



WORK SESSION of the Greenbelt City Council held Wednesday July 18, 2001, for the purpose of reviewing capital projects priorities and a possible bond referendum.

Mayor Davis started the meeting at 8:50 p.m. It was held in the Senior Classroom 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; Jeff Williams, City Treasurer; Hank Irving, Director, Recreation; Kenny Hall, Director, Public Works; Celia Craze, Director, Planning and Community Development; John Rogers, Police Department; David Moran, Assistant to the City Manager; and Kathleen Gallagher, City Clerk.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Sheldon Goldberg, Advisory Planning Board; Sylvia Lewis; representatives from the Dog Park Association; Amy Boyes, the Gazette; and Betsy Likowski, Greenbelt News Review.

Following introductions, Mr. McLaughlin announced that Council would hold a work session on Monday, July 23, with representatives from the Metroland developers.

Dog Park: Mayor Davis asked if anyone would like to speak to the Dog Park item. Marjorie Whitacre said all the officers of the association were present tonight to demonstrate their support and offer thanks to the Council and Public Works staff for the restoration work that had been done on the park. She addressed the park's value to its users and described fund-raising efforts. In response to a query from the Mayor, she said the expansion and lights were still the top priorities for use of the \$15,000; the lights in part are a safety issue. Mayor Davis suggested use of the Adopt-a-Bench Program for a potential donation of a bench to the park. There was discussion of whether opening a second dog park in another part of town would be helpful. Ms. Craze said staff had looked originally at both secured and off-leash sites and had determined secured sites to be preferable. She said other possibilities might be the lower dam area at the Lake, Northway, or parcel 15. She also mentioned having visited a dog day care center that included an area that was fenced but wooded, which might open other possibilities. Mr. Roberts said he did not like the idea of putting a fenced area near Greenbelt Lake. He also said he thought a benefit of having only one park is that it brings residents of different parts of the City together. With regard to wear to the ground at the entrance, Mr. Hall said that will remain a problem until the expansion is done and they can "rest" parts of the park on a rotating basis.

Skateboard Park: John Rogers addressed Council on behalf of SWAT (Skateboards, Wheels and Trucks), a group of young people and some of their parents with whom he has been meeting monthly to find solutions to the problems of skateboarding in Roosevelt Center. He assured Mayor Davis that "truck" refers to a part of a skateboard, not a vehicle. The members are all

Greenbelt residents. They want to establish a park but initially would like funding to do a site survey and an estimate of needs and costs, and to purchase portable ramps for use during the interim. In response to a query from Mr. Putens, Mr. Rogers said they are waiting for information from LGIT regarding liability insurance. The site being considered is behind the Community Center, where there used to be tennis courts. Mayor Davis cautioned that this project would involve not only a site and equipment but also staffing. She suggested that privileges should be lost by anyone caught skateboarding at illegal locations. It was clarified that this park would be for in-line skating and boards, not scooters. The Mayor suggested, and Council strongly encouraged, that this group participate in the Labor Day parade. Council agreed to consider a request for \$5,000 for preliminary expenses.

Bond Referendum: There was discussion of a letter about a loan program offered through the state, which Mr. McLaughlin said was more useful for municipalities that do not qualify on their own for a AAA bond rating. The City will look into this and any other possibilities, but for present purposes a bond referendum would probably be the best way to go.

Mr. McLaughlin said Council should be aware that in five years (FY 06) the City would be free of debt and could presumably reduce taxes. A ordinance for a proposal to put a bond on this year's ballot would need to be introduced in September.

Mr. Roberts said that although he had been looking forward to retiring the debt, he had no objection to putting a referendum on the ballot. Mr. Turnbull said he would support a bond if the payment after the bond and refinancing did not exceed the City's existing payment. Mr. White and Mr. Putens agreed that this was a good time to issue a bond but that the specific list of projects needed some work, in particular to include all parts of the City.

Mayor Davis asked if there was agreement in principle to do a bond referendum before moving on to the project list. Mr. White said he was in theory willing to go up to the \$5 million level. Mr. Turnbull said he did not want to go that high and wanted to keep to a relatively short term.

Greenbelt East: There was general agreement that the Springhill Lake Recreation Center and the Public Works facility were the two main projects for the list. Mr. White said although the Public Works project benefits the whole City, it is necessary to do something to benefit Greenbelt East specifically. He suggested the overpass at Eleanor Roosevelt High School, since it would join two parts of Greenbelt East and complete the trails project. Mr. Putens said an underpass might be more effective than an overpass. He suggested playgrounds, but Mayor Davis noted there was not yet an agreement with the City on the playgrounds. Mr. Goldberg said that it had been so long since the Greenbelt East Advisory Committee had talked about these issues, he was not sure priorities were the same. Mayor Davis said there had been talk of a full-blown Recreation Center in Greenbelt East. Mr. Putens said there had been discussion of joining the two buildings at Schrom Hills Park. Later, he added that there was a lack of meeting space in the southern sector of Greenbelt East. In response to a question from Mayor Davis, Ms. Craze said it would cost about \$300,000-400,000 to complete the necessary streetscaping work for Greenbelt East. Mr. Goldberg said there was still a lot of interest among residents in completing the Hanover Parkway work. Ms. Craze also suggested putting aside some planning money to evaluate expanding the structures in Schrom Hills Park.

Greenbelt Theatre: Mr. Putens said he thought the theater would have appeal in Center City. Mr. Roberts maintained that tax money should not be spent on the theater and that it had been agreed that no out-of-pocket money would be involved if the City were to acquire it. He said many citizens are opposed to this and that including the theater could jeopardize the bond referendum. Other council members disagreed, saying the City had always known that a major renovation would be required if the City acquired the theater. Mr. Turnbull said the theater made more sense to him than overpasses as a City bond issue, since the theater is the "anchor" of Roosevelt Center, and the overpasses should be a state responsibility. He added the overpass at the high school would be the exception to that, only because of its high level of importance to the City and to Greenbelt East.

Mr. Roberts expressed concern with taking on so much debt that the City would not have the flexibility to take on additional projects that might come up. Mr. Putens disagreed, saying it was important that Council move forward with some of these projects that otherwise would be "nitpicked for years."

Council put forward the following list, though Mr. Putens thought there should still be more in Greenbelt East, and Mr. Roberts still objected to the inclusion of the theater renovation. The matter will be on the agenda for the August regular meeting.

Cost
Project

\$2,000,000
Public Works Expansion

750,000
Springhill Lake Rec. Cntr. Renovation & Expansion

500,000
Greenbelt East Streetscaping/Traffic-Calming

250,000
Greenbelt Theatre Renovation

\$3,500,000
Total

It was agreed to continue the capital projects discussion at another work session in late August. In the meantime, Council confirmed that staff could assume that the Public Works expansion, the Springhill Lake Recreation Center renovation/expansion, the Community Center windows, and the work to be done under the Buddy Attick Park Master Plan would continue as priority capital projects.

Other Business:

Council directed staff to place the expenses of the Mayor's attending the Maryland Municipal League retreat on the consent agenda of the next meeting.

The meeting ended at 11:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Gallagher

City Clerk