



WORK SESSION of the Greenbelt City Council held Wednesday, June 24, 2009, for the purpose of discussing campaign financing with the Board of Elections.

Mayor Davis started the meeting at 7:06 p.m. It was held in the Senior Classroom of the Community Center.

PRESENT WERE: Councilmembers Konrad E. Herling, Leta M. Mach, Rodney M. Roberts and Mayor Judith F. Davis. Councilmember Edward V. J. Putens was unable to attend.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael McLaughlin, City Manager; David Moran, Assistant City Manager; Robert Manzi, City Solicitor; and Cindy Murray, City Clerk.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Pamela Gregory and Jean Cook, Board of Elections. Steven Gilbert and Dorothy Lauber, Board of Elections, arrived at 7:12 p.m.

Mayor Davis thanked the Board of Elections for coming and explained the purpose of the meeting was to discuss setting additional requirements for campaign financing.

Mayor Davis asked who was responsible for setting and enforcing campaign finance requirements. Mr. Moran said Council set the requirements, but noted the only enforcement for non-compliance was that a successful candidate could not be sworn in unless their financial reports were filed as required. Mr. Manzi mentioned the City of Laurel has strict requirements regarding failure to submit financial reports, noting the penalties included fines and the inability to run again. Mr. Manzi will provide a copy of the Laurel requirements.

Mr. Roberts said he had no concerns with the current campaign finance requirements and didn't see any reason to change the system.

The current candidate financial reporting requirements were reviewed. It was suggested to add a third financial report. Mayor Davis noted that residents had expressed concerns during the public hearings regarding possible outside influence on campaigns, and suggested a third reporting requirement be added to provide more transparency to the process. It was suggested the first contribution and expenditure report be due in late September, the second due approximately 10 day to two weeks prior to election day, and the final report remain due the first Monday after the election.

There was discussion regarding campaign donations from family members and candidates, as well as "in kind" donations of professional services. Mr. Manzi said candidates in state and federal elections are required to report these donations, but noted the City is not subject to state election laws and, therefore, Council can set the requirements.

Ms. Mach questioned what should be done with leftover campaign funds if the candidate chooses not to run again. Mr. Manzi said candidates can donate leftover funds to another candidate, elected official or charity, but cannot use the funds for their personal gain.

Mayor Davis and Ms. Mach said a bank account separate from the candidate's personal accounts should be required for all candidates.

Mayor Davis and Ms. Mach suggested adding a column labeled "purpose" to the campaign expenditure form and a column "employer or business" to the contribution report, as well as fund balance line.

There was discussion regarding limiting campaign donations. Mr. Roberts said he did not think a change in the current procedure was necessary. Mr. Manzi said Council could only limit the amount donated at one time, but the same person could make additional donations to the same campaign. He also mentioned that all donations would be more transparent with the addition of the third financial report. Council agreed not to set donation limitations.

Ms. Gregory commended Council, on behalf of the Board of Elections, for their efforts to make elections more transparent.

Council directed staff to make the following changes and include any appropriate legislation regarding these changes on the agenda for the meeting on July 13.

- 1. Candidates must maintain a bank account separate from their personal accounts for election funds.*
- 2. Candidates not seeking to run again must donate leftover campaign funds to another candidate, elected official or charity.*
- 3. Contribution Reports:*
 - 1. Addition of a third report due approximately 10 days to two weeks prior to election day;*
 - 2. Inclusion of candidate and family donations, as well as "in kind" donations;*
 - 3. Addition of "employer or business" to contributions reports, "purpose" to expenditure report, and fund balance; and*
 - 4. Fines/penalties for non-compliance.*

The meeting ended at 8:03 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

*Cindy Murray
City Clerk*

