



WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held Monday, October 20, 2008, for the purpose of holding a stakeholder meeting with Greenbelt clergy and other leaders of religious organizations.

Mayor Pro Tem Roberts called the meeting to order at 8:04 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, and Mayor Pro Tem Rodney M. Roberts. Mayor Judith F. Davis was out of town.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael P. McLaughlin, City Manager; and Cindy Murray, City Clerk.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Ruth Wilson and Dottie Brown, Berwyn Presbyterian Church; Trudy Conrad and Delores Downs, Catholic Community of Greenbelt; Jim Fischer and Joy Allchin, Greenbelt Baha'i Community; Rev. Tino Cione, Trinity Assembly of God; Rev. Thomas O'Brien Jr., Good Samaritan Lutheran Church, Betty Jo Smith, Roger Evans and Judy Evans, Hope Fellowship Baptist Church; Doug Love, Appleton Seventh Day Adventist Church; Larry Yore, St. Hugh's Catholic Church; Rev. Stephen Mentz, Holy Cross Lutheran Church; Bob Rand, Paint Branch Unitarian Universalist Church; Kevin Hammett, Greenbelt Community Church and Greenbelt Community Relations Board; Bill Orleans and others.

Mayor Pro Tem Roberts welcomed everyone to the work session and invited them to talk about any particular issues or projects involving their organizations.

Mr. Fischer suggested a community observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day would help to promote unity for all religious and racial groups. Ms. Alcham said the Baha'i community across the United States believes that racism is the most important issue of the country.

Ms. Brown said the Berwyn Presbyterian Church and many other local congregations operate food pantries to assist families in need. There was discussion regarding the large increase in the number of people receiving help from the pantries.

Rev. O'Brien said his congregation had been working on ways to reach out to teenagers. He mentioned that teenagers are welcome to use the basketball courts at Good Samaritan after school hours. He also mentioned they would be holding a "Haunted Woods" event on October 31st and November 1st beginning at 6:30 p.m. He noted that many high school students work this event for community service hours.

Mr. Putens commended the organizations on the individual work they do providing emergency assistance to families in need, but asked if there was any coordinated effort of staff, facilities, efforts, etc. in case of a serious emergency. Rev. O'Brien mentioned this has been discussed at

the Greenbelt Interfaith Leadership Association meetings. Mr. Putens asked how the city could help with their efforts.

Rev. Mentz said his congregation was willing to provide clothing to residents in need after the fires in Greenbelt West but, after several phone calls to various organizations, were unable to determine who was coordinating this effort. Mr. Putens and Mr. Herling suggested a list or data base be developed providing information on the services each organization could provide. Mr. Rand said there was need for better communication especially since many congregations will respond with resources if they know what is needed.

There was discussion of the increasing numbers of the homeless. Many of the church representatives reported on their participation in the "Safe Haven" weekly sheltering program but noted they did not have the volunteers or facilities to participate in the "Warm Nights" monthly sheltering program.

Ms. Mach said the county needed to develop a plan to provide shelter for the increasing numbers of homeless individuals, particularly women and children. Mr. Putens said the Four Cities Coalition of Greenbelt, College Park, New Carrollton and Berwyn Heights, have been discussing the increasing numbers of homeless. He mentioned it would take a combined effort to solve the problem.

Rev. Cione said his church has a desire to find a large vacant facility to establish a "Dream Home" which would provide shelter to homeless men, women and children. He noted it would take a multi-level support system including other churches, community organizations and local governments. He mentioned "Dream Homes" had been established in other cities such as Dallas and St. Louis.

Mr. Orleans requested that the issue of providing shelter to the increasing number of homeless in the area be placed on the agenda for the upcoming Four Cities meeting.

Ms. Conrad announced that the Greenbelt Interfaith Leadership Association will be holding an interdenominational Thanksgiving Eve service on November 26th at the Community Church.

Mayor Pro Tem Roberts thanked all the groups for the work they do in the community, especially their work with families in need.

Mr. Putens said he wanted to leave the group with a challenge to work together on projects and issues by coordinating their resources and facilities. He mentioned that only through a coordinated effort could a "Dream Home" type project be established.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:23pm.

Respectfully submitted,

*Cindy Murray
City Clerk*

