



WORK SESSION of the Greenbelt City Council held Wednesday, June 8, 2005, for the purpose of holding a stakeholder meeting with the civic associations.

Mayor Davis called the meeting to order at 8:10 p.m. in the Multipurpose Room of the Community Center.

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

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael McLaughlin, City Manager; and Kathleen Gallagher, City Clerk.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Raymond Peterson, Belle Point; Paul Butterworth, Mary Anne McAndrew-Scott, Bob Schmertz, and Henry Atwell, Charlestowne North Tenants Association; Sheldon Goldberg, Greenbelt East Advisory Committee; Terry Benedik and Nancy Waruch, Greenbriar Community Association; Bob Doyle, Greenbrook Estates HOA; Marc Siegel, Lakeside Citizens Association; Derek Thompson, Windsor Green HOA; Judith Thompson, Windsor Green and GEAC; and Mark Davis, Woodland Hills Community Association.

Following introductions, Mayor Davis explained that the City Council holds stakeholder meetings with the organizations representing large homeowner groups but that, collectively, the smaller organizations represent a substantial portion of the City. The following issues were raised as being of interest.

Traffic-Calming and Traffic Issues

Mr. McLaughlin said he expected this project to be finished in Greenbelt East by the end of the calendar year but that Greenbelt Station and Springhill Lake were taking up a good deal of time in the Planning Department. Mr. Thompson said they were interested in a more precise time line because it affected other work Windsor Green wanted to accomplish. He said they had been unable to get specific information about the plan or the schedule. Mayor Davis suggested that they make an appointment to talk with Celia Craze or Terri Hruby in the Planning Department to get the plan, which Council had approved some time ago. Mr. McLaughlin said although it was difficult to project a specific schedule, if Windsor Green would explain what it needed to do, the City would certainly make every effort to dovetail its work with theirs.

Mayor Davis told Ms. Waruch that since Greenbriar had not wanted the other traffic-calming measures that had been proposed for Hanover Parkway, only the speed humps on either side of the crosswalk midway between Greenbelt and Mandan Roads would be put in.

Mr. Siegel said traffic-calming was needed on Lakeside Drive. He said there are many more children in the area than there have been for a while and no sidewalks. Mr.

McLaughlin said there had been no request from Lakeside on this that he was aware of and that it had not hit the threshold of what the City had identified as a problem when the survey was done a while ago. It was agreed that Mr. Siegel would make a formal request on behalf of the association if they wished. In response to Mr. Herling's question, Mr. McLaughlin said the threshold had been determined by the average speed for the 85th percentile of traffic. Mr. Roberts asked if the residents would be willing to have sidewalks put in, and Mr. Siegel said he doubted it.

There was some discussion of "cut through" traffic going through Greenbrook Estates from Ora Glen to Megan. The Mayor also remarked that proposed traffic-calming had been dropped because Greenspring I did not want it.

Mr. Doyle asked about claims he had heard that the Police Department had told people that motorized bikes were legal on sidewalks. Mr. Siegel said he knew that people who had called the Police Department to complain about gas-powered mopeds and mini-bikes on the lake path had been told they were not illegal. Mr. McLaughlin said he would be sure that the information being given out by the police dispatchers about this was correct.

Mr. Siegel asked what authority the park rangers at the Lake Park have. Mr. McLaughlin said they cannot write tickets or citations but are instructed to resolve matters they can handle and call the police or code enforcement for anything they cannot handle.

Code Enforcement Issues

In response to a question from Mr. Thompson, Mayor Davis explained that code enforcement officers would continue to do windshield inspections periodically. There was also discussion of the City's continued non-enforcement of the refuse can requirements in Windsor Green. Mr. Putens commented in general on the need for good control of trash and garbage containers since rats and raccoons had become a more serious issue in the area.

With regard to controls on rental properties, the Mayor said it is important for residents to share information with the City, since the City may not be aware that a property has turned rental.

Ms. McAndrew-Scott mentioned Takoma Park's comprehensive rent laws and controls. Mayor Davis said Takoma Park's code in this area had been instituted many years ago and that starting such restrictions now would not be an easy matter.

Mr. Siegel raised a question of two rental properties in Lakeside. Mr. McLaughlin said the one was in violation of the county zoning ordinance, which the City enforces. As a result, the City has notified the county of the violation, as well as citing the owner under City law. Mr. Siegel said there is a second house that has renters upstairs and a daycare operation downstairs. He said none of the owners of the house live in Greenbelt.

Ms. Waruch said there is a unit in Greenbriar where the owner of a restaurant lets the staff sleep, with the result that people are continually coming and going.

The Mayor again stressed the need for people to be aware of what is going on in their neighborhoods and to notify the City of any problems.

Police/Vandalism Issues

Mr. Doyle said Greenbrook Estates has an ongoing problem with kids kicking out the slats on their fence along Ora Glen Drive. They have also had a problem with mailbox-tampering, which has been reported to both the police and the postal service. Mr. Putens said people are apparently looking for gift cards and the like but in the process are also destroying other mail.

Drainage Issues

Mr. Goldberg said that Public Works staff had come out to look and have said they are sure pipes are leaking. Mr. Putens said WSSC should be responsible for moving on that quickly. Mayor Davis said to let the City know of problems so it can coordinate. She said there is some funding in the budget to look into the cause of drainage problems but that the City's role is limited.

Charlestowne North

There was considerable discussion of Charlestowne North's difficulties in having its tenants' association be recognized by the management, as well as new problems with rent increases. Council asked Mr. McLaughlin to look into the current problems vis-à-vis the understanding the City reached with the owners in 2003. Mr. Roberts commented that last time it was the threat of rent control that caused the owners to reconsider. The Mayor said it was necessary to understand, however, that market rents had greatly gone up. Mr. Herling added that the lack of a county office to handle landlord-tenant problems was also an issue. The Mayor said she has asked the Prince George's County Municipal Association to take on as an issue the reinstatement of that office.

Mr. Butterworth thanked Council for talking about this tonight. He said they had not really expected it to be discussed in detail at this meeting, though they were interested in hearing more about the overall impact on the City of the new development in Greenbelt West, which they thought might affect all renters. Mayor Davis said one of the things the City was hoping for there was the greater community stability that increased homeownership might bring.

It was clarified that Mr. McLaughlin would send a letter of inquiry to the owners of Charlestowne North.

Miscellaneous

Mr. Davis said it would be helpful if very timely information were kept both up to date and more easy to locate on the City's Web site. He said he had looked in vain to get information on Greenbelt Day Weekend and that sometimes more permanent information is difficult to find.

Mr. Atwell suggested cutting back some of the foliage at the northwest corner of Westway and Ridge to improve visibility from Westway of eastbound traffic on Ridge. It was concluded that this was GHI property but that the City would look into it.

Other Council Business

Mayor Davis asked Council about a letter they had received from Mayor Walker of Landover Hills, seeking support for permitting WalMart to build in the old Capital Plaza. They believe that the economic benefits outweigh concerns with the social issues surrounding WalMart or with the county's requirements regarding adequate public facilities and minimum emergency response time. Council agreed it would neither support the request nor send a formal letter about it.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Gallagher
City Clerk