



WORK SESSION of the Greenbelt City Council held Thursday, June 23, 2005, for the purpose of reviewing the conceptual site plan for the Springhill Lake redevelopment and reviewing some election issues.

Mayor Davis called the meeting to order at 8:07 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; Celia W. Craze, Director, Terri Hruby, Assistant Director, Ethan Bindernagel, Community Planner, Planning and Community Development; Joe McNeal, Assistant Director, Recreation; Brent Elrod, intern; and Kathleen Gallagher, City Clerk.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Joyce Chestnut, Bill Wilkerson (chair), Brian Gibbons, Sheldon Goldberg, Emmett Jordan, Advisory Planning Board; Kap Kapastin, Beltway Plaza; Tom Jones, resident; and James Giese, Greenbelt News Review.

Ms. Craze explained that because of the conjunction of large projects in her office, she had formally assigned a "lead person" to each, with the result that she was serving as the lead person for Greenbelt Station, Ms. Hruby for Springhill Lake, and Mr. Bindernagel for Beltway Plaza. She then turned the staff side of the work session over to Ms. Hruby.

Springhill Lake Conceptual Site Plan

Ms. Hruby said there had been no response from AIMCO on items arising from the May 31 work session. At this time, the schedule is that the plan will come to Council for approval on July 11 and go to the County Planning Board on July 28. She then reviewed a draft list, dated June 22, of staff-generated conditions for approval that would be taken to the Advisory Planning board, then brought to Council with a recommendation on July 11.

Regarding item #1, Mr. Roberts thought that the percentage of units to be sold was too low at 10%. He suggested 50% as a target; Mayor Davis countered with 25%. Mr. Herling said his interest was in a larger proportion of units being at or near the "entry level" rental price. He said they had targeted 5% in early 2004 and that he had said then that this percentage should be doubled. Ms. Mach said she did not see how these numbers or percentages could be targeted so specifically in the absence of a market study.

Mr. Putens asked if the City should be looking at acreage of units for sale rather than numbers of units. Ms. Hruby responded that it would be worthwhile to look at both.

Regarding item #4, mandatory dedication requirements, the Mayor asked if the language was strong enough. After some discussion, it was agreed that it was satisfactory. Following some clarifications from Ms. Hruby, #5 was also okayed.

Since item #6 raised the issue of the abandonment of Breezewood Drive west of Springhill Lane, Mr. Kapastin was asked at this juncture to give an overview to Council of the plan for Beltway Plaza. He emphasized that it was a preliminary conceptual plan. It would establish a second "front" on the north side of Beltway Plaza facing Springhill Lake, and it assumes the maintenance of Breezewood Drive through to Cherrywood Lane, as well as a continuation of Springhill Lane south past Breezewood into the shopping center, possibly with a roundabout at Breezewood. He said they would request a reorientation of the townhouses currently shown as backing to Beltway Plaza in order to open up the face of Springhill Lake toward the shopping center. The plan indicated some addition rental units above the retail on the northern edge of the shopping center as another tie-in to the residential area. The Sports Authority wing would be torn down under this plan. The existing AMC-8 would be expanded to 12 theaters with stadium seating, and the currently vacant AMC-6 would be used for other purposes. Mr. Kapastin said virtually all of the change would take place on the Springhill Lake side at this time because Giant, Target, and the freestanding tenants on the Greenbelt Road side have long-term leases and rights over changes to the façade and to the parking lots.

Mr. Roberts was not enthused about adding yet more rental apartments to this area, and he also questioned the provisions for green space. In general, however, Council was encouraging about the proposed mix of uses and thought this was a good start on a concept plan. Mayor Davis said green space and recreation had also been raised at an earlier meeting Mr. Kapastin held with staff,

Mr. Putens emphasized the need to have a Plan B in case certain tenants, such as a movie theater, went into Greenbelt Station.

