WORK SESSION of the Greenbelt City Council held Wednesday, March 20, 2002, for the purpose of receiving a briefing on the Goddard Space Flight Center (GSFC) Master Plan.

Mayor Davis started the meeting at 8:08 p.m. It was held in the Senior Classroom of the Community Center.

PRESENT WERE: Council members Edward V. J. Putens, Rodney M. Roberts, Alan Turnbull, and Mayor Judith F. Davis. Councilmember Thomas X. White arrived at 8:30 p.m., and Mr. Putens left at about 9:55 p.m.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael P. McLaughlin, City Manager; Kathleen Gallagher, City Clerk. Kristin Ward arrived a little later in the meeting.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Kim Toufectis, Facilities Planner, Walter Daly, Project Manager, and Nina Harris, Public Affairs, Goddard Space Flight Center; Frederick M. Heider, Vice President of Athavale, Lystad & Associates and consulting environmental engineer to Goddard; Sheldon Goldberg, Advisory Planning Board; Amy Boyes, the Gazette; Charles Jackman, and Judy Bordeaux.

Mr. Toufectis introduced Mr. Heider, who said their purpose was to describe Goddard's current analysis of the possible alternative routes for redirecting traffic from Soil Conservation Road (SCR). He provided detailed maps and began with a description of the three routes under consideration, one that would run west and two that would run east of SCR.

Proposed Alternative Routes

Route W-1: Going southbound, this route ends on Greenbelt Road just opposite the entrance to Chelsea Woods. There is already a road in this position but the gates are usually closed. A new employee entrance would be located on the west side. The security perimeter would be changed to allow location of a private development and partnership zone between Greenbelt Road and the new security perimeter. This road would connect with Soil Conservation Road at the north end by a route that would partly use an existing road and partly require a new exit road from SCR that would pass through existing property of the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center (BARC).

Routes E-1 and E-2: These routes would run almost due east over the northern edge of the east campus and curve down to Good Luck Road. The northern edge is the same for both routes and is dictated by the operating parameters of the facilities and equipment located on the east campus. They differ in that E-1 ties to Good Luck Road in between the two entrances to the Countryside Apartments, while E-2 cuts somewhat farther east, circumventing all the facilities on the east campus, and intersects Good Luck Road farther north.

E-1 and E-2 would both require an improved intersection with Good Luck Road. The county would also require the widening of Good Luck Road to four lanes from the intersection to Rt. 193; this widening would all occur on the NASA side and be paid for by the federal government. The state would require improvements to 193 at the intersection with Good Luck Road, including double left turn lanes, and lane improvements may also be required on westbound 193 at the intersection. W-1 would require turn lanes and additional storm water management at Greenbelt Road, as well as changes to the BARC property at the northern intersection with SCR. The alternate routes would all be two lanes with a 45-mph speed limit, except for W-1 from Explorer Road south to Greenbelt Road, which would require four lanes. Both the eastern and the western routes require using property currently owned by BARC.

Wetlands Issues

In response to a question from Mr. White about impact on wetlands, Mr. Heider said there was a study of the area around the BARC pond that would be affected by W-1, and the opinion of the Corps of Engineers is that the road would not affect anything that qualifies as wetlands. On the eastern routes, they are awaiting results of a study of Beaver Pond. Mr. Heider said there is no existing mitigation area in this location.

Mr. Roberts asked about the wetland located on the east campus. Mr. Heider said it was not portrayed on the map but, in effect, runs down through the middle of the campus. Mr. Roberts asked if they were planning to mitigate for putting this new road through a wetland, and Mayor Davis asked if there would be a need to bridge a stream. Mr. Heider said that what would be needed was more on the order of a culvert, since the water stream in question was very shallow. Mayor Davis asked if they could be sure that would be enough if it floods, commenting that although the waterway might be small now, the balance was probably delicate, and the water management might be challenged by a new roadway. Mr. Heider responded that the wetlands are all under the authority of the Corps of Engineers. Mayor Davis said if there were to be a need for mitigation, Greenbelt would want to know what was proposed, since the City's experience has been that mitigation is often unsuccessful and may even be located in a different watershed. Mr. Heider said they will definitely be required to have a storm-water management plan and would be dealing with all these issues.

