

1 **Work Session of the Sandy Springs City Council was held on Tuesday July 20, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.,**  
2 **Mayor Rusty Paul presiding.**

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4 **I. Invocation – Rabbi Ron Segal, Temple Sinai**

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6 **II. Staff Discussion Items**

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8 **A. 2021-197 PCID Quarterly Presentation**  
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10 **Pat Chesser, Sandy Springs Representative to the Perimeter Center Improvement District Board**  
11 stated the PCID's mission is to self-tax to accelerate needed transportation infrastructure improvements  
12 within its boundaries. Under the direction of Executive Director Ann Hanlon, the PCID is collaborating  
13 with the City of Sandy Springs on the Mount Vernon Trail Project. The City will manage 100% of project,  
14 though the City and the PCID will fund the design and right of way acquisitions of project portions within  
15 their respective jurisdictions. The multi-use trail expands from Vernon Trace to Abernathy, and will  
16 ultimately connect to MARTA and Path 400. On August 25, 2021 the PCID Fulton Board will be presented  
17 with the partnership agreement, which is anticipated to be received favorably. Once approved, PCID will  
18 purchase needed right of way in their jurisdiction. Next, construction should begin in the third quarter of  
19 2022. A future partnership opportunity include the MARTA Medical Center Laker Hearn and Peachtree  
20 Dunwoody Improvements project. While this \$4.8N project will be funded in full by PCID and MARTA,  
21 the City will manage it.  
22

23 **Mayor Rusty Paul** stated we are delighted about how we can work together. Both the PCID and the City  
24 have the same objective of improving the quality of life and transportation and mobility in the perimeter  
25 district, which will have benefits across the whole community.  
26

27 **B. 2021-198 2022 ArtSS in the Open Sculpture Competition Finalists**  
28

29 **Cheri Morris, Art Sandy Springs, ArtSS in the Open Chair** stated the art pieces approved by the City  
30 Council in June, 2021 will soon be moved from City Springs to their new home. They will be replaced by  
31 finalist from the 2021-22 ArtSS in the Open sculpture competition. Nearly 99 pieces were reviewed by City  
32 staff who looked for safety, durability and appropriateness. Art Sandy Springs then formally screened the  
33 balance, and sent 60 to be reviewed by a panel of art expert judges. Nine final pieces, and three alternatives,  
34 are recommended for approval. *Speaking Color* by Blaine Steiner is a light-hearted piece (\$7K). *Assume*  
35 by Joey Manson is composed of steel and concrete (\$20K). *Allow 60* by Scott Strader is the head of a Native  
36 American chiefdom (\$20K). The first people at the springs in Sandy Springs were Native American.  
37 *Comma* by Lee Badger is a piece that moves (\$10K). *Triumph* by Ben Pierce is 11' tall (\$9.5K). *One Arch*  
38 by Rollin Karg is an intricate, detailed piece (\$3,850). *Minko* by Jeremy Colbert is made of found objects  
39 (\$10K). *Windstone* by Bob Turan is also a kinetic piece (\$19,750). *Floret* is the competition's first  
40 submission from Atlanta artist David Landis (\$43K). The three alternates include *Swallowtail II* by John  
41 Parker (\$18K), *Angelica* by Joe Malesky (\$5.5K), and *Hill Climb* by Jim Collins (\$12.5K). Each of the  
42 alternates were selected because of their quality and can also slip in place of other pieces if needed. Lastly,  
43 the Sandy Springs Art in Public Places Plan denotes the parks, roundabouts, plaza and right-of-ways where  
44 public art can be placed. This year, the ArtSS will add additional detail to the Plan to identify what location  
45 are best for specific types of pieces. ArtSS hopes to work with City staff to accomplish that.  
46

47 **Council Member John Paulson** asked to where will the art pieces that are currently at City Springs be  
48 moved.  
49

50 **Ms. Morris** replied they will go to the northwest corner of Abernathy Road and Wright Road to create a  
51 sculpture garden, around the concrete wall.

52  
53 **Council Member Andy Bauman** asked if in the future a piece can be placed at the site by Powers Ferry  
54 Landing, where the breakoff is heading down Northside and New Northside.

55  
56 **Ms. Morris** replied yes, and another location to consider is at Dupree and Mount Vernon.

57  
58 **City Council Consensus:** Move forwarded as presented.

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60 **C. 2021-199 2021 Annual Action Plan (HUD Revision)**

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62 **Ginger Sottile, Community Development Director** introduced Michele McIntosh-Rosh. Ms. Ross has  
63 fifteen years of experience and comes from the City of Milton. She has a lot of experience doing  
64 comprehensive plans, small area plans, LCI and grants. Ms. Ross is also a 26-year resident of Sandy  
65 Springs.

