



**WORK SESSION of the Greenbelt City Council**

**Held Wednesday, November 29, 2000**

**For the purpose of receiving a presentation from the State Highway Administration (SHA) on the proposed Neighborhood Conservation Project for Greenbelt Road.**

Mayor Davis started the meeting at 8:10 p.m. It was held in the Multipurpose Room of the Community Center.

PRESENT WERE: Council members Rodney M. Roberts, Alan Turnbull, Thomas X. White, and Mayor Judith F. Davis.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael P. McLaughlin, City Manager; Kathleen Gallagher, City Clerk; and Celia Craze, Director, Planning and Community Development.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Tawanna Gaines, Mayor, John Groulx, Town Administrator, and Bill Armistead, former Mayor, Berwyn Heights; Karen Jarrett and Ken Goon, RK&K, Consultants to the State Highway Administration (SHA); Patrick Schmitt and Kevin Cookley, SHA staff; Joyce Chestnut, Paula Clinedinst, and Scott Fifield, Greenbelt representatives to the future advisory task force; Sheldon Goldberg, Advisory Planning Board; Kap Kapastin, Quantum Management/Beltway Plaza; Virginia Beauchamp, the Greenbelt News Review; Amy Boyes, the Gazette; Fred Gasper, Doug Love, and others.

Prior to the SHA presentation, Lt. Tom Kemp gave some background on a framed display of such items as badges, patches, vehicle photographs, and short city histories from the police departments of Greenbelt, Greendale, Wisc., and Greenhills Ohio. Greenbelt's Police Department prepared three of these for the "sister" green belt cities. The Mayor thanked Lt. Kemp and complimented the department on its work in creating the display.

After introductions, Ken Goon gave an overview of the Neighborhood Conservation Program, which is run by the SHA and based on the Smart Growth Program. Initially funded at \$50 million, the program has been deemed so successful that its budget has been increased to \$150 million this year.

Mr. Goon said that although Greenbelt Road was conceived as a Neighborhood Conservation project, running from Rt.1 to Mandan Rd., it is potentially expanding to a length of seven miles in response to requests from College Park to extend it west to Adelphi Rd. and from Greenbelt to extend it east to the main entrance of Goddard. This may bump it into the category of a major planning project. It is because of this change that the task force has never been convened, but SHA senior management expects to make this decision within the next six weeks or so. Mr. Goon said Neighborhood Conservation projects are thought of as "minor projects" by the SHA. They may involve roadway resurfacing, drainage problems, curbing, sidewalks, landscaping, enhancements for bikes and pedestrians, and improved access to public transportation. They

essentially involve revitalization of what already exists, not new design. If the project reclassified as a major planning project, more major redesign work could be undertaken.

Mr. McLaughlin asked what the pros and cons to the two approaches are for the City. Mr. Goon said the Neighborhood Conservation projects are budgeted from \$1-3 million and operate approximately on a three-year time frame, with roughly a year to conceptualize, a year for design, and a year to build. Major project budgets could be much more substantial - up to \$25-30 million - but implementation is longer, and major projects throughout the State compete with one another.

Mayor Davis asked if the work could be split into several smaller projects in order to stay within the Neighborhood Conservation model. Mr. Goon said yes but that SHA was also concerned with a master plan for the span of Rt. 193 and wanted to be careful about splitting it up or not coordinating it. In response to questions, he and Mr. Schmitt clarified that SHA's interest was not in inhibiting towns from being distinctive in their streetscapes, but rather in maintaining coherence in certain elements for a major traffic corridor. Mr. Armistead pointed out that parts of this span of 193 are vastly different from another—ranging from the heavily commercial area of Berwyn Heights at 193 to more rural areas east and west. Mr. Turnbull said he hoped the communities would receive deference outside of the curbs. He also said it might be more effective for all the municipalities if the College Park extension of the project stood on its own, since the concerns are very different.

Mr. White noted similarity between the extensions at both ends of the project, saying that the university at one end and NASA at the other are both concerned primarily with getting traffic in and out of their properties to 193. He said this emphasis struck him as being inimical in both cases to the Neighborhood Conservation concept.

Mr. Goon described the task force process as usually taking about four meetings over six to eight weeks. The task force doesn't vote; rather, it operates on consensus building. SHA continually modifies its plan in response to the task force. Even after the task force has completed its work, SHA would still return to Council for further discussion of the project concept.

Ms. Jarrett then gave a slide presentation showing problem areas SHA has identified on Greenbelt Rd., as well as examples of work done other Neighborhood Conservation projects.

Fred Gasper asked whether, if the project were split up, the smaller projects would be done at the same time or compete with one another. Mr. Goon and Mr. Schmitt said that they would be done as a group but that they work would be phased and that this would be true regardless if the work was done as one project or several projects.

Mr. Goon said SHA would hold a public meeting after the decision was made in December or January regarding how to classify the project. Mr. McLaughlin said Council could not formally make a recommendation on this, should they wish to do so, until the next regular meeting on December 18. Mr. Goon said they would alert Parker Williams, SHA Administrator, that a letter might be forthcoming.

Council thanked the presenters for coming and for the thorough process they seemed to be undertaking.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Gallagher

City Clerk