Returning to the staff recommendations, Council agreed upon the importance of maintaining Breezewood Drive. No problems were raised regarding items #s 7 through 10. Regarding #11, Ms. Hruby said the intention was not necessarily to provide a new tram service but perhaps to bolster TheBus service. Items through #24 were reviewed.

Mr. Roberts asked about ball fields and the recreation center. Ms. Hruby said it was up to AIMCO to answer those questions but that it was evident that there was little available space to work with. Mr. Roberts said there had been discussion of needing to eliminate some buildings in order to provide space. Ms. Hruby said there were also discussions taking place regarding going higher on some of the buildings in order to reduce the footprint. Mr. Roberts also asked how item #21 would be measured: that is, how would it be determined what quantity of recreational facilities would be adequate? Ms. Craze said staff was attempting not to quantify this issue now because this is a concept plan. She said this would give them a performance measure; they should tell the City how they would accomplish it, and the City can then respond. Mr. Herling said that he, too, was concerned that more is needed, given the proposed increased density. Mr. Roberts said the owners do not seem to understand what it means to make recreation integral to the community. Ms. Craze said she understood that but did not

want to give them a formula for how to do it. Mayor Davis added that the details would begin to be filled in at the stage of detailed site plan.

Mayor Davis suggested more explicit language in #25 if there is interest in having the townhouses face Beltway Plaza.

Following review of the other items, Mr. Putens said he would like to see encouragement regarding a mix of building materials to assure the quality of the appearance of the development. Mr. Roberts asked if something could be added about providing for public safety. Ms. Hruby said it could be mentioned that they would need to address public safety in the preliminary plan of subdivision.

Regarding the school, Ms. Mach expressed concern about the appropriateness of using the historic part of the middle school for the recreation center. Ms. Hruby said there was enough square footage and a possibility of being able to use the existing gym. Mr. Roberts said he did not like the idea of having the City's recreation center be on Board of Education property. He said he would prefer that the historic wing be used for a school function.

Ms. Chestnut stated that the Berwyn Heights Volunteer Fire Department, which is the first responder to Springhill Lake, had expressed concern about the proposed increase in the number of units. Ms. Mach said it was her understanding that there was also an issue related to public safety in keeping Breezewood Drive open to Cherrywood Lane.

Mr. Wilkerson spoke to encourage the increased density as a way to increase the amenities. Mr. Gibbons shared this view and supported the idea of "building up" to create more space. He recommended not simply increasing the height of the high-rise towers, however, but spreading the increase throughout the development in the lower-rise buildings. Mr. Roberts commented that reducing the density would also help to create more space. Mayor Davis said the owners have said they cannot fund the amenities without the density.

It was agreed that staff would prepare a response to the June 7 letter from AIMCO, primarily for the purpose of correcting information for the benefit of the elected officials and others who had been copied. Council agreed that it should go out right away, without delaying for Council review.

Ms. Hruby mentioned that the City had received a request today for a City TIF for Greenbelt Station, to be used for infrastructure, such as interior roadways to be dedicated to the City. She said it would be premature to discuss it at this stage. Ms. Craze added that staff did not intend to bring a proposal to Council while there is still so much to resolve regarding what the developers need to provide to the City.

Mr. Jones spoke to say that he agreed there had to be plans for green space and recreational facilities on this site because there is nothing available at the periphery of the property.

Election Issues

Distance for Electioneering: Although there was not consensus regarding changing the 300' law, a majority of Council was willing to consider revising the law to a lesser distance. Mr. Roberts preferred 100'; Mayor Davis was willing to consider 150'; and Mr. Herling thought that on some of the sites, 125' would work better. Mr. Putens and Ms. Mach were inclined to make no change. It was agreed that an ordinance would be prepared for introduction at the July meeting for 150'. Mr. Roberts said the problem with the 100' distance previously was that it was not enforced. Mayor Davis said she did not really think there was a correlation between the visibility of electioneering and voter participation.

It was also agreed that the signs on public property action would not be on the agenda until the August meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Gallagher
City Clerk