

Work Session Meeting of the Sandy Springs City Council was held on Tuesday, January 6, 2015, at 7:10 p.m., Mayor Rusty Paul presiding.

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

STAFF DISCUSSION ITEMS

Public Works

1. 15-0012 T-0024 Hammond Drive Improvement Project Briefing

Director of Public Works Garrin Coleman gave a PowerPoint presentation on Hammond Drive Capital Improvement Project T-0024.

Councilman Ken Dishman asked what drives the five year Environmental Impact Study (EIS) duration.

Director of Public Works Coleman stated a lot of it is the amount of environmental work that has to be done and the number of concepts.

Councilman Dishman asked if there is anything that can be done to accelerate the process.

City Manager John McDonough stated the process can be accelerated by paying for it locally. The cost is close to \$40 to \$60 million.

Councilman Tibby DeJulio stated currently the City has about \$670,000 of the funds for the project and will be using \$196 million for the City Center program.

Director of Public Works Coleman stated the City would be contributing about twenty percent of the cost which is about \$8 to \$12 million.

Councilman DeJulio stated not many residents in the area are in favor of this project.

Councilman Graham McDonald stated he lives immediately next to the widened Johnson Ferry corridor which was two lanes and is now four lanes. In the last couple of years the traffic volume on that road has increased by fifty percent. If more lanes are built, more traffic will appear. He wants to know confidently before moving forward with this project that the City wants more traffic in those directions. He heard that Goody Clancy thought a four lane Hammond Drive would have a negative impact on the City Center development. He spoke to the neighborhood association on each side of Hammond Drive and traffic was a concern that was raised.

Director of Public Works Coleman stated when going through a federally funded process, the no build is an option that is also evaluated. The vertical fix needs to be looked at when reviewing the corridor. There may be a way to connect the neighborhoods underneath, so that Hammond Drive would be going over the neighborhoods.

Councilman DeJulio stated the difference between this project and Abernathy is that Abernathy only had two entrances from the neighborhoods which were Wright Road and Brandon Mill. This project will have five or six entrances. He was involved in the \$500,000 earmark which was given to the City for looking at bus rapid transit in this area. On all of the concepts shown there is nothing for bus rapid transit.

Councilman Gabriel Sterling stated on the first map plan bus rapid transit was shown. There are areas in the middle of the plan where two traffic lanes can be kept and space for adding a bus rapid transit lane or light rail in the future. With the five year analysis, this project is looking to be built in 2022 to 2025. Also, what needs to be considered is the transit future for the City. He suggested earlier the Transportation Investment Act (TIA) funding of \$10 million could be used at the intersection of Roswell Road and Hammond Drive to increase the stacking to move the dysfunction out of that area. Staff understands that Council does not want to see unhealthy traffic that damages the neighborhoods. Council wants a pedestrian friendly neighborhood and transit at some point. He would like staff to get the feedback from the neighborhoods to get the preferred option. Starting the process allows the feedback from the neighborhoods, the rest of the City, and traffic engineers, so that all of the options are looked at.

Director of Public Works Coleman stated one of the travel lanes could be used for bus rapid transit in the interim until the median is reinstituted.

Mayor Rusty Paul asked if at one time there was a proposal to have a rail between the Cumberland area and Doraville MARTA station with a light rail component that would come up Roswell Road, make a right on Hammond Drive and extend to the Dunwoody station, then carry back over to I-285.

Director of Public Works Coleman stated he believes that is correct. The preferred mode is the bus rapid transit.

Councilman John Paulson stated if the City applies for funding, does that commit the City to spending \$60 million.

Director of Public Works Coleman stated the City will still need to be selected and awarded the funds and then will have to go through the public process.

Mayor Paul stated he understands the reservations that everyone has about that area that are both positive and negative. That particular segment is inadequate for the traffic that is there now. This is a ten year project. If ten years from now the City decides something needs to be done, then the change would not occur until another ten years from that date. If five years into the project planning Council decides the project is not needed, not moving forward with the project is still an option as well. If the project is not at least started, there will be no opportunity for the project in the future. When moving forward with this project the City will have the data, so that future Councils and future Mayors will have that ability. If situations change, they will not then have to start a ten year project.

Councilman Sterling stated the \$500,000 the City will be spending on this is federal money that is waiting for the City to spend. If it is decided by the City in three to four years to move forward with this project, the City taxpayer funds will be used at that point.

Councilman DeJulio asked how much more of the \$670,000 will the City have to spend to evaluate this project.

Director of Public Works Coleman stated he believes the EIS was estimated from \$500,000 to \$700,000 with another \$500,000 in preliminary and finals plans. This amount will include the \$670,000 and the City would pay twenty percent of that amount. Staff's intention is to apply for funding for design, right-of-way, and construction.

Councilman DeJulio asked if this is a request to Council to apply for the funding.

Director of Public Works Coleman responded yes.

Councilman McDonald asked staff to investigate whether Goody Clancy did give the opinion that four traffic lanes would not be ideal.

There was a consensus of Council to allow staff to move forward with applying for funding for the T-0024 Hammond Drive Improvement Project.

Community Development

2. 15-0013 Natural Resource Protection Update

Director of Community Development Angela Parker gave a PowerPoint Presentation on Natural Resource Protection. She requested guidance from Council on the item that states, "When existing trees along the entire street frontage are cleared as a part of single family redevelopment, require tree planting along the frontage: one tree for lots 100' wide or less; two trees for lots great than 100' wide and up to 200' wide; and three trees for lots greater than 200' wide".

