



WORK SESSION of the Greenbelt City Council held April 21, 2008, for the purpose of meeting with representatives of the Greenbelt Volunteer Fire Department (GVFD).

Mayor Davis started the meeting at 7:31 p.m. It was held in the Council Room of the Municipal Building.

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

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael P. McLaughlin, City Manager and David E. Moran, Assistant City Manager

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Jay Remenick, Brian Rudy and Chris Fleshman, GVFD.

Mr. Fleshman stated that information Mayor Davis had heard about GVFD considering the purchase/lease of an ambulance from Bladensburg was inaccurate. He reported that GVFD was looking into buying or leasing an ambulance.

Chief Rudy stated that GVFD had learned that insurance companies have an allotment to pay for ambulance service. GVFD reported it had contracted with a company to begin billing for ambulance rides provided by GVFD. It was noted that the County also planned to start an ambulance billing program and if local departments did not have their own billing program in place, the County would end up receiving all of the revenues from ambulance billing. The County intends to bill insurance companies. However if the insurance company does not pay or the ambulance user is uninsured, the County plans to seek the payment from users and ultimately utilize a collection agency if needed. GVFD stated its ambulance billing program would also bill insurance companies, but not seek any further billing of individuals or seeking collections. [GVFD did note that their billing company would have to send a bill to uninsured users, but they did not expect to receive these amounts.]

Mayor Davis asked about a May 1 deadline. GVFD responded that they had to make a decision by this date whether or not to implement their program. GVFD reported that Greenbelt and Beltsville were the only two fire companies in the area not currently billing for ambulance service.

Mr. Roberts expressed skepticism and concern about the program. He believed that the County was moving in the wrong direction.

Ms. Mach asked if the bills could be personalized to indicate that if an individual had a problem paying the bill, they could contact the fire department. Mr. Fleshman responded yes. Mr. Herling asked about the success rate in terms of payment. Mr. Remenick responded that rate was 70%. Mr. Putens stated that if GVFD did not implement this program, the County would do

it.

Mayor Davis referenced the amount of money Bladensburg was making from ambulance billing and asked if the program was implemented here in Greenbelt, would it reduce pressure on the City to increase its apparatus fund. Mr. Fleshman responded possibly. GVFD noted that BINGO revenues were down and that the County was cutting back on the funding it provides to volunteer departments.

Mayor Davis noted that GVFD did not need the City's permission to take this step. Council suggested that GVFD hold a public meeting and conduct an education campaign (including a News Review article) about the ambulance billing issue. GVFD stated that they didn't want to implement ambulance billing, but that the County's decision to establish it was forcing their hand.

The meeting ended at 8:06 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,
David E. Moran
Assistant City Manager*