

Work Session Meeting of the Sandy Springs City Council was held on Tuesday, February 7, 2017, at 8:20 p.m., Mayor Rusty Paul presiding.

Councilmembers present: Council Member John Paulson, Council Member Ken Dishman, Council Member Chris Burnett, Council Member Gabriel Sterling, Council Member Tibby DeJulio, and Council Member Andy Bauman.

STAFF DISCUSSION ITEMS

City Manager's Office

1. 17-066 Underground Utilities Policy

Assistant City Manager Jim Tolbert began the Underground Utilities Policy PowerPoint presentation.

Mayor Rusty Paul stated during the Ashton Woods subdivision construction he thought the utilities would be placed underground.

Assistant City Manager Tolbert stated that project is item d on the presentation. He continued with the presentation.

Council Member Tibby DeJulio asked about section b for the City of Chamblee's ordinance and who determines what amount to place the utilities underground is too expensive.

Assistant City Manager Tolbert stated the City Engineer determines that.

Council Member DeJulio asked if the City could require all new construction and new development to have underground utilities. He knows the transmission lines cannot be moved, because the cost would be astronomical now.

Assistant City Manager Tolbert stated there is nothing legally that he knows of that prohibits the City from requiring new construction to have underground utilities. The reality is, if everyone is required to place the utilities underground, small developments will be required to replace streetscape. Some developments may have to spend \$1 million on the development and another \$1 million to move the utilities underground. The cost for underground utilities is outrageous. Georgia Power requires that they install all the utilities just like at City Springs.

Council Member Gabriel Sterling stated he actually wants to see redevelopment happen in some of the areas that need it. One of the issues we have is the cost. To bury three utility poles cost \$900,000.

Council Member DeJulio stated the cost was \$5,000 per foot.

Council Member Sterling stated he likes the mix of the Chamblee ordinance. If the City accomplishes anything, it will be in the redevelopment area. There will not be new subdivisions built, because there is no land left for doing that.

Mayor Paul stated speaking of tear downs and rebuilds, there are townhomes that are being built in existing subdivisions. When the density is increased, the City could require underground utilities as part of that type of redevelopment. He would consider the development along Mabry and Spalding Woods a new subdivision.

Council Member Sterling stated the utilities at that subdivision are buried underground. He was under the impression that Ashton Woods would bury all the utilities in that area. Some are being buried and some

are not. We need a policy to remove some of the visual clutter in the community. The question is what is economical viable.

Council Member John Paulson asked if a reasonable size for a project is 20,000 square feet, so that the cost of burying the utilities does not overwhelm the cost of the project.

Assistant City Manager Tolbert stated it is hard to tell if that is a good number. It depends on the utilities that have to be buried. If there is a bank on a corner lot with five poles that need to be buried, it may be too costly. If it is one pole, then it could very likely be a reasonable cost.

Council Member Paulson stated he is trying to argue the issue of a project of a certain size. When the cost of the utility relocation kills the project, then that is unfair to him.

Council Member Sterling asked if the City Engineer can have that role and the Community Development Director can review the cost. Half a million dollars to bury the power lines on a \$300,000 project is unreasonable. He is not sure if Council can set this type of policy.

Mayor Paul stated when he owned a building, the redevelopment was going to cost about \$300,000 and the overlay would have been about another \$75,000, so he decided not to move forward with the project, because he could not afford it. There is a balancing act. If people are burdened with too many costs, redevelopment may be shut down in the areas where we want it. There is also an opportunity such as with Ashton Woods. They are burying the utility lines on the inside of the project and it would not have taken much to bury them on the perimeter of the project. We need to give staff some type of direction on where to go. He would like the City to take advantage of every opportunity to have the utilities buried underground.

Council Member Paulson stated he likes alternative numbers 1 and 3.

Council Member DeJulio stated there are lot of tear downs and rebuilds of homes in the City. He asked what the cost is to move the utilities underground for a single new home. It cannot be exorbitant. If he were going to buy a \$1 million home, he would not want above ground utility lines.

Assistant City Manager Tolbert stated the cost depends on where the utility poles are located and if there are transformers on the poles.

Council Member Sterling stated what Council Member DeJulio is referring to is in the commercial areas trying to require the burying of utility poles. A single-family home being required to bury the utility lines could exorbitantly affect some of the housing costs.

Mayor Paul stated he at least agrees with alternatives 1 and 3. If Council chooses alternative number 1, he wants to make sure the utilities are being placed underground on the perimeter and not just the interior of a project.

Council Member Sterling stated the City got Mill Creek to bury their utilities, but did not get the development on Franklin Road to bury theirs.

Council Member Chris Burnett stated he likes alternatives 1 and 3. He would be careful on the 20,000 square foot minimum, because that will be situational. Depending on how many poles need to be removed and how much that changes the cost of the project, it may render the project not financially viable. We need to be careful not to state just a minimum square footage.

