



**WORK SESSION of the Greenbelt City Council held Monday, October 15, 2001, for the purpose of holding a stakeholder meeting with the Greenbelt Area Schools.**

Mayor Pro Tem Turnbull started the meeting at 8:10 p.m. It was held in the Council Room of the Municipal Building.

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

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael P. McLaughlin, City Manager; Wendy Wexler, CARES; and Kathleen Gallagher, City Clerk.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Sandra Lyles, Assistant Principal, Eleanor Roosevelt; Phyllis Gillens, Principal, Magnolia; Loretta White, Principal, Robert Goddard; Judy Austin, Principal, Greenbelt Middle; Linda Sherwood, Principal, Springhill Lake; Liz Whelan, Principal, St. Hugh's; Leta Mach, Alla Lake; Jackie Magness, Liz Roslewicz, Mary Alice Carroll, and Pam Moody, Advisory Committee on Education; Sylvia Lewis; Kelby Brick; Barbara Hopkins, Greenbelt News Review; and Amy Boyes, the Gazette.

Following introductions, Mr. Turnbull explained that one purpose of this meeting was to follow up on the earlier meeting where overcrowding and transportation issues had been discussed. Mr. White also asked for an overall evaluation from the principals of how things are going this year.

Although reports were generally positive from the schools, some of the problems brought up included the following:

" Springhill Lake Elementary: Ms. Sherwood said facilities are stretched and noted that the new Head Start program will add another 40-45 children. The program opens November 13, and it is not yet clear who will be supervising the teachers. She added that CARES and Officer Parker have been wonderful resources. In response to a question from Mr. Putens about their facilities, she said that other than having too many people in too little space, they have only three bathrooms for more than a thousand people and some problems with the cafeteria in serving breakfast to 500 children.

" Magnolia Elementary: Ms. Gillens said Magnolia is overcrowded and using all its space. The PTSA has been emptying storage space to use as classrooms. They had a problem at the beginning of the semester with school buses running 30-90 minutes late. She said they have really been calling on the parents this year to serve as substitute teachers and bus drivers and have gotten a good response. This year Magnolia qualifies as a Title I school for the first time, with the result that they are receiving some additional funding. In response to a question from Mr. Putens about facilities, she said Magnolia is in fairly good condition, but she agreed that, like Springhill Lake, they need more bathrooms. In response to Mr. Roberts' question about what

was going on with the bathrooms, the principals explained that the problem is that when the County adds students and even temporary classrooms, there is no expansion of other facilities such as bathrooms or cafeterias.

" Greenbelt Middle School: Ms. Austin described serious facilities problems, particularly the condition of the roof and problems with the heating system. As a magnet school, they have buses coming from all over and have had some coordination problems. They also have no activity buses this year and would have to pay for activity buses themselves. Mayor Davis noted that one problem with the Middle School is that it is up for renovation, and the county probably does not want to make piecemeal repairs. Ms. Wexler said word had just been received, however, that this work will be delayed at least another year. Scott Frison, a parent of a student at Greenbelt Middle, said his child was still waiting for the bus at 10 o'clock this morning. He said that as a parent he was appalled at the condition of the school and thought the school system had a problem with its priorities.

" Eleanor Roosevelt High School: Ms. Lyles said the population is at 2,946. She said that while the situation has improved somewhat, they are still having bus problems, with some students missing the entire first period and buses leaving quite late in the day.

Discussion of the transportation problems suggested the following difficulties: computer snafues, a shortage of drivers, not allowing drivers to make obvious adjustments to routes, a need for a second adult on some buses. Pedestrian safety issues continue to be a problem.

With regard to Mr. Frison's comments, Mayor Davis added that virtually no Prince George's County schools have air conditioning, and many have problems with the heating systems. She said these maintenance matters have been let go because of funding issues. Ms. White responded by asking, "If they can air-condition all the classrooms in the Delta of Mississippi, why not here?" This type of problem, she said, principals and teachers cannot control.

Mr. Roberts said the condition of the roof at the Middle School is cause for serious concern, especially if it is to be renovated, because the water will damage the building. He said he could not understand why this would be allowed to happen.

With regard to air-conditioning, Ms. Sherwood said that last year she had been able to purchase three air-conditioners at \$800 each for rooms where specific health problems could be cited, with the school system paying for rewiring and installation. This year, if she wanted to install additional air-conditioners, in the absences of specific health issues, she would have to pay an additional \$8,000 for the rewiring and installation herself. She said one problem is that there is no plan for the ongoing renovation and maintenance of these buildings and never has been. Nor do they have custodians.

Mr. Putens asked if there was anything Council could do to facilitate the hiring of bus drivers. Ms. Sherwood said the shortage is not just of bus drivers, but also secretaries, aides, cafeteria workers, substitute teachers, and others.

Mayor Davis pulled together the items to be followed up:

-- Find out who is responsible for safety inspections of the schools; see if our code inspection staff has any authority to intervene.

-- Send letter to School Superintendent and School Board regarding facilities issues, overcrowding, staffing, buses.

-- Officer Parker is looking into walking route problems, talking to parents and students. See if there is anything the City can do, once he has reported.

-- Look into whether the City could hold a job fair or do anything it is not already doing to facilitate the hiring of staff (ACE will look into this).

Mr. Putens commented that the county has no money to deal with many of its problems. Mr. Turnbull asked if there was action Council could take to affect the school board's ability to tax and be held accountable, since attempts to repeal TRIM do not seem to be working. Mr. White commented that in the current climate, no one would want to give this board that authority. Mr. Roberts stated that what is needed is a targeted school tax, not a repeal of TRIM.

Mayor Davis thanked everyone for coming.

Other Business

Mr. McLaughlin distributed copies of the flier on the bond referendum that is being mailed. He also noted e-mail Mr. Turnbull had sent out regarding the \$1 million for the Jaeger Tract still being in the federal budget.

The meeting ended at 10:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Gallagher