



WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held Wednesday, March 12, 2003, for the purpose of holding a stakeholder meeting with the County Planning Board.

Mayor Davis started the meeting at 8:07 p.m. It was held in the Multipurpose Room of the Community Center.

PRESENT WERE: Council members Rodney M. Roberts, Alan Turnbull, Thomas X. White, and Mayor Judith F. Davis.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael P. McLaughlin, City Manager; Celia Craze, Director, and Kristen Ward, Community Planner, Planning and Community Development; Joe McNeal, Assistant Director, Recreation; David E. Moran, Assistant to the City Manager; and Kathleen Gallagher, City Clerk.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Elizabeth M. Hewlett, Chairman, William M. Eley, Jr., Vice Chairman, and Albert C. Scott, Board Member, Prince George's County Planning Board; Adrian Gardner, General Counsel, Fern Piret, Director of Planning, Marye Wells-Harley, Director of Parks & Recreation, Frances Guertin, Administrator, Andrea Davey, Public Affairs Officer, Gary Wagner, Planning Department, and Joe O'Neill, Northern Area, M-NCPPC; Sheldon Goldberg, Advisory Planning Board; and Judy Bell, Greenbelt News Review.

Following introductions, Mayor Davis described the purpose of the City's stakeholder meetings. She thanked the Planning Board for coming, noting that it had been a long time since such a meeting had been held between the Board and Council and that she thought communication had been better between the two groups recently. Ms. Hewlett said the Board was pleased to be invited and agreed that this would provide a good opportunity to talk about any issues. She added she had never felt the relationship between the Board and Council to be a negative one but that, as a quasi-judicial body, the Board cannot always do what people want.

Greenbelt Station

Mayor Davis gave a brief overview of the City's reservations about the plans previously submitted for Greenbelt Station, including the environmental concerns, increased traffic on City streets, the proposed beltway interchange, and the absence of anything meeting the City's definitions of mixed-use development or transit-oriented development. She also commented that the City has heard revised plans have been submitted. Mr. White added that the City's had a positive experience with the sector planning process and was dismayed to see that subverted by the developers' zoning subtext amendment. He said the City invested a great deal in the plan only to have it be ignored, and he attributed the City's skepticism about the current process at least in part to that disillusionment.

Ms. Hewlett responded that they do take the process seriously. They are attempting to get more input from the community than they used to and to notify interested parties in time for them to be able to respond. She reiterated that it is nevertheless the case that when there are different interests, everyone cannot win all the time. On this subject, Dr. Piret added later in the meeting that staff reports are now being published to the Web site promptly, and a staff member is being assigned as a liaison to each municipality. She said she would let Ms. Craze know who had been assigned to Greenbelt.

Dr. Piret said her office had not yet seen the revised plans. They are being briefed next week by the State Highway Administration project manager on plans for the interchange. She added that they share the definition the Mayor described of "mixed use."

Mr. Roberts added two more concerns with Greenbelt Station: that it would damage existing shopping facilities, particularly Beltway Plaza, and that the supposedly "upscale" development would simply duplicate shopping available elsewhere. He stressed that any development should be targeted at meeting local, not just regional, needs.

Mr. Turnbull stated that he thought it was important for the Board to understand that Greenbelt is very proud of its early planning history but has suffered "a history of incremental degradation," only some of which has been self-inflicted. He said even Greenbelt's most serious environmentalists have accepted that there will be development at the Metro Station, but the City wants good development and good planning.

Mr. White added that WMATA's role in this process had left much to be desired as well, since WMATA had acted as if it was a private developer. Dr. Piret suggested passing those concerns along to the county's new representative on the WMATA board (Marcell Solomon).

Goddard Master Plan

Council said one item of concern for both Greenbelt and Prince George's County is that if Goddard succeeds in bringing its private contractors onto the campus as planned, then there is potential for significant impact on both the commercial real estate market and on the tax base. Mayor Davis added that Goddard receives county services, including the Fire Department. Dr. Piret said they had been given the impression that Goddard did not intend to move in that direction for another 10-20 years, but that NASA should be approached about making payments in lieu of taxes. Mr. Roberts responded that Council did not get the impression that they plan to wait 10-20 years.

