for competitive wages in comparison to neighboring areas while emphasizing partnerships with unions. They debated budget planning and the union certification process, balancing cost-saving measures with fair and transparent practices.

Public Sector Union Rights Expansion

Council proposed expanding strike bans from public safety employees to all city employees, addressing concerns about intimidation tactics and management interference. They upheld the importance of employees' rights to choose their union representation through secret ballot elections.

Informational items were discussed.

The meeting ended at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Bonita Anderson
City Clerk