

WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL was held Wednesday, June 10, 2026, to receive a presentation and discuss the Draft Cemetery Master Plan/ and discuss the Budget Process.

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; Jaime Fearer, Acting Director of Planning and Community Development; Greg Varda, Director of Recreation; Megan Searing-Young, Museum Director; and Shaniya Lashley-Mullen, Deputy City Clerk.

OTHERS PRESENT WERE: Carolyn Gimble, Johnson, Mirmiran, and Thompson (JMT) and others.

Greenbelt Cemetery Preservation Plan

The Council held a work session to discuss the final draft of the historic Greenbelt Cemetery Master Preservation Plan. Ms. Searing-Young and Ms. Gimble presented the plan, which is approximately 95% complete. The plan aims to stabilize and secure three late 18th century cemeteries (Hamilton, Turner, and Walker) that are legally protected landmarks and active resources for the Greenbelt National Historic Landmark District. The presentation included historical context about these cemeteries, which contain both white family remains and likely enslaved individuals from tobacco plantations in the Vansville District.

Ms. Gimble provided updates on cemetery research, including the discovery of the Turner Family Bible, containing records of births and deaths of enslaved people from 1852 to 1850, is stored at the United Methodist Church of Hyattsville. The research revealed that Hamilton Cemetery, located near the community gardens, is the largest of the three cemeteries and faces significant challenges with vandalism and overgrowth, with headstones removed in the 1960s and 1970s and now stored securely. She recommended fencing in the Hamilton Cemetery area to protect the site, noting that Turner and Walker cemeteries do not present the same preservation challenges.

Ms. Gimble discussed fencing needs at Hamilton Cemetery, with cost estimates ranging from \$7k to \$13k, for installing a chain-link fence around both Hamilton and Walker Cemeteries. The Council explored alternatives to chain-link fencing, considering more attractive options like split rail fencing or hedges that would better match the surrounding landscape while still delineating the cemetery boundaries. The discussion also covered the condition of Turner Cemetery, which needs full fencing around the perimeter, and Walker Cemetery, which requires improved access paths, particularly for the two revolutionary war soldiers buried there. The sites are eligible for National

Register Designation and various grant funding, though some improvements like fencing and path repairs may require City funds.

Councilmember McKinney inquired about how the information would be implemented in museum work and wayfinding, Ms. Searing-Young responded that the cemeteries would be included in community wayfinding panels and potentially through QR codes. Ms. Searing-Young discussed plans to make the historical cemetery information available once the 10A facility is operational, including potential walking tours addressing 18th and 19th century history.

Councilmember Fritz inquired about the Reparations Commission's role in monument decisions, and Ms. Searing-Young advised that a memorialization project is being considered to acknowledge enslaved individuals buried on the land. The discussion revealed estimates of approximately 10 known burials at Turner Cemetery, though exact numbers are difficult to determine due to unclear stone markers, and no specific estimates were provided for enslaved versus white individuals.

The Council discussed implementing a master plan for cemetery maintenance, with a focus on addressing immediate needs at Walker Cemetery before moving to longer-term projects like monuments and events. Judith Davis, Greenbelt East, suggested creating a seasonal maintenance plan, train public works crews, and potentially establish a "Friends of Greenbelt Historic Cemeteries" group like Congressional Cemetery's model.

Budget Process

The Council also reviewed the recent budget process, identifying the need to meet earlier deadlines set by the County and State governments, and discussed potential improvements to future budget work sessions. Mayor Pro Tem Weaver explained the need to condense and streamline the budget process and timeline to complete work before May's first Regular Meeting, focusing on keeping discussions more disciplined to budget-related items rather than operational matters. They agreed to separate the Green Ridge House meeting from formal budget sessions to allow residents to interact directly with Councilmembers and decided to maintain the split recognition groups sessions despite their length. Councilmembers expressed support for the calendar system with question deadlines, suggesting improvements like incorporating more fiscal focus in quarterly reports, potentially holding some sessions on weekends, and exploring different budget analysis frameworks including base budget review and outcomes-based budgeting.

The Council discussed improving the budget process, with suggestions from Ms. Davis, to hold pre-budget meetings in November instead of December to allow more time for staff work during holidays. Mr. Salmerón noted that property tax revenue guidance typically comes in December, which currently sets the budget process timeline. He highlighted that about 85-90% of the budget consists of fixed costs like personnel and utilities, leaving only 10% for flexible decisions. The Council discussed improving community engagement and participatory budgeting processes, with a focus on

providing questions in advance. They explored ways to make financial reporting more strategic, suggesting a shift from detailed task reports to monthly summaries of top three goals achieved by departments, which would be elaborated during quarterly work sessions.

There was discussion regarding creating a finance working group to help identify budget topics, research revenue opportunities, and propose efficiencies before November budget discussions. Councilmembers debated the merits of forming various committees and task forces, with some expressing concerns about creating too many small groups that might exclude other Councilmembers, while others viewed focused groups as helpful for collaborative work and better supporting the City Manager. The discussion highlighted the need for more proactive Council involvement in budget planning and the importance of balancing committee participation with existing Council responsibilities and community engagement. They addressed the need to prioritize important initiatives and make decisions about potential tax increases or service cuts.

Informational Items:

The Council reviewed upcoming meetings, including a proposed change for the Four Cities meeting to July 16th, and discussed the recodification of the City Code, deciding to accept the updated Code even with known areas needing future revision. Additional topics included MML Summer Conference planning and a County press conference regarding a lawsuit affecting Park and Planning funding.

The meeting ended at 9:49 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Shaniya Lashley-Mullen
Deputy City Clerk