

Special Called Meeting of the City of Sandy Springs City Council was held Wednesday, August 27, 2014, at 6:00 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Rusty Paul called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

City Clerk Michael Casey reminded everyone to silence all electronic devices at this time. Additionally, those wishing to provide public comment during the Public Comment segment of the meeting are required to complete a public comment card. The cards are located at the entrance and need to be turned in to the City Clerk.

City Clerk Casey called the roll.

Mayor: Mayor Paul present

Councilmembers: Councilman John Paulson, Councilman Ken Dishman, Councilman Graham McDonald, Councilman Gabriel Sterling, Councilman Tibby DeJulio, and Councilman Andy Bauman present.

APPROVAL OF MEETING AGENDA

Motion and Vote: Councilman DeJulio moved to approve the Special Called Meeting Agenda for August 27, 2014. Councilman Dishman seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

CITY CENTER MASTER PLAN UPDATE

Mayor Rusty Paul stated the City Center is the most ambitious project the City has ever undertaken. Not everyone sees that the project should operate the same way. This is a City of 100,000 people and as he jokingly says, about 120,000 opinions. This is the third public hearing for this project and the City also sought input on the City website, solicited emails, and conducted a poll. This was done in order to try and do everything to get public opinion, insight, and direction on this project. This Council truly wants to use every tool possible to understand the community's attitudes and opinions. We want to incorporate as many of the community's thoughts and ideas as possible. Whatever decision the Council makes, some people will disagree with it and some of you will disagree with it strongly. All that Council can hope is that a consensus is reached that will make most people reasonably happy. No one has worked harder, cared more, and listened more intently, than this Council in trying to discern what the majority of people want to see at the City Center site. If the decision made next week is not what a member of the public wants, it is not because Council did not listen or did not care what they thought. He is proud of Council's work and time they contributed and their attitude towards trying to understand what the public wants.

Mayor Paul continued stating the most controversial aspect of this plan is the performing arts center. The Goody-Clancy plan, which was an in depth community input, has always had a performing arts center in it. This evening the public will hear why the City is proposing the plan that will be displayed. The City went through a process and rationale in order to get where we are this evening. Charlie Johnson, who is an expert on performing arts centers, advised the City on the facility that best meets the community needs. Some people think the City does not need a performing arts center and he understands that opinion. Others in the community think a performing arts center is essential to creating a sense of place and a place for the community to happen. There is no place in the community for clubs, civic groups, or organizations to meet. The reason for the size that is being proposed is because Mr. Johnson states it will

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work economically for a City the size of Sandy Springs. Many individuals have visited about a dozen similar facilities in Roswell, Gwinnett, and Buckhead and many others in the region. Without exception, the centers cautioned us to not build the PAC too small, because it just won't work. Staff looked at what is going on in the City. Last Friday night, there were more than 2,000 people that attended Movies By Moonlight, the annual community movie festival. Regularly on summer Sundays there are more than 2,000 people enjoying the Concerts at the Springs. For some, it did not make sense to propose a facility that was so much smaller than the demonstrated community demands. Council has been committed from day one to build the project right or don't do it. Some believe the City is spending too much money on these facilities and he understands those concerns. The public will see the City can pay for the project with existing resources and he is personally committed to a capital campaign to raise a significant portion of the performing arts center cost. This morning he and Councilman McDonald helped open the Epstein School's new renovation. The school raised \$6 million from the community to fund that privately. Holy Innocent School just raised \$22 million for the new addition to their school. He is convinced Sandy Springs citizens and the private sector will be equally as generous on this project. He will do everything he can to raise as much money as possible to minimize the public investment. The development team will speak this evening and they believe a performing arts center is crucial to the City Center project in order to attract the type of restaurants and shops that many people tell the City they want here. The development team says unless there is some type of activity center that brings people into the City Center at night, the result will only be chain restaurants and less quality retail, because the economics will not work. The reason for this statement will be provided during the presentation. If the City does not invest in itself, we cannot expect others to do so. The City is seeking the appropriate level of investment. At the same time, Council's mind is still very open, which is why tonight is so crucial. The comments this evening will be received very seriously, but not all the citizens will be satisfied with the results. Council will do what is in the best interest and what is right for the community. Council will do this by incorporating the citizens' wisdom as well. He thanked the City Manager, staff, architects, the development team, and all those who have been associated with this presentation. It has been a pleasure working with everyone to get where we are today. These individuals have listened to the elected officials, citizens, and then they tried to incorporate what they heard into the options that will be seen tonight. The team brought the best ideas, so that Council can arrive at the most informed recommendations possible. Anyone that wants to say something will be allowed to speak. Staff will take the comments in the order in which they arrived. If someone wishes to speak, they need to fill out a comment card and return it to the City Clerk's desk. Staff is also accepting written comments that will be read by the City Clerk. Every speaker will receive two minutes to speak. When the buzzer goes off, the individual will need to finish their comments and the next individual will be called up to speak. If someone has not finished their thoughts, they can submit written comments to the City Clerk. There may be some that have passionate and differing opinions. He insists that everyone be respectful and neighborly. This is the last public comment period before Council votes on this item on September 2nd. There will not be public comment at that time. He thanked the citizens for attending the meeting and being willing to share their comments. Sandy Springers are passionate about their community.

