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**REGULAR MEETING OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held April 25, 2005.**

Mayor Davis called the meeting to order at 8:05 p.m.

ROLL CALL was answered by Councilmembers Konrad E. Herling, Leta M. Mach, Rodney M. Roberts, and Mayor Judith F. Davis. Councilmember Edward V.J. Putens was unable to attend because of a work commitment.

ALSO PRESENT were Michael P. McLaughlin, City Manager; Robert A. Manzi, City Solicitor; and Kathleen Gallagher, City Clerk.

Mayor Davis asked for a moment of silence in honor of residents Virginia Scarbeau and Thomas Singleton. The Mayor then led the pledge of allegiance to the flag.

CONSENT AGENDA: Mayor Davis asked to remove the minutes of the regular meeting of April 11, 2005, from the consent agenda. It was moved by Ms. Mach and seconded by Mr. Herling that the consent agenda be approved as amended. The motion passed 4-0.

Council thereby took the following actions:

**MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETINGS**

- Regular Meeting, October 11, 2004 (amended)
- Work Session, April 6, 2005

Approved as presented.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Park & Recreation Advisory Board, Report #05-1 (Contribution Groups Budget Review): Council accepted this report and agreed to consider it at the work session for Contribution Groups on May 11, 2005.

REAPPOINTMENTS TO ADVISORY GROUPS: The City Council appointed Mary Geiger and Christopher Husker to new terms on the Park & Recreation Advisory Board.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: It was moved by Mr. Herling and seconded by Ms. Mach that the agenda be approved. The motion carried 4-0.

**PRESENTATIONS**

Introduction of LaVerne Stewart-Logan – Green Ridge House Service Coordinator: Christal Parker-Batey, Community Resource Advocate, introduced Laverne Stewart-Logan as the new Service Coordinator for Green Ridge House, with the Greenbelt Assistance-in-Living Program. She will help Green Ridge House residents access programs, benefits, and services, as well as bringing in health-related speakers and services requested by the residents. Eventually, she will also be working with clients on the Green Ridge House waiting list and their families. The service coordinator position was made possible by a three-year grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Council welcomed Ms. Stewart-Logan to the City.

Certificate of Appreciation – National Depression Awareness Campaign: Mayor Davis read the agenda comments. This certificate was awarded to the City last month at the Suicide and the Older Adult Conference sponsored by Community Crisis Services, Inc., Doctors Community Hospital, and the Prince George's County Area Agency on Aging in recognition of its six-month education campaign on Depression Awareness and Suicide Prevention. Mayor Davis commented that this award should be attributed to Ms. Parker-Batey, whom she asked if the program would continue. After describing the program that was run in 2004, Ms. Parker-Batey said the expectation is for the screening to be an annual event.

Since the presenter on the Community Emergency Response Team Program had not yet arrived, Mayor Davis continued with the next items on the agenda.

Maryland Chiefs' Challenge – Proclamation: Mayor Davis presented a proclamation recognizing the Maryland Chiefs' Challenge, which during April and May puts a special focus on increasing compliance with laws on safety belt and child safety seat use. MPO Scott Kaiser emphasized that this program was not about writing tickets, though many are written, but rather about education. He brought samples of materials used for the education campaign. He said in the Police Department's preliminary survey, they unfortunately had found seat belt compliance rates down in both Springhill Lake and Center City, but they will work to get the rates back up by the end of the Challenge period. He said last year Greenbelt had placed first in the state-level competition for the fifth consecutive year and second in the national competition, which the City had entered for the first time. Council thanked MPO Kaiser for his very effective work with these programs.

**PUBLIC HEARING ON THE PROPOSED FY 2006 BUDGET:** The Mayor read the agenda comments and recessed the regular meeting for the public hearing on the budget. Three citizens came to speak. Charles Hagelgans, 125 Hedgewood Drive, opened by saying that City employees do a great job and that he intended no criticism of staff in any suggestions he would make for budget cuts. He made the following suggestions. (1) Do not add the new position in Public Works this year. New positions create permanent liabilities, and this is the best opportunity to save. This work could be absorbed in Public Works with little reduction in service in other areas. (2) Reduce the horticultural services staff from five to three. Reduce the street landscaping budget by using more low-maintenance perennials that do not require staff to do continual seasonal plantings. (3) Send only one representative to conferences instead of sending all Councilmembers. At \$22,000 the Maryland Municipal League absorbs more than half of the City's membership and conference budget. (4) Prepare a less elaborate budget book – all the color and photographs are not necessary. It appears to require a good

deal of staff time. (5) Do not rush to participate in the performance measurement coalition. Wait to see if other municipalities benefit from it. (6) What is the armored personnel carrier used for? Does the City really need it?

Mayor Davis thanked Mr. Hagelmans for his suggestions. She noted that when multiple Councilmembers attend conferences they do not duplicate efforts but rather deploy themselves to cover as many sessions and events as possible. She said oftentimes they are able to bring back ideas that save money. She said the personnel carrier was surplus and had not been purchased but that Council could ask the City Manager to report on how much its maintenance runs. She added that it is intended to serve in a possible hostage situation, so the hope is that it would not receive much use.

