



WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held Monday, October 20, 2003, for the purpose of discussing changes to the City arts policy and the contribution group application process.

Mayor Davis called the meeting to order at 8:05 p.m. It was held in the Council Room of the Municipal Building.

PRESENT WERE: Councilmembers Rodney M. Roberts, Thomas X. White, and Mayor Judith F. Davis. Councilmember Edward V. J. Putens arrived at 8:25 p.m.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael P. McLaughlin, City Manager; Hank Irving, Director, Joe McNeal, Assistant Director, and Nicole DeWald, Arts Coordinator, Recreation Department; and Kathleen Gallagher, City Clerk.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Mark Gitlis, chair, and Robert Schafer, Arts Advisory Board; Marc Siegel and Clement Lau, Park & Recreation Advisory Board; Richard McMullin, and Susan Slyter. Konrad Herling arrived later in the evening.

Arts Policy

Mr. Gitlis offered a summary of the situation. He said the City Council has charged the Arts Advisory Board (AAB) with the responsibility of periodically reviewing the arts policy. He said the AAB has been discussing it for years now, but relatively recently it surfaced as a priority. Much of the existing policy was found to be anachronistic, since most of the original goals and plans had already been achieved. As a result, the board decided to write a mission statement to replace the policy, believing this to be more appropriate now, as well as more useful for purposes of filing the many applications and reports necessary to the arts programs. Council met with the board to discuss the revision and asked the board to hold public hearings to review it and to add a statement of goals to the mission statement. Having done so, the AAB believes the revised document represents a great deal of work and thought and a lot of public input, as well as demonstrating Greenbelt's strong support for the arts and the arts community. Mr. Gitlis said the document is written intentionally in broad strokes because the board thinks the place for specificity is the annual budget process.

Mr. White said the addition of the goals greatly improved the document. Council discussed specific phrasing for a number of the items. Ideas discussed included the advisability of stating "the greater Baltimore-Washington area" as the target audience and the best way to incorporate the statement of arts education programs for children.

It was agreed to place this item on the agenda of the next regular meeting.

Contribution Group Application Form

Council reviewed a new policy information sheet for recognition and contribution groups, a new application form for recognition groups, and a revised form for contribution groups.

It was agreed the policy should refer to "recreation and service groups" rather than "sports and recreation groups, in order to include such organizations as GIVES and FORA. Mr. White asked that "fellow residents" be changed to "Greenbelt residents."

Ms. DeWald pointed out a proposed change in policy such that a new applicant would have status as a recognition group for at least one year prior to being eligible for funding as a contribution group. Mr. White supported the concept of waiting a year for funding but thought groups should be able to apply as contribution groups. Mayor Davis pointed out that during the interim they would receive the benefits of being recognition groups, which include everything but the funding, with a much shorter application. Councilmembers Putens and Roberts agreed. Ms. DeWald also pointed out that recognition groups can come aboard at any time, not just on the budget cycle.

There was discussion of equipment purchased by contribution groups reverting to the City and how the City keeps track of it. Mr. McLaughlin explained it had been 10-15 years since a contribution group had made capital expenditures, with the result that this is not an issue in practice. It was agreed to boldface the information indicating that, upon termination of an organization, its unused allocations would revert to the City. Under #4, it was agreed to say "are found to be detrimental."

Under "eligibility" it was agreed that, under #4, 1/2 rather than ? of an organization's activities should take place within the City.

Under #5, Ms. DeWald said it was proposed to reduce from ? to ? the minimum percentage of members who must be residents in order not to penalize groups that recruit. Mr. Putens, Mr. Roberts, and Mayor Davis all disagreed with this premise. Mr. Siegel commented that, in his opinion, the Park & Recreation Advisory Board (PRAB) had not adequately reviewed that topic. Mr. Putens added that he would never budge on this, since he believes Greenbelt tax money should go to Greenbelt residents. Mr. White disagreed, citing the Concert Band and Senior Softball as examples, and said a group must be evaluated as a whole in terms of the benefits or services it provides to the City, rather than just on the basis of the residence of its members. Mr. Roberts responded that those two groups are examples of why Council makes exceptions to the policy, but he was concerned about the signal that would be sent if the policy itself were changed. Mr. White replied that there was nothing wrong with the idea that having high quality programs may require a bigger base than Greenbelt. Noting that figures of ?, 1/2, and ? were still on the table, Mayor Davis said this question remained open. Ms. DeWald replied that the board and staff would welcome any suggestions for language that would define what makes a group a Greenbelt group. Mr. Putens asked when, in fact, Council had turned anyone down purely on the basis of the numbers. Mr. White replied that Council may not have turned groups down, but it had harassed them.

Under "additional requirements," concern was expressed about setting a 50% matching requirement, and it was agreed to say groups will be required to have a fund-raising program instead.

On the new recognition group application form, it was agreed to add "service" to the criteria for determining eligibility. The Mayor asked that the City Solicitor look into what privacy provisions might apply to the request to provide an organization's mailing list.

It was agreed that this item would be placed on the agenda of a regular meeting after PRAB had been able to review the residency requirements again.

Other Business

Several scheduling matters and an invitation from the County Executive to attend a briefing on economic development on October 22 were discussed.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Gallagher

City Clerk