



BUDGET WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held Monday, May 19, 2003, for the purpose of conducting a final review of the changes proposed to the FY 2004 budget.

Mayor Davis started the meeting at about 8:05 p.m. It was held in the Council Room of the Municipal Building.

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

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael P. McLaughlin, City Manager; Jeff Williams, City Treasurer; David E. Moran, Assistant to the City Manager; Deirdre Allen, Finance; Kenny Hall, Carolyn Clemens, and Bill Phelan, Public Works; Chief Jim Craze, Lt. Dan O'Neil, Tom Kemp, and Michael Craddock, and Sgt. Jim Parker, Police Department; Julie McHale and Joe McNeal, Recreation Department; Celia W. Craze, Planning & Community Development; and Kathleen Gallagher, City Clerk.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Sheldon Goldberg and Molly Lester.

Other Business: Mayor Davis reminded everyone that the American Legion's Memorial Day ceremony will be at 10 a.m. on Monday, May 26, at Roosevelt Center and that Cpl. Doug Sappington's retirement event will be tomorrow evening. Mr. McLaughlin also noted the publicity given to the City's award-winning Pet Expo in the current issue of the Maryland Municipal League's magazine.

Citizen Comments to Council: Mayor Davis asked if any members of Council had received any comments on the budget from citizens. Mr. Turnbull and Mr. Roberts said they had not. Mr. White and Mr. Putens said they had received little comment and that was to the effect that if a tax increase was necessary, "so be it." The Mayor said the only person she heard from took a stand against funding the skateboard park, which she deemed a very large expense to benefit a very small number of people, many of whom were likely not even to be residents.

The pending budget changes were discussed for the most part following the order of a memo from Mr. McLaughlin dated April 10, 2003, with other items brought in from other sources.

Revenues: In response to a query from the Mayor, Mr. McLaughlin said there was no more news on revenues. The City anticipates ending FY 03 about as forecasted. Although the Governor has signed some bills, he still has until May 27 to take actions that could impact local budgets. There was discussion of whether the Governor had the authority to adjust the formula for distribution of state income taxes, as has been suggested, or whether that would require legislation. Were this to happen as projected, the loss in revenue to Greenbelt would be about \$18,000. It was agreed to assume the \$12,000 reduction in state police aid would occur.

There was then discussion of a number of suggestions from the Recreation Department to cut costs or enhance revenues, per a May 16, 2003, memo from Mr. McNeal. A majority of Council agreed to make the following changes that would result in an estimated net increase of \$8,000 in revenue:

increase rental fees for Schrom Hills Park from \$50 to \$100; increase Buddy Attick Park rental fees from \$50 to \$75, with a further increase to \$100 when restroom facilities are completed;

increase gym rental fees at the Youth Center and Springhill Lake for adult user groups from \$25 to \$35 for residents and \$35 to \$45 for non-residents;

increase gym resident rental fees at the Community Center from \$35 to \$40 (not part of Mr. McNeal's memo);

charge nominal fees for some special events (with a plan to be presented to Council prior to implementation);

There was no majority support for the following items on Mr. McNeal's memo: elimination or reduction of open gym in the Community Center; increasing Center I.D. fees; collecting donations at the 4th of July celebration; and placing vending machines in parks.

Staff Positions: Mayor Davis commented that almost all departments cited needs for additional staff. She commented that the problem with adding positions is that they become permanent budget items; of the current list, only the police officer position might be initially assisted by grant funding from the COPS program. Council agreed the ½-time position in economic development could not be supported this year.

GATE/ACE: Given there are no future implications, it was also agreed not to increase the contribution to GATE. It was understood that the \$5,000 given to ACE this year would not be ongoing, but the committee is always welcome to suggest new programs or needs.

P&CD Office Associate/Animal Control: Mr. White argued on behalf of the increase to the office associate position in Planning & Community Development to full-time, saying that Council is making many demands on that department, and the position is needed for them to do what Council wants accomplished. Ms. Craze said since they will need to fill the position following a retirement during the next year, it would be helpful to be able to hire a full-time person directly rather than making a part-time commitment to someone. When this item was revisited later in the evening, it was concluded it could not be supported this year. Council also agreed the half-time animal control position could not be funded this year.

SHL Police Officer: There was discussion of supporting the police officer position to be shared with AIMCO for Springhill Lake only if the COPS funding comes through. Mr. White thought the City should fund it regardless, in order to reinforce the importance of commercial stakeholders contributing to public safety. Mr. Turnbull expressed concern about the implications of setting up another substation that did not appear to be fully

staffed. Lt. Kemp suggested ways to make it clear that this was not intended to be a fully functioning substation. There was also discussion of a prior offer from Greenbriar to contribute to support for a dedicated police position there and the implications of letting neighborhoods influence the distribution of police officers in the City. Eventually, a majority of Council supported funding the position contingent upon the COPS funding. Mr. Turnbull also suggested that there should not be an automatic three-year renewal but that the City should renegotiate for additional support from AIMCO at that time.

CNG/Hybrid: A majority of Council agreed to hold to the Manager's budget and support only CNG trucks or hybrid cars this year, but not both.

Recycling Education Funds: A majority of Council agreed not to reinstate the \$900 that had been trimmed from expanding recycling education in the Manager's budget.

