

WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held Wednesday, September 14, 2016, to receive a City Manager Update and discuss Capital Projects.

Mayor Jordan started the meeting at 8:05 p.m. The meeting was held in the Multipurpose Room of the Greenbelt Community Center.

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

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael McLaughlin, City Manager, Jeffrey Williams, City Treasurer and David Moran Assistant City Manager.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Eileen Knoll, Jessie Meltzer, Laura Kressler, Kris White, Eric Olson, Carol Drees, Diane Ronchi, Charlene Backstrom, Ashley O'Connor and Diane Oberg, Greenbelt News Review

Preliminary End of Year Report

Mr. Williams indicated that FY 2016 went well except for real estate abatements. He reported that expenditures were \$100,000 less than budgeted. Mr. Williams noted that business abatements usually fell in the 3rd year of a triennial assessment.

Mr. Williams stated that the FY 2016 Budget for abatements was \$300,000 and when the FY 2017 Budget was presented in March, there were \$180,000 in abatements. He noted that \$1,200,000 in abatements were granted in the final quarter.

Ms. Pope stated that Council was taken aback by the large abatement and indicated the City should have been notified by the State. Mayor Jordan asked if the City was notified about this abatement. Mr. McLaughlin responded that the City receives a report from the State Department of Assessments and Taxation (SDAT) periodically.

Mr. Roberts asked for further information about the large Franklin Park abatement. Mr. Williams indicated it was based on a 2013 filing when they were renovating buildings and those units were not generating revenue.

Mr. Williams reviewed the revenues for FY 2016. He reported income tax was higher, as well as hotel/motel tax. Mr. Herling noted there would be revenue from the new hotel near Greenway Center. Ms. Davis hoped we would begin capturing revenue from online providers such as Airbnb.

Mayor Jordan asked about permitting revenue. Mr. Williams responded that sometimes these revenues don't materialize. Mr. Williams noted that Recreation revenues were up, largely due to Greenbelt Kids. He indicated that speed camera and red light camera revenues were leveling off.

Mayor Jordan asked about expenditures in the Recreation and Public Works accounts. Mr. McLaughlin responded that in Recreation, additional camp staff was hired. He indicated that in Public Works, there was a long term illness and a third person was hired.

Mr. Roberts asked about salary savings for vehicle maintenance staff. He believed the City could have fixed a 7 year old truck that was replaced if it had better mechanics. He encouraged staff to re-think this practice.

Mr. McLaughlin summarized that the City took a hit but could absorb it due to the fund balance.

Ms. Davis asked about the abatement number budgeted for FY 2017. Mr. McLaughlin responded it was \$250,000.

FY 2017 Notes to Date

Mr. McLaughlin indicated that so far things were on budget, but the City had not yet received property tax revenues.

Capital Projects Update and FY 2017 Plan

Mayor Jordan noted there were folks in the audience who wanted to hear about the dog park. Mr. McLaughlin noted there was \$5,000 in FY 16 which was not spent.

Ms. Pope stated that she was trying to put money in the Budget for a second dog park. Mr. Herling asked about the cost for the original dog park. Mr. McLaughlin responded it was about \$7,000.

There was considerable discussion about the dog park. It was noted preliminary cost estimates ranged from \$15,000-\$25,000 and the cost was dependent on location and amenities provided.

Ms. Davis and Ms. Mach favored the Parcel 7 – Ivy Lane site. Mayor Jordan liked the Northway site. Ms. Pope believed St. Hugh's playground site was a central location and that size of the playground could be reduced. Ms. Davis indicated that Franklin Park was looking at a dog park. Mr. Roberts wanted to consider the area adjacent to the Aquatic & Fitness Center (former site of Candy Cane City playground). Mayor Jordan and Ms. Mach also liked this location.

There was a request that the City consider accommodations for special needs dogs. A dog park user noted her dog was afraid of other dogs and she requested a time when she could reserve the park for her dog to be alone.

Mr. Herling believed the City needed a space roughly the same as the current dog park.

Ms. Ronchi noted that she uses the park every day. She indicated some small dogs are scared by larger dogs and too many dogs. Ms. Ronchi observed that most owners were respectful.

Ms. Knoll stated that when designing a dog park: bigger is better, trees are preferred, and that water and lighting were also needed. Ms. White liked the Ivy Lane site because of its proximity to the Animal Shelter. Dr. Kressler noted there would always be community concerns regardless of where you locate the dog park. Ms. White also liked the Ridge Road location. Ms. Knoll believed the Ivy Lane site would be the least contentious for the neighbors.

Ms. Davis believed the Northway site was too isolated. She liked the Candy Cane City site and hoped the City could narrow the list and develop cost estimates for a small number of sites.

Mr. Roberts liked the Ridge Road site. He believed the Parcel 7 – Ivy Lane site would be contentious and thought it was too small.

Ms. White asked about the use of the Parcel 7 – Ivy Lane site. Ms. Mach responded this was currently used as an informal play area.

Council directed staff to further research and provide more detailed cost estimates for four locations: Parcel 7 – Ivy Lane, Ridge Road opposite 101-105 Ridge, St Hugh’s and Candy Cane City site.

Capital Project updates – Mayor Jordan wanted to see progress on the bus stop accessibility project and gateway signage, the latter particularly for the 80th anniversary year. There was support for installing or repairing a bus shelter and use the balance of funds to begin implementing the Bus Stop Accessibility Study. There was support to make the bus stop at Hanover and Mandan handicap accessible. Mayor Jordan expressed that he was comfortable with staff proceeding with the study recommendations.

Ms. Davis indicated a need to move forward on replacing the heating and air conditioning system at the Theatre. This will be placed on the agenda of a future work session with the Friends of the Greenbelt Theatre.

Ms. Mach raised the Roosevelt Center drinking fountain [listed as an un-programmed project]. With the Tap-It program now promoted in the area, Council expressed support for removing this project from the list. Ms. Pope suggested the Tap-It program be promoted more.

Mayor Jordan suggested implementing gender neutral bathrooms in city facilities.

Renter’s Tax Credit

Mr. Moran briefed Council on the State and County programs. Mayor Pro Tem Davis suggested the City proceed on implementing a City program. Other Council members supported the idea as well.

Council Actions Request (CAR) Report

Council reviewed the CAR Report. Mr. McLaughlin agreed to look into 2010-32. Council asked to move up 2011-9.

Ms. Pope asked about 2015-27. Mr. Moran responded that staff had the recommendations and it was a workload issue. Mr. McLaughlin agreed to check into 2014-14.

Mayor Jordan suggested a process for bringing closure to certain issues by placing something on consent. Mr. Roberts was opposed to dealing stuff by consent.

Community Questionnaire Results

Mr. Moran provided a brief review of the results of the 2015 community questionnaire.

Informational Items

Mr. Herling advised that he and Ms. Pope attended a documentary on fracking. He also attended a meeting on the MARC Camden Line. Ms. Davis attended a focus group on Module 3 of the proposed zoning rewrite.

The meeting ended at 10:45 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

*David E. Moran
Assistant City Manager*