66  
67 **Michele McIntosh-Ross, Planning and Zoning Manager** presented the 021 Annual Action Plan – HUD  
68 Revision. It is a notice of a revision to the City’s 2021 Annual Action Plan and to open its public comment  
69 period. The City is required to prepare a yearly Annual Action Plan to participate in the CDBG Program.  
70 The Plan describes the goals and projects to be accomplished for that specific program year. Since the City  
71 adopted the Plan in May, 2021, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development has allotted an  
72 additional \$8,899 to the City of Sandy Springs. Because of the change, the City must reopen the public  
73 comment period, which will run from July 21 – 23, 2021. Subsequently, the City will adopt its amended  
74 2021 Annual Action at the August 3, 2021 City Council meeting. No action is required this evening. As a  
75 reminder, the funds are used to defease the Section 108 loan debt used for the multi-year sidewalk projects  
76 along Roswell Road, from Long Island Drive to Northwood Drive.

77  
78 **City Council Consensus:** Move forwarded as presented.

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80 **III. Public Works**

81  
82 **A. 2021-200 RAISE Grant Application**

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84 **Caitlin Shankle, Transportation Planner** provided an update on the City’s Rebuilding American  
85 Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grant application, in support of the PATH 400 Trail  
86 Extension project. There is \$1B available in funding, with a minimum award of \$5M and a maximum award  
87 of \$25M. The grant program requires a 20% match. There is a cap of \$100M in total funding for projects. .  
88 The City’s application request is for the current construction funding gap of \$11, 560,225; \$9,248,180 –  
89 Federal funding request and \$2,312,045 – local match. The grant program is not part of the ARC, and the  
90 decision will be made by the U.S. Department of Transportation. Notice of award will be made by  
91 November 22, 2021.

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93 **IV. City Council Discussion Items**

94  
95 **A. 2021-201 Elected Officials Benefits Discussion**

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97 **Council Member Andy Bauman** stated this is not for us, but for future Councils. The City Charter states  
98 that the City Council has the authority to vote annually to raise the mayor and city councilmembers' salaries  
99 in an amount consistent with the Consumer Price Index or similar inflationary index. While this is not the

focus of today's discussion, it could be considered. Secondly, the Charter states that by ordinance there may be the provision of insurance, retirement, workers' compensation, and other employee benefits to the mayor and members of the city council. This is an item uniquely vested within the power of the elected body. I am proposing that what I speak about tonight is for the next term. This should be done transparently in open meetings, and I request this item be placed on the public hearing agenda at the August 3 City Council meeting. The Charter Commission has discussed salaries for elected officials. The Mayor's Diversity and Inclusion Task Force has talked about a pipeline of elected official leaders; expanding the group of folks to whom serving maybe more accessible. Being proposed is that elected officials be eligible to all the benefits that full-time employees are eligible.

**Andrea Surratt, City Manager** stated employees have access to the 457 retirement plan, which is pre-tax. Some elected officials participate too. There is also the 401(a) retirement plan, which is a defined contribution plan. Employees receive 12% from the City and up to 5% in matching contributions. Employees are 100% vested at five years of service. An elected officials classification does not exist in the plan documents and that would need to be amended to allow elected officials to participate. Health insurance is also offered, with numerous plans offered to full-time employees and their dependents. Council Member Bauman asked Staff to research benefits offered at specific cities: the Cities of Alpharetta, Brookhaven, Dunwoody, Roswell, Savannah, and Smyrna all provide some opportunity for their elected officials to participate in their benefits programs. Athens-Clarke consolidated government did not respond. Should the Sandy Springs City Council decide to participate in the City's employee benefit program, then the impact to the budget is somewhere between \$100K and \$160K.

**Council Member Bauman** stated the vast majority of cities in the State do this. The proposal is for this to be effective when the next mayor and council take office. And the reason this is presented now, is to vet it publically before qualifying. To be clear, two people with exactly the same classification may have different benefit choices, depending on their personal situation.

**City Manager Surratt** replied that is correct. The employee takes on the balance of the costs depending what options they choose.

**Council Member Bauman** stated this is public service, but it also a job. It is a part-time job, but it is every day of the week, every time of the day and night. I am thinking about future generations of this Council, the work involved, and the incentives we need to consider to get people to want to do this public service. In 2017, out of seven races there were six race unopposed. It is a sacrifice; a sacrifice of the public servant and their families. Perhaps between now and when we vote, the Diversity and Inclusion Task Force can discuss this, looking at making these positions more accessible to all of our citizens. If we are serious of about inclusion, then this is a step in the right direction. We need to ask what are the obstacles to serving. Are there people not doing this because of the money? I was stunned about all of the other cities that do this. The Charter Commission unanimously recommended increases for elected officials. This is the right thing to do. As any employee, you can opt out from the benefits. If we need to put in the ordinance that elected officials would need to opt in, then that is okay too.

**Council Member Tibby DeJulio** stated the City was designed so it would be a different type of city and not a beauracracy. That is one of the reasons the City went with the private-public-partnership model. It was a conscious decision that the councilmembers would not have benefits. The City has explored this before and the decision was no. I am opposed to benefits. I do this as a community service. Sandy Springs is a wonderful city, and I do this because it is the right thing to do. I am in favor in of paying city council members.