Facility Maintenance Position: There was strong sympathy for the need for this position, and Mr. Hall made the case that this area of Public Works is already stretched too thin, even without the new facilities opening. Mr. Roberts argued that no positions should be added in a year when next year's budget could be even tighter. Mr. Turnbull agreed this should be discussed again next year when the new facilities were actually open. Mr. White and Mr. Putens wished to support it. When this item was revisited later in the evening, it was concluded it could not be supported this year.

Waste Collection Fees: Mr. McLaughlin pointed out to Council that these fees are not proposed for increase this year, since they were raised the last two years. Mr. Phelan noted that although this service ostensibly operates at a loss, the crews collect recycling and trash for parks and City facilities as well, and resident user fees should not be expected to cover those costs.

Yard Waste: Mr. Putens argued in favor of adding to the budget the \$7,500 in overtime for weekend collection of yard debris during those weeks when a holiday during the week requires that Friday be used for collection of a regular route. Mr. White supported this too. Mr. Roberts and Mr. Turnbull did not, with Mr. Turnbull saying the broader issue was the fact that yard debris collection is done at the end of the week at all. When this item was revisited later in the evening, it was concluded it could not be supported this year.

Recreation Supervisor Position: Mr. Putens was supportive. Mr. White questioned a need to add staff following the reorganization of the department, which the City Manager had supported last year with no increase in staff. Eventually, it was agreed that this was too large an item to consider this year. Council was concerned about the amount of overtime and compensatory time being racked up in the department, however. Mayor Davis said if there was too much for current staff to do, then other alternatives might need to be considered, including doubling up on classes or program or cutting programs if need be.

Greenbelt Connection: A majority favored ending Sunday hours at 1 p.m., a \$2,000 savings.

Reduction of Recreation Facility Hours: Everyone agreed to restore, at a cost of \$2,200, the cuts to holiday hours that were proposed to reduce time at recreation facilities, as

well as the \$2,000 for the half-hour cut-back in proposed hours at the Youth Center and Springhill Lake. On the other hand, a majority agreed to maintain the cut in the budget for closing the Aquatic and Fitness Center at 10:00 p.m. rather than 10:30 p.m.

Friends of the New Deal Café Arts: There was disagreement on whether to recognize FONDCA as a contribution group but not fund them this year or to fund them at the \$2,000 level requested. A compromise was struck to fund them at \$1,000 to be earmarked for performer expenses only.

Capital Projects Fund: The Mayor suggested putting off action on the Cherrywood Lane roundabout until possibilities for partnering with either WMATA or the Greenbelt Station developers could be pursued. She said she was against the City's moving quickly to undertake this project when other groups may benefit. She also expressed concern about the state of the City's so-called animal facility, which is not only inadequate but will disappear with the renovation of the Public Works facility. As to why the City needs its own facility, it was said that the City must hold animals for five days before turning them over to the county; moreover, the City wishes to encourage fostering and adoption, while the county is quicker to euthanize than the City would like. There was discussion of the use of Program Open Space funding, including a suggestion from Mr. Putens to reduce the tax contribution to Capital Projects by a penny by using POS money for projects to total to about the \$124,700 yielded by a penny of tax. Mr. White emphasized the need to maintain the commitment to the 3.5¢ for Capital Projects.

Cherrywood and Kenilworth Red Light Camera: Chief Craze presented data showing the southbound camera at this intersection to have the lowest activity and not to be paying for itself. Ms. Craze suggested that the congestion at this intersection makes it very difficult to run a red light with any speed, with the result that the camera is not deterring light-running and is not serving any useful purpose. Mr. White supported the removal of this camera from the budget by the City Manager and said he believed it to be a total waste of tax money. Since Mr. Putens, Mr. Turnbull, and Mr. Roberts were all of the opinion that this camera in some way contributed to the overall success of the program, the costs were put back in the budget.

Bottom Line: The result of the discussion was a net increase of \$32,200 to expenditures. There was discussion of using some or all of the \$58,500 uncommitted in the reserve appropriation. Mr. White was willing to increase taxes above the 4¢ increase in order to maintain services. Mayor Davis and Mr. Putens both said they did not want an additional increase. Mr. Roberts again stated his belief that the City should not increase the size of its work force under financial circumstances such as the current ones, saying that would be "the worst thing we could do right now." The Mayor suggested that because of the uncertainty about state funding, the better part of valor would be to reserve the balance of the \$58,500 after covering the \$32,200. Mr. McLaughlin pointed out that the state decisions would be made prior to budget adoption so that this matter could be reconsidered as early as May 27.

Mr. Turnbull said from his perspective, 3¢ of the 4¢ tax increase was attributable to the increase in the LEOPS payment, the loss of state highway funding, and the increase in health insurance costs, none of which were in the City's control. The last penny he attributed to prior personnel decisions kicking in at their full costs.

Mr. White said he might vote against the budget in its current form since he did not think City services were adequately supported. Mr. Roberts said for him it would be a compromise to vote for a 4¢ increase but that he believed he would have to support it.

Mr. McLaughlin thanked Council for their efforts with the budget, and Council thanked Mr. McLaughlin, Mr. Williams, and the department heads.

The meeting ended at about 11:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathleen Gallagher
City Clerk