



WORK SESSION of the Greenbelt City Council held Monday, July 23, 2001, for the purpose of meeting with representatives of the Metroland developers.

Mayor Davis started the meeting at 8:15 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 Moran, Assistant to the City Manager; Celia Craze, Director, Planning and Community Development; Terri Hruby, Community Planner; Gabrielle Benjamin, Intern; and Kathleen Gallagher, City Clerk. Robert A. Manzi, City Solicitor, arrived later in the evening.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Norman Rivera, Sandy Gallagher, and Morty Levine, Metroland; Amy Boyes, the Gazette; and Virginia Beauchamp, Greenbelt News Review.

The Mayor first asked for introductions. In addition to City residents, there were many residents of other parts of Prince George's County present in support of the proposed development of Greenbelt Station.

Mr. Rivera commented that following the six-hour hearing of July 12, the discussion of the conceptual site plan would continue on July 26. He said the "opposition" is still putting on its case, after which he would present a rebuttal. He introduced Morty Levine of Metroland, who described some of the projects he has been involved with in the metropolitan area, including a 1500-unit development in Germantown and a mixed-use property called Ashburn Village in Virginia. Mr. Levine said much of his past work is compatible with Greenbelt's philosophy, and he believes it is essential to the success of development to incorporate the preferences of the residents of the area.

Mr. Rivera went on to address some specific points the City had raised in its findings on the conceptual site plan. Regarding the failed mitigation area, Mr. Rivera noted both Greenbelt and College Park are opposed to use of this site. He said they are attempting to be responsive, but they view this as a man-made failure, and if the Corps will give them permission to move it, they will.

Regarding Main Street issues, Mr. Rivera said Westfield is willing to be flexible, and it is understood that "a regional mall is not what people want."

Regarding the provision of mixed-price housing close to the station, Mr. Rivera said it is now their intention to have 200-300 residential units and that they will proffer to provide a range of rental prices by including smaller units and efficiencies at lower rents. These will be in the north

core and will increase the transit-orientation. He said they have been talking with City staff about ways to increase the transit-orientation and decrease dependence on cars at the station.

Regarding the concern about police coverage, Mr. Rivera said the increased tax base would provide some relief. Mr. Levine added that they could impose an internal impact fee, either per unit or based on square footage, to support additional security, fire and rescue, and police. This is similar to paying a fee to maintain common areas.

Mayor Davis stressed the City's willingness to work with the developers. She emphasized that the image that has been projected by others of Greenbelt as a city opposed to all development is simply not true. She said Greenbelt supports high-quality, appropriate development.

Mr. Rivera then gave an overview of the current conceptual design, which is "concept C."

The Mayor asked for any staff comment. Ms. Craze reviewed the City's concerns, including increased vehicle trips, environmental impacts, housing choice, public facilities and services, the City's requirements on right-of-way, mixed-use development, and the status of the mitigation site. She said the Sector Plan guidelines were developed by the community and are important to the community. The north-south connector road is also problematic, since any substantial linking of the north and south cores requires crossing the creek area, and there is no easy answer on how to do that. For the benefit of the supporters of the project in the audience, Mayor Davis reviewed that the City is not opposed to development but rather to the negative impacts of this project on local schools, traffic, and public services and facilities.

The Mayor then asked for any questions from Council. In response to a question from Mr. Roberts about the claim of the developers to have permission from the Corps of Engineers to move the mitigation site, Mr. Rivera said they were told verbally that the Corps would be willing to look at other alternatives. They have not submitted a permit application. Mr. Roberts said the Corps has in the past assured the City this site is out of bounds for development. He accused the Metroland team of misrepresenting the facts by claiming at the Planning Board hearing that they already had permission to do this. He added that since working with the Sector Plan group, he has been opposed to the north-south road.

Mr. Turnbull thanked Mr. Levine for coming and asked what his purview in the project was. Mr. Levine said he takes a comprehensive view and looks at things from the standpoint of their economic viability. He said he does not see how this project could be viable without the north-south road. Mr. Turnbull said he had not been able to tell from the examples Mr. Levine cited whether he had experience with in-town, in-fill, transit-oriented types of projects. Mr. Levine said he has not worked directly on any Main Street sorts of projects. Mr. Turnbull asked if he had worked in this county, and Mr. Levine said on residential but not commercial projects.

Mr. Putens thanked Mr. Levine for his remarks on listening to the community. He asked what the likelihood of getting upscale stores was. Mr. Levine said there is great interest in the site due to its location, but stores of that caliber would not sign now. He said, "We have to sell it."

