

MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY RELATIONS ADVISORY BOARD MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, MAY 14, 2020 VIA ZOOM TECHNOLOGY.

The meeting began at 7:34 pm.

Members participating were: Rick Ransom, Dan Hamlin, Jamie Krauk, Ray Raysor, Sherry Burks, Kevin Hammett, Lisa Lake and David Moran, Staff Liaison. Also participating was Bill Orleans.

Welcome & Introductions

Rick welcomed everyone.

Approval of Minutes

Jaime moved approval of the minutes from December 12, 2019 and February 13, 2020. Sherry seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Community Feedback

There was no community feedback

What Resources Do We Have for Helping Greenbelters During A Crisis?

Rick expressed concern that there were Greenbelt residents in need of assistance in Greenbelt West and Greenbelt East. In particular, he was concerned about the need for food assistance and asked where these residents go and how do they get help. Rick discussed the food pantry at St. Hugh's and the one at Berwyn Presbyterian Church but noted Franklin Park residents may not be aware of, or able to get to, these food pantries.

Ray reported that there was a food program at Springhill Lake Elementary for students. He indicated folks were unaware of the local food pantries. Ray indicated that there was a large immigrant population at Franklin Park who are also not as aware of these services.

Rick was concerned that residents who don't have transportation or can't get out would not be able to get the help they need.

David noted that the Greenbelt Connection transportation service was still operating and that Franklin Park residents and others could utilize it to get to other parts of Greenbelt for needed services. He indicated that there had been a Capital Area Food Bank program at the Beltway Plaza Giant in March but that was discontinued. David also reported that the City had expressed interest to the County in becoming a World Food Kitchen distribution site. He suggested that any resident in need of food should call the City and staff would try to connect the resident to the needed resource. David acknowledged there were gaps in the solutions/resources available to residents in need.

Dan reported that the County was doing a terrific job of listing available resources available on their website, including rental assistance. Sherry noted there was currently a stay on evictions.

Ray noted that he was meeting with Vice-Chair Hawkins and Chair Turner tomorrow and requested more information on World Food Kitchen initiative so he could follow-up. David agreed to provide additional information to Ray via email.

Lisa asked about the number of calls the City was receiving from Franklin Park residents. David indicated that he didn't have exact numbers, but that both the City's main number and the CARES and GAIL offices receive the calls.

Ray stated that the residents in Franklin Park have a disconnect about what's available in Greenbelt. He reported on a survey he conducted where about 85% of Franklin Park residents had never been to Roosevelt Center. He also noted many residents don't read or receive the Greenbelt News Review.

Lisa asked Ray about the survey and if anything else resonated with him. Ray responded that while working with Franklin Park residents, folks don't have time to attend meetings. He also noted the challenge with the transient nature of apartments and resident turnover.

Rick asked about the connection to the Springhill Lake Recreation Center. Ray indicated that some residents tend to socialize and recreate within their own "nationality" group and don't even visit the Recreation Center.

Ray did observe that Franklin Park sends out an email newsletter and that management has been reluctant to include too much information about Greenbelt activities because they don't want to overwhelm the residents. He suggested that given this pandemic situation, management might be willing to help publicize the key City numbers. Lisa suggested a simple flyer that provided the key phone numbers for residents to call.

Lisa asked if the City had a Spanish version of the website and Spanish speaking employees. David responded that the website has a translation feature and the City has a number of Spanish speaking employees as well as access to a language translation service. Lisa offered to prepare a basic flyer. Ray suggested contacting Denise Knight to help with distribution of the flyer at Franklin Park.

Kevin asked about the Good Samaritan Fund. David responded that the Good Samaritan Fund and the Eviction Relief Fund were pretty small and were never intended to address an event of this magnitude. He noted these funds were administered by the Greenbelt Interfaith Leadership Association (GILA) and that residents can now donate to these Funds online. Ray noted that GILA didn't have much organizational structure. Dan noted the Fund had also been helpful in providing fresh foods to residents via a food voucher.

Jamie wanted to return to the flyer idea which she really liked. She believed there was consensus regarding the flyer that: less is more, produce it in both English and Spanish and provide basic City and County phone numbers and website links.

Sherry reported that County Executive Alsobrooks had considerable information on her twitter site. There was further discussion about which phone numbers and websites should appear on the flyer without overwhelming them with too much information.

David offered to have the City prepare the flyer and make the necessary copies. Ray stated that Franklin Park could post the flyers on the building doors. David agreed to have City staff draft a simple flyer (two-sided in English and Spanish) with basic City and County phone numbers and websites. The flyer would be emailed and distributed to apartment and condominium complexes in Greenbelt East and West.

Bill mentioned that on Monday, Council had agreed to send a letter to apartment management companies requesting that they allow their residents flexibility on overdue rent including establishing a payment plan. He suggested CRAB and other groups like GILA and GREA might want to also encourage apartments to take these steps.

City Council Referral – Recognition of Greenbelt Residents who Celebrate their 100th Birthday

David provided background on the referral. Jamie recalled a prior email thread/summary that had been circulated among CRAB. David agreed to locate that email and provide it, along with the other materials for the next meeting. Jamie believed that once this was located and shared, CRAB could then prepare a response. Rick and Jamie recalled that CRAB had identified a gesture like a card or certificate that both the recipient and their family would appreciate.

City Council Referral – Greenbelt 20 Minute Clean-up Initiative

David provided a summary of the referral. He noted that the City and some of its organizations already engage in these type of clean-up activities. Rick agreed to review the materials and provide an outline for the next meeting.

Next Meeting Date

CRAB agreed to hold the June virtual meeting on Thursday, June 11 at 7:30pm.

The meeting ended at 8:59 pm.