City Center Update

1. Performing Arts/Multi-Use Center

City Manager John McDonough presented slides 1 – 15 from the PowerPoint presentation.

2. Park and Green Space

George Bushey, Design Director for Rosser International, presented slides 16 – 25 from the PowerPoint presentation.

3. Master Development Site Options

Steve Provost, Vice President of jB+a, Inc., presented slides 26 – 43 from the PowerPoint presentation.

4. Retail

Mr. Bushey presented slides 44 – 54 of the PowerPoint presentation.

Jo Ann Chitty, Senior Vice President at Selig Enterprises, presented slides 55 – 61 from the PowerPoint presentation.

5. Project Budget and Funding Options

City Manager McDonough presented slides 62 – 68 from the PowerPoint presentation.

6. Public Comment

Mary Mattson, 3045 River W. Pkwy, stated the presentation was very impressive and overwhelming. There is very little time to absorb this much information. She asked why an outside company decided on the 750 – 1000 seats for a PAC and not the Sandy Springs residents. There has been a wonderful retail survey that she responded to on the City website, but there was no online survey for choice of the PAC. She understands there was a telephone survey and the Likert scale was used.

Mayor Rusty Paul stated the development team made a recommendation based on what the economics of the project will support. The decision is made by the Sandy Springs residents and that is where the final decision will be made. The City Center website, staff, and Council are accepting comments. Staff is tabulating the information that is being gathered.

Meade Sutterfield, 5730 Winterthur Lane, asked when the revised pro forma is going to be available.

City Manager John McDonough stated the plan will be available by the end of the week.

Mr. Sutterfield stated he spent an extensive amount of time looking at the pro forma provided in the previous document. He used sensitivity analysis when looking at the Burnsfield facility, which is comparable. This plan shows that 125,000 people attend their PAC. If the City's PAC is comparable, his numbers show the City will lose \$700,000 in year five. He is looking at numbers that show a five year pro forma, before revision, that will make \$200,000 over five years. Burnsfield lost \$2 million over the first five years and is still losing \$200,000 a year. He is not saying the City should not build a PAC, but he is saying the City needs to understand there may need to be a subsidy and what the level is. He does not want the City to have a \$500,000 a year problem they have no way to solve.

Evan Weisman, 820 Edgewater Trail, stated he has been a Sandy Springs resident for forty-four years. Whenever his family wants to see a movie, he and his family first check the movie theatre in Sandy Springs. When they do that, they do not have to get in the car to drive there. The City can have that same advantage with having a performing arts center here. There are many communities such as Duluth and Norcross that have performing arts centers. In each case, the public is able to drive to these performances, park their car, and walk to the restaurants and theatrical venues without getting back into their cars. He is sure the City can have the same atmosphere. As the traffic situation in Atlanta worsens, the convenience of avoiding highways and a short drive for the Sandy Springs residents becomes more attractive. There is already a small theatre in the City called Act 3 in a very small space. He is sure that Act 3 would welcome the chance to move to a place like the black box theatre.

Steve Levetan, 435 Stone Mill Trail, stated he is the Chair of the Sandy Springs Conservancy and is here tonight speaking on behalf of the Board. He commended City staff and the development team on their hard work in developing the new plan. The Conservancy is on record for advocating for more green space in the City Center. The Conservancy is pleased with the evaluation of the plan that includes increased green space and community gathering spaces. The spaces appear to be well balanced and allow for programs for multiple uses. These are key amenities that contribute to the economic value of the site and enhance the quality of life for all. The Board is pleased to support site plan Option 4. The Board looks forward to working with the City and other stakeholders in moving forward to implement the plan.

