

**BUDGET WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL** held Wednesday, May 6, 2026, to meet with the Recognition Groups (Group 1) regarding the 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 (7:06 p.m.), 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; and Shaniya Lashley-Mullen, Deputy City Clerk.

**OTHERS PRESENT WERE:** Representatives of each recognition group (Group 1), and others.

The Council held a work session to review budget requests from local organizations. Mr. Varda explained the grant review and funding processes, which involved more than 50 recognition groups requesting funding, and the budget adjustments made to balance the available budget of \$122,200 with the \$199,307 in requested funding.

**Greenbelt Soccer Alliance:** Jonas Cadwallader and Scott Borg reported 149 unique players this season, with 50% being Greenbelt residents. The organization practices at the new Schrom Hills Park fields and anticipates growth due to the upcoming World Cup, though none of their matches will be held in Greenbelt. Mr. Varda advised that the review committee panel recommended a reduced funding amount of \$3,300 for FY2027, down from their requested \$4,000, due to their well-organized status and existing financial reserves.

**Greenbelt Municipal Swim Team:** Liz Murray and Christine Nickel requested the same funding amount as last year to support their coaching staff, noting challenges from pool maintenance that affected their programs and reduced their home meets from two to one last year. The team plans to increase its fundraising efforts, including a potential collaboration with the Greenbelt baseball team for Labor Day Festival bingo. Mr. Varda advised that the Greenbelt Municipal Swim Team requested \$10,000 for FY27, and the review committee panel recommended a reduced funding amount of \$8,300. The first home meet is scheduled for June 13 from 8 a.m. to noon at the Greenbelt Aquatic and Fitness Center.

**Chesapeake Education Arts Research Society (CHEARS):** Carolyn Lambright-Davis, Earth Squad, Jennifer Dudley, Bil Davis, and Maggie Cahalan presented a PowerPoint presentation. Ms. Cahalan noted that this marked CHEARS' 20th anniversary as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. She presented their various projects, including the Three Sisters Gardens initiative across multiple locations in Greenbelt, with volunteers working to maintain and harvest the gardens while experimenting with innovative planting methods,

such as using toilet paper rolls for tomato plants. Ms. Cahalan discussed the Greenbelt Grows initiative, including the mobile food hub and the Great Food Transition Project. Mr. Varda advised that CHEARS requested \$1,800 for FY27, and the review committee panel recommended a reduced funding amount of \$1,500.

**Greenbelt Farmers Market:** Scott Fifield and Suzette Agans reported on vendor changes and the upcoming market preparation for Sunday, May 10<sup>th</sup>. The Greenbelt Farmers Market will open at 10 a.m., with some new vendors joining, while others, including beer and wine vendors, did not return. Mr. Varda advised that the Greenbelt Farmers Market has a Basic Certification and only receives in-kind services from the City.

**Greenbelt Boys & Girls Club:** Orin Howard provided an update on the Greenbelt Boys & Girls Club's current activities, including 20 track athletes practicing at Eleanor Roosevelt High School and eight flag football players, with female flag football showing growth. The discussion addressed the potential addition of tackle football, though Mr. Howard noted it would require new equipment, including compliant helmets, and solid participant numbers by a specific deadline. Mr. Varda advised that the Greenbelt Boys & Girls Club requested \$11,000 for FY27, and the review committee panel recommended \$9,100, noting their strong impact but potential financial reserves that might not require the full amount requested. The Council clarified that its current policy requires organizations to have 501(c)(3) status, which would need to be reviewed if Mr. Howard chose to pursue a 501(c)(7) designation instead.

**Greenbelt Youth Baseball:** Patrick Keaton discussed the Greenbelt Youth Baseball program's 75-year history and current operations, including their 220 players across 20 teams from ages 5-13. He highlighted recent improvements including more sponsors, successful fundraising events, and a planned tournament in June. Mr. Varda advised that Greenbelt Youth Baseball requested \$10,500 for FY27, and the review committee panel recommended \$8,700 due to budget constraints. Mr. Keaton acknowledged the higher income projections and agreed to share updated information about their fundraising efforts with the Council. He explained that while field drainage issues were previously a concern, they have been resolved, though they still face challenges with using county fields and paying for light pole charges. Mr. Salmerón agreed to help track utility costs for the light poles.

**Babe Ruth:** The Council discussed Babe Ruth's Operating Grant Application. Mr. Varda advised that Babe Ruth requested \$3,500 for FY27, and the review committee panel recommended \$2,900.

**Greenbelt Refugee Aid Committee (GRACE):** Frank Gervasi described GRACE's four-year mission to support Ukrainian refugees and those affected by Russian bombing, highlighting GRACE's work with local volunteers and members of Parliament. Mr. Varda advised that GRACE requested \$10,000 for FY27, and the review committee panel recommended \$7,900. The Council reviewed GRACE's work supporting Ukrainian refugees, and Mr. Gervasi advised that GRACE is considering establishing

sister-city relations with Ukrainian cities. Mayor Pro Tem Weaver expressed concerns about the cost and alignment of the request within the City's contribution structure, suggesting that a sister-city program might need to be funded separately. Mr. Gervasi explained GRACE's ongoing commitments and potential future support for undocumented residents in Greenbelt.

**Greenbelt Business Alliance (GBA):** Paul Ricketts explained that the GBA currently has 34 paid members and aims to increase to 50 members. The GBA plans to use the funds to host a gala like its successful event in 2025, which included award ceremonies and networking opportunities. Mr. Varda advised that the GBA requested \$5,000 for FY27, and the review committee panel recommended \$4,000, noting that the event could boost economic activity but was less well aligned with the recognition group program's mission.

### **Grant Funding Framework Discussion**

Mr. Varda discussed the grant funding framework and budget adjustments, noting that Nicole DeWald, Arts Supervisor, addressed a \$77,000 budget shortfall through tier-based funding caps and scoring adjustments. Council members raised concerns about significant funding increases from some organizations and questioned whether organizations like GATe and GRACE should receive funding due to concerns about their alignment with program purposes. The Council agreed to schedule a work session during the summer to review and potentially amend the funding policy, including consideration of performance metrics and the variation in the types of requests from organizations.

### **Information Items:**

There was discussion regarding replacing the Kelly Ivy Memorial Tree at Braden Field.

The meeting ended at 9:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Shaniya Lashley-Mullen  
Deputy City Clerk