



**WORK SESSION of the Greenbelt City Council held Wednesday, January 10, 2001,  
for the purpose of reviewing the update on the Compensation and Benefits Survey.**

Mayor Davis started the meeting at 8:05 p.m. It was held in the Multipurpose Room of the Community Center.

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; Consuella Harris, Human Resource Officer; Jeffrey Williams, City Treasurer; David E. Moran, Assistant to the City Manager; and Kathleen Gallagher, City Clerk. About 30 other staff members were present in the audience, including Celia Craze, Director, Dept. of Planning and Community Development; James Craze, Chief of Police; and Kenneth Hall, Director, Public Works.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Craig Rich, Gordon Pracht, and John Rodgers, Fraternal Order of Police; Amy Boyes, the Gazette, and Jim Giese, Greenbelt News Review.

After introductions, Mr. McLaughlin said this report had been sent to all department heads and to Craig Rich, F.O.P., and Karl Skaggs, Public Works. He then gave an overview that summarized Ms. Harris's cover memo to Council dated November 29, 2000. The main goals of the follow-up included: looking in depth at 10 positions to see if the findings of the original survey (which found Greenbelt salaries to range from 1.23% to 32.53% behind those in comparison cities) were supported; seeing if turnover in the City workforce was out of line with state and national averages; and looking into the feasibility of having an outside consultant do an in-depth study. Nine of the 10 positions held up in the more complete review, which was found to be adequate validation of the initial survey.

With regard to the recommendation that the City contract with Hendricks and Associates to undertake a thorough review of the classification system and pay scale, Mr. McLaughlin noted that the firm had a great deal of local government experience. They have solicited Greenbelt's participation in several surveys for other municipalities and have in hand much of the relevant data. In response to a query from Mr. White, Mr. McLaughlin added that City staff did not have the expertise to undertake the total review of all positions that Hendricks could do, in part because of the very wide range of differences in salary lag across positions.

Mr. Putens praised Ms. Harris's work on the update. He asked if the consultant's study could result in completely new classification system, adding that he thought the City's had become too compressed. Mr. McLaughlin said nothing was ruled out and noted that some jurisdictions have as many classification groups as Greenbelt (26), while others have as few as six.

**Review of Benefits:** In response to a question from Mr. White, Mr. McLaughlin said Hendricks had not been asked to include a review of benefits in their estimate. He suggested this would be part of the question being posed to Council about the extent to which we look at salary vs. total compensation. In response to a later question from Mr. Roberts, he added that the additional costs of including benefits in the study would probably be minimal.

**Turnover Rates:** Regarding turnover rates, it was determined that, at about 10% per year over 1998-2000, Greenbelt fell midway between the national and state rates. Nor did the reasons for departures suggest any cause for alarm. Council suggested staff consider building an exit interview into the separation process and that the interview should be conducted by the Human Resource Officer, not the individual's supervisor.

A question was asked by staff from Public Works about whether workload is taken into account in the study. Ms. Harris explained this survey would not capture that. There followed discussion of the distinction between a need to hire additional employees to manage a workload vs. a need to reclassify a worker who was not being compensated for the appropriate level of work. In response to a later question, Ms. Harris said the consultant would either talk with each employee or at least with someone from each position.

**Total Compensation:** Ms. Harris said that when total compensation (pay + benefits) was looked at for the nine positions that were studied in depth, the average gap between Greenbelt and the comparison cities dropped by 10.6% (from 17.8% to 7.2%). There was no agreement on looking at pay vs. pay and benefits. Mr. Putens said that although looking at the value of benefits might be useful, salary is the primary concern and must be kept at the forefront. He also said that the benefits should be looked at separately and not added to the value of pay and that it is not legitimate to compare totals of salary plus benefits. Someone from the Police Department questioned whether all the benefits had been captured: for example, health insurance after retirement, the number of years to be worked before eligibility for retirement, and the percentage of salary paid by pension.

Mayor Davis said she had found it valuable to receive a statement that showed money paid out by her employer for benefits, and she thought the City should consider doing this. Mr. White said he agreed that benefits were part of the total picture that must be looked at. Mr. Turnbull said he agreed with Mr. White and Mr. Roberts about the necessity of looking at benefits as well as pay. He said that "if it's all about salary," as Mr. Putens and some of the City staff were suggesting, then perhaps the City should be looking at converting some benefits to salary. Mr. Roberts added that if it is true, as some have suggested, that the City is paying too much for benefits, then the cost of benefits should be looked at.

**Comparison Cities:** The cities used for comparison so far have been College Park, Bowie, Laurel, Rockville, Gaithersburg, and Takoma Park. Mr. Rich asked if Prince George's County and the Maryland National Capital Park Police could be included for comparison for the Police Department. Mr. Putens supported this request and asked that they be included separately for comparison but not include them in statistics, since although the City competes with them for employees, it is not realistic to include them in peer-group comparisons. For purposes of having another city with approximately the same services Greenbelt offers, Council agreed to add

Hyattsville to the previous six. Mayor Davis stressed, however, that if Hendricks has any suggestions on this score—either to add or substitute other cities—Council is open to recommendations on the matter.

What is the target? The question was raised of where on the scale of the peer group Greenbelt should fall in terms of salary and benefits, but Council agreed that until the results of the in-depth survey were available, it was premature to try to answer this.

Mayor Davis stressed the importance of having study results by April to be able to consider them with budget decisions.

Other Issues: There was discussion of the pros and cons of paid overtime for employees, as well as of the benefit to the City of the take-home police car policy in terms of response of off-duty officers and visibility. The problem of reaching longevity soon was also raised, and Ms. Harris said that would be looked at as part of the study.

#### Other Business

Mayor Davis said she had been notified by Maryland-National Capital Park & Planning that a subdivision plan had been submitted for the Jaeger Tract. Mr. McLaughlin said he thought this was the plan that Bob Crecco mentioned at the work session with Westchester Park, but he will check to be sure we have it.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Gallagher

City Clerk