*City of Greenbelt, Maryland*

***GREENBELT CITYLINK***

 WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held Monday, July 24, 2006, for the purpose of meeting with representatives of Washington Gas and the Lakeside Citizens Association.

*Mayor Pro Tem Roberts called the meeting to order at 8:05 p.m. It was held in the Council Room of the Municipal Building .*

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

*STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael McLaughlin, City Manager; David Moran, Assistant City Manager; and Kathleen Gallagher , City Clerk.*

*ALSO PRESENT WERE: Tracye Funn, Manager of Public Affairs, and Tom Fryer, Director of Replacement Construction, Washington Gas; Marc Siegel, president of the Lakeside Citizens Association; other Maplewood Court residents Regina Murphy, Holley Wallace, Virginia and Cyril Femrite, Resa Jascourt; other Lakeside residents Sandra and David Lange, Bill Layler, Eli Flam, and Ron Benjamin; Bill Orleans; Michael Zimmerman, the Gazette; Virginia Beauchamp, Greenbelt News Review and Maplewood Court resident; and others.*

*Following introductions, Mr. McLaughlin provided background on the work that had been needed in Maplewood and Olivewood Courts and concerns about natural gas leaks throughout Lakeside . Residents were particularly concerned because of the incidents of gas explosion that occurred elsewhere in the county. He said although information was sent out by Washington Gas following the recent work, it had still seemed worthwhile to hold a community meeting.*

*Ms. Funn gave an overview of various Washington Gas assistance programs for customers, and she described the process that is supposed to be followed when a resident makes a call regarding a gas leak. Among other things, she said doorhangers should be placed at houses in the neighborhood indicating the status of response to the complaint. Mr. Fryer then went into more detail on the classification of complaints and the handling of the different categories (1-3). He said the essential criteria were the concentration of gas in the air and the location of the gas. At concentrations under 5%, gas is not a serious problem because it is not flammable; when it is in the street rather than adjacent to houses, there is lower exposure. When leaks are classified at a level of 2-3, they are repaired on a slower schedule. He said they had replaced the main gas lines in Maplewood and Olivewood Courts and did not see any leaks beyond those two courts that required more than routine follow-up. He noted that natural gas can be smelled at a level well below danger point, but he later qualified that in an enclosed area, rather than outdoors, a leak is always serious.*

*There was considerable discussion regarding communications problems between residents and Washington Gas. Ms. Funn said that when a smell of gas persists, people sometimes think they have not responded, even though they have done so and determined that the situation is non-emergency. Nonetheless, they cannot predict when non-emergency repairs will take place, nor do they provide interim status reports when they return to monitor the status on later occasions. Ms. Mach suggested that follow-up notification would go a long way. Mr. Siegel pointed out that none of the Lakeside residents had received doorhangers. He said it sometimes took multiple calls to get someone to come out. He stressed that representatives were always helpful and polite but that there was little progress over a five-year period. He said the temporary road patches and repairs were still causing access problems for residents on sidewalks. Mr. Femrite said a good deal of damage had been done at their house in the strip between the street and the sidewalk.*

*Ms. Funn allowed that there were instances where they did not follow their own policy. She said the doorhangers had been in use for only a year or so and thus would have postdated the initial contacts. She passed around a sheet for people to fill out if they still had problems, and she said they would respond.*

*Mr. Herling asked about Pinecrest Court . Mr. Fryer said at this time they have nothing else pending in Lakeside . He said they inspect every three years and that they do not replace lines based totally on age so that there would not necessarily be an expectation that all of Lakeside would be replaced at the same time.*

*Mr. Lange asked questions regarding what quality control checks were done after work was completed. Mr. Herling asked if they were understaffed and if their completion time on the jobs classified as "2" and "3" had increased. Ms. Funn said they were in compliance with all codes and requirements. Mr. Fryer said their completion rates, which must be reported back to three utility commissions, have not increased.*

*Mr. Putens asked about the control Washington Gas has over its subcontractors. Mr. Siegel added that he thought there were "disconnects" between Washington Gas and its subcontractors.*

*Mr. Siegel said that. in light of all the working and patching that had been done to Olivewood and Maplewood Courts, he hoped the City would give these roads as much priority as possible for repaving.*

***Other Business***

*Ms. Mach had noted an article in the NLC newsletter about using the start of the school year to notify parents of eligibility for children's health insurance. Mr. McLaughlin said he would pass it on to Liz Park.*

*The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.*

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Kathleen Gallagher*

*City Clerk*