

Work Session Meeting of the Sandy Springs City Council was held on Tuesday, March 17, 2015, at 7:50 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. **15-107** Consideration of Revisions to Sandy Springs Capital Sidewalk Program Scoring Model for use in the Implementation of the FY 2016 Sidewalk Program

CIP Unit Manager Marty Martin gave a PowerPoint presentation on the proposed revisions to Sandy Springs Capital Sidewalk Program Scoring Model for use in the implementation of the FY 2016 Sidewalk Program. There was an addition of three criteria in response to feedback from Council and staff. The scale is an overall total of fifty points. There has been concern about right-of-way contributions for sidewalk projects. For that reason, right-of-way availability has received a double scoring point of ten.

Councilman Andy Bauman asked if for right-of-way availability the City can take into account a property owner or neighborhood that demonstrates willingness to donate the right-of-way.

CIP Unit Manager Martin responded yes. Staff will look for a petition letter of intent from the neighbors of a willingness to donate the right-of-way.

Councilman Gabriel Sterling stated if there are ten houses in row and the property owners are willing to donate the right-of-way, can staff move this project up the rankings in the capital sidewalk project list. Some people get confused about the ranking of the capital sidewalk project versus the neighborhood sidewalk project. He referred to the citizen that spoke earlier during public comment about Dudley Lane receiving a sidewalk and he does not believe that falls under this topic of discussion.

Councilman Bauman stated it is his understanding that Council was presented a budget of \$750,000 that will go towards sidewalks that is separate from the Heard's Ferry project in the capital program. This is one of the line items that Council voted on and if Council votes on it, that money will be used to go towards the ranked projects of which Dudley Lane or any other street could be included.

Councilman Sterling stated there are two separate funds for sidewalk projects. Some people think this ranking affects the neighborhood sidewalk program, which it does not.

Councilman Bauman stated he personally does not care about any particular project. What he cares about is a good public policy that allows the City to prioritize and build projects to get people from where they are to where they want to be and also addresses safety concerns. The criteria for proximity to parks he supports. He favors proximity as a scoring criteria to private schools. He does not believe public schools should be a part of the scoring, because based on how he understands the City policy that is a whole other category.

Mayor Rusty Paul stated when new schools are built the sidewalks need to be taken into consideration.

Councilman Bauman stated the school sidewalks should not go under the ranking, but be separately considered. Those sidewalks are a super priority and that has been the historic policy of this City.

Mayor Paul stated Council is now voting on a new policy which will abrogate the previous policy.

Councilman Bauman stated he proposes that public schools be a separate ranking from the parks.

Councilman Sterling stated he does not disagree necessarily. The City has a policy that sidewalks be installed within a quarter mile of any school, whether it be public or private.

City Manager John McDonough stated in the last fiscal year budget a sidewalk was constructed to the new Heards Ferry Elementary school.

Councilman Sterling stated this is a ranking policy for capital programs and the quarter mile requirement would still be upheld.

Mayor Paul stated if Council wants to be sure specific language is in the policy, then it needs to be included in the policy.

Councilman Sterling stated there are four different criteria and one of them is building sidewalks within a four mile radius of a school. Just because this policy is passed, it does not make that requirement go away.

Mayor Paul stated if a new policy is passed, it would be replacing the old policy.

Councilman Bauman stated Council should reaffirm that public schools are included in the policy. He is rethinking the criteria of the proximity to places of worship. Schools are unique in that the population is predominately of a young non-driving age. Private schools should also be included in the criteria.

Councilman Tibby DeJulio stated down the street from where he lives is the International Jewish Academy, which was required to install their own sidewalk.

Councilman Bauman stated a school is a reflection of demand for a sidewalk.

Councilman DeJulio stated a condition of zoning can be included that a sidewalk be required to be constructed.

Councilman Bauman stated the City needs to recognize there are existing schools. When looking at the larger list of items, if there is proximity to a park or school, then those are areas used significantly by the vulnerable young underage non-driving population. Ten out of the fifty points should be ranked for parks and schools. He endorses this policy and Mr. White made very good points about cost. If there were a two tier review that includes safety, then that could begin the process for a sidewalk being requested. If that yields a project that for example may cost \$500,000 and Council really wants and needs it under this policy, then the City should start planning for it. This policy will blend desire, need, safety, and cost.