Susan Yeosock, 785 Lake Summit Drive, stated she is in attendance on behalf of the Lake Forrest Summit Community Association. The association held an annual meeting in February and reviewed the City Center Master Plan. This presentation was not available at that time. The association feels that it will be very important to have pedestrian walkability possibly all along Lake Forrest Drive to this project. The association feels there may be hidden costs. The association has worked with developers near District 5 on other projects for key components for the Master Plan. There may be upcoming costs associated with the intersections at Lake Forrest, Allen Road, and Northwood. The association would like to see the skewed intersection at Cliftwood and Carpenter and the vehicular and pedestrian conflicts eliminated.

Mark Griffith, 85 Brandon Ridge Drive, stated the term performing arts center is not mentioned once in the Goody-Clancy presentation. What is mentioned is the phrase multipurpose venue, which is an important distinction. A multipurpose venue is about making the civic building not be dormant after 5 pm. The idea was to use the cultural events to make it a destination that can be utilized twelve to eighteen hours a day. His concern is there is not discussion about one building, but instead two buildings. The size of the plot of land is still the same. He wonders if two buildings will minimize the housing space or if the walkable retail will be compromised. He questions if a performing arts center this size is needed in order to draw people into the City Center to utilize the retail. The neighbors in Roswell and Decatur have tremendous retail traffic, but do not have anything the size of what is being proposed.

Steve Grossman, 5170 Trimble Road, stated he is a boardmember of Art Sandy Springs and also the owner of Steve's Live Music in Sandy Springs. His business has had about 1,000 performances in the last two years. He is very much in favor of a performing arts center in the City as well as a black box. It is very important to have a full facility of 750 to 1,000 seats to house first class acts. He understands the cost of performing arts and this will be important to the community to have as an anchor.

Jim Comerford, 15 The Landing, stated he is the Chairman of the Sandy Springs Economic Development Advisory Committee. The Committee has had the privilege of representing the citizens in considering issues of economic development and community vitality. The Committee has been involved in all points of this very inclusive, open, and transparent process that has brought all here this evening. The Committee has enthusiastically endorsed the development of City Center and has positively watched the evolution of the plans for City Center that have occurred to date. Much of the underlying issue before us all is trust. The City Center is the physical manifestation of us as a community. The process by which we have gotten here, of the great thought exhibited by the public and private sector, greatly commends all of us. The previous Mayor, Eva Galambos, would tell the citizens that this City was founded on an impossible dream. Whatever Sandy Springs can dream, we can do. He thinks the previous Mayor would say to dream big.

Richard Hendrix, 1710 Winterthur Close N.W., thanked all of the individuals that presented this evening. He trusts all of Council and the City Manager because of the work and dedication he has seen that has gone into this. He is a strong proponent of the performing arts center and he prefers Option B+.

He defers to the judgment of all the professionals. He is very impressed by the expertise, professionalism, and dedication of everyone involved in this project. He has confidence the right decision will be made.

Jan Collins, 445 Ferry Landing, stated she represents the Sandy Springs Society which has served the City for twenty-five years. The Society has raised \$3 million and all of it has gone back to the City. She moved to the area forty-five years ago and since then the City has grown and so have the needs. The City raised the bar high when voting in the current Mayor and Council who have wisdom and transparency. The Society appreciates all they do. She read the study of what makes the happiest cities and at the top of the list are those cities that help support the arts to flourish.

Tom Johnson, 6500 Scott Valley, stated he has been a resident of Sandy Springs for the last thirty-five years. He thanked everyone involved in this large project. He is now in favor of the B+ center and a black box, once he saw the 3D presentation. The project will be an asset to the community to help it grow.

Patti Mactas, 911 St. Lyonn Cts., Marietta, GA, stated she is the Artistic Executive Director of Act 3 Productions, which is located in the Sandy Springs Plaza. Not many citizens know where Act 3 is located. She thanked the community and the City for their support. She wants to share lessons she learned in five years that may affect how Council feels about the performing arts. Act 3 is a very small black box theatre that has good lighting and sound, but not much else. Act 3 is located at the back of a shopping center and yet has been able to attract some of the best talent, children, and attendees. For the last three years, the theatre has won more metropolitan Atlanta theatre awards than any other theatre in the Atlanta area. The money is made with the children performers and that is where the City will see their return on investment. A black box and large theatre are needed in order to cover the entire scope to serve the community.