149 **Council Member John Paulson** stated I am not in favor of this. The concept of service is important to me.  
150 The benefits should not be the reason to do this, it should be for the community. Approving this, could be  
151 as much as doubling our compensation. I encourage anyone who wants to run, and I hope compensation is  
152 not the reason.

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154 **Council Member Jody Reichel** stated I ran to be a part of the City Council and to serve the community. I  
155 am not willing to say right now if I am for or against this, because I need to learn more about it. If it is the  
156 cost that is an issue, maybe councilmembers can contribute more than an employee would. Hopefully we  
157 can continue to investigate the opportunity.

158  
159 **Council Member Steve Soteres** stated it would be interesting to see what the public has to say about it.  
160 Right now I lean towards not supporting it, but I do not have a problem with citizens having an opportunity  
161 to talk about it.

162  
163 **Council Member Chris Burnett** stated from the perspective of drawing the best talent, you want to offer  
164 the best benefits package. Having served on many corporate boards and nonprofits, I have never served on  
165 a board where directors receive health benefits. They may receive other things like stock options. I think of  
166 councilmembers as a body that sometimes has to make difficult decisions about employees. I am concerned  
167 if we became part of the benefits package, could we really make the best decisions when it perhaps comes  
168 time to cut those benefits. I would never want us to be conflicted when we had to make a decision in the  
169 best interest of our constituents. The fact that the other cities do it, does not weigh heavily on my thought  
170 process. I have always thought that Sandy Springs is not like other cities. I would want to do it because it  
171 was the right thing. It ultimately may be in the best interest, particularly if we want to diversify the talent  
172 pool and it is determined this is important. I would like to hear from the public. Optics do concern me. We  
173 came out of the pandemic and received a substantial amount of federal money. We have been criticized on  
174 how we have used that money, such as not spending enough on the hungry or those facing evictions. During  
175 these uncertain times, is it the best time to be doubling our compensation?

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177 **Mayor Rusty Paul** stated if this is approved, I will not take any benefits. The retirement program does not  
178 receive any City subsidies. If council wants to be pay the full amount of their participation in the health and  
179 retirement programs, then I would not object. I would object to any City subsidies to the elected officials  
180 to participate in these benefits and I would veto it.

181  
182 **Council Member Bauman** stated in terms of timing this would be for the next council, so if not now,  
183 perhaps four years for now. How common is this in your past work?

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185 **City Manager Surratt** replied in previous work with two other cities, the elected officials had benefits.

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187 **Council Member Bauman** stated the Charter Commission, which had two former council members,  
188 unanimously supported pay increases. I think it is highly elitist for this elected body to talk about who  
189 should and who should not be on the council in relation to this. Maybe some of you would do this for no  
190 pay. I do not know if the Mayor would reject his salary or any increases from the Legislature. This should  
191 not be a position for the wealthy and the retired. This will benefit people more than it benefits me. If we  
192 were to take the issues of diversity and inclusion, socio-economic inclusion seriously, then we should ask  
193 the question of the Task Force. We should ask the community. I want to know what would inspire more  
194 people to do this. Just these benefits is a step in the right direction. I am doing this for others. I think it is  
195 highly elitist for this body to dismiss out of hand what would inspire people to run, not those things that we  
196 do not want them running for. Who are we to say that? It is the voters that say that. And that will be  
197 transparent. I would like us to take an up or down vote in August. If we get the four votes, and the Mayor  
198 vetos it, then the Council could override the veto. But I do hope we put it on the agenda and listen to our

199 constituents. And Mayor, I hope you speak to the Diversity and Inclusion Task Force because that is what  
200 inspired this idea.

201  
202 **Mayor Paul** stated we will put it on the first agenda in August.

203  
204 **Council Member Paulson** stated I do not consider myself an elitist. I am not retired and I am not wealthy.  
205 I do not care who runs for Council. I encourage anybody who is upset with what I am doing to run for  
206 Council. I have never heard anyone say it does not pay enough. I reject your of me characterization and the  
207 others who spoke tonight that are not in favor of this.

208  
209 **Council Member Burnett** stated I agree with Council Member Paulson. I did this because I love this city  
210 and I wanted to make it a better place. I do not feel like that was a fair representation of who we are. I hope  
211 it was just an argument and not a real belief of who you believe we are.

212  
213 **Mayor Paul** stated nobody has paid a higher price than for my public service over the last eight years. My  
214 business has dwindled to almost nothing because I have not solicited a single new client. It has cost me  
215 thousands of dollars a year to serve in this position. I know how much my family has sacrificed financially.  
216 To hear you characterize me like that is unfair. I do this because I love this city; and, I think I have skills  
217 and talents that help make it a better place. I have a lot respect for you, Mr. Bauman. That was not necessary.  
218 We have all voted our conscious. When you were elected, I told you I would never ask you to vote against  
219 you conscious. I think these men and women have expressed their conscious, and to have them attacked in  
220 that manner is extremely disappointing.

221  
222 There being no further business, the meeting adjourned **at 7:21 p.m.**

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224 Approved: August 3, 2021.

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227 \_\_\_\_\_  
228 Russell K. Paul, Mayor

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Raquel D. González, City Clerk