



WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held Wednesday, September 29, for the purpose of discussing various personnel policy matters, including reviewing the authority for approval of job descriptions and receiving an update on aspects of the City compensation plan.

The meeting began at 8:10 p.m. in the Senior Classroom of the Community Center.

PRESENT WERE: Councilmembers Konrad E. Herling, Leta M. Mach, Rodney M. Roberts, and Mayor Judith F. Davis. Councilmember Edward V. J. Putens arrived soon after the meeting began.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael P. McLaughlin, City Manager; Consuella Harris, Human Resource Officer; Jeff Williams, City Treasurer; and Kathleen Gallagher, City Clerk.

Informational Items

Mr. Roberts told the City Manager there was a problem with graffiti on the underpass at the Mobil station.

Mayor Davis said the conference on gang activity sponsored by the Council of Governments today was excellent and she regretted that no one else from the City had attended.

Ms. Mach said she had spoken at Eleanor Roosevelt High School's National Honor Society induction ceremony.

Approval of Job Descriptions

Mr. McLaughlin said the question that needed to be resolved was "Who has the authority to approve job descriptions?" The City Charter says that the City Council approves the classification plan. Historically, City Managers have brought new and revised job descriptions to Council for approval because they have interpreted the Charter conservatively to mean that anything that alters the existing classification plan requires Council approval. At several points over the last few years, however, Councilmembers have suggested that job descriptions do not require Council review and should be handled by the City Manager. Mr. McLaughlin said Ms. Harris had checked with other jurisdictions and found some do it one way, some the other. He said it was really just a matter of Council deciding how it wished the City to do it.

Mr. Putens said it was within the purview of the City Manager to assign duties to staff and that Council should not be involved at that level. He said this responsibility should reside with the City Manager, since while Council decides what needs to be done, it is the City Manager who is accountable for figuring out how to do it and structuring resources to that end. Mayor Davis asked what would continue to be reviewed and approved by Council as part of the budget process. Mr. Putens said approving a new

slot but not the specific responsibilities of the slot. Mr. McLaughlin asked if that meant, for example, that Council would want to see that a grade 7 position was going to become a grade 8 but not see the description for the job. Mr. Putens said that was true. Mayor Davis said she thought that approach would work. Ms. Mach agreed, saying she agreed with Mr. Putens that Council decides what needs to be done, and the City Manager decides how to do it.

Mr. Herling asked what would happen with a new position. Mr. Putens said Council had reviewed job descriptions for new positions in the past, but he did not think it was necessary, except in the case of a major organizational change. Mr. McLaughlin added that new positions that were related to new activities or program areas would necessarily have to be reflected in the budget presentation because they would need new funding. He noted that there had been a period where a number of new positions were being brought forward at mid-year but that Council had made it clear that except when absolutely necessary these should be structured into the budget process. In summary, Mr. McLaughlin said the basic change was a separation of the job descriptions from the classification plan. It was no longer considered to be the case that every changed job description implied a revision to the classification plan and required Council review and approval.

City Process for Doing Reclassifications

Ms. Harris said Council had requested follow-up on the classification process used by the consultant in the 2001 compensation study. She said the biggest concern had been that the portion of the process that assigned values to the types of work seemed to leave too much discretion to the reviewer in combination with too little documentation of how judgments were made. She said staff will be using the U.S. Office of Personnel Management's Factor Evaluation System, which is more structured and defined. She then described the steps of that process, as enumerated in a handout called "City of Greenbelt Reclassification Process." She said the City will solicit departments for reclassification requests and typically will process five to ten positions per year, with some positions including multiple employees. She said reclassification requires that a person be doing additional or higher level duties that are clearly different than those performed previously, intended to be permanent, and are approved by the supervisor and department head.

Ms. Harris distributed copies of the Factor Evaluation System, including the Primary Standards used for evaluation. Mr. McLaughlin noted that it was at this level—that of assigning point values—that the Hendricks study lacked detail. Ms. Mach asked whether point values in between the totals given for the categories could be used, but Ms. Harris said, no, it was not a continuum.

With regard to the chart comparing the City's classification plan with the federal one, Mr. McLaughlin explained that the collapsing of certain City grades was simply because the City plan had been overlaid on the federal one for comparative purposes but that these grade levels were distinct in the City plan.

Mr. McLaughlin said he and Ms. Harris were of the opinion that ten years between major reviews of the pay plan is too long a period and that between five and seven is probably a better target.

Comparison of Salaries

Ms. Harris said Council had also directed that there should be a salary comparison with the City's peer group every couple of years, so one was undertaken in 2003. The primary comparison group comprises Bowie, College Park, Laurel, and Hyattsville. Data are also gathered from Gaithersburg, Rockville, Takoma Park, and Prince George's County for informational purposes. Looking at minimum salaries, the City is lagging for six positions with Hyattsville in the comparison but behind for 20 positions with Hyattsville removed. Mr. McLaughlin said Council direction was sought on whether or not to leave Hyattsville in. He went on to say, however, that another factor compounded the comparison of minimum salary levels, since a number of lower-level positions are still being hired for at an interim level that is still below the minimum prescribed by the Hendricks plan. He said it is taking much longer than anticipated to get all positions up to the recommended minimum hiring level. He said he and Mr. Williams had discussed alternatives for closing this gap and would like Council direction to present some options with the budget. He also noted that Greenbelt fares very well on comparison with the other four cities on maximum salary levels.

Ms. Mach asked how long it took an employee who was hired at an interim level to reach the minimum level. Mr. Williams said typically two pay raises, with the first of these coming as early as six months with release from probation.

Regarding the question of whether Hyattsville should be kept in the equation or not, Mr. Putens thought it should be included, though other Councilmembers tended to think not. Ms. Harris suggested that she look more closely at the 20 positions that lag without the inclusion of Hyattsville, and then Council could review the issue again. She said she could bring that back in about a month.

Ms. Mach then raised the issue of the "living wage," saying that even though there are no employees at the one grade level (2) that has a minimum below \$10.50, she would still prefer to see this removed and have the City make a formal commitment to maintaining it. Mayor Davis said she agreed in principle but would like to see more analysis. Mr. McLaughlin said staff would address this prior to the budget. Mr. Roberts asked that analysis of requiring it for contractors be included.

Position Pairing

There was discussion of the renewal of the practice dropped with the Hendricks study of pairing positions to create a ladder. A draft list had been prepared of positions to which this would apply. Council agreed with this concept. Mr. Putens made suggestions regarding having technical and clerical positions advance by one grade level, with professional level positions advancing by two grade levels.

The meeting was adjourned at 10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Gallagher

City Clerk