



WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held Wednesday, February 12, 2003, for the purpose of reviewing the FY 2002 Report on Arts Education Programming.

Mayor Davis started the meeting at 8:05 p.m. It was held in the Multipurpose Room of the Community Center.

PRESENT WERE: Council members Edward V.J. Putens, Rodney M. Roberts, Alan Turnbull, Thomas X. White, and Mayor Judith F. Davis.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael P. McLaughlin, City Manager; Joe McNeal, Assistant Director, Recreation; Nicole DeWald, Arts Coordinator; Jessica Gitlis, Ceramics and Visual Arts Specialist; Di Quynn-Reno, Community Center Supervisor; Katie Scott-Childress, Museum Curator and ceramics instructor; and Kathleen Gallagher, City Clerk.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Mark Gitlis, Ginny Zanner, Betty Wellborn, Pauline Grant, and Robert Schafer, the Arts Advisory Board; Jean Sickle and Chris Coyle, Greenbelt Pottery; Barbara Simon, Greenbelt Association for the Visual Arts (GAVA); Sofia Kosmetatos, the Gazette; about 25 arts program participants, parents, and instructors.

Ms. DeWald gave an overview of the staff report dated September 26, 2002. She announced Greenbelt Pottery had now acquired 501(c)(3) status.

Mr. Roberts inquired about the reason 40 or so classes did not have enough enrollments to be held and asked if this was a typical number. Ms. DeWald said she thought it was. She said in some instances, sections of classes would be consolidated, and oftentimes new programs must be offered multiple times before they find their audience.

Mr. Turnbull asked about the method for conducting the satisfaction survey, and he urged the staff to develop additional means for getting participants to fill out the evaluation form, since the number of responses is too small to provide useful information. Everyone agreed to try harder to get the forms filled out, while recognizing that since these are recreation activities, the form cannot be a requirement as it would be in a school environment.

There was discussion of the rejuvenation of the Greenbelt Foundation for the Arts, with Eileen Peterson as president.

Mr. White asked for an explanation of how "open studio" works in ceramics. Ms. Gitlis explained that potters new to the Community Center are asked to take an 11-12 week course, and open studio is included in the fee. Subsequent to taking the class, people are eligible to register for open studio only. Mr. White also made inquiries about how the accounting was done for the Greenbelt Pottery's sales. He said he was concerned that the studio use may be too much oriented toward professional artists rather than an

education function and toward adults rather than children. Ms. Gitlis explained in some detail what they believe is appropriate for children's activities given the level of supervision they believe younger students require in a studio setting.

Mr. Putens challenged Mr. White's questioning of the ethics of the use being made of the studio, and Mr. McNeal pointed out that other groups using the Center were not required to produce the type of accounting Mr. White described. Mr. White responded that City Contribution Groups are expected to give an accounting. Mr. Putens replied that the Pottery is not a Contribution Group. Ms. DeWald and Mr. McNeal added that in fact the situation was reversed because Greenbelt Pottery donates to the City. Mr. Gitlis said the Pottery's relationship to the City had been spelled out in the proposal they submitted to run the pottery programs. He also said the nature of the sales would not be categorized as "professional"; otherwise, the sales would be much higher. Jean Sickle, who is on the board of the Greenbelt Pottery, said she wanted it to be clear that "we are not freeloading" and "we are not trying to run a scam." She said they pay the open studio fee to the City, as well as donating time and equipment. Katie Scott-Childress added that there is neither the shelf space nor the kiln space for professional production of ceramics at the Community Center. She said, "No one is in that league." Ginny Zanner also addressed this point.

Mayor Davis asked about drop-in programs for teenagers, saying she had heard some criticism that these programs were now fewer in number. Ms. DeWald said other programs, including Artful Afternoons, have replaced the drop-in programs but serve much of the same purpose, in that these programs are available without registration or fees. She said this does represent a change, but staff believes they are reaching more people this way. Ms. Gitlis added that one goal is to train people to use the facilities and equipment properly, and this requires some structure, which is also a reason for attaching open studios to classes initially.

Mayor Davis said there had also been questions about home-schooling programs. Ms. DeWald said one program that the Mayor mentioned as having been criticized had in fact been developed in response to a specific request. Deborah Taylor, with the PG Home Learning Network, said they felt the quality of programs at the Community Center had gone down; as a result, they had hired Barbara Simon to teach classes for them in space donated by the Methodist Church. Mayor Davis congratulated them on finding a program that met their needs; she said the City did not need to have a monopoly on arts education programs, and there was plenty of room for different formats and programs to flourish. Carolyn Hammett, also a home-schooling parent, said her children enjoy the Recreation Department's programs, and she appreciates the fact that they are less expensive than they were in the past, since they could not afford GAVA's classes.

P.J. Siegel said her family had taken part in many Recreation Department programs over the years, and she would like to comment on some areas in which they had seen problems. Noting that the evaluation reports show few negative comments, she suggested it might be the case that those who find the programs unsatisfactory do not stay till the end and thus are not still around to fill out the evaluation forms. Another problem is that classes start before all Prince George's County students are able to get home from school, which limits their options. She also cited conflicts in timing between

complementary programs and the fact that instructors billed in the brochures may change by the time the course is offered.

A number of people spoke favorably about their experiences with classes and activities at the Community Center, including the Norden family of Greenbelt and Dee Dixon of Upper Marlboro,

There was further discussion of ways to get more complete evaluations, including follow-up with people who drop classes. Ms. Siegel also commented that more information in the description of offerings would enable people to make better-advised decisions in advance.

Richard McMullin spoke about his interest in expanding studio opportunities in stained glass.

Mayor Davis thanked everyone for coming.

Other Business

Mr. White volunteered to attend the County Council discussion of CB-40.

The meeting ended at about 10:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Gallagher
City Clerk