*City of Greenbelt, Maryland*

***GREENBELT CITYLINK***

 **WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL** held Wednesday, June 12, 2006, for the purpose of following up on several administrative matters and receiving a briefing from he Beltsville Agricultural Research Center (BARC) on the status of their application to be designated a National Bio-Agro Defense Facility.

Mayor Davis called the meeting to order at about 8:02 p.m. It was held in the Senior Classroom of the Community Center.

**PRESENT WERE:** Councilmembers Rodney Roberts, Leta Mach, Edward Putens, and Mayor Judith Davis. Councilmember Konrad Herling arrived shortly after the meeting began.

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

**ALSO PRESENT WERE:** Sheldon Goldberg, Advisory Planning Board. Arriving for the second part of the meeting at about 8:30 p.m. were Dr. Phyllis Johnson, Director, Dr. Ronald F. Korcak, Associate Area Director, and Robert Serrano, Deputy Area Director, BARC; and Barbara Hopkins, Greenbelt News Review.

Follow-up on Administrative Items

Regarding the petition for the City to exert pressure on its contacts at the Goddard Space Flight Center (GSFC) adjacent to Greenbelt regarding the controversy about NASA’s censoring of statements by Dr. James Hansen, it was initially agreed by Mayor Davis, Mr. Roberts, and Ms. Mach that this was not a municipal issue as such and that the local GSFC was not involved. Eventually there was agreement that a statement of general concern to the City’s federal representatives would be more appropriate, since the issue has been taken up by a Senate sub-committee.

Regarding the request from Greenbelt Baseball for temporary lights at MacDonald Field, it was agreed to grant the request to have lights for an hour after dusk from August 27 until October 29, with the restriction that this should be no later than 8:30 pm.

Regarding the petition from Clement Lau on behalf of the swim team for more lane time, Council thought they already had enough time relative to other users. It was agreed to let them have some additional time during periods the pool is not open to the public if they are willing to pay for staffing.

BARC Update

After introductions and a brief discussion of BARC’s facilities needs and plans, Dr. Johnson said she wished to update the City on the status of a proposal submitted to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) by BARC as part of a multi-state mid-Atlantic consortium to site a National Bio-Agro Defense Facility (NBAF) on the Beltsville campus. She said such a facility would be a natural complement to the work BARC is already doing in plant and animal diseases, which can be introduced into an environment intentionally or via normal commerce. She said DHS has not yet decided many of the particulars about what kind of facility it wants, including whether the level of security would be BSL-3 (which BARC already has) or a more highly controlled BSL-4, which is built inside a BSL-3 facility. She described the many advantages BARC could offer for such a project, including its location and high quality of its animal scientists, facilities, and research experience. She said they were discussing siting the facility at the far north end of the Beltsville property, where it would be near woods and high-security federal agency neighbors, rather than near residences and schools.

Mayor Davis asked about its proximity to creeks and reminded Dr. Johnson that a number of groups in the area would look very closely at any potential impact. Mr. Roberts also asked about the impact on the woodlands. It was explained that the map being used was not precise and that in fact streams were not nearby. Dr. Johnson said they would undoubtedly have to cut down trees but that the area was not solidly wooded and that they have a great deal of land on which they can do mitigation. She said they wouldn’t remove any more trees than necessary but that security was the top consideration. She noted there were other sites on the property under discussion as well.

Dr. Johnson explained that 29 institutions had applied and that there had been a public announcement of the first cut, which kept 14 applicants in the running. She said although a final decision was far off (spring 2008, with the opening of the facility in 2013), they wanted to do outreach in the neighborhood and the county to disseminate the information now so that, in the event they are successful, it would not appear as though they were attempting to conceal information about the plan. She said the applicant pool would be reduced to three in November or December, with those groups pursuing Environmental Impact Statements (EISs) and then submitting a new round of detailed proposals by the end of 2007. She said in the process of doing the EIS, they would become much more specific about the site, as well as soliciting public comment.

Council expressed its appreciation for the early information and asked to be informed as soon as something was known in the fall. Mayor Davis said she regretted the word “Defense” in the facility title, which implied a direct connection to the Defense Department and might be misunderstood by the public.

In response to questions from Mr. McLaughlin, Dr. Johnson said they had nothing recently on the subject of the University Connector Road and that, because of their constrained budget, they would be unlikely to reinstate their Field Days program anytime soon.

A number of informational announcements were made.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Gallagher
City Clerk