



PUBLIC HEARING OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held Thursday, May 7, 2009, on Voting Reform.

Mayor Davis started the hearing at 7:05 p.m. It was held in the Windsor Green Community Center.

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

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael McLaughlin, City Manager; Robert Manzi, City Solicitor; and Cindy Murray, City Clerk. Steve Silvestri, Outside Counsel, joined the meeting at 7:15 p.m.

Following introductions, Mayor Davis announced this was the last meeting in the third series of public hearings scheduled by Council concerning suggestions for changes to the City's current election process. She explained that this series of public hearings would focus primarily on whether or not to expand the City Council from five to seven members, which is the latest suggestion offered by several citizens at previous hearings and in email messages.

Mayor Davis stated the City Council had not taken any position on this matter, nor would it take a position tonight. She said the public hearing this evening is one more opportunity for the Council to listen to all participants and to gather information.

Mayor Davis commented that Greenbelt has always welcomed discussion, with many differing viewpoints, and asked everyone to be respectful and open-minded throughout the evening. She asked all audience members who wished to speak to sign in and encouraged individuals who did not want to speak publicly to write or email their comments to Council.

Mayor Davis then opened the floor to speakers in the audience.

Ann Lombardi, 37 Ridge Road, said she supports increasing voter outreach and changing the election year as actions to increase voter turnout. She commented that she is not opposed to expanding the size of Council but didn't feel this action will increase voter turnout.

Joan Falcão, 114 Julian Court, said she supports increasing the size of Council and hopes this action will encourage minority participation. She said she was opposed to changing the election year.

John Kirk, 7203 Morrison Drive, said he was opposed to both increasing the size of Council and changing the election year. He commented that many residents have no interest in City affairs and these actions will not increase voter turnout.

Bob Rand, 109 Northway, said he supports both increasing the size of Council and changing the election year to increase voter turnout and to provide opportunities for new candidates. He also recommended a new committee be formed to study the issues of ethnic and racial diversity on Council.

Ed Crump, 7768 Mandan Road, said he opposed increasing the size of Council and changing the election year. He commented that increasing the size of Council would increase costs and may not lead to diversity on Council.

Derek Thompson, 7116 Ora Glen Court, said he was speaking for his wife, Judith Thompson, who supports both changing the election year and increasing the size of Council as actions to increase voter turnout.

Andy Carruthers, 2-M Gardenway, said that he had made his views known at the previous two hearings but wanted to add that other municipalities had lower voter turnout for local elections than Greenbelt.

Lowell Owens, 119 Northway, said he supports both increasing the size of Council and changing the election year as actions to increase voter turnout.

David Lange, 12 Pinecrest Court, said he supports increasing the size of Council, changing the election year, and increasing voter awareness and education. He also said steps could be taken to block candidates from campaigning with, or accepting money from, partisan candidates. Mr. Lange recommended more promotion of all city services in both Greenbelt East and Greenbelt West and said the Greenbelt Neighbors Alliance (GNA) would be willing to assist with this effort.

Mayor Davis thanked everyone who participated in the discussion. She said Council will be presenting their individual comments for change to the voting system at the regular meeting scheduled for May 26, 2009.

The meeting ended at 7:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Cindy Murray
City Clerk*