



WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held Wednesday, March 14, 2007, for the purpose of meeting with representatives of Federal Capital Partners to discuss their plans for new development at the site of the Hanover (Greenway Village) Apartments.

Mayor Davis called the meeting to order at 8:18 p.m. It was held in the Senior Classroom of the 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; Terri Hruby and Tarek Bolden, Planning and Community Development; and Kathleen Gallagher, City Clerk.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Lacy Rice, Partner, Sam Glass, Associate, Federal Capital Partners; Larry Taub, O'Malley, Miles Nylan & Gilmore; Ken Dunn, Loiederman Soltesz Associates; Sheldon Goldberg, Advisory Planning Board and Greenbelt East Advisory Committee; Michele Touchet, Friends of Still Creek; Alan Turnbull, National Park Service, and Bill Orleans.

Following introductions, Mayor Davis said that the reason for the meeting was that some members of Council wanted further discussion about the new construction prior to placing anything on the agenda of a regular meeting, specifically regarding Council's prior request to look into making it senior condo or coop housing rather than rental.

Mr. Rice referenced a letter they had sent to the City documenting that their research confirmed their opinion that the market is soft and sales are down for sales of apartment units. He said there is an oversupply of units for sale and that in this area getting financing for construction is a problem. He said they would have been very happy to build the units for sale if the market had been favorable to that.

Mayor Davis asked about the likelihood of conversion later. Mr. Taub noted that at this location there would be nothing to prohibit that from a zoning standpoint if it proved financially viable later. Nothing would have to be changed in the site plans to permit it.

Mr. Roberts said he did not think there was enough in these plans that would benefit the City to justify the City's support for the text amendment. He said he did not want to see more rental units built here only because the market is bad for anything else. He said he believed Greenbelt was still behind in for-sale units regardless of what might be true of the region. The Mayor responded that a benefit might be that as rentals they had been discussed as being for moderate income seniors, and the City has nothing targeted like that. Mr. Roberts asked if there could be a covenant to keep the housing designated for seniors.

Mr. Putens said he had no interest in annexing more apartments.

Ms. Mach suggested that they be required to look into selling to a coop when they sold the property. Mr. Roberts doubted that could ever be enforced.

Mr. Herling said he still believed that Greenbelt was a unique market in terms of coops.

Mayor Davis asked what rents they had in mind for the units. Mr. Rice said they would have to send that information. He said they were thinking of one- and two-bedroom units.

There was discussion of whether anything could be done in partnership with the City that could be a version of Green Ridge House. Doubt was expressed regarding whether there was any financing vehicle for this in the absence of the HUD Section 8 program.

Mr. Rice pointed out that this part of Hanover Parkway is an ownership area and that even without any extraordinary action it would be highly likely that this property would convert to sale-units in a favorable market. He also said that market-rate, age-restricted units had been what they were looking at. He said they had not spoken of any income limit. He added that the tax-credit financed projects do restrict the occupancy to seniors for at least 30 years.

Mr. Roberts said he did not see a particular need to target moderate to lower income, since there are many older people in Greenbelt who would have plenty of equity in a house and who would be looking for a smaller area on one floor. Mayor Davis was concerned with how seniors who were renting could afford to buy.

Ms. Mach provided some material from the Federal Home Loan Bank on programs for development of senior housing.

At the Mayor's request, Ms. Touchet pointed out the location of Still Creek. Mr. Turnbull said he had been working with the Still Creek Friends group but more recently had been appointed by the Park Service to work with them on behalf of the agency. They conveyed that they were watching the plans and the area but had no complaint about anything being done at the site. Mr. Turnbull commented that almost any renovation on the site would be an improvement since it would be done to today's standards.

Mr. Taub stressed the importance of resolving the primary issue of what the property should be. He said until then there was no way to talk about details. He said they need to move forward with the text amendment, which they have tried to frame in accord with Council's preferences. It is not property-specific, and it addresses concerns raised by City staff. He said he would emphasize what he said at the previous meeting that this is a better vehicle than a Special Exception in terms of the control it would give the City through Detailed Site Plan (DSP) approval. He said it appeared there were two issues that had to be worked through: for-sale vs. rental and the affordable housing question. He said the latter could be difficult because in recent years there has been only market rate housing and tax-credit rental. Mayor Davis asked about providing some affordable units within the property on the model required by Montgomery County. She allowed, however, that having DSP approval was a big benefit. Mr. Rice said they would "cogitate" further and see what they come up with.

Other Business

Mayor Davis said she wanted Council to know that she, the two Prince George's County representatives, College Park, and Takoma Park had all abstained on a vote to provide for legal counsel for COG's defense in a lawsuit filed by the Sierra Club and Audubon Society because of the Transportation Planning Board's position on the Inter-County Connector. She said that County Councilmember Exum said they intended to file an amicus brief. It was mentioned that the City might consider doing so.

Mayor Davis commented that she thought Greenbelt Baseball had been unfair to City staff in insisting on bringing its list of complaints directly to the City Council at Monday's meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Kathleen Gallagher
City Clerk*