Council Member DeJulio asked if Council has the flexibility to exempt someone from this requirement, if we felt it was unreasonable.

Mayor Paul stated that may be an issue of picking favorites and non-favorites, and that could set the City up for a lawsuit.

Assistant City Manager Tolbert stated criteria language could be placed in the ordinance that would allow the engineers to follow, so they can make that decision.

Council Member DeJulio asked if the City has a position called City Engineer.

Assistant City Manager Tolbert responded yes.

Council Member Bauman suggested making the underground utilities a requirement for all commercial developments, and then having the ability for the City Engineer to agree with it.

There was a consensus of Council to move forward with alternatives 1 and 3 and to include criteria for alternative number 3 to allow flexibility, depending on the cost.

2. 17-067 Rezoning Analysis - Criteria, Indicators, and Tools

Assistant City Manager Jim Tolbert gave the Rezoning Analysis - Criteria, Indicators, and Tools PowerPoint presentation. This presentation was a report to Council. There were no comments from Council.

3. 17-068 SunTrust Stadium Traffic Management Update

Assistant City Manager Bryant Poole gave the SunTrust Stadium Traffic Management Update.

Mayor Rusty Paul asked if even during nongame days that the residents from East Cobb that drive down Riverside Drive would not use that interchange to get over to that area.

Assistant City Manager Poole stated that is correct. The study was showing that the primary impact for people that could benefit was right at the Cumberland CID. For the people in northern East Cobb it was not showing that they would drive through that area. The study was not just for the Braves traffic, but also for the regional impact. The initial cost analysis indicates the proposed flex shoulder lane at Windy Hill Road is about \$8 million and the City agrees to participate in that.

Mayor Paul asked if that cost is mainly to strengthen the shoulder.

Assistant City Manager Poole stated there are some areas where walls would have to be built. In the proposal, there is also talk about widening the bridge. The estimate for that cost is on the higher side. There are ways that GDOT can curtail the cost by doing variances to their own policy, such as narrowing their own lanes on the interstate. The estimated price is based on if GDOT will not allow any variances.

Council Member Tibby DeJulio asked if there is a work plan for staff and the police officers.

Assistant City Manager Poole stated as recent as today, staff is working on the plans on what work force and resources are needed. A police officer will be located at key intersections, as well as a Public Works staff member. The intent is to keep the staff out of the road, but they are willing to help if necessary. For the evening games, a staff member may begin the shift at 4:00 p.m. in order to move the traffic through the area. There may be staff after the game to deal with that traffic. Staff plans on operating the Traffic Management Center (TMC) and Cobb County will have their own TMC as well. Staff is working with Cobb County regarding the traffic, whether it is cones or message boards placed near the stadium. Staff will be reaching out to the businesses in the Powers Ferry area to understand what they will be doing as well.

Council Member DeJulio asked if Cobb County or the Braves would reimburse the City the cost of the traffic management. This will require a lot of Police officer and Public Works staff time that will cost the City money.

Assistant City Manager Poole responded at this time, no.

Council Member DeJulio asked if that topic has been brought up by the City that the Braves are getting the benefit out of this project while the City is receiving some of the expense with no benefit.

Assistant City Manager Poole stated he believes both organizations are aware of it. In fairness to the Braves, the City will need to know how much it will cost the City. This will require the City to finalize the traffic management plan to understand the resources and costs.

Mayor Paul stated the issue is if a plan is made, it will be altered the moment that we start implementing it. For the first month or so after the stadium opens, it will be a disaster, because no one knows how to get to the stadium.

Council Member Andy Bauman stated he would like more information on the traffic count data and to include some of the not so obvious intersections, as well as game days versus non-game days.

Assistant City Manager Poole responded yes. There is a concern that there will be an increase in traffic volume, whether it is on the City roads, the interstate, or in the neighborhoods. There would be an analysis prepared for non-game days and one for game days.

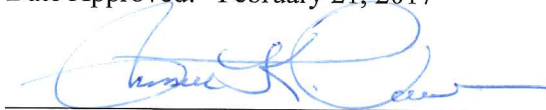
Council Member Bauman stated he wants the residents to know that as a City we are collecting our own data as well.

Council Member DeJulio asked when the express lanes on I-75 would be open.

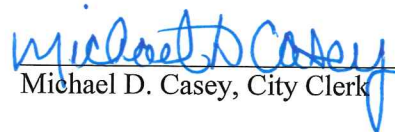
Assistant City Manager Poole stated he believes that is one year to one and half years away.

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 9:11 p.m.

Date Approved: February 21, 2017



Russell K. Paul, Mayor


Michael D. Casey, City Clerk