



WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL
Held Wednesday, January 26, 2005
For the purpose of holding a stakeholder meeting with representatives of the
County School Board

The meeting began at 7:35 p.m. in the Multipurpose Room of the Community Center.

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

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael P. McLaughlin, City Manager; Wendy Wexler, staff liaison to the Advisory Committee on Education; and Kathleen Gallagher, City Clerk.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Abby Crowley and José Morales, Prince George's County Board of Education; Mayor Cheye Calvo, Berwyn Heights; Leroy Tompkins, Chief Accountability Officer, William Greene, Jr., Chief of School Boundaries, Tony Liberatore, Chief Administrator for Supporting Services, and Robert Kuntz, Acting Director of Planning and Architectural Services, Prince George's County Schools; Lori Morris, County Councilmember Douglas J. J. Peters' Office; Eva Griffin and Raymond Peterson, Advisory Committee on Education; Natasha Brown, the Gazette.

Following introductions, Mayor Davis welcomed everyone and reviewed the purpose of the City Council stakeholder meetings.

Greenbelt Middle School

Mr. Morales distributed a 3-26-2004 memo from Mr. Kuntz giving a history of the Greenbelt Middle School (GMS) renovation project on the school system's Capital Improvement Program (CIP). Mr. Liberatore said it is now in the CIP for FY 2009 construction. Mayor Davis asked if any planning had been initiated. Mr. Liberatore said that since the \$1 million that was received from County Councilmember Peters was not enough to complete the planning, the money was being held. Mayor Davis said the City had asked to have the funding targeted toward repairs to the historic part of the structure if it was not adequate to complete a meaningful part of the planning. Mr. Putens had brought to the meeting a list of needed repairs provided by the principal. Mr. Liberatore said it was important to follow the existing work order process and that the lead should be taken by the principal in communicating the needs. Mr. Morales added that they could not respond if they did not know about the problems. Mr. Putens said his understanding was that many of these items have been in the work-order process for some time.

Mr. Roberts expressed dissatisfaction with the delay to FY09 for construction. He again stressed that the City Council had asked that the \$1 million be used for critical repairs

within the historic part of the facility if it was not adequate for planning. Ms. Mach also confirmed this. Mayor Davis added that while the renovation continued to be put off, the building continued to deteriorate. She said all the Council sees happening is waiting and more waiting.

Mr. Liberatore said they would look at the repair list and see what could be done out of current operation funds first. He said their direction from the County Council had been that the \$1 million was to be used for planning and that if that was not the intention, it would have to be revisited.

Mayor Calvo noted that the needs were evident at GMS even when he was a student there. He said the renovation keeps sliding back and is always a few years away, with the result that the historic portion becomes further endangered. He agreed with the City Council that FY09 is "incredibly inadequate," but he said his main concern was not so much the current delay but trying to discover how the continual delays had occurred and how to assure that a further delay would not occur. Mr. Liberatore responded that the Schools administration would be more than happy to have more funding from the County Council.

Mayor Calvo asked if there was anything in place to guaranty that the historic structure would in fact be preserved. Mr. Kuntz said the square footage for the part to be preserved has been delineated and that there are "strict guidelines" that govern it.

Ms. Mach said that when the City's Advisory Committee on Education (ACE) reviewed the plan, it suggested that the historic structure be used for administrative functions with the new part to be added to the back. She said subsequent plans had shown a structure with even less square footage than currently exists, which would not be workable. She said the discussion and the plans had been left in limbo. She said everyone wants the project to move forward but that at this point it is not clear what the project is and what kind of structure would be planned even if there were enough funding to do the planning.

Mayor Davis asked if an architect had identified any areas as being in imminent danger. Mr. Kuntz said nothing was considered to be that bad, although the building was being monitored unofficially and there was some concern with the gym area.

