



WORK SESSION of the Greenbelt City Council held Wednesday, February 7, 2001, for the purpose of meeting with representatives from the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center.

Mayor Pro Tem Turnbull started the meeting at 8:06 p.m. It was held in the Senior Citizen Classroom of the Community Center.

PRESENT WERE: Councilmember Thomas X. White and Mayor Pro Tem Alan Turnbull. Councilmember Rodney M. Roberts arrived later during the meeting.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael P. McLaughlin, City Manager; and Kathleen Gallagher, City Clerk.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Dr. Ronald Kurcak, Associate Area Director, and John Van de Vaarst, Deputy Area Director, Beltsville Agricultural Resource Center (BARC); Amy Boyes, the Gazette, and Barbara Young, Greenbelt News Review.

Mr. Turnbull started the meeting with introductions and a brief overview of the purpose of the City Council's stakeholder meetings.

Dr. Kurcak summarized information provided on handouts about the budget, personnel, and facilities of the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center (BARC). He noted that BARC's total budget is \$112 million for Fiscal Year 2001. Their R&D budget is only 2% of the federal appropriation, compared with NASA's 11%. After declining for a period, the number of Ph.D. scientists they employ has been rising. Half of BARC's employees reside in Prince George's County. BARC has 6,700 noncontiguous acres.

Dr. Van de Vaarst reviewed a list of construction projects. An item of particular interest to Council is that the roof of Building 003 (the clock tower building on Rt. 1) is being replaced with a roofing material that is made from recycled rubber but which looks so much like slate that it has been approved for use by the Maryland Historical Trust. It has a guaranty of 50 years and will save them over \$300,000 on the project. In response to a request from Mr. White, he said they would send Council more information about the product and a sample.

There was brief discussion about the extent to which BARC's buildings have historic status. Dr. Van de Vaarst said they are arranging for the Maryland Historical Trust to do a categorization of their buildings that will permit them to plan future changes or preservation. He noted that the National Park Service, through its training center in Frederick, is now in the process of restoring the log house on the property.

Mr. Turnbull asked if they had plans for any major road changes. Dr. Van de Vaarst said they do not, but they have allocated a fair amount for much-needed road repairs in the near future.

Dr. Van de Vaarst said that although there was no intention now of closing roads, BARC does have increased concerns with security. Over the last couple of years, there have been increased incidences of theft of items like laptop computers, wallets, and purses. The Department of the Navy is currently undertaking a safety survey on the campus.

Mr. White said citizens have asked him whether it is possible to extend the hours that Research Road is open into Greenbelt. Dr. Kurcak said they could certainly consider this and that a brief formal request from the City would be helpful. He said they could consider closing it somewhat later in the evening or varying the closing time seasonally. Mr. Roberts questioned the advisability of extending the hours the road is open, however, with the result that it was agreed further Council discussion was necessary of this subject prior to any request to BARC.

There was brief discussion of BARC's and the City's mutual success in using bio-diesel fuel in vehicles. Dr. Kurcak said BARC is now also using a home-heating oil blend that includes 5% soy.

Dr. Kurcak said he and BARC's director, Dr. Phyllis Johnson, have been doing increasing outreach in the area of "high-tech," and BARC will be holding a technology showcase on the campus on May 3. The purpose is to feature BARC products that could be licensed for development. He said in the past BARC has been reticent about selling itself and making its discoveries known, but they are trying to remedy that.

Mr. Turnbull inquired about BARC's involvement in the Anacostia Trails Heritage Area (ATHA) project. Dr. Van de Vaarst said they wanted to be good neighbors and be cooperative but had concerns about trails near research facilities. Mr. Turnbull noted that many of the items of interest on BARC's campus are visible from existing roads and would not involve any invasive presence. He added that much of Greenbelt's original "green belt" is now preserved as part of BARC. In later discussion of signage on the Parkway, he suggested that BARC might want to consult with ATHA regarding signs that were compatible with the program as well as suitable for the Parkway.

Mr. Roberts asked about the progress of BARC's hazardous waste clean-up. Dr. Van de Vaarst responded that although they are not by any means finished, they are very satisfied with the progress they have made so far in reducing the original 166 sites to 53. He said they are making steady progress.

With regard to the Goddard master plan, Dr. Kurcak distributed a map showing that by BARC's estimate, the proposed realignment of Soil Conservation Road would isolate more than 12 acres of BARC's campus on the Goddard side. He said at this time BARC has no official position on the Goddard proposal and is waiting to see how the surrounding communities feel and what advice is given to them by Congressman Hoyer's office. He also noted that at this point BARC has not seen results of any environmental study.

With regard to the proposed expansion of the I-95/495 interchange, Mr. Turnbull summarized Council's objections. He pointed out that all plans thus far proposed would take land from

BARC, with the result that BARC should be aware that the City might have to take a position opposing this use of their land.

Council members thanked Drs. Kurcak and Van de Vaarst for coming, and they responded that they would be happy to return anytime.

Other Business

Council agreed to hold an executive session on Tuesday night at 7:30 p.m. to discuss the U.S. postal facility and the Greenbelt Theatre, in lieu of a meeting on Wednesday night.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Gallagher
City Clerk