

MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY RELATIONS ADVISORY BOARD (C.R.A.B.) MEETING
HELD ON THURSDAY, MARCH 10, 2022, VIA ZOOM

The meeting began at 7:30 p.m.

Members participating: Rick Ransom, Ric Gordon, Raymond Raysor, Sudhanshu Sinha, Kevin Hammett, Jamie Krauk, and Tim George, Staff Liaison. (Dan Hanlin and Dea Zugby were absent)

Also participating : N/A

Welcome and Introductions

Rick welcomed everyone and invited a member to read the Community Pledge.

Opening Comments

None

Council Referrals to C.R.A.B.-- Collective Bargaining Agreement

The meeting began with Rick asking C.R.A.B. members what was in the referral? He also asked whether we would talk about the collective bargaining agreement for the F.O.P.? Tim replied the referral was to ask C.R.A.B. to investigate whether the nonmanagerial staff can be given the right to do collective bargaining. The police department and F.O.P. are already authorized to do it and are doing it. It is up to C.R.A.B. to think about whether or not regular employees should have the same right. Tim explained further that the City must provide the right for an employee to do collective bargaining. The right to do it was extended to F.O.P. years ago. He proceeded to outline for the group the process for collective bargaining. A certain percentage of the employees will have to agree, and the City will have to permit it.

Was this point of origin at the Council, or was it a result of employees making the informal request? The referral said that Mayor Byrd is the person who brought this subject to the agenda and the one who also recommended it be sent to C.R.A.B. and E.R.B. for consideration. He is not sure if an employee had raised the issue in the meeting or if Mayor Byrd thought about it because the police were doing their collective bargaining, so he asked about other employees should be able to do it too.

Hence, Jamie recommended that each C.R.A.B. member go back and look and listen to the video to verify the point of origin. Thus, Rick asked, is this something people are asking for or something that Mayor Byrd wants them to have. Ric explained that Mayor Byrd thought if the police department could do collective bargaining and make it an even playing field, why can't the citizens have it too.

Rick asked if C.R.A.B. could send an email to request Mayor Byrd to join them to share more about collective bargaining, and in so doing, why not ask E.R.B. to join as well. They all agreed to ask Mayor Byrd to come and share with the group.

Sudhanshu asked if there were other F.O.P. for employees? Ric replied, no. Tim stated almost all the employees have them. However, few non-police employees in a union have organized collective bargaining. Sudhanshu explained the difference between N.B.U. They don't have any connections to the Unions. B.U.'s is bargaining staff.; the union fight for B.U. only. Is the proposal from an equity standpoint, or is it there to head off a problem we are trying to avoid or solve? Both Jamie and Rick said it would be nice to know the root of the collective bargaining idea.

Ray asked what is the process to get something to this level? He looked at the agenda for that day. Therefore, he replied he does not think there is a written formal process. How it goes is a Council member can bring up a topic, and it becomes something that they want on the next agenda because it is important. Let us see what this or that organization has to say about it before moving forward--- there is no absolute motion. Next, the Clerk sends out a memo to the organization requesting their input and attendance.

Rick commented it is not a vote. Rather, we can send an email inviting, specifically Mayor Byrd. Jaimie replied that sending an email was okay. However, she wants E.R.B. to be cc'd on the email inviting them to participate.

Also, Sudhanshu commented that they can send an email back explaining their thoughts if they cannot attend, especially Mr. Byrd. However, he also said that once the conversation begins, they need to be sure to call to Mr. Byrd's memory that this will cause an increase in taxes every year.

Next, Ray asked Tim, when the F.O.P. did this before, did the City Council handle it? Or did it go into a referendum? He replied, he did not know, but he would find out. He would check into it to see if they decided to do it or did, they put it out to the voters. Either way, he will get back to them about it. He further explained that in the space of collective bargaining, the collective bargaining itself does not cause an increase in taxes. The raising of taxes is because collective bargaining can include a wage surge. When this happens, there is a tax rise. Additionally, Tim said that it can never be stopped once you start collective bargaining.

Lastly, Ric clarified the bargaining agreement for F.O.P.

- It was not a referendum.
- It was a bargain between the F.O.P. and the Council voted on it.
- It did not go to the public because they are a union.

Council J. Davis confirmed this, said Ric.

Term Limits:

Rick asked if there should be term limits for Council. And are there term limits for other municipalities? Ric stated the citizens rejected the idea. But he does not plan to be here for 40 years. Ray commented that the millennials are not big on volunteering for some reason. Tim replied that out of the eight municipalities that responded, only one of them has term limits; that is University Park.

Action Items:

C.R.A.B. recommends that the Council add the term limit idea as a survey question to the ballot to gauge a feeling about it from the public.

Do we know how many noncitizens are living in Greenbelt? Tim replied that they did not know this information. However, he could check in with the County and the State.

Following this, Ric asked Tim about what was happening in the other municipalities? Are they allowing noncitizens to vote? What are they doing regarding non-residents? Tim replied that in 2019 College Park started allowing non-resident voting. Ric replied that Palmer Park allows it too. Ric says that he and other colleagues believe that if the individual is a resident, they should be allowed to vote--- citizens or not. But then, Tim replied, the problem with this is the County keeps the records for resident voters. Greenbelt City gets the voter's roll from the County. They will not maintain a non-residents noncitizen roster. The administration and the City Clerk are responsible for maintaining the noncitizen roster. So, that is a burden. He said it would mean additional staff and monies in this area if we do.

Tim also said he could check with College Park and see their process for noncitizens and gather data regarding the advantages and disadvantages. So, it is certainly something he could check on and report back to them.

Further, have we ever had this on the Greenbelt Survey, said Rick? Tim says he does not believe they have ever asked the noncitizens to have the right to vote on a survey before. Nevertheless, he will review previous ballots to be sure. Then, let them know for certain.

Rick asked who manages the 16 and under list with Tim responding that the City Clerk and the Board of Elections manage the list. Should they invite them to share their insight? Ric believes they should get the public's input concerning this before going forward.

Ear to The Ground (What is C.R.A.B. hearing as community members?)

What is the role, and what is the right balance of public access? Jamie said she knows it makes the City richer and better, but where could agencies adjust this, especially C.R.A.B.? Hence, it is a fruitful discussion that is needed. —representative versus cooperative government.

Sudhanshu asked will the question of term limits be placed on a ballot or be sent directly to residents? Jamie replied that Tim would look at prior surveys--- data to see what the public has done or said in the past? Then, C.R.A.B. will discuss what to do, especially regarding term limits in future surveys. Tim also added that if C.R.A.B. does not want to wait two years, he could put a few of their questions in survey monkey on the website to get the public's input. He said he would be willing to do this for them.

Meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Submitted by

Mary Davisson, M.A.