Enabling Planning & Zoning Authority

The Mayor explained there is now a modified bill pending. She said the City has appreciated the work of Planning Board but thinks this oversight is no longer necessary. She said there is an equity issue involved: why does everyone else have this authority but not Prince George's County? Ms. Craze added that the items for which the

municipalities would gain authority under this bill are all appealable to the District Council.

Ms. Hewlett said although there is a philosophical disagreement between the Board and the City Council on this issue, she thought there might be room for the incremental authority if properly framed. She said she did not think the Board and Council were too far apart on the increment proposed. She said she understands that Greenbelt feels as though it is being treated like a child but that there is still an argument to be made for regional oversight and compatibility. Mr. Roberts asked why any cities in Maryland have zoning authority, if regional oversight is so effective. He said he thought a legal issue was involved in treating cities so differently from one another.

Mr. Gardner said the driving force originally was that in the D.C. area, there was federal money available for parkland; the State of Maryland wanted to be sure it got its share, and it wanted to tie development and parkland. He said Prince George's is the only county with 27 municipalities, which places it in a unique situation. He stressed that the municipalities already have a role in all the significant stages of review. He said even with the modified bill, there are potential problems in "taking little pieces" out of this process and in having a city sit in quasi-judicial capacity at the end of a process. He also noted the sector planning process, which Greenbelt thought had worked well, was a good example of a regional process involving three cities. He said although he recognized that this is "an attractive home rule issue," the point is not whether cities have the capacity to do it; rather, philosophically, they believe in the county-wide structure, even if there is room for improvement.

Ms. Hewlett again said that "we are not far apart" on the increment under consideration.

Mr. White stressed to Mr. Gardner that there was not a request to change the rules and that any decision made by a municipality would be appealable to the District Council. Mr. Gardner responded that this in itself created problems because certain things not currently appealable to the District Council would become so under this bill.

Mr. Roberts said the problem he saw was not with the board itself but with the "political end game" that was played.

Funding for Programs

Ms. Hewlett said they had no idea where the information had come from that M-NCPPC was considering phasing out its payments to municipalities over a three-year period. She said this is untrue, and "the money is all still in the budget." She expressed concern that the City had copied its letter of complaint to all its elected representatives. She added that M-NCPPC does provide other services to the City and that it is not accurate to imply that the annual \$79,000 is the only benefit the City receives. She said if the City hears information of this sort in the future, someone should call her for immediate clarification. Mayor Davis said that staff would look into it and that if the information was wrong, the City would correct it and get it out to those who had been copied before. She said if the City's information was wrong, she apologized.

Technical Issues

Regarding possible revision to the woodlands ordinance, Mayor Davis said the recent experience with Golden Triangle had suggested that developers have too much leeway with off-site mitigation. The City recognizes that this leeway is currently allowed under the law but wonders if some tightening of the law would be feasible. Dr. Piret said there are some items pending for updating in the ordinance and that this could possibly be added. She said she would have her staff take a look at it and would consult with Ms. Craze on it.

Regarding standards for parking spaces and parking lots, Dr. Piret said they could look at this as well. In terms of the Golden Triangle case, she said it was interesting that usually they are told by applicants that Park & Planning requires too much parking, not, as this applicant said, too little. Mr. Turnbull clarified that, with regard to parking lot plans, the City was concerned with both pervious surfaces and with the aesthetic issues.

Mayor Davis asked if it would be possible to get stronger zoning enforcement assistance when people fall out of compliance with their original site or landscape plans, the recent problems with the Exxon station at Greenbelt and Hanover being the prime example. Dr. Piret said the Department of Environmental Resources has authority for zoning enforcement; however, they operate on a basis of responding to complaints.

Ms. Hewlett thanked Council for initiating this meeting, and Council thanked the Planning Board and staff members for coming.

The stakeholder meeting was completed at about 10:05 p.m.

Other Business

It was agreed to defer the executive session scheduled for tonight since Mr. Putens was not available.

Mr. Moran said the Bi-County Committee had not voted on the modified zoning bill yesterday because of other items. Mayor Davis said Delegate Gaines now believes there are enough votes even without Delegate Ross's vote.

The meeting ended at 10:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Gallagher
City Clerk