

BUDGET WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held on Wednesday, April 22, 2026, to discuss the Recreation Department, FY2027 Proposed Budget.

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

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

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Josué Salmerón, City Manager; Greg Varda, Director of Recreation; Andrew Phelan, Assistant Director of Recreation Facilities & Operations; Anne Oudemans, Assistant Director of Recreation – Programs; Megan Searing Young, Museum Manager; and Shaniya Lashley-Mullen, Deputy City Clerk.

OTHERS PRESENT WERE: Bill Orleans, Michael Hartman, Judith Davis, and others.

The Greenbelt City Council held a work session to discuss the proposed FY27 Recreation Department budget, with Director Greg Varda and Assistant Directors Ann Oudemans and Andrew Phelan presenting. The proposed budget totals slightly under \$9 million in expenditure with over \$2 million in revenue, including funding for 2% COLA for non-classified staff and expanded arts offerings in Greenbelt West. Mr. Varda outlined several capital projects planned for FY27, including the Museum Education Center, Phase 2 of the Braden Athletic Complex, and the Springhill Lake Recreation Center concept plan cleanup.

Mr. Varda discussed challenges with the Recreation Department's budget, including a recent minimum wage increase to \$15.30 per hour and concerns about pay compression within the non-classified staff. He highlighted the need for a succession plan due to six employees having 25-30 years of service and discussed the department's high usage of facilities serving both Greenbelt residents (62%) and non-residents (38%). Ms. Oudemans addressed plans to increase programs at Greenbelt West, particularly targeting active aging programs for residents 60 and over and preschoolers, while noting the importance of serving non-residents who choose to attend their programs.

Ms. Oudemans noted that while most programs have non-resident participation, some class programs fill before non-resident registration opens. The Council explored ways to advocate for increased funding from Park and Planning, given that fee-based revenue has been flat and many programs serve non-residents. Mr. Varda discussed the current 15% fee spread between residents and non-resident rates for summer camps, aiming to remain competitive while not pricing out non-residents. Ms. Oudemans noted that there has been an increase in free and subsidized programming, particularly in Greenbelt West, to serve all communities.

The Council discussed several topics related to community programming and facilities. Mr. Phelan advised the department to explore the possibility of linking the community center's activity calendar to the City website to provide better information about classes and cancellations. Mr. Varda addressed revenue projections, with some discrepancies, between the

Recreation Department numbers and those of the City treasurer. Mayor Jordan inquired about programming in Greenbelt East, which Ms. Oudemans answered that the Recreation Department currently offer programs at Schrom Hills Park and explained the challenges of limited indoor space. The Council explored potential funding needs for additional programming, including a center leader position at Schrom Hills Park estimated at \$26,000 and the Learn to Earn program costing between \$32,000 and \$36,000. Finally, Ms. Oudemans touched on efforts to connect with Homeowners Associations (HOAs) in the Greenbelt East area and Mr. Phelans discussed the utilization of community center space by recognized groups.

The council discussed community center space usage, revealing that over \$67,000 worth of free space was provided in FY25 through free space groups and recognition programs. They addressed challenges with kitchen rentals, noting that many potential users get stuck in the county permitting process, and discussed plans to explore local permitting options and accommodate early morning caterer access. The discussion also covered ADA compliance efforts, including plans for a water wheelchair and new lift for the outdoor pool, elevator replacements, and various accessibility improvements at recreational facilities and playgrounds.

Dr. Rosado, a Greenbelt resident, thanked the Recreation Department for supporting the Greenbelt Black History and Culture Committee but expressed concerns about slow information distribution from Franklin Park management. Judith Davis, Greenbelt East, highlighted the success of new programs and increased Park Rangers' presence while noting the discontinuation of archery. Michael Hartman, 2 Court Gardenway, praised the Recreation Department's efforts for people with disabilities but suggested expanding accessible table spaces in pavilions.

The Council discussed exploring options for increasing revenue, including potentially raising commercial tax rates and implementing different tax rates for various business types. The discussion also touched on the performance measures for the Museum and the Greenbelt Aquatic and Fitness Center, noting stable visit numbers due to loyal pass holders, and highlighted the successful organization of special events by the Park Rangers and Special Events Team. Ms. Oudemans discussed the busy event management work handled by Patrick Mullen and staff, highlighting their impressive support at recent events including the Veterans Day ceremony with the governor.

Ms. Searing Young, Museum Director, was thanked for her work with the Greenbelt Reparations Commission and provided an update on the Greenbelt Museum funding. The State has confirmed a significant contribution toward the Museum project, with plans to begin demolition and construction in FY2027, though programming may need to be temporarily relocated during construction. The Museum has seen increased visitation on Sundays but reduced scheduled walking tours compared to pre-COVID levels, with many visitors discovering the museum through City email and social media blasts.

The Council and Ms. Searing Young discussed marketing and outreach strategies for the museum, including partnerships with Anacostia Trails Heritage Area Inc. (ATHA) and leveraging existing events like the farmers' market. They explored ideas for a traveling museum format and discussed the need to update and maintain existing signage around the City, potentially incorporating QR codes and working with the Reparations Commission for historical

content. Ms. Searing Young also touched on plans for a new Visitor Education Center that would inspire visitors to explore other Greenbelt sites and serve as a more welcoming space than a traditional museum.

Dr. Rosado, a Greenbelt resident, thanked Ms. Searing Young for her significant contributions to the Reparations Commission and suggested potential museum presentations and travel exhibits. Judith Davis, Greenbelt East, raised concerns about the readability of information panels and the lack of individual donation opportunities during the visitor center fundraising project, while also inquiring about the Tugwell Room's status and future exhibits for the 250th anniversary. Michael Hartman, 2 Court Gardenway, inquired about parking solutions and accessibility for people with disabilities, to which Ms. Searing Young explained that visitors are advised to park at the library lot or use the Museum's driveways when space is available. Ms. Searing Young discussed accessibility concerns for new construction, including entrance design and parking lot access.

The Council reviewed park permits revenues, particularly for pavilions and tennis courts, with Mr. Phelan explaining enforcement procedures and rental systems in place. The Council also discussed potential lighting upgrades for tennis and volleyball courts.

Information Items:

Mr. Salmerón provided the Council an update on the upcoming Ukraine visit meeting, resubmission of budget requests including overdue public safety surcharges, and plans to meet with the County Executive.

There was brief discussion regarding parking issues at Buddy Attick Park, particularly along Crescent Road where cars were blocking bike lanes, and concerns about enforcement during popular events like the 4th of July and Easter Hunt.

The meeting ended at 9:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Shaniya Lashley-Mullen
Deputy City Clerk