



**WORK SESSION of the Greenbelt City Council held March 28, 2001, for the purpose of reviewing the General Fund Summary and General Government budgets.**

The meeting began at 8:11 p.m. It was held in the Senior Class Room in the Community Center.

PRESENT WERE: Council members Rodney Roberts, Alan Turnbull, Mayor Davis and Edward Putens. Mr. White arrived at 8:18 p.m.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael McLaughlin, City Manager; David Moran, Assistant to the City Manager; Jeff Williams, City Treasurer; and Anne Marie Belton, Executive Secretary.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Sheldon Goldberg, Amy Boyes with the Gazette and Diane Oberg with the Greenbelt News Review.

Mr. McLaughlin began the meeting by explaining that the flatness in Greenbelt's assessed property values has caused property tax rates to increase over the last nine years. A one (1) cent tax increase is proposed for FY 2002. Mr. Williams pointed out that the City's fund balance continues to grow. The growth is attributed to savings on expenditures. Position vacancies are the greatest cause for savings.

Mr. Williams informed Council that a discrepancy in the number of homes listed on the City's tax roll has been identified. It appears that the State of Maryland has overlooked approximately 85 homes; possibly in the Greenspring neighborhood. If the State finds this to be true, the revenue amount for FY 2002 would increase.

Mayor Davis made reference to a memo from Mr. Williams about a meeting with the State Department of Assessments and Taxation (SDAT). This memo advised Council that SDAT is the City's advocate in cases of questionable assessments.

Real Property Tax - Mr. Williams stated that there is a 3 tenths of a percent (.03) decrease in the real property assessable base for FY 2002. Mayor Davis made mention of some common area upgrades that would possibly happen in the Greenbriar neighborhood in approximately three to four years. These upgrades would help increase property values in Greenbriar.

Personal Property Tax - Mr. Williams explained that a 5% decrease in property tax revenue is expected. This decrease is attributed to one company, Cingular Wireless (formerly Cellular One), moving equipment to different locations outside of Greenbelt. Abatements as of this work session are close to the estimate for FY 2001, however an additional abatement of \$100,000 is expected to be granted to Cingular Wireless in the current fiscal year.

### Other Local Taxes

The estimated FY 2001 Income Tax revenue is higher than the FY 2001 adopted budget, however it is less than the actual for FY 2000. Mr. Williams informed Council that in FY 2002 the State is expecting a 5% increase in income taxes and a 3% increase for Prince George's County. Staff is uncomfortable with increasing the City's portion of this revenue based on history, therefore the proposed FY 2002 income tax revenue will remain at the estimated FY 2001 level.

The revenue for Admissions & Amusements is fairly steady with 50% coming from movie theaters, 40% from Jeeps, and the remaining 10% from various other activities. The Hotel/Motel Tax revenue will remain steady in FY 2002. An increase to this revenue is likely in future years with the addition of a Residence Inn. Cable Television revenues are expected to increase in FY 2002 with the addition of Comcast cable service in the Springhill Lake Apartment complex.

### Revenue from Other Agencies

Several grants were awarded for various programs in FY 2001. A few of them, such as the Maryland State Arts grant and the After School Food grant, will continue in subsequent fiscal years. It was noted that the Fire Grant can only be submitted when expenditures are incurred and reimbursement is requested from Prince George's County. Mr. McLaughlin also pointed out to Council that FY 2002 will be the last year of funding for the COPS Fast Grant.

### Service Charges for Current Services

Waste collection fees are proposed to increase \$6.00 for the upcoming fiscal year. This will increase the quarterly bill from \$41.20 to \$42.70. The Self Supporting Recreation fees are also proposed to increase. This fee increase will help cover the cost of overtime for the camp counselors. Even with this increase, the program is still competitive with neighboring summer activities.

### Fines and Forfeitures

The revenue for parking citations and late fees has declined due to the Parking Enforcement officer handling other duties in addition to parking enforcement.

The revenue amount for the Red Light Cameras is equivalent to two tickets per day per camera. This revenue is uncertain because the exact timing of them becoming functional is unknown. Mr. Putens stated he believes that this revenue could comfortably be increased based on the

experience other jurisdictions have had. Mr. Williams pointed out that the money collected initially from these fines will be used to pay for the camera installation and salary for a staff person to process the tickets. When payment for installation costs is complete, the City will experience the effects of the revenue.

