



**BUDGET WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held Wednesday, April 21, 2004**, for the purpose of reviewing the Recreation Department sections of the FY 2005 budget.

Mayor Davis called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m. It was held in the Multipurpose Room of the Community Center.

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

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael McLaughlin, City Manager; Jeff Williams, Deirdre Allen, Finance; Hank Irving, Joe McNeal, Julie McHale, George Rogala, Di Quynn-Reno, Karen Haseley, Nicole DeWald, Greg Varda, and Nancy Wilmot, Recreation; and Kathleen Gallagher, City Clerk.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Mary Geiger, Christopher Husker, Kelly Ivy, Clement Lau, and Marc Siegel, Park & Recreation Advisory Board; Sheldon Goldberg, Greenbelt East Advisory Committee; and Thomas X. White, Greenbelt News Review.

Mr. Irving first thanked the advisory boards with whom Recreation staff serve as liaisons, including the Park & Recreation Advisory Board, the Arts Advisory Board, the Senior Citizen Advisory Committee, and the Youth Advisory Committee, as well as the other volunteers who work with the department. A slide show was presented reviewing the department's accomplishments, issues and services. Items raised by Council included the following:

GC12 Facilities Supervisor Position: Mayor Davis asked what the cost of adding this position would be and was told about \$50,000.

Benefits for Non-Classified Staff: Mr. McLaughlin said the cost of including this would be about \$100,000. Mr. Putens asked for clarification on whether that meant non-classified staff or previously non-classified staff who would be classified. Mr. McNeal said it was the former. Mr. Putens asked if there was a way to phase these benefits in. Mr. McLaughlin responded that he had not seen a way to do a phase-in, and he clarified that the cut-off was people who worked at least 20 hours per week.

Recreation Department's Employee Recognition Program: Mr. Putens asked why this was not done citywide. Mr. McLaughlin said it was, but some departments have also initiated their own in-house programs. Mr. McNeal added that Recreation has so many non-classified employees that the criteria for recognition in the department's program are different. Ms. Mach said she was not altogether comfortable with the part of the recognition program that involved acknowledgment of sponsors. Ms. McHale said the purpose was to recognize those sponsors who have supported City activities on an ongoing basis.

Community Center Windows: In response to a question from Mr. Roberts, Mr. McNeal said the City does plan to redo three to five windows at a time in the Community Center, in order to get reduced prices, but he noted that the problem with doing too many at once is that there is a down-time when users will be displaced and services will be interrupted.

GAFC Rates: Regarding the proposed increase in daily resident rates, Mr. Rogala said these have not been increased in a decade. Mr. McLaughlin added that the pass fees, on the other hand, have been increased on a regular basis.

PoolPaks: Mayor Davis commented that the replacement of the PoolPaks was not in the budget. Mr. McLaughlin replied this item is in the Building Capital Reserve Fund for next year, but it is a big-ticket item that may require financing. He said further study would be given to it this year.

Facilities: Mayor Davis praised the cleanliness and appearance of the buildings, and Mr. McNeal said the credit for that should be given to Public Works.

GAFC Cost-Recovery: There was discussion of 70% as being the target that recent Councils had considered acceptable for recovering expenses at the Aquatic and Fitness Center.

Room Rental Charges: Mr. Putens suggested consideration of beginning to charge some civic groups, e.g., homeowner associations, a nominal fee for use of meeting rooms. He said many homeowner associations have budgets that can be used for such purposes. Mayor Davis and Mr. Roberts both expressed concern over where the line would be drawn, since they would not wish to see smaller groups with no budgets be affected. Ms. Mach suggested surveying the users. Mayor Davis and Mr. Roberts reiterated that this was not a high priority item for them. In response to a question from Mr. McLaughlin, there was agreement that further information on this was not needed prior to budget adoption.

Playing Fields: Mr. Roberts asked about the City's access to fields at schools, especially Greenbelt Middle. Mr. Varda said the rules on this seemed to have changed, with the result that City teams had no time at the Middle School last year. He said the work on the roof at the school also had some impact. Mayor Davis asked about the loss of the adult soccer league. Mr. Varda said the fields were bad, and the teams went elsewhere.

Windows Project and Artists-in-Residence: After praising the arts programs overall, Mr. Putens asked what the effect on the artists-in-residence would be when the windows in those rooms were renovated. Ms. DeWald said a plan for pro-rating the rent was already under discussion. She said the artists were aware of what was coming and that, although it would be disruptive, everyone understood it would have significant long-term benefits.

Cost of Stage Funding & Backdrop: Ms. Mach asked the cost of the stage funding that is not included in the budget. Ms. DeWald said \$8,000-\$10,000. She also asked whether the plan to cover blackboards to create more wall-space was consistent with the historic designation. Ms. DeWald said the easement did not cover this floor of the building but that, regardless, the covering would be temporary. Mayor Davis asked if there was an

estimate for the stage backdrop. Ms. DeWald said there was not, since the best way to do it, including whether to do something portable that could even be used out of doors, was still under discussion.

Arts Education Programs: Mr. White asked about arts education programs for children. He said he rarely sees any on the roster in the Community Center and that his impression is that there appears to be a "paucity" of programs for children. He said he rarely sees children in the building. There was discussion of how much discrepancy there was between programs offered in the departmental brochure and those that were sufficiently enrolled to be held. He asked to receive a listing of classes that were actually delivered for children. Mr. McLaughlin said this could be provided.

Park Rangers: In response to a question from Ms. Mach, Mr. Irving described the role of the Park Rangers. He said there were usually only four on staff and that they provide extra eyes and ears for surveillance, but not enforcement, and they also fulfill a public relations function by greeting people at City parks.

New Deal Café: Mayor Davis asked about payment for use of the Community Center kitchen by the New Deal Café. Ms. Quynn-Reno said the charge is \$5/hour, and they are paying only \$10/month. Mayor Davis expressed concern that the City is effectively subsidizing them. Council encouraged a renegotiation of the terms for the Café's repayment of the money it owes the City.

#### Other Business

Mr. Roberts reported that the Transportation Planning Board's vote on the Inter-County Connector went in favor of reopening study of the project.

Mr. Putens cited a recent article regarding enforcement against panhandling on Route 1 and asked why the City could not practice similar enforcement. Ms. Mach agreed, saying there are public safety concerns.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:15 p.m.  
Respectfully submitted,  
Kathleen Gallagher  
City Clerk