

Greenbelt City Council
Work Session With
Roosevelt Center Merchants

November 9, 2016
8:00 p.m.

Room 201
Greenbelt Community Center
15 Crescent Road

Agenda

- < Introductions
- < Update from Merchants
- < Security Cameras
- < Smoking in Center
- < Festivals in Roosevelt Center
- < Other Items

WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held Wednesday, October 14, 2015, to meet with the Roosevelt Center Merchants.

Mayor Jordan started the meeting at 8:00 p.m. The meeting was held in Room 201 of the Greenbelt Community Center.

PRESENT WERE: Councilmembers Judith F. Davis, Konrad E. Herling, Leta M. Mach, Silke I. Pope, Edward V. J. Putens, Rodney M. Roberts and Mayor Emmett V. Jordan.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael McLaughlin, City Manager; George Mathews, Police Department Community/Media Liaison; and Cindy Murray, City Clerk.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: George Boyce, Greenbelt Maker Space; Caitlin McGrath, Greenbelt Theater and President of Roosevelt Center Merchants Association; Terri Atkins, Michael Hartman, Karim Kmaiha and Maria Kmaiha, New Deal Café; Bob Davis and Joe Gerari, Greenbelt Consumers Cooperative; Cindy Comproni, Greenbelt Federal Credit Union; Anwal and Amahl Salleh, Greenbelt Stylists; Sheila Alpers, Greenbelt Step Club; Rafiq Ahmed, DMV Pizza; and others.

George Boyce advised that the Greenbelt Maker Space was doing very well and is entering its third year in business. He reported on its successful summer school sessions, home-school programs and after school programs.

Caitlin McGrath, Greenbelt Theater, provided an update on the Greenbelt Theater. She said that the Anacostia Trails Heritage Area (ATHA) had offered the Theater grant funding for a bike rack in an effort to encourage bike tourism. Mr. McLaughlin said Terri Hruby, Assistant Planning Director, would contact Ms. McGrath about the bike rack.

Sheila Alpers said the Greenbelt Step Club is doing well. She said an open house event is being planned and Council would be notified.

Rafiq Ahmed reported that DMV Pizza had been open for nine months. He advised that business had been slow during the summer but he expected it would pick up in the fall and winter. Mr. Ahmed said he has two other similar restaurant establishments, one in Washington DC and one in Baltimore.

Anwar and Amahl Salleh reported that business at Greenbelt Barber and Stylist had been down about 20 percent overall. Council complimented the Sallehs on the landscaping work done in front of their shop. Mr. Salleh said that he owns the entire building in which he is located. He said it had been costly to him to repair damage in the basement caused by the previous tenant.

Cindy Comproni said the Credit Union had a good year and has received one of the highest ratings awarded for financial institutions. She commented on their sponsorship of many community events, including the Outstanding Citizen and the school supply collection for Springhill Lake Elementary School, etc. Ms. Comproni said the Credit Union is trying to "go green" by encouraging members to utilize electronic statements.

Ms. Comproni said the Greenbelt Consumers Cooperative is able to get FIOS service but the Credit Union and New Deal Café cannot because of the location of the Verizon lines in the

Center. She noted that their current internet service is slow and spotty because Verizon said the lines they are using are old and carry too much traffic. Mayor Jordan asked that this concern be added to the list for discussion at Council's work session with Verizon. Ms. Comproni also expressed concern about the structure of the building after the flooding incident at Realty One in the fall of 2014 and recurring water leaks. She commented on the difficulty of having a dialogue with the owner about structure problems or concerns.

Ms. Comproni said she was not receiving notifications of festival permits on a regular basis. She also said a light is needed in the basement utility room for repairmen on service calls.

Bob Davis reported that sales at the Greenbelt Consumers Cooperative have declined about two percent over the past two years. He attributed the decline somewhat to supplier issues. Mr. Davis said they had recently invested \$45,000 in new hot food equipment and hoped to expand the lunch business into a dinner business also.

Michael Hartman said the New Deal Café will be celebrating its 20th anniversary on November 8, 2015, and added that it is now completely out of debt. He reported that the Café is involved in many community events, including partnering with Coop to provide cider and cookies to children carving pumpkins and partnering with the Zero Waste Circle of the Greenbelt Advisory Committee on Environmental Sustainability and serving as a water container refill station. Mr. Hartman said he supported the bike rack idea for Greenbelt Theater.

Ms. Davis mentioned the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments TapIt program for businesses serving as water container refill stations. She suggested the New Deal Café participate in this program also.

There was discussion regarding the need for directional signage to the Center and the use of sandwich boards by the businesses. After discussion, Ms. Davis suggested "Signage for Roosevelt Center" be included as a discussion item when Council meets with the State Delegation. It was also suggested that a meeting with Councilmember Turner to review this concern. Mr. Hartman complimented Terri Hruby, Assistant Director of Planning, for working with him on signage concerns and explaining the current regulations.

Maria Kmaha, Manager of the New Deal Café, asked if some "merchant only" parking could be designated during the Labor Day Festival. She said she often has to run to the store for supplies and it was very difficult to do so during the Festival when parking is limited. Mr. McLaughlin suggested the Roosevelt Center Merchants Association (RCMA) review the request and discuss with the Labor Day Festival Committee. He added that a small number may be workable but a large number would likely be an issue.

George Mathews, Police Public Information Officer, reported that crime was very low in the Center. He said there is an occasional stolen bike or theft from auto incident. Mayor Jordan noted that the cameras in the Center had been in operation for about four years.

In response to a question from Mr. Hartman, Mayor Jordan said staff is working on the festival permit policy and expected a draft would be ready for review by the end of November. Mr. Hartman asked that a copy of the draft be sent to the RCMA for review.

Caitlin McGrath reported that she was now president of the RCMA. She said RCMA will be applying for a grant from the Greenbelt Community Foundation to fund a student intern to work on promotion of the Center. Ms. McGrath reported "Celebrate Local" would be the theme for the Center from early December to early January.

Ms. Mach suggested an informational kiosk in the Center would benefit the patrons.

Mr. Herling mentioned it is difficult for individuals to locate the Greenbelt Arts Center and Restoration Church in the rear of the Center using their Centerway addresses. He suggested a street name could be given to the lower parking lot to make it easier for people to find these locations.

Informational Items

Several informational items were discussed.

The meeting ended at 10:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Cindy Murray
City Clerk*