## General Fund Expenditures

The City's health insurance payments have decreased by 22% for FY 2002. This decrease is due to switching from Aetna to Blue Cross/Blue Shield. The savings from this change have been used to augment the reserve for the compensation and benefits study.

The proposed amount for insurance, line item 33, has been increased 5% in anticipation of an increase in the cost of insurance. As of the printing of the budget document, definite increases were not available.

The City has experienced a 130% increase in the cost of natural gas. The City plans to renegotiate the current contract with Washington Gas in the summer in hopes of attaining a lower price.

Mr. Williams informed Council that with the funds provided to employees for college courses, the City is able to purchase the equivalent of an AA degree each fiscal year.

Despite the aging of the vehicle fleet, motor equipment maintenance expenses are down 6% this fiscal year.

Mayor Davis inquired about the proposed staffing changes for FY 2002. Mr. McLaughlin explained several changes in the organization. The Police Department total Full Time Equivalents (F.T.E.) is decreased by two. The Automation Analyst position has been transferred to the Finance Department in order to create a position of Information Technology Director. The second position, Animal Warden, is proposed to be moved to the Planning & Community Development department. There is not currently an incumbent in either of these positions. The Youth Services Bureau has decreased by one half of a F.T.E. due to the use of graduate interns in client case work.

In reviewing the General Government Issues and Services for FY 2002, Mr. McLaughlin emphasized that a significant amount of staff time will need to be focused on a couple of upcoming events. One of these events, redistricting, is one of the results of the 2000 Census. Staff review of the boundaries is warranted given the possibility of change in political representation of Greenbelt at all levels. The other item is the election in November, 2001.

A discussion of City Council salaries resulted in a request of placing this issue on a list for consideration at the final budget work session. The suggestion made was to increase the Mayor's salary by \$1,500 per year and Council members salary by \$1,000 per year. City Council salaries have not been increased since 1989.

Mr. Moran informed Council that the lever machines would be used for the November, 2001 election. The County is currently conducting a pilot program with other types of voting machines in various municipalities. The results of this pilot program could mean a change in the type of machine Greenbelt uses in the future.

The Finance Department is proposing several changes in the FY 2002 budget. They are expecting to bring the payroll function in-house beginning in January, 2002. This will save approximately \$5,000 in FY 2002 and an additional \$5,000 in FY 2003. The Human Resource office is evaluating which areas prove to be the most effective to advertise current job openings. This evaluation is being done due to the increase in expenses for Public Notices, line item 37. It is also proposed to suspend the Cooperative purchase fee to the Council of Governments (COG) this fiscal year. Items purchased through COG in the past can be purchased off of other contracts at a similar or less expensive cost. The City will continue to support the efforts of COG.

Increasing the retainer fee for the City Solicitor was questioned. It was decided to leave the fee as proposed and reevaluate it in subsequent years.

The Public Information and Community Promotion office, along with Comcast, will promote the addition of Comcast cable service in the Springhill Lake Apartment complex in FY 2002. This addition will aid in the unification of the Greenbelt community.

It was requested to add Greenbelt Access Television, Inc. to the annual stake holder meeting list due to their involvement in producing programs for the City's cable channel, B-10.

Different forms of technology to be used by Council were discussed. All of Council agreed that for future Councils, the availability of technology should be made available to them, depending on their need. The top choices to be looked into further by staff were: cellular phones, personal computer or laptop, and fax machines. It was suggested to include a question on the election survey asking the citizens how they prefer to contact the Council members.

Staff reports - Mr. McLaughlin reported that he had received a phone call from Senator Green informing him on the status of the bond issues for Greenbelt. The Senate had a request for \$325,000 for the Springhill Lake bond and an additional \$25,000 for the Greenbelt Theater. The House was reporting \$350,000 for just the Springhill Lake bond. Mr. White reported that there will be a CAB work session on April 3 from 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. on the Sector Plan.

The meeting ended at 11:25 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Anne Marie Belton  
Executive Secretary