



**WORK SESSION of the Greenbelt City Council**

**Held Monday, August 21, 2000**

**For the purpose of receiving a presentation on teleworking; following the presentation, Council met to discuss the City Manager's FY 2001 goals**

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, Thomas X. White, and Mayor Judith F. Davis.

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

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Gil Weidenfeld, Teleworking Coordinator for the Md. Department of Transportation (MDOT); Amy Boyes, the Gazette; Elaine Skolnik, the Greenbelt News Review; and Vic Nicholson.

Mr. Weidenfeld gave a presentation on teleworking, in which he described some of its advantages to the community (reduction of pollution, reduction of traffic congestion), to employers (improving employee recruitment and retention, reducing sick leave, reducing operating costs, improving ADA compliance), and to employees (reducing commuting time and costs, improving the balance between work and family responsibilities). But he said it should not be mistaken for a substitute for eldercare or childcare, and in most instances it is not full time.

He then gave an overview of a grant program for pilot projects that MDOT is offering in collaboration with the Baltimore Metropolitan Council and the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. The program is called Telework Partnership with Employers (TPE), and it provides consultants to Maryland employers to evaluate teleworking possibilities in their own organizations. He supplied brochures and a Web site address for further information: [www.teleworksmart-md.org](http://www.teleworksmart-md.org).

In response to questions or comments from Council members, Mr. Weidenfeld cited examples of government and private employers that had increased productivity and reduced turnover since initiating teleworking opportunities.

Mr. White asked about costs to outfit people to work from home. Mr. Weidenfeld said that when MDOT started its program, employees were expected to provide their own hardware and Internet connections. He said there are quite a few variations on the theme, depending on need: e.g., employers might provide laptops or make surplus equipment available, and they might provide high-speed Internet connections when needed. He noted that most state agencies have no budget for this.

Mayor Davis asked about municipal participation. Mr. Weidenfeld said that Rockville is the only municipal organization using TPE that has a written policy and is about to begin its program.

Mr. Roberts asked if the State was providing tax incentives for employers who participate in teleworking. Mr. Weidenfeld said Maryland is not doing so, but Virginia is. Joan Pitkin has attempted to introduce legislation but has not been successful so far; she introduced a bill to give a tax credit on equipment, but her colleagues considered it too expensive.

There was also discussion of the two teleworking centers that are open in Laurel: one at the National Guard and one at Laurel Lake Center that is federally owned but run by the College of Southern Maryland. At this stage, according to Mr. Weidenfeld, such centers are heavily subsidized and may not be cost-effective.

Council agreed to:

Continue to look into the City's participation in the program, either on its own or in conjunction with another municipality, such as College Park. Mr. McLaughlin noted that developing a telework policy is an objective for the City for this year.

Ask Berwyn Heights to place a short presentation by Mr. Weidenfeld about the pilot grant program on the agenda for the fall 4 Cities meeting. Mayor Davis suggested that a primary focus on the pilot program, rather than on teleworking per se, might be the best approach with this audience.

Place information on Channel B-10 about the grant program directing people to the Web site.

With Mr. Weidenfeld providing a first draft, send a letter from the Mayor to major employers located in Greenbelt, encouraging them to request a presentation on the program; send a similar letter to the County's Economic Development Corporation.

At 9:50 p.m., Mr. Weidenfeld's presentation was completed. Council then turned to the goals that the City Manager had proposed for this year. They supported the four items that had been identified by the Manager and suggested that the status of these might be reviewed quarterly with the CAR report. There was also discussion regarding the strategic plan and the fact that it had not yet been taken to the citizens for review. It was decided to discuss this further at the work session that will be held on goals.

Other Business: Mr. Putens announced that he would be unavailable Monday-Wednesday of next week because he is having knee surgery.

Mr. Roberts reported that the American Legion said it lost money on Greenbelt Day Weekend this year. There was discussion of whether this part of the event should be moved to a different site. Mr. White noted that some people were uncertain whether events held at the Legion were open to the public or not and were thus reticent about attending.

Mayor Davis noted that the shoemaker will leave Roosevelt Center at the end of the month.

Mr. McLaughlin announced that a non-resident suicide had been found at Northway Field on Saturday.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Gallagher

City Clerk