



WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held Wednesday, June 18, 2003, for the purpose of receiving a report on the Greenbelt Lake Watershed Assessment.

Mayor Davis started the meeting at 8:05 p.m. It was held in the Multipurpose Room of the Community Center.

PRESENT WERE: Council members Rodney M. Roberts and Thomas X. White, and Mayor Judith F. Davis. Councilmember Edward V. J. Putens arrived at 9:20 p.m.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael P. McLaughlin, City Manager; Terri Hruby, Senior Community Planner; Bill Phelan, Assistant Director, Public Works; Hank Irving, Director, Recreation; and Kathleen Gallagher, City Clerk.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Mark Burchick, Environmental Systems Analysis, Inc. (ESA); Lola Skolnik, Marc Siegel, Mary Geiger, Kelly Ivy, Paul Sabol, Clement Lau, Larry Hilliard, Erica Linden, and Richard T. Ransom, Park & Recreation Advisory Board; residents John Fike, Tonia R. Fike, Richard Loutsch, Molly Lester, Mary Kingsley, Roger Kingsley; Al Geiger, Greenbelt News Review; and others.

Following introductions, Mayor Davis announced that tonight Mr. Burchick would present ESA's assessment of the Greenbelt Lake Watershed. She said that concerns had been raised regarding the quality of the lake water and Council had expanded the range of the investigation to include the streams feeding into the lake. She thanked the members of the Park & Recreation Advisory Board (PRAB) for joining the meeting.

Mr. Burchick said ESA had submitted two documents on the study: the Greenbelt Lake Watershed Assessment and the Greenbelt Lake Wildlife Management Plan. He described the Rapid Stream Assessment Technique (RSAT), the methodology they used for analyzing such measures as channel stability, channel scouring/sediment deposition, physical in-stream habitat, water quality, riparian habitat conditions, aesthetics, and remoteness. He then described the three sub-watersheds they identified as feeding Greenbelt Lake: Lakewood/Woodland Hills (LWWH); Braden Field/Roosevelt Center (BRC, with its own two sub-watersheds, the Firehouse and the Braden tennis courts streams); and Charlestowne North (CN).

Mr. Burchick described the stability of the various streams. Looking at pollutants, he said test results showed "there is elevated everything everywhere." He gave examples of organic and inorganic pollutants and explained the former are best treated by plant uptake and the latter by sediment and soil binding. In their tests, the highest inorganics (oil, grease, metals) came from the BRC stream, because of the Roosevelt Center parking lots; the highest organics came from Lakewood/Woodland Hills. Mayor Davis asked if a sanitary leak could be causing the high fecal coli form levels in the LWWH stream. Mr. Burchick said that could well be the case, but he stressed all ESA's readings were one-time events, so that further testing would be required to see if any specific

findings were anomalies. In response to a question from Mr. White, he said there was a test that would determine if it was human or animal waste. He recommended doing some further testing to narrow the question down and then presenting it to WSSC if it appeared to be their problem to fix.

Regarding the inorganics, Mr. Burchick gave information on an oil and grit separator that could be buried in the parking lot behind the Coop to remove a significant amount of the pollutants coming from Roosevelt Center. In response to questions from Mr. White and Mr. Phelan, he confirmed the separator would catch copper and that the captured materials could be placed in a regular dump. Later in the meeting, Mr. Ivy asked what the cost of the separator was and whether this would help the condition/appearance of the east forebay. Mr. Burchick said it would and that the machines cost about \$35,000 and required a fair amount of labor but little maintenance.

Mr. Burchick said he knew the Canada geese were a sensitive topic but that the fact is that migratory geese are good and resident geese are bad. He said they had estimated at least 2,000 geese were on the lake at one point in their survey and that the net result is about 21 tons per year of "goose poop" going into the lake. He described four methods of goose management: flightless molt capture, which requires a federal permit to transport the geese; egg addling, which also requires a federal permit; use of a barrier such as Kevlar fencing; and harassment techniques, such as dogs or a laser gun he demonstrated.

