



REGULAR MEETING OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held March 24, 2003.

Mayor Davis called the meeting to order at 8:01 p.m.

ROLL CALL was answered by Councilmembers Edward V. J. Putens, Rodney M. Roberts, Alan Turnbull, Thomas X. White, and Mayor Judith F. Davis.

ALSO PRESENT were Michael P. McLaughlin, City Manager; Robert A. Manzi, City Solicitor; and Kathleen Gallagher, City Clerk.

Mayor Davis asked for a moment of silence in memory of former resident Jeffrey R. Stevens. She also asked that people keep in their hearts the nation's military servicemen and women in Iraq and their families, as well as the City's own front-line police and fire personnel. She then led the pledge of allegiance to the flag.

CONSENT AGENDA: It was moved by Mr. Turnbull and seconded by Mr. Putens that the consent agenda be approved as presented. The motion passed 5-0.

Council thereby took the following actions:

MINUTES

- Work Session, March 5, 2003
- Mid-Term Legislation Dinner, March 6, 2003
- Regular Meeting, March 10, 2003
- Work Session, March 12, 2003
- Interview, March 19, 2003

Approved as presented.

APPOINTMENT TO ADVISORY GROUP: Council appointed Esther Herold to the Senior Citizens Advisory Committee.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: Mayor Davis asked to add an item to the agenda as #16 to discuss several bills pending in the legislature, on which information had been distributed. Mr. Turnbull moved approval of the agenda with that amendment. Mr. White seconded the motion. The motion passed 5-0.

PRESENTATIONS

Distinguished Budget Presentation Award: Mr. McLaughlin accepted the Government Finance Officers Association's Distinguished Budget Presentation Award from the Mayor on behalf of the Finance Department. This award for the FY 2003 budget marks the 15th consecutive year the City has received it. Mr. McLaughlin acknowledged the contributions of Jeffrey Williams, City Treasurer, David Moran, Assistant to the City Manager, Beverly Palau, Public Information and Communications Coordinator, and Anne Marie Belton, Executive Associate.

City Manager's Proposed FY 2004 Budget: The City Manager presented his FY 2004 proposed budget to the City Council. Mayor Davis commented that, as had been anticipated, this would be a difficult year for municipal budgeting. She asked if Council had any general questions. Mr. White asked for clarification on how the City would proceed with dealing with the increased costs for the LEOPS program. Mr. McLaughlin said staff would be meeting with the state to find out more about why this had happened and whether there were alternatives to pursue. Since the state's terms for paying the cost difference are not attractive, the City will also look into financing the amount and paying the state up front.

Mr. Turnbull asked the source of the one FTE Mr. McLaughlin had mentioned cutting and was told it was the police cadet position that had been approved for FY 03 but had never been filled.

Noting Council had in the past sometimes been "stalked" by wish lists from departments at budget work sessions, Mayor Davis asked the City Manager if any such lists should be anticipated this year. He promised no wish lists would stalk Council this year, with the exception of the need he himself would identify for additional staff in a number of areas of City government.

There was some discussion of the impact of the cutting of state highway funding this year and the impact of a possible reduction in funding in the COPS program.

In response to a request from Mr. White for an analysis of items the Manager had considered cutting but left in the budget, Mr. McLaughlin pointed out there was a list in Council's budget books that included this as well as other categories of items considered. He said he would provide analysis of this information to Council.

Mr. White also asked for further explanation of the suggestion to raise the City's cap on assessments. Mr. McLaughlin explained that a 10% per annum cap on assessments is the maximum allowed by state law; however, at the time the county reduced its cap to 3% in the early 1990s, the City reduced its own cap to 5%. Since the City's base has not risen much over the last six years or so, there has been little practical impact of that action to date, but the City should perhaps reevaluate the cap now in the light of a new round of assessments and a likely increase in the base.

The Mayor announced that there would be numerous budget work sessions and encouraged public participation, especially suggestions from anyone who felt the budget should be cut in lieu of raising taxes and who could identify significant ways to do that. She said the reductions in funding at federal and state levels, combined with the limitations imposed at the county level by TRIM, meant that the burden of increasing revenues would be concentrated on the municipal level.

PETITIONS AND REQUESTS: Sheldon Goldberg, 7848 Jacobs Drive, reported on his attempt to get information from Comcast on either Turner Classic Movies, which is not on the county's line-up, or on the package for major league baseball, which is on their line-up but which they have no subscription information available for. Council commiserated and encouraged residents to continue to make their preferences known to Comcast.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Mr. White reported on several trips to Annapolis with staff to testify on pending legislation: including, the Laurel bill for a local food and beverage tax, the CNG fast-fill station, and the Springhill Lake Recreation Center bond bill.