Rev. Kevin Jefferson, a non-resident, described other mixed-use properties he had seen and said the Station is one of the few developments proposed for Prince George's County that is attractive and has a sense of place. Mr. Levine said this "sense of place" is what they want to create.

Matthew Thomas, a non-resident, also spoke in favor of the project and said he was glad to see there seemed to be some common ground between Council and the developer. He said when he walked into the room he felt the mood was adversarial and that there was a perception of "it's them against us." He said when he arrived, someone in the audience who saw the button of support he was wearing for the project, said, "We won't be intimidated." He said he used to live in Greenbelt and has talked with residents who want the project and feel they are not being served by their leadership.

Mr. Putens responded that Council is concerned with what people need and that if there is a "them and us" it's the developers who are "them" and everyone else in the room is "us."

An environmental planner who is working for Citizens to Conserve and Restore Indian Creek (CCRIC) also responded to Mr. Thomas, saying that everyone wants the site developed, but everyone wants it to be done correctly and be a credit to Prince George's County. He said no one wants the view of it from the beltway to be the rear-end of a Linen 'n Things. He asked, "Is that the image Prince George's wants to project?"

Also responding to the "them against us" issue, Mr. White said development has been the most important issue in his more than 28 years on Council. He reviewed the Greenbelt City Council's successes over the years in modifying developers' plans with the result that the City has achieved much higher quality development projects than would have occurred had the developers not been challenged to do better than they originally proposed. In addition, he cited that in some of these instances (Capital Office Park, Golden Triangle, Maryland Trade Center), there were conceptual plans that are still being adhered to.

Mr. White also inquired about two of the items College Park had included in its provisional approval: the limitation of building height to 12 stories and an off-site flood management issue. Mr. Rivera said they had told College Park they would be willing to cap at 12 stories with several specific exceptions, including the hotel and the twin towers. Mr. Levine told Council that capping a hotel at 12 stories is not realistic today because, between atriums and commercial and meeting spaces, the actual hotel floors may not begin until the fourth or fifth floor.

Irving Reed, Mitchellville, spoke in favor of the development. He asked what Montgomery County would be like without upscale shopping. He stressed that it is because of the location of this proposed project that it is of interest to a wider constituency than just Greenbelt. He said, "It's Prince George's County, not Greenbelt."

Mr. Turnbull asked what impact the school facilities issue would have. Mr. Rivera said they would start with the senior residences as phase I, since they have no impact. He said the reopening of the school in Berwyn Heights might benefit them. Mr. Levine noted that in most counties, developers can pay a fee and proceed with certainty that beyond a point the project cannot be stopped because of school figures. Mr. Turnbull said he was concerned that if the

residences were not built at the beginning of the project, patterns of use and transportation would set in that would never be turned around. Mayor Davis explained some of the history of the problems with school facilities in Prince George's, saying the county does not want portable classrooms and split sessions.

Pat Blankenship, chair of CCRIC, addressed the supporters of the project regarding the problems with the type of development that had been proposed. She talked about standard regional malls that are "dead at night" and, in comparison, described her vision of Main Street development that would include restaurants and arts venues that would be open at all hours.

Mr. Turnbull left at about 10:35 p.m.

Michael Arrington, a non-resident, spoke about why the county needs to encourage development. He compared the current process with the development of the Jack Kent Cooke stadium. He said although many of the local residents may be inconvenienced, the presence of the stadium in the area serves the "greater good." Mr. Putens again explained that the City is not opposed to development but wants development of high quality. Mr. Roberts said he did not think gridlock was to the greater good of the county and that what was evolving in the case of both the stadium and Greenbelt Station was a greater "bad" rather than a greater "good."

Sylvia Lewis, 2-C Gardenway, also addressed Mr. Arrington and reviewed once more that no one is against the development of the station.

Barry Schlesinger, 155 Westway, said he had recently heard that the region might lose federal highway funding because of the air quality and that this was one more reason why everyone should support transit-oriented development. He asked that the developers be required to provide greater detail about their plans.

Ms. Craze said that there is not a requirement for greater detail than the county is currently requesting, though CB-47 would require detail in some areas. She said Mr. Rivera had indicated they would be willing to keep the record open for 30 days, and she asked him if he would request this at the hearing on Thursday. He confirmed he would. In response to a question from Mr. White, Ms. Craze said the planning board would still go ahead and make its decision, but the additional comment would still go to the District Council for their consideration.

Council thanked everyone for coming.

Other Business

An announcement was made regarding services for Fran Herling. Council also reviewed some changes on the meeting schedule.

The meeting ended at 11:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Gallagher

City Clerk