Mr. Roberts said he too would prefer not to hire for new positions this year, including the two approved in last year's budget, but he did not want to eliminate any existing people.

Ms. Mach said she had asked Public Works about perennials during last year's budget process and had learned that because the City grows many of its own, the cost of the plants themselves is not high. She agreed with Mr. Roberts that she did not wish to let any existing employees go, but she said she would be interested in learning about vacancies created by retirements and resignations.

Sue Krofchik, 6 Fayette Place, said she, too, appreciated the hard work of the City Council and staff but would like to see even harder work on limiting the tax increases. She suggested: (1) adding a question to the community survey taken at election time regarding how much people were willing to have their taxes increased to support activities; (2) requiring that department heads be asked to submit budgets at a level of "no increase"; (3) following up better on monies spent, such as the police vehicle computers that were not installed last year; (4) considering a special assessment in lieu of a permanent tax increase as a way of addressing specific financial needs; (5) temporarily decreasing or cutting programs until revenues increase.

In response to a question from the Mayor, Ms. Krofchik said she did not mean to cut current staff. She said she thought department heads could probably determine the best ways to cut in their own departments. Mr. McLaughlin said he could direct department heads to develop budgets with no increases, but his policy for the last several years is to direct them to prepare budgets to cover existing City services and to place any new needs or services aside to be looked at separately. He said the message he keeps getting from residents is that they do not want services cut.

Mayor Davis asked Mr. McLaughlin why, if residents assessments have all gone up so much, the City is not flush with revenues. He explained that as that revenue stream goes up, others are going down. In FY 2006, the City expects to see a big decrease in its Admission and Amusement taxes because of the closure of the six theater screens at Beltway Plaza. The City is also facing a significant reduction in its highway user revenues. At the same time, drastic increases in costs have occurred, including utility and fuel costs.

The last speaker was Frank Gervasi, 163 Research Road. He said his concern is that the full impact of assessment increases has not hit yet, with the result that people may not

appreciate just how much their taxes are going up. He said he thought it was premature to increase the tax rate by so much when assessments are still "skyrocketing." Mr. McLaughlin said the entire City had been reassessed in calendar year 2003, with the result that FY 2006 will reflect the second year of the increase. The calendar year 2006 reassessment will be reflected in FY 2008 revenues. He said the budget to maintain existing services that he submitted to Council requires both the increased revenues from assessments and also the tax increase. He said perhaps revenues will catch up in future years—but not this year. Mr. Gervasi then suggested that at least the portion of the tax increase that has been justified as being needed to increase the reserves should not be imposed this year but should rather wait until the effect of the reassessments becomes more evident.

Mr. Roberts commented that in some locales, the tax rate automatically goes down when assessments go up but that this does not happen here.

In response to a question from Ms. Mach, Ms. Parker-Batey explained the Homeowners' Property Tax Credit; she said there was also a renters' rebate.

Mayor Davis read parts of an e-mail message from Erv and Laura Beckert, 7-G Crescent Road, that expressed support for whatever budget is required to continue to fund City services at their existing level.

Mr. Herling encouraged residents to come out to the remaining budget work sessions. Mayor Davis added that comments could also be phoned or e-mailed. There being no other comments, the Mayor declared the hearing to be closed and reconvened the regular meeting.

PETITIONS AND REQUESTS: None.

THE COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM (CERT) PROGRAM: Mayor Davis read the agenda comments. Calvin Hawkins of the Office of Emergency Management made a presentation to Council on the CERT Program, a training program the Prince George's Volunteer Center would like to offer to Greenbelt residents. It provides free training to community members who are interested in developing a pre-planned response to severe weather events and other disasters. Mr. Hawkins listed Berwyn Heights, Laurel, Bladensburg, Hyattsville, North Brentwood, Colmar Manor, and a number of other municipalities that had already participated in training. He also commented on the encouragement they had received from the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG). He said the program involves 20 hours of training in such areas as fire safety, disaster, and emergency procedures and has greatly benefited by partnering with the Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute. He brought brochures and said material was also available on the FEMA Web site. Mayor Davis said Ron Shane, formerly of the Berwyn Heights Town Council, had given an enthusiastic presentation about the program at a Four Cities meeting. In response to questions, Mr. Hawkins said they configured the 20 hours of training in almost any way the jurisdiction wished to have it presented; similarly the program could be initiated when the City wanted it. Bill Holland, Greenbelt Public Safety Advisory Committee, said the program had really "exploded" in Maryland and that he thought response would be "tremendous" in Greenbelt, given the volunteer spirit and the earlier success of the Police Academy program. Mr. Hawkins said a major benefit of the program was that it could free up

professional first-responders from tasks like answering the phones and directing traffic for other tasks. Council agreed to refer the program to the Public Safety Advisory Committee for review and follow-up.

MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETINGS - Regular Meeting, April 11, 2005: Mayor Davis said that in addition to those listed, the death of Billie Jo Fox, wife of Public Works staff member Michael Fox, had also been recognized at the moment of silence at that meeting. She also asked to add the qualification "public" to the statement that Roosevelt was the "only high school" from the county listed in the education review issue of the Washington Post.

#### ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Mr. Manzi said there were still obstacles to his getting a copy of the agreement between WMATA and the Metroland developers involving the issue of who could have access to the copy. He said he understood an executive session was tentatively scheduled for Monday night.

Mr. McLaughlin mentioned that the new Gazette reporter for the Greenbelt beat, Courtney Burns, was present tonight. He also said the Municipal Government schools competition had been held on Friday and that the Celebration of Spring and Cinco de Mayo activities, as well as an electronics recycling, would be held next Saturday.

Mr. Herling said he was very impressed with the Municipal Government competition and noted that Karen Hampton, member of the College Park City Council, had attended and that College Park would be holding its first competition May 10 at 6 p.m. in their Council chambers. Mayor Davis added thanks to Beverly Palau for all her work with the schools for this event and to Joe McNeal for serving as master of ceremonies.

Ms. Mach mentioned attending the Public Works Open House and the Arbor Day and Earth Day celebrations on April 16, as did other Councilmembers.

Mr. Roberts asked if there is a way to recycle unwanted television sets, since they cannot be taken with the City's electronics recycling. Mr. McLaughlin said he would find out.

Mayor Davis said that on April 15, she and Mr. Roberts attended the ACE writing awards. She said that in addition to the Public Works' activities on April 16, she had attended a joint City/FONDCA concert at Roosevelt Center and read the Astronomy Day proclamation at the Owens Science Center. On April 20, she, Mr. McLaughlin, and Mr. McNeal attended the Golden Age Club's annual luncheon. She reminded everyone that this Friday is the receipt deadline in Laurel for applications for PGCMA scholarships. She also announced that on May 2 the County Council would hear a request for funding to cover the amount being billed to municipalities for election services.

LEGISLATION: None.

NEW GREENBELT ASSISTANCE-IN-LIVING PROGRAMS – BRIEFING: Mayor Davis read the agenda comments. Ms. Parker-Batey was present to answer questions on two new

programs to be offered through the GAIL program. One, the AARP Foundation's Money Management Program, promotes independent living for older residents who are at risk because they cannot manage their financial affairs. She said the AARP would provide the volunteers, as well as liability coverage for the City. The hope is to have the program up and running by July 1.

Mayor Davis commented that this looked like a good deal of new work for Ms. Parker-Batey and asked if the number of clients could be limited. Ms. Parker-Batey said they could but that she hopes that the City's application to Volunteer America for a volunteer coordinator will be successful, since the role of that person would be to recruit and supervise volunteers and to manage specific volunteer programs, including the Brown Bag Food Program, the Adaptable Equipment Program, the Community Nursing Program, and the AARP Money Management Program. She added that if the City is awarded a volunteer coordinator, matching funds of \$4,250 will be required. The matching funding for this grant was one of the components of the City's Livable Communities Grant application to the county. If the funds are not provided through Livable Communities, the City will either need to provide the matching funding itself or decline the volunteer coordinator. A request could also be made to County Councilmember Peters.

Ms. Mach made a motion that the City Council approve the submission of the Volunteer Maryland grant application, with the understanding that if an external funding source cannot be located for the cost-sharing (e.g., from Livable Communities or Mr. Peters), the application will return to Council for further decision. Mr. Roberts seconded the motion, which passed 4-0.

**2006-2008 COUNTY COOPERATION AGREEMENT FOR CDBG PROGRAMS:** The Mayor read the agenda comments. She added that Senator Sarbanes had worked to restore these funds as a separate line item in the federal budget and that this had been a major issue with the National League of Cities. That notwithstanding, the county has changed the focus of what it wishes to fund away from the street, curb, and gutter funding it had provided previously. Mr. McLaughlin added that since the income criteria had changed, the only part of town that qualifies now is Springhill Lake. It was moved by Mr. Roberts and seconded by Ms. Mach that the City Council approve the cooperation agreement with Prince George's County for the 2006-2008 period. The motion passed 4-0.

**SELECTION OF AUDIT SERVICES FOR FY 2005:** Mayor Davis read the agenda comments and then clarified that these two firms had responded to the previous Request for Proposals. She said she wished Council had been notified earlier that there was a problem. Ms. Mach moved that Council direct that proposals be solicited from McGladrey & Pullen and Clifton Gunderson to do the City's FY 2005 audit. Mr. Roberts seconded the motion, which carried 4-0.

**MEETINGS:** Council reviewed the schedule of upcoming meetings. It was agreed that the executive session on Greenbelt Station would be held after the work session on Monday night regardless of progress with obtaining the copy of the agreement.

ADJOURNMENT: A motion to adjourn the meeting was then made by Ms. Mach and seconded by Mr. Herling. The motion carried 4-0. The Mayor adjourned the regular meeting of April 25, 2005, at 10:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Gallagher  
City Clerk

"I hereby certify that the above and foregoing is a true and correct report of the regular meeting of the City Council of Greenbelt, Maryland, held April 25, 2005.@"

Judith F. Davis  
Mayor