



**MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION held Monday, July 15, 2002, for the purpose of meeting with the chairpersons of Council's advisory boards and committees.**

Mayor Davis started the meeting at 8:10 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: David E. Moran, Assistant to the City Manager; and Kathleen Gallagher, City Clerk.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Leta Mach, Advisory Committee on Education; Charles Jackman, Advisory Committee on Trees; Sheldon Goldberg, Advisory Planning Board; Teddy Primack, Arts Advisory Board; Steve Skolnik, Board of Appeals; Judy Ott, Board of Elections; Kevin Hammett, Community Relations Advisory Committee; Hugh Jascourt, Employee Relations Board; Neal Barnett, Recycling & Environment Advisory Board; Jackie Shabe-Rochefort, Senior Citizens Advisory Committee; and Jessica Mealey, Youth Advisory Committee. The Park & Recreation Advisory Board and the Public Safety Advisory Committee were not represented.

Role of Advisory Groups

Following introductions, the Mayor spoke briefly about the tremendous benefits Council's advisory boards and committees bring to City government. She emphasized that the advisory groups extended Council's capabilities by undertaking background work, by bringing forth new ideas and suggestions, and by representing the citizens of Greenbelt by reviewing and responding to Council referrals.

Remarking that REAC sometimes has exchanges with the Public Works Department about relatively minor matters, Mr. Barnett asked the extent to which it was necessary to bring everything to Council's attention via formal communications. Mayor Davis said it was important that Council or the City Manager be notified of most things in order that work flow issues be taken into account and so that there will not be conflicting directives. Mr. Putens and Mr. White added that the staff liaison should be interacting with other staff as needed to evaluate what should come to the City Manager and/or to Council.

Ms. Shabe-Rochefort said SCAC had found it difficult to get information on City activities in order to be able to schedule its own events without major conflicts. She asked if there was any central calendar or if one could be created. This would cover events but not routine meetings. Mayor Davis asked staff to look into the feasibility of doing such a calendar.

### Recruitment/Appointment Process

Mayor Davis commented that, in general, residents have been steadily applying to participate in advisory groups, so vacancies are at a low ebb. She noted that REAC is the only group with significant vacancies now and asked Mr. Barnett if the committee has undertaken any recruitment activities. He said they try to recruit people who attend their various activities and who express any interest. Ms. Mach mentioned that ACE has an information table at the Labor Day Festival. Mr. Barnett said REAC had tried that without attracting new members.

Mr. White said Council tries to honor applicants' preferences, including sometimes moving them from their original group if their first choice had no vacancies at the time they applied. He noted that doing so was sometimes at odds with trying to solve chronic vacancy problems. Everyone who spoke agreed, however, that Council should do its best to accommodate applicants' first choices for groups, since they are volunteering their time and are most likely to stay and become involved where they are most interested.

Ms. Shabe-Rochefort said SCAC could benefit from greater diversity in age and gender. Mayor Davis responded that Council had not been turning applicants of any age or gender away and encouraged all the groups to promote recruitment.

### Role of Council and Staff Liaisons

The Mayor pointed out that a definition of the role of Council liaison and a reformulated definition of the role of the staff liaison appear in the current version of the policy and procedure booklet. Ms. Shabe-Rochefort said that SCAC had raised issues last year about the role of the Council liaison and wanted to thank Mr. White for coming to many of their meetings and for letting them know when he could not attend others. She said SCAC had also previously complained to Council about problems with the committee's working relationship with City staff and that this has improved a great deal. She said they appreciated Council's response on this.

Ms. Ott expressed appreciation for Ms. Gallagher's work as staff liaison to the Board of Elections, particularly last year, when the change in voting machines presented unusual challenges to the board and the voters.

### Advisory Group Communications

Mayor Davis said Council has been receiving copies of minutes of meetings more regularly and encouraged everyone to keep the copies coming. In response to a query from Mr. Jackman, it was clarified that formal reports or communications from advisory groups to Council should be sent to the City Clerk rather than directly to Council, and she will see that they are distributed to Council and placed on an agenda for follow-up.

Ms. Shabe-Rochefort questioned whether copies of each group's minutes were supposed to be sent to all the other groups, saying that SCAC would like to receive them. Other chairs indicated they did not want to receive them. Mr. Putens pointed out that there is a great deal of variation in how relevant one group's activities are to another. Mr. Roberts said he thought doing this wholesale would be too much to ask the City Clerk to do. After some discussion, it was agreed that Ms. Gallagher would survey the groups to see what, if anything, they wished to receive and notify the relevant staff liaisons to send the copies directly to the other groups. Ms. Shabe-Rochefort also asked

if advisory group minutes and reports could be posted on the Web site. Mr. Moran responded that staff time is already stretched in this area but that the question could be evaluated.

#### Attendance at Meetings

Mr. Goldberg mentioned that staff had not been calling meetings of the APB and that he assumed this must be because there were no referrals coming from Council. Ms. Gallagher said it was her understanding that the board was not going to meet until September unless there was a specific need. Mr. White suggested there might be less urgent matters that could benefit from brainstorming during periods of no referrals. Mayor Davis suggested using the lulls to bring in speakers. Mr. Turnbull said groups should keep in mind that they are not dependent upon staff or Council to receive assignments or call meetings.

Mr. Jascourt mentioned the need for the chair of the Employee Relations Board to have the experience and knowledge to conduct formal hearings. Mr. White suggested that providing training to the whole board might be worthwhile. Mr. Jascourt agreed that could be useful but maintained that having prior experience in the chair was important.

Mr. Turnbull encouraged all the groups to think in terms of any appropriate training or citizen-professional association memberships, since these serve both to share information and also to empower citizen-boards. Mayor Davis said the Metropolitan Council of Governments (COG) and the National League of Cities have interesting sessions as well. She added that if any of the groups had needs or interests of this type, they should let the City Manager know.

Mayor Davis listed the items to be followed up on: developing a central calendar of events; evaluating whether advisory group minutes and reports should be posted on the Web site; seeing which groups wish to receive other groups' minutes; following up on training activities, if groups are interested.

The meeting ended at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Kathleen Gallagher  
City Clerk