Traffic Flow Projections

There was considerable discussion of traffic flow issues. Mr. Heider said a survey of vehicles showed that the heaviest use of SCR is by 193 westbound traffic taking it north to proceed westbound on Powder Mill Road. He added that use of W-1 would increase travel for these drivers by about a mile. He said they assume choosing W-1 would result in a big increase in traffic on Springfield Road.

The origin-destination survey data showed numbers of vehicles surveyed during peak-hour volumes, not the total numbers of vehicles over a day. Mr. Roberts persisted in trying to determine a total number of cars using SCR. He questioned whether there is really enough traffic on SCR to require creating any new roadways if GSFC were simply to close the road. Mr. Toufectis said it was their assumption that not providing an alternative would be unacceptable to the surrounding communities, especially on the east side, since that would place a great deal of stress on existing roads. He said their

goal was to minimize the amount of new road needed and mitigate the impacts, while concentrating their operations in the middle of their property rather than sprawling the campus. Mr. Heider emphasized that they want to concentrate their operations in part for security reasons but also in order to organize their functions more efficiently. Mr. White said he still thought that, with some creativity and ingenuity, it should be possible to achieve those goals without closing SCR to the public. Mayor Davis suggested that the purpose of this meeting was simply to review the locations of these three routes, not to re-open discussion of the justification for the project.

Mr. Turnbull pointed out a problem in the traffic projections on the maps. Although there is an assumption of NASA growth to its approved ceiling of 1,100 in the traffic projections for the three alternative routes, the map based on "no action" includes only projected growth for other entities. Mr. Turnbull pointed out that GSFC is doing itself a disservice by presenting the projections this way, since they make the scenarios for all the alternative routes look worse in comparison with the "no change" scenario. Mr. Toufectis agreed and said they would respond with another analysis on this.

Mr. Roberts asked if the Purple Line of Metro was taken into account in the traffic projects. Mr. Heider said it was not, since there is no confirmed approved route for the Purple Line yet.

Mr. Turnbull stressed maintaining easy points of entrée for pedestrians and bikers in order to increase non-automotive access to the campus.

Some additional information was presented on the worst-case impacts of traffic on noise and carbon monoxide for the different routes, but the differences among the alternatives did not appear significant.

Next Steps

Mr. Toufectis said that the director of GSFC will soon state a preferred route. There will then be an opportunity for public comment before the director decides which route they will proceed to try to implement. Mr. McLaughlin asked if any City action was needed at this time. Mr. Toufectis said, no, they will accept comments at any time and will hold meetings during the formal comment period.

Mayor Davis said she would prefer that one of the eastern routes be selected. Mr. White said he would prefer an eastern route as well, if no way could be found to keep SCR open. It was suggested to Mr. Toufectis that a preliminary briefing of the Advisory Planning Board might be advisable. Mr. Toufectis also encouraged participation by Greenbelt residents in the Community Council that is advising Goddard on community impacts.

Other Business

Fire Department - Mayor Davis said Chief Krob had his meeting with the county and that it is currently proposed that Greenbelt will lose all four of its career firefighters, as will Branchville. This would mean Greenbelt would have no coverage during the day, since Berwyn Heights has a ladder truck and ambulance but no fire engine. The closest

fire trucks will be at College Park and Glenn Dale. She added that the County Fire Department had been warning county government for some time that this funding impasse was approaching, and they have encouraged pressure from elected officials.

House Bond Hearings - Mayor Davis said the testimony at the bond hearings today had gone well.

The meeting ended at 10:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Gallagher

City Clerk