Mr. Burchick also reviewed a list of suggestions about the lake park made by ESA staffers who were not previously familiar with the area. One item that received some discussion was to undertake selective timber thinning to improve the basal area of young hardwood stands while managing invasive species in the adjacent woodlands. Mr. Roberts objected to this suggestion, and Mr. White agreed. Mr. Burchick said although this concluded his formal presentation, much more detail could be found in the written reports.

Mayor Davis mentioned residents' complaints about algae. Mr. Phelan said the lake had no algae blooms last year; rather, it had water meal, which was mistaken for algae but which is beneficial. The Mayor suggested the City write articles and otherwise educate the public so people can tell what is beneficial and what is not.

Residents in attendance commented, however, that even if it is beneficial, it is still a major change on the lake since it did not used to be there.

A resident from the Charlestowne end of the lake asked how well the forebays were working. Mr. Burchick said they were working but were "undersized and overtaxed." He noted the original plan had intended them to be larger. When Mr. White commented that of the sub-watersheds evaluated, the "CN" one was nonetheless rated best, the resident responded, "That doesn't make it good," and Mr. Burchick agreed that even CN was in excess of desirable standards. He added, however, that this is consistent with the condition of all the lakes in the region.

Mr. Roberts said he wanted to hear solutions not to the bottom-line problems of the lake but to the problems of the streams feeding into the lake. He also asked if the City should be posting warning signs regarding consumption of fish caught in the lake.

Replying to Mr. Roberts, Mr. Burchick said ESA was told by consultants at the University of Maryland that the bass, blue gills, crappies, and pickerel should be safe, but warnings would be appropriate regarding the bottom-feeders, which are the carp and catfish. Mr. Roberts suggested providing information on how to clean fish to reduce the pollutants consumed. Mr. Phelan asked about a "fish and release" policy, but Mr. Burchick said he did not think that was doable.

Regarding the condition of the sub-watershed streams, he said they are sterile, as they are throughout Prince George's County. He said although "the numbers" can be brought down, they cannot be brought down enough to stop algae blooms, which will always be a problem. He said this is a reality of urban lakes.

On a number of occasions, Mr. Burchick cautioned that under their agreement with the City, ESA had taken single readings for many measures and that multiple readings should be acquired for reliable information on specific parameters.

Mr. White asked how the City should proceed with this subject. Ms. Hruby said that, in addition to PRAB, the reports were being given to the Recycling & Environment Advisory Committee and the Advisory Planning Board for review. She added that staff has Mr. Burchick's slide presentation on a CD so that it can be shared with the advisory groups. She clarified that ESA has completed the work for which the City contracted.

A resident said the forebays should be cleaned and maintained by the City, since a filter only works if it is kept clean.

Mr. Burchick said the priorities he would recommend would be improving the condition of the highly eroded part of the channel identified as Greenhill (GH-1) and removing the resident geese. This part of the stream, in the area of Hillside, was identified as being GHI property.

The Mayor asked if there were low-cost items that could be taken care of promptly. Ms. Hruby suggested doing the fecal coli form tests. Mr. Phelan said the staff could list some of the aesthetic items but that he thought the real stream and lake issues would likely come with a high price tag.

Mr. Roberts questioned the point Mr. Burchick made earlier regarding the sterility of all the streams in the county. He said the stream near Hillside, identified as being in such poor condition, was teeming with life until the concrete swale was put in. Mr. Burchick responded that at this point Greenbelt Lake and its sub-watersheds are "a genetic island" that is no longer connected to Indian Creek. He said the "genetic movement corridors are gone" and cannot be reconnected because of the construction of Kenilworth Avenue and the beltway. Discussion of the Indian Creek – Greenbelt Lake connections continued.

Council thanked Mr. Burchick for his report. This part of the meeting ended at 10:05 p.m.

Other Business: The Mayor ascertained who would be attending the retirement event on Friday night. She updated Council on a College Park zoning issue that is about to go to court. She said she had attended a recent personal safety workshop conducted at Greenbriar by George Mathews, at which it was apparent that residents are becoming increasingly alarmed about safety in Greenbelt East. She added that complaints about dispatchers and police response have lessened. Council agreed to continue with an executive session on personnel matters.

The meeting ended at 10:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathleen Gallagher
City Clerk