

**BUDGET WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL** held Wednesday, May 13, 2026, to meet with the Recognition Groups (Group 2) regarding the FY2027 Proposed Budget.

Mayor Jordan called the meeting to order 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 S. Fritz, Amy E. Knesel, Danielle P. McKinney (virtual), Jenni A. Pompi (arrived at 7:36 p.m.), 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; Nicole DeWald, Arts Supervisor; and Shaniya Lashley-Mullen, Deputy City Clerk.

**OTHERS PRESENT WERE:** Representatives of each Recognition Group (Group 2); and other attendees.

The Greenbelt City Council held a work session to review budget requests from community recognition and contribution groups, focusing on budget-related evaluations. Ms. DeWald explained that the review committee panel had reviewed the applications and found that requests exceeded the available budget by 63%. Budget adjustments were made to align the requests with available funding.

**Black History & Culture Committee:** Dr. Lois Rosado and Joe Parks discussed the committee's mission to highlight African American contributions and their plans for upcoming programs, including a focus on the 2027 Black History Month theme, "Black Press to Black Digital Press." Councilmember Fritz expressed enthusiasm for the theme, noting its importance in providing alternative voices and historical perspectives. Dr. Rosado confirmed that programming would focus on two main areas: February events and November's Emancipation Day, with a commitment from Shemeka to portray Ida B. Wells.

**Greenbelt Community Orchestra:** Anne Gardner reported that the Greenbelt Community Orchestra is in its third year. She discussed its upcoming May 31 concert, which will feature themes related to the 250th anniversary of American history, as well as future performances, including a NASA-themed "Planets" concert in November. She explained that the orchestra's funding request is intended to support conductor stipends and music rights, particularly for works by women and minority composers.

**Greenbelt Concert Band:** Jean Lee and Danielle Celdran provided an update on the Greenbelt Concert Band and expressed gratitude for the Greenbelt Community Foundation's grant support. They highlighted recent events, including a successful tribute concert for former member Tom Cherix, and described their ongoing partnerships with schools and local organizations. The Greenbelt Concert Band is seeking funding to support the conductor's salary, operational expenses, and music

purchases. Ms. Celdran also discussed the band's fundraising efforts, including a new sponsorship program. Councilmembers expressed appreciation for the band's contributions to the community and asked questions about financial details, including the difference between honorarium and salary payments.

**Greenbelt Labor Day Festival:** Donna Peterson, Karen Yoho, and Jon Gardner reported on the upcoming 72nd Greenbelt Labor Day Festival. The festival will run from Friday evening through Monday afternoon and will feature activities including a carnival with a new vendor, Snyder Amusements, entertainment, and community events. Mr. Gardner stated that the committee is seeking in-kind support from the City, including bus coordination, police services, and Public Works assistance. The committee is also exploring ways to increase participation by local nonprofit organizations and improve accessibility features at the event. Applications for various festival activities will open on May 18.

**The Space:** Shaymar Higgs and Robert Rand reported on successful program expansions, including new 3D-printing and laser equipment, an entrepreneurship program, and partnerships with local schools. Mr. Rand shared an extensive list of partners and programs, including work with charter schools such as Kingsman Academy and Pathways Public Charter School. He highlighted the recent Standards for Excellence certification and governance improvements. The Space is seeking \$25,000 in general operating funds for the current year, a reduction from previous requests, and is facing space constraints due to the loss of its upper-level space and ongoing challenges in finding new locations for displaced programs such as sewing and yoga. Ms. DeWald stated that The Space received positive feedback from the review committee panel for promoting opportunity and equity.

**Greenbelt Arts Center:** Carol Shaw, Chris Dullnig, and Alan Duda presented the Greenbelt Arts Center's 45-year history in Greenbelt and discussed its current challenges, including reduced City funding and recovery from the impacts of the pandemic. Ms. Shaw highlighted the community's arts and theater programs, including monthly art displays featuring local artists, upcoming music performances by Marvin Gray and the Gray Line Band, and a potential collaboration with a magician and improv group for Labor Day weekend. Ms. DeWald reported that the review committee panel recognized the Greenbelt Arts Center for its community impact despite its financial challenges.

**GATe:** Frank Gervasi, Jennifer Dudley, and Daniel Thiess discussed GATe's mission of community-driven storytelling, its funding through PEG (Public, Educational, and Governmental) fees, and its efforts to expand into elementary schools through literacy fairs, while noting declining PEG funding and the need to diversify revenue sources. Mr. Thiess was introduced as the new Executive Director, and GATe was recognized as celebrating its 40th anniversary. The Council discussed GATe's current operations and financial situation, noting that PEG fees have decreased from \$180,000 to \$85,000 over five years, while fixed costs remain approximately \$35,000. The organization relies heavily on volunteers and has reduced staff from six full-time employees to two part-

time employees. GATe operates several programs, including the Utopia Film Festival, monthly Baha'i productions, and educational courses, with recent initiatives including partnerships with local elementary schools and a stop-motion animation program for children. The Council acknowledged GATe's significant community impact and educational opportunities, expressed concern about staffing reductions due to decreased funding, and Mayor Pro Tem Weaver suggested scheduling a work session to explore strategies for modernizing revenue streams, potentially including a streaming tax.

**Friends of the New Deal Café Arts:** Meg Haney and Julie Winter discussed plans to promote the upcoming Jazz Festival on June 6 and the Blues Festival on September 26, both organized by Friends of the New Deal Café Arts, through social media, posters, postcards, and a spring fundraising effort. They also noted the addition of professional emcees and sound technicians to enhance the festivals. The advisory panel commended the events as a Greenbelt mainstay, noting that they attract visitors from outside the City and offering support for including more local performers, if possible.

**Greenbelt Makerspace:** Robert Candey, Tim Uber, Vikram Kashyap, and Donna Lochner presented the organization's accomplishments over the past year, including operating a tool library with more than 830 items, hosting repair cafés, and planning to offer classes. They reported 1,072 tool checkouts and services to more than 1,300 visitors during the past year. Councilmembers expressed support for the organization's growth and community impact. Mr. Salmerón asked whether Greenbelt Makerspace would consider a potential collaboration with the City regarding snow-removal equipment sharing.

#### **Information Items:**

Mayor Jordan advised that the Final Budget Review would be held on Monday, May 18, and that Budget Adoption would be held on Tuesday, May 26. Mayor Pro Tem Weaver reminded the Council to submit formal proposals by Friday, May 15, so they could be included in the Council's work session packet.

Mr. Salmerón discussed scheduling a follow-up meeting with County Councilmember Adams to discuss the City's top priority request to the County. Mayor Jordan and Councilmember Pompei stated that they would like to attend the meeting.

The meeting ended at 9:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Shaniya Lashley-Mullen  
Deputy City Clerk