Mayor Paul stated there can be as many criteria as Council chooses. If the sidewalk cannot be built due to fund constraints, he does not understand why cost would be at the bottom of the priority list when it has to be the number one criteria.

Councilman Graham McDonald stated under this policy there may be a project such as the river edge north project that can be constructed within the budget. The policy risks the Council not pursuing the projects that may have a large price tag.

Councilman Sterling stated one main point Mr. White made was right-of-way availability is not a cost issue, but instead a desire issue. If someone is willing to give up their own property, that is a desire to have a sidewalk.

Mayor Paul stated if there is a project that the City does not have enough money in the budget to fund, then all of Council has the ability to change the budget. The budget can be changed anytime that Council chooses. He is not in favor of making cost the third item.

Councilman John Paulson stated one thing that was brought up was where safety should be addressed. When he looks at the criteria, safety does not jump out at him.

CIP Unit Manager Martin stated the single biggest measure within these criteria is the roadway classification. There are a certain number of trips on the roadway and a certain number of pedestrian movements adjacent to the number of trips on the roadway. If you look at the pedestrian report that Transportation Planner Kristen Westcott provided to Council several weeks ago you will see those scores and recommendations line up with safety and the need. The other criteria that staff measures that could potentially be considered are similar to the vehicle accidents. Staff can calculate where there have been vehicle pedestrian accidents.

Councilman Paulson stated the criteria does not specifically address safety anywhere.

City Manager McDonough stated the term safety is implied. Sidewalks are built for safety in order for people to travel along roadways. He is not sure how to objectively or subjectively evaluate that. The highest level of traffic is typically on the arterial collectors where the cars travel at a higher rate of speed.

Councilman Paulson stated places of worship are different than schools, because children attend school five days a week and many churches are open only on Sundays.

City Manager McDonough stated these items came from a previous Work Session where there was a general consensus from Council to add the items in red.

Councilman Paulson stated there is a different level of usage for schools than there is for places of worship.

Councilman Ken Dishman stated he is very comfortable with the suggested changes. Feasibility in the project has to be the number one priority to be considered and that includes cost and constructability.

Councilman DeJulio stated the suggested changes are good but he would like to add that the parks and schools be within proximity to Sandy Springs. He cannot see the City building sidewalks that lead to parks, schools, and churches that are outside the City. A lot of times the sidewalks are not being connected, so the City sidewalks end up going to nowhere.

Mayor Paul asked if Councilman DeJulio would make an exception if a project included a MOU with a neighboring jurisdiction.

Councilman DeJulio stated he would support that.

Councilman Bauman stated he strongly objects to linking sidewalks in Sandy Springs to other jurisdictions.

Councilman Sterling stated he objects as well.

Councilman Bauman stated this is a demand and safety driven issue. There are other areas of the City that are busy pedestrian areas. There is an amphitheater, two private schools, and a horse park that are very close to Sandy Springs. The sidewalks will make it safer for the residents to get to those areas.

Councilman Sterling stated the City should not be held to a certain standard because one jurisdiction does not responsibly take care of its citizens. Most of the southern part of the City is oriented south and some cooperative projects have been completed with Dunwoody. In the long term this may encourage the city to the south to place funds into their sidewalk projects. If Dudley Lane is ranked on the list, it may encourage the possibility of all the connections being completed and both jurisdictions being served better.

Councilman DeJulio asked where does the City stop with this. Eight years ago the City received a request from Chastain Park to help them build their capital project, because the residents of Sandy Springs were using that park. If Sandy Springs builds a sidewalk to Chastain Park, why not build all the way to the park to help with the capital expenditures as requested. The Council at that time made a decision that this was not in the City's area and the park would be responsible for their own sidewalks. He supports the decision to allow the City's sidewalks to connect to other jurisdictions as long as those jurisdictions are willing to have an agreement and also place an investment in the area.

Councilman Sterling stated he does not believe that is applicable to this discussion. No one is spending money in another jurisdiction. This discussion is about spending money in this jurisdiction to serve the citizens. Connecting the sidewalks is the right thing to do. Just because another jurisdiction does not move as fast as we want doesn't mean the City should not look out for the best interest of its citizens. The City of Atlanta may pass a \$250 million bond referendum for projects such as these.

