



WORK SESSION of the Greenbelt City Council held Wednesday, February 7, 2007, for the purpose of meeting with the Youth Advisory Committee to discuss a restructuring of that group.

Mayor Davis started the meeting at 7:34 p.m. It was held in the Senior Classroom of the Community Center.

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

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael P. McLaughlin, City Manager; Greg Varda and Andrew Phelan, Recreation Department; and Kathleen Gallagher, City Clerk.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Leslie Primack (chair), Justin Walker, J.D. Flanagan, and Joel Mason-Gaines, Youth Advisory Committee; Charles Jackman, chair, Advisory Committee on Trees; Kevin Hammett, chair, Community Relations Advisory Board; and Marcus Ngbea, the Gazette.

Following introductions, Mayor Davis said that Council realizes that the Youth Advisory Committee has not had enough to do and that when that happens, interest naturally tends to dwindle. She asked Leslie to summarize the conclusions YAC had reached in its discussion. Leslie said they had concluded it would be better to have young people participate in other boards and committees but that they had not come to a conclusion on whether YAC should be maintained as a separate committee. Mayor Davis asked why they thought this approach would be better. Justin said that he, for example, was interested in recreation and that he thought he could be of more help to kids as a participant on the Park & Recreation Advisory Board (PRAB) than on YAC. J.D. agreed with Justin. Joel also agreed, saying that he thought they would have a greater voice via the other groups. Leslie added that YAC tended to be too isolated.

In response to questions from the Mayor, Mr. Jackman and Mr. Hammett both said that youth members or representatives from YAC would be welcome on their committees. Mr. Putens suggested that groups who were enthused about participating might extend an invitation to YAC for any members to attend a meeting to see what might be of interest.

The Mayor reviewed the list of groups, and there was discussion of which ones would be of interest. Mr. Putens said he thought it was important to maintain YAC as a separate group that would meet to provide a broader base of youth opinion and to allow the youth representatives to bounce ideas off one another.

Regarding the question of whether these would be additional positions on other groups or whether young people would take existing slots, Ms. Gallagher said she thought it was important that they be additional positions that would exist only when YAC members were interested in

filling them. That way, a position would always be available for a YAC member, but the board or committee would not be burdened with an extra vacancy at times when no YAC member was interested. That idea was generally agreed to. There was also considerable discussion of whether the positions should be voting positions or not. Eventually it was concluded that they would be non-voting liaison positions, with the idea that issues could be brought back to YAC to have a vote and position taken there if the group so wished. It was felt that having YAC take a position would concentrate the youth vote and be a stronger voice. Mr. Putens stressed that the non-voting status of the positions should not mean that the youth liaisons were not full participants in discussions or that they should not have their opinions recorded when votes were taken.

It was noted that young people would not be eligible to be voting members of four advisory groups for which the City Charter requires that members be registered voters: the Advisory Planning Board, the Board of Appeals, the Board of Elections, and the Employee Relations Board. There would be nothing to prohibit being a non-voting liaison to those groups, although the Board of Appeals would probably not be of great interest, and the Employee Relations Board would not be appropriate for this type of participation because of the confidential nature of its business.

Ms. Gallagher raised the question of whether there was a need to continue the two adult positions on YAC under the new regime, especially given that they had been vacant for some time. It was generally thought that they could be dispensed with, but the Mayor asked the YAC members and staff liaison to give that question some further thought.

In response to a question raised by Mr. McLaughlin, it was revealed that only one of the four YAC members in attendance was young enough to be likely to continue on the committee next year. Mr. McLaughlin suggested using the rest of this school year as a pilot project for the new structure that could then be evaluated prior to making any official changes. There was general agreement that this would be a good way to proceed. Ms. Gallagher asked that the changed structure also be referred out to the other boards and committees for comment before any permanent changes were made. Mayor Davis thanked everyone for coming. Everyone but Mr. Ngbea left at about 8:15 p.m.

Other Business

Council welcomed Mr. McLaughlin's suggestion to nominate Artful Afternoon for an MML Award of Excellence. He announced an upcoming dinner for former state senator Leo Green and a balloon test at Greenbelt Station.

Mr. Herling said he would e-mail information on a meeting to be held on Saturday by the sponsor of the "bottle bill" that has been introduced in the state legislature.

Mayor Davis said the EENR committee of the NLC had suggested holding its steering committee meeting in Greenbelt in September since the Small Cities meeting had been so successful here,

but she told them the timing would probably not be good because of the MML fall meeting to be held in Greenbelt. She said there were additional problems in the Safeway parking lot regarding handicapped spaces that needed to be looked into. She asked for further information about a report on cats being transported from the City animal facility to the ASPCA. She also asked that the City look into a Takoma Park ordinance that gives relief on property tax that is triggered by the applicability of the state program. She also relayed a number of items from a PGCMA meeting that had taken place with Park & Planning at the County Administration Building. She said the bill on McMansions is a priority issue for PGCMA but that Park & Planning has already taken a position of opposition, expressing concern over "piecemeal" legislation and saying that a yearlong study is needed in order to develop countywide guidelines.

The meeting ended at 8:55 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,
Kathleen Gallagher
City Clerk*