Cheri Morris, 4940 Long Island Drive, stated she is on the board of Art Sandy Springs. Art Sandy Springs is very much in favor of a performing arts center as part of the City Center. She assisted with a survey a few years ago where she learned that \$.49 of every dollar spent by residents of Sandy Springs is spent outside of the City. Art Sandy Springs believes the performing arts center can turn that tide by building both brand and community. Every community in America is working towards attracting and retaining the creative class. Great cities like Austin, TX and Toronto, Canada have great class. Sandy Springs competes with all of the northern arc cities for every homebuyer, store, and hotel. She asked what Sandy Springs brand is and why anyone would choose Sandy Springs over another city. The cities of Roswell, Decatur, and Marietta have great brands. The City's brand will be greatly improved by becoming the home of a performing arts center for North Metro Atlanta in order to attract and retain the creative class to improve the community.

Pamela Jeter, 5680 Lake Forrest Drive, stated she is in agreement with Ms. Morris regarding the brand of the City. The presentation did not meet her expectations. She is from the Boston area that offers great food and connectivity, which she did not feel in this presentation. There are younger generations in the City that do not necessarily have the 2.5 kids. The single populations are rising and the City should consider this. The restaurants she saw listed did not meet her expectations. The City should watch the oversized homogenized architecture. The area seems like it will be large and cold with a lot of stone. She was visualizing charm, quaintness, and an intimate approach to meeting the community needs. People can be alienated if the scale is out of proportion in regards to the buildings.

Mayor Paul stated the drawings that were presented are simply place holders. The design team cannot start the architecture until the concept plan is approved by Council.

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Jon Haydon, 568 Mount Vernon Highway, stated he was born in Sandy Springs. He is a professional actor and will speak about the performing arts centers he knows that have been successful. The best ones are the ones that are multiuse and can hold as many people as possible when featuring a hit show. The managing director that operates the theatre can make money by being prudent and booking the theatre nightly with civic groups, professional groups, singers, or travelling acts. He wants to see the City have a great place that children and families can be proud of.

Jody Reichel, 639 Carriage Drive, stated she is known as a "dance mom". Her daughter is a competitive dancer who attends several recitals and competitions each year. Every time an event is held, they have to go to downtown Atlanta. The Firth Center is about the same size as the one being proposed in Sandy Springs. It would be nice to have something like this in the City in order to not be required to drive so far every time.

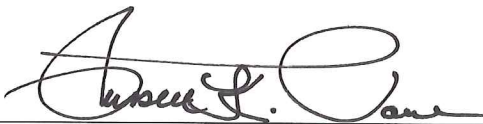
Chris Burnett, 6115 Rivershore Parkway, stated he originally was going to speak on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce, on which he served on the board for a number of years, and the Economic Development Board, and on behalf of the business community. He then decided to speak as a father. His family was at a restaurant on Roswell Road recently and his son that is twenty years old said that Roswell Road is really tired. His son stated that this is not a place that he as a young person wants to stay. His son lives in Midtown and lives around all the trendy things that happen in that area. The PAC is a challenging issue and some people do not understand such a large project. The younger generation is the future and fifteen years from now they will be the homeowners, parents, civic and community leaders. The City needs to do something now to keep them in Sandy Springs.

Mayor Paul thanked the public for their comments. This meeting was to inform the public on the proposed project. The City did its best to go public as quickly as possible once we reached a decision point. This evening the public has seen all of that information in one presentation given in the best way. The Council appreciates the public comments and the love and passion for the City of Sandy Springs. He thanked the public for attending the meeting.

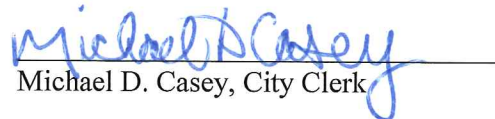
ADJOURNMENT

Motion and Vote: Councilman DeJulio moved to adjourn the meeting. Councilman Paulson seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 7:53 p.m.

Date Approved: September 16, 2014



Russell K. Paul, Mayor



Michael D. Casey, City Clerk