City Manager McDonough stated the way the policy is drafted, it recognizes any public park as a criteria. If there is a consensus of Council, that language will be left in the policy. If Council wishes the park to be specific to Sandy Springs, that needs to be noted in the policy.

Councilman McDonald asked if the proposed policy considers the existence of a blind curve. Whether it is on a connector, distributor, or local road, compared to the same classification of road that does not have a blind curve.

CIP Unit Manager Martin stated there is no ability to consider that criteria that he is aware of.

Councilman McDonald stated that is something that should be addressed. He would like to hear from staff on why this is something that might not be able to be addressed. A hypothetical situation is two distributor roads of the same classification, one having a blind curve and one not having a blind curve. When he references blind curve he means a short sight distance.

CIP Unit Manager Martin stated evidence of pedestrian activity and walkability is associated with the road shoulder. That is subjective at this point and is based on field evaluations when looking at the sites. These are assessed more so in constructability than anything else, because that gives a relative indication of how to create a shoulder on the street, if it does not exist already.

Councilman McDonald stated subjective analyses are being made when the various items are being ranked, such as dangerous curves for pedestrians.

CIP Unit Manager Martin stated staff could potentially assess an existing walkability of the road shoulder. If there is a walkable road shoulder, it is less likely that pedestrians will be walking in the travel lane. If there is not a walkable shoulder, there is a greater probability that they might resort to walking in the traffic lane.

City Manager McDonough asked how many people in Sandy Springs have been hit by a car on the side of the road in the last year.

Police Chief Ken DeSimone stated two people have been struck and killed in the last two years and they were both walking on sidewalks.

Mayor Paul stated there is a consensus of Council that they would like some recognition that safety is a factor in these criteria.

City Manager McDonough suggested combining the criteria of parks and schools into one category and replace places of worship with safety for five points. Dead man curves and dangerous conditions will receive five points and straight roads will receive one point.

Councilman Bauman stated he objects. He agrees with adding safety, but there is so much weight on cost of a project. The most vulnerable and most in need who cannot drive are going to parks and schools. He asked that the parks and schools category be ten out of fifty points. If there is a park nearby a school, that should equal ten points.

City Manager McDonough stated an additional five points can be added to give a total of fifty-five points.

Councilman Dishman stated he thinks evidence of pedestrian activity is for safety. He suggested changing the wording to add safety.

Councilman Sterling stated that does not address Councilman McDonald's concern about the dead man's curve.

Councilman McDonald stated adding the safety language may address his concern.

Councilman Dishman stated Riverside Drive is an example of a dangerous road for pedestrians. That is one where there is no evidence of pedestrian activity.

Councilman McDonald stated people are smart and do not walk along Riverside Drive, because it is dangerous. He likes Councilman Dishman's suggestion regarding pedestrian activity and safety. There are areas of the City that people will not walk because of a danger factor.

Mayor Paul suggested a change to the language of pedestrian activity with the addition of "including particularly at risk pedestrian activity".

Councilman McDonald suggested adding the language "or lack thereof due to safety".

Councilman Bauman thanked staff for the suggested changes to the policy. He would like the neighborhood sidewalk policy revisited to include the payment in lieu.

Mayor Paul stated there is a consensus of Council to add five points for safety and the word "worship" will be removed from the policy.

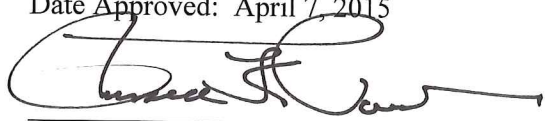
Councilman McDonald stated he believes that the evidence of pedestrian activity should be taken into account with safety.

Mayor Paul stated there is a consensus of Council to add evidence of pedestrian activity, including at risk activity, and the points will remain at ten points as a safety component.

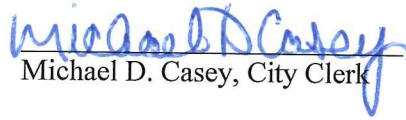
There was a consensus of Council to move this item forward to a future City Council meeting.

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 8:23 p.m.

Date Approved: April 7, 2015



Russell K. Paul, Mayor



Michael D. Casey, City Clerk