

WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held Wednesday, October 13, 2010, for the purpose of meeting with Fieldstone Properties.

Mayor Davis started the meeting at 8:05 p.m. It was held in the Multipurpose Room of the Community Center.

PRESENT WERE: Councilmembers Konrad E. Herling, Emmett V. Jordan, Leta M. Mach, Silke I. Pope, Edward V. J. Putens, Rodney M. Roberts, and Mayor Judith F. Davis.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael P. McLaughlin, City Manager; Celia Craze, Director of Planning and Community Development; and Cindy Murray, City Clerk.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Joseph Kazarnovsky, Ralph Reider, Carl Mayse, and Debbie Dillon, Fieldstone Properties; Laura Kressler, Public Safety Advisory Committee; David Lange, Greenbelt Neighbors Alliance; Mike Ralls, Chief of Security Beltway Plaza; Mary Clark, Greenbelt News Review; Brian Gibbons and Bill Orleans.

Introductions

Joseph Kazarnovsky, Fieldstone Properties, thanked Council for the opportunity to meet with them. He said that due to the size and complexity of the purchase, along with this being the largest single mortgage Freddie Mac had approved this year, closing had been delayed on the Empirian Village property but he expected it would occur by the end of this week.

Mr. Kazarnovsky said Fieldstone was excited to become owners of the property and were very much aware of the issues and amount of resources that would be required for the needed improvements. He also said the new property name, Franklin Park at Greenbelt Station, would be in place soon.

Mr. Kazarnovsky reported on the success Fieldstone had experienced with the acquisition of a 1,067 apartment complex known as Mill Run in Union, New Jersey, which had been suffering from significant financial issues as well as a high crime rate prior to their purchase. He explained they had worked with community leaders, invested several million dollars in upgrading individual units and the exteriors of buildings, began a thorough credit and criminal screening process on all tenants, and evicted residents who violate property rules. Mr. Kazarnovsky reported the crime rate at Mill Run had decreased significantly and the reputation of the property had significantly improved.

Mr. Kazarnovsky reported that Debbie Dillon will be the on site property manager and that he and other Fieldstone representatives would visit the property on a regular basis. He commented on Ms. Dillon's extensive experience in the business.

Ms. Dillon reported Fieldstone's plans for the property include upgrades to the pool area, leasing center and landscaping, and providing a fitness center for residents use. She also advised that Fieldstone had entered into a housing contract under the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) program to house approximately 100 military families by next June. Ms. Dillon also said she is working with the University of Maryland on an agreement to provide housing for graduate students.

Crime Issues

Mr. Kazarnovsky stressed one of their highest priorities was addressing the current problem with crime on the property. He praised Officer Tim White, the on-site Police Officer, but said additional police resources would be needed. Mayor Davis explained the current police partnership agreement in place and Mr. Kazarnovsky indicated Fieldstone would be willing to invest additional resources

for increased police presence on the property. Ms. Dillon said they would be installing cameras and call boxes throughout the property.

Mr. Jordan mentioned the close proximity of the property to Greenbelt Metro and asked if there was a problem with non-residents coming onto the property. Mr. Kazarnovsky said no, most of the crime problems come from inside the property.

Mayor Davis suggested Fieldstone meet with the Police Department to discuss crime issues and concerns. She also noted the need for lighting installation or repairs in many dark areas of the property. Ms. Dillon said she would set up a meeting after Fieldstone had closed on the property.

Mr. Putens explained the work being done by the Public Safety Advisory Committee and Community Relations Advisory Board to identify neighborhood issues in Empirian Village. He said they had been unsuccessful at their attempts to form a partnership with the management of Empirian Village. Mr. Putens encouraged Fieldstone to work on this issue with the advisory groups.

Ms. Kressler, Chair of the Public Safety Advisory Committee, mentioned the committee would be willing to work with residents of Franklin Park to set up a community watch program.

Code Violations

There was discussion regarding the significant number of outstanding violations and fines along with maintenance requests. Mr. Kazarnovsky said Ms. Craze and Ms. Dillon have worked out a detailed plan to address these issues within the next 90 days. He explained that contractors will be hired to clear the current backlog of maintenance issues but they expect to have adequate staff in place to have maintenance work orders resolved within 24 to 48 hours.

Ms. Craze reported all life safety violations had been addressed in order for the mortgage to be approved. She said the City had granted a temporary occupancy permit for 90 days only at this point. Ms. Craze said a permanent permit can be issued after the City is satisfied that all code violations have been addressed. She also reported payment had been received for all outstanding fines on the property.

Maintenance and Property Issues

Mr. Roberts asked if the long range plan was to use contractors or have their own maintenance staff to address maintenance issues. Mr. Kazarnovsky said their long range plan is to have adequate staff dedicated solely to maintenance issues.

Ms. Dillon said they will be sending all residents a letter, in both English and Spanish, providing information on the proper way to report service requests. Mr. Kazarnovsky added the maintenance reporting phone will be answered by a staff member who will know how to reach the appropriate party to resolve the problem.

Mayor Davis and Mr. Herling noted the lack of adequate recycling areas on the property. Ms. Dillon said they are reviewing the waste and recycling contracts in place at this time and will be negotiating new contracts. Mr. Kazarnovsky commented on the positive impacts good recycling programs have had at their other properties. Mayor Davis suggested Ms. Dillon contact Luisa Robles, the City's Recycling Coordinator.

Mr. Putens asked about the burned-out buildings on the property. Mr. Kazarnovsky said it was inexcusable nothing had been done with these buildings and that they would address this issue promptly.

Ms. Mach asked about window guards for tenants. It was noted that if a tenant requests window guards, they are provided. Ms. Craze said the window guard issue will be addressed in the next revision of the code.

Ms. Mach and Mr. Roberts asked about plans for building entranceways. Mr. Kazarnovsky said all buildings will have secured doors and the storefronts removed by Empirian Village will be restored. He noted that broken glass from the building doors is a significant problem and said that they are currently experimenting with a variety of different building doors.

Communications

Mr. Kazarnovsky said their staff would be obtaining email addresses for their tenants as a way to communicate and share information. Ms. Dillon advised they are also working on development of a website. Mr. Herling and Ms. Mach commented on the valuable community information provided in the Greenbelt News Review.

Mayor Davis suggested Ms. Dillon contact the Recreation Department and Social Services regarding services available to residents. She also mentioned the Greenbelt Middle School Task Force and the 75th Anniversary Planning Committee would welcome input from a Fieldstone representative.

Mr. Putens asked about a new tenant orientation. Mr. Kazarnovsky said staff will review rules with every new tenant to ensure they understand their responsibilities as tenants. Mr. Putens and Mr. Gibbons mentioned the benefits of forming a tenant advisory committee or tenant focus groups to work with management.

Mr. Kazarnovsky, Mr. Reider, and Mr. Mayse left the meeting at 9:40 p.m. to catch a train. Mayor Davis thanked them for coming, wished them success and said Council looked forward to improvements on the property.

Informational Items

Several informational items were discussed.

The meeting ended at 10:13 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Cindy Murray
City Clerk*