Councilman Gabriel Sterling asked if staff looked at what other jurisdictions have done with their frontage trees.

Director of Community Development Parker responded no. In the peer review, generally all of the other jurisdictions focused either on canopy or the number of trees on a site.

Councilman Sterling asked if a new subdivision is developed, will the rule apply for that as well.

Director of Community Development Parker stated it should apply in that case as well, and townhomes would be considered single family attached.

Councilman Sterling stated he is more in favor of these suggestions for environmental reasons and the increased walkability of the neighborhoods. When there are trees, it makes cars drive slower and people feel safer. This is something that should potentially be encouraged. He is not sure what the correct number of trees to plant is, but something similar to this should be done.

Councilman Tibby DeJulio stated he does not like the idea of the City telling residents they have to place a tree in front of their house. The City has regulations on how much tree canopy is to be on the lot and he has no problem with that. He may not want a tree in front of his house, but instead on the side or behind. He does not want someone telling him to place a tree in the front of his house.

Councilman John Paulson stated the suggested language is, "When the existing trees along the entire street frontage are cleared as a part of a redevelopment", this will require replanting. In these situations, trees were on the property previously and were removed as part of construction. This should be the minimum requirements for the replanting.

Councilman DeJulio asked what do the City's ordinance says on how much land needs to be covered by trees.

Director of Community Development Parker stated that amount is thirty percent.

Councilman Sterling stated the City has a regulation that a percentage of the property have a required amount of tree coverage. There are better environmental and walkability reasons to encourage tree planting. Another option is that the City does not require the tree planting, but instead if a certain number of trees are removed, the applicant will be allowed to pay a lower fee into the tree fund.

Councilman DeJulio stated if someone is redeveloping a property, sidewalks are required to be installed by the developer.

Councilman Sterling stated the use of sidewalks is increased if there are trees.

Councilman Andy Bauman stated as a proponent of this provision, he would prefer the planting requirement be for lots seventy-five feet wide or less. The language is addressing the term of clear cutting, where a large portion of the property in the front is completely cleared out. Trees being removed have a heat island effect on the road and walkability. The City has regulations on the aesthetics of properties and he does not see this as going any further than many of the other requirements as to the aesthetics of property. There are legitimate reasons why neighborhoods would want to include this on their list of reasonable restrictions on redevelopment.

Councilman Ken Dishman stated he agrees with Councilman Bauman. The City's responsibility is to protect the integrity of the neighborhoods. If a developer clear cuts a property when the rest of the neighborhood has trees, they are fundamentally impacting the integrity of the neighborhood. One tree replacing twenty that were removed is not asking a lot from the developer. This will help ensure that the neighborhoods have heavy tree canopy and do not have bald patches where trees were removed.

Councilman Bauman stated he lives in a neighborhood that was completely cleared to be built fifteen years ago. He does not know if Fulton County required this or the developer chose to do this, but the developer planted a tree in the front of each property. For someone that walks a dog twice a day in the summer, this has created a much more walkable neighborhood. He strongly respects property rights, but when the Council decides to implement an ordinance, it is just a matter of what is reasonably included in the ordinance. He is in favor of this suggestion and reserves the right, pending the final language, to offer another measurement after more research on whether the appropriate standard should be 100 feet or 75 feet.

Councilman McDonald stated he agrees with Councilman DeJulio on protecting the tree canopy. Rules that are in place that require certain percentages of a lot to be covered are a good thing. However, he does not like the concept of stating a tree has to be planted in front of your house, if a tree was removed, in order to build the house. He believes that is encroaching on something that could be a restrictive HOA covenant and that the City should not be involved in.

Councilman Paulson stated the required tree canopy does not bother him if the consequence only triggers when all of the trees in front of the house are cleared to begin with.

There was a consensus of Council to proceed with a required tree frontage planting.

Councilman DeJulio asked that staff get the number to Council of how many homes are built in the City with no trees planted in front of the homes. He would like to know if this is a problem in the City.

Mayor Rusty Paul asked if Director of Community Development Angela Parker can come up with a compromise that might reach a better consensus. An option could be instead that applicants be given credits and incentives to do these things. A separate ordinance option to consider is to incorporate what is now before Council and add another section that relies primarily on incentives.

Councilman Bauman stated there has been discussion regarding historic tree preservation. There have been some questions as to the legality and ability to preserve historic trees. Councilman Sterling has been in contact with Trees Atlanta about a partnership on a voluntary basis to have trees planted within the right-of-way in the City.

Mayor Paul stated he has reservations regarding the required tree plantings in the front yard.

City Manager John McDonough asked if the trees are to be required, what types of trees should be planted.

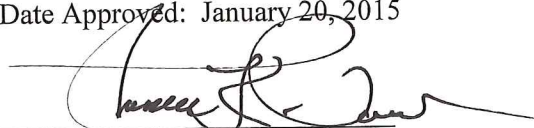
Councilman Sterling stated that should be left up to the City arborist.

Director of Community Development Parker completed the PowerPoint presentation with slide 24.

There was a consensus of Council to fund the following tree projects: Johnson Ferry Road medians, Abernathy Road medians, and Abernathy Road street trees.

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 7:51 p.m.

Date Approved: January 20, 2015



Russell K. Paul, Mayor



Michael D. Casey, City Clerk