

WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held Wednesday, October 5, 2011, for the purpose of discussing Economic Development.

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

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

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

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Aubrey Thagard, Assistant Deputy Chief Administrative Officer For Economic Development and Public Infrastructure, Prince George's County; H. Walter Townshend III, President and CEO Baltimore Washington Corridor Chamber; John Henry King, Economic Development Director, City of Bowie; Aaron Marcavitch, Anacostia Trails Heritage Area

The meeting began with introductions. Mayor Davis noted that commercial office vacancies were approaching 30%. She also mentioned retail vacancies at all three shopping centers. Mayor Davis commented on abandoned housing units.

*Aubrey Thagard
Prince George's County Office of Economic Development*

Mr. Thagard described the County's Economic Development staffing, organization and agencies. He gave a presentation to Council that identifies Prince George's County's Economic Development assets including Federal properties, work force education and compensation level, AAA bond rating, its strategic location, etc. He noted that 60% of County residents commute to work outside the County.

Mr. Thagard discussed their strategic assessment process. He noted a focus on addressing problems associated with the County's permit process. He stressed the interest in development surrounding Metro stations. He stated there may be an announcement related to the Greenbelt Metro development within the next 30-60 days.

Mr. Putens stressed the problems with the County permit process. Mr. Thagard responded that the County Executive was aware of this problem and that reforming the process was a priority and underway.

Mr. Jordan asked how the Office of Economic Development can help municipalities. Mr. Thagard responded that there were 16 agencies that touch economic development and he indicated they would work with municipalities. He also stated that the County could use the recently created Economic Development Fund to provide incentives for companies to relocate or remain in the County.

Mr. Herling stated that transportation was key to economic development and asked about transportation improvements. Mr. Thagard stated that east-west connections were essential and referenced the Purple Line.

*H. Walter Townsend, III
Baltimore Washington Corridor Chamber (BWCC)*

Mr. Townsend described the programs and services offered by BWCC. Mr. Jordan asked about the creation of the Howard County transit system and how this public private partnership was started. Mr. Townsend provided an overview and indicated it was largely the businesses that pushed for its creation. Mayor Davis referenced the need for workforce education.

*John Henry King
City of Bowie*

Mr. King offered to research databases to determine Greenbelt's office vacancy rate and retail vacancy issue. He noted that the City can invite the Economic Development Corporation to make a presentation to the City.

Mr. King suggested the City establish its own economic development priorities. He indicated that he often hears that WMATA is the hold up to transit oriented development, not the County. Mr. King suggested the City meet with property owners and their managing agents.

Long-term, Mr. King suggested that the City may want to consider a salaried position. He referenced the Greater Washington Initiative. Mr. King suggested the City meet with the Prince George's Financial Services Corporation (FSC). He mentioned the County Small Business Initiative and the University of Maryland Small Business Development Center. He also suggested Casey Wilson, consultant with the statewide small business development center as someone to talk with.

Mr. King stated that retail tenants are found differently. He suggested the City participate in International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC) activities. He noted that ICSC holds regional meetings at the Gaylord. He suggested the City come join the Prince George's team at this meeting in February. He also noted that the State Economic Development Corporation provides a Speakers Bureau consisting of their past Presidents.

Mr. Marcavitch briefly discussed ATHA's plans.

The meeting ended at 10:54p.m.

Respectfully Submitted

*David E. Moran
Assistant City Manager*