Mayor Davis reported on attending the Women's History Month luncheon; the Greenbelt Fire Department banquet, at which the City was presented a replica of the Ground Zero firefighters, in thanks for the City's efforts to retain its paid county firefighters; and career presentations for the 4th and 6th grades at Springhill Lake Elementary School. She announced she would be attending the ceremony at which Virginia Beauchamp would, with others, be inducted into the Maryland Women's Hall of Fame. She said this year a Springhill Lake Elementary School student, Mohammed Gir, was the county winner of the Maryland Municipal League's "If I Were Mayor" contest. He will receive his award plaque during the Municipal Government Week ceremony at the State House on April 21. The Mayor also announced an April 30 deadline for applications for scholarships from the Prince George's County Municipal Association. This year, eligibility is limited to undergraduate students who are residents of municipalities in the county.

LEGISLATION

A Resolution to Negotiate the Purchase of a Survey of the Southern Boundary of Attick Park from Greenhorne and O'Mara of Greenbelt, Maryland

Mayor Davis read the agenda comments. Mr. White introduced the resolution for first reading.

GREENBELT STATION AND METRO ACCESS PROJECTS: The Mayor read the agenda comments. Celia Craze, Director, Planning and Community Development, described a briefing given to the County Council by the State Highway Administration on the beltway ramps. She said Councilman Peters had argued very strongly that the City be given an opportunity to comment on this proposal, and the draft letter before City Council is a response to that. She said she believed County Council would ultimately approve the plan but that at least the City was being brought into the discussion. Mayor Davis noted a concern expressed by the Citizens to Conserve and Restore Indian Creek (CCRIC) that they had not been able to comment. Ric Santos, Legislative Aide to Councilman Peters, said this was a public meeting. Doug Love, 3D Plateau Place, commented on the dissatisfaction of some of the participants on the focus group on the beltway interchange project, who were in favor of the no-build option but did not have the opportunity to complete their work. It was agreed that the City would send a copy of its letter to Pat Blankenship, president of CCRIC.

Council made extensive changes to the draft letter after detailed discussion. Several points that came up included a need to stress that building the ramps would be a government subsidy of a private developer and that there had never been a need identified by either the state or WMATA for a full interchange to serve the metro station alone. This need was identified only in the context of commercial development. James Giese, 20 Maplewood Court, former City Manager, said that initially the City Council supported a full interchange but it was rejected by the state because its proximity to the Kenilworth exist meant it did not meet federal interstate standards. Lowell Owens, 119 Northway, and Barry Schlesinger, 155 Westway, also commented on the standards for ramps.

Since Sandy Gallagher, representing Metroland Developers, said it would not affect their plans if Council did not hold its work session to review the new plans until late May, it was agreed the work session could remain scheduled for May 28.

It was moved by Mr. Roberts and seconded by Mr. White that the letter to County Councilmember Douglas Peters be approved as amended but that staff be directed to send out a revised draft to Council at the end of the week. The motion passed 5-0.

LETTER TO COMCAST ON RECENT CHANGES: The Mayor read the agenda comments. Ms. Palau explained that this letter would be sent by the participating groups. Mr. White asked that the last sentence be corrected to clarify that the Baltimore stations are currently on only the expanded basic line-up, not the basic. It was directed that Councilman Peters be copied on this letter at his request. Mr. Turnbull made a motion to approve the draft letter and authorize the Mayor to sign it. Mr. Roberts seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

I-NET COMMITTEE BYLAWS: Mayor Davis read the agenda comments, and Ms. Palau summarized the information. Mr. McLaughlin said the issue of county government's participation may change with the new administration, but in the meantime it is necessary for the other participants to continue to develop a structure without the county. It was moved by Mr. Putens and seconded by Mr. White that Council approve the bylaws and approve the City's continued participation in the I-Net Committee. The motion passed 5-0.

PENDING STATE LEGISLATION – HBs 982, 370 and 642

House Bill 982 – Admission and Amusement Tax: The Maryland Municipal League requested that the members of the Prince George's County Municipal Association support this bill. It was moved by Mr. White and seconded by Mr. Putens that Council support HB 982 and communicate that support to its state delegation. The motion passed 5-0.

House Bill 370 – Electricity Regulation: This bill would require the development of a renewable energy standard, a Clean Energy Fund, and a clean energy credit trading system. It was noted that the Maryland Municipal League had taken no position on this bill. It was moved by Mr. Roberts and seconded by Mr. Turnbull that Council support HB 370 and communicate that support to the City's state delegation. The motion passed 5-0.

House Bill 642 – Increased Littering Fines: The bill would increase Litter Control Law monetary penalties in several categories. It was moved by Mr. Turnbull and seconded by Mr. Roberts that Council support HB 642 and communicate that support to the City's state delegation. The motion passed 5-0.

MEETINGS: Council decided it would be helpful to be briefed by staff on the revised plans for Greenbelt Station sometime prior to the work session on May 28. It was agreed to hold the briefing following the budget work session with the Fraternal Order of Police on May 5.

ADJOURNMENT: A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Turnbull and seconded by Mr. Putens. The motion carried 5-0. The Mayor adjourned the regular meeting of March 24, 2003, at 10:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Gallagher
City Clerk

"I hereby certify that the above and foregoing is a true and correct report of the regular meeting of the City Council of Greenbelt, Maryland, held March 24, 2003.@

Judith F. Davis, Mayor