Mr. Herling said although there has been discussion of funding from AIMCO in conjunction with the renovation of Springhill Lake, he thinks it important that this funding not be assumed. Ms. Morris strongly agreed and said Mr. Peters' assumption is "no AIMCO" and that he is working to get the project moved up to the FY07 CIP. She said she believed it was because of his hope of getting it moved up that he had designated the \$1 million for planning. She noted state funding has been drastically cut back, and Mr. Liberatore said the County Council had stepped up to supply as much of the lost funding as it could. Ms. Morris said the County Council was engaging in forward-funding with the hope that the money would come back in a future year.

There was discussion of whether it would be advisable or not to have the elementary and middle schools at the same location or in the same building. Mr. Kuntz clarified that what had been under discussion was one divided building for elementary and middle. Mayor Calvo also noted in this regard that the GMS is a mixture of two districts.

AIMCO/Springhill Lake Elementary School

Mr. Morales and Dr. Crowley stressed that this topic is still being considered at the level of the CIP committee, that the School Board has not even discussed it yet, that the CIP committee has issues with the plan, that the board has not agreed to anything, and that the City would be involved prior to its coming to the full board. Mayor Davis responded that the City has not come to any agreement with them about anything either.

There was discussion of whether the higher density but mixed-use plan for the renovation would be likely to result in more or fewer school-aged children.

Mr. Herling asked about the proposal to have both the elementary school and the recreational center in the middle of the complex to increase access. Mr. Morales said the problem is that the county does not own land there. Mayor Davis commented that Council was not in agreement with that proposal.

Overcrowding and Boundary Issues

Mr. Greene pointed out that about 135 students had come to GMS on the "choice" program and that more could come. He said relief for the overcrowding at Berwyn Heights is on the agenda for next year and that since there is no room for temporaries there, this means moving students.

There was some discussion of the board's interaction with communities over boundary changes. Mayor Davis stressed a need for more community contact and for the board not to expect that people can always travel to Upper Marlboro for public hearings. The board members and staff said only so much interaction with the public on these decisions was feasible, given the number of schools involved and the size of the county.

Ms. Mach and Mayor Calvo both stressed a need for better information on the school administration Web site as one way for communities to make better decisions and provide feedback. Ms. Mach said they need maps and information on boundaries that goes beyond information for a specific residence address. Mayor Calvo said enrollment data were not as good as they should be. Mr. Greene said a problem there is that enrollments are not certified by the state until January. He added that there is information that staff can share informally that it cannot put on the Web site prematurely.

DuVal Renovation and Expansion: Renovation of classrooms is occurring now. The addition will be started soon. Dr. Crowley said students will be sent from Bowie, not from Roosevelt, to DuVal.

Pre-Employment Background Checks: Dr. Crowley said these are thorough and that turn-around time has greatly improved. Where there is a problem, it is that there is no notification to the school system of subsequent events or charges. She said they are concerned about this, and the board's personnel committee is to discuss it.

Clearing of Snow on Sidewalks: Mayor Davis said she had received a complaint regarding students walking in the street on Greenbelt Road to get to Eleanor Roosevelt, now that buses did not pick up those within two-miles of the school. Since it was not clear exactly where this was occurring, it was uncertain who owned the adjacent property and thus should be clearing the walks.

Public Hearings: Dr. Griffin asked if there could be more response or dialogue at public hearings. Dr. Crowley said their public is simply too large for this type of interaction. She said that although the board does not respond to public comment, it is seriously considered, however, and is frequently reflected in the ultimate results.

Other Business

Mr. McLaughlin asked for Council guidance on approval of applications from the Friends of the New Deal Café (FONDCA) for permits for this year's outdoor concerts, given the complaints about noise from last year. Council suggested that all outdoor music should end by 10 p.m.

Ms. Gallagher gave a reminder that the deadline for lower registration rates for the Congressional City conference is the end of next week.

Mayor Davis said she had received an e-mail from a representative of CCRIC indicating there was surveying going on at Greenbelt Station. Mr. McLaughlin said the City would monitor it. Mayor Davis also noted that the Academy 6 section of the movie theater at Beltway Plaza had closed; with PetsMart having vacated, that leaves a lot of space at that end of the mall.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Gallagher

City Clerk