

Work Session Meeting of the Sandy Springs City Council was held on Tuesday, December 18, 2018, at 6:01 p.m., Mayor Rusty Paul presiding.

Council Members present: Council Member John Paulson, Council Member Steve Soteres, Council Member Chris Burnett, Council Member Jody Reichel, Council Member Tibby DeJulio, and Council Member Andy Bauman.

INVOCATION

Rabbi Lauren Cohn, In the City Camp, offered the invocation.

STAFF DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. **18-403** Consideration of Amending the City's Technical Manual by Adding and Amending a New Section Regarding the Placement of Utilities

Assistant City Manager Jim Tolbert stated he and Director of Economic Development Andrea Worthy met with representatives of the Sandy Springs Perimeter Chamber. There was a group created by Mr. Mahaffey and Chip Collins in which held meetings. There was one or two points from the meetings where a consensus was reached. Everyone would like to see as many of the overhead utilities as possible placed underground, but we know there are a few obstacles. He gave the Underground Utility Ordinance and Policy PowerPoint presentation dated December 18, 2018.

Council Member John Paulson asked, if the utilities are already buried in front of a developer's project, will the developer still have to pay into the fund?

Assistant City Manager Tolbert answered not if the utilities are already buried. If the utilities are not buried on that street, then the developer would have to pay into the fund.

Council Member Chris Burnett asked if anyone had the chance to speak with Council Member Soteres and the North End Task Force about this topic. This may be an issue with the older buildings on the north end of the City. For example, if someone were on a 150 foot wide lot and removed a building from the property, they would have to pay \$300,000 prior to constructing a new building. That amount seems costly.

Assistant City Manager Tolbert stated if there is redevelopment on the north end of the City, there is a suggestion that the City contribute half of that cost out of this fund. The committee raised that as an issue for the underground requirement. This is an attempt to provide a way to make it less difficult.

Council Member Burnett stated he was fine with the verbiage that resulted from the meetings, but had a concern about the cost for a linear foot.

Assistant City Manager Tolbert stated they came up with the concept of doing a cost per linear foot in lieu of fees, and requiring everyone to pay into the fund.

Council Member Burnett asked how the \$2,000 per linear foot compares to what the cost would be if they had to bury the utilities.

Assistant City Manager Tolbert stated it is difficult to tell. There are so many factors. The cost around City Springs for 3,500 feet was about \$2,600 to \$2,700 per foot. There are other projects that cost about \$1,500 per foot. The cost depends on the transformers, vaults that are built, the complexity, and other items. This ordinance will not apply to the transmission lines.

Council Member Burnett asked if it would be up to the developer that if they could bury the utilities for less than the recompense charge, then they could do that.

Assistant City Manager Tolbert responded yes. If they have a large enough project, that is probably worth it. If the property is a 150 foot lot, it is very hard to work without having to go onto the property next door or into the right-of-way to do it.

Council Member Andy Bauman asked what is the rationale for coupling the policy with predetermined priority areas.

Assistant City Manager Tolbert stated it was a suggestion of the committee, since we are trying to focus on development in the City Springs area. That is where we are trying to have the utilities placed underground. The City Springs area is the first area where we will concentrate our efforts.

Council Member Bauman stated he hopes that if this moves forward in January, which he thinks may be too soon, he would like to hear from stakeholders in the area. He hopes this item would be a public hearing item to allow for public comment. He wants to think about this more. He would be inclined to uncouple some of the expenditures from the basic policy. The expenditures complicate the policy. He would still prioritize those areas, but to put where we would spend the funds in the ordinance does not immediately make sense.

Assistant City Manager Tolbert stated the ordinance would say what has to be done and that there is an in lieu of fee. The policy would set the fee and the priority area.

Council Member Bauman stated he wants to hear from stakeholders. He is concerned about unintended consequences.

Council Member Paulson stated staff should engage the stakeholders.

There was a consensus of Council to move this item forward to a future Council meeting as a public hearing item.

2. 18-404 Tree Canopy Study Update

GIS Analyst Langdon Sanders gave the Tree Canopy Study Update dated December 18, 2018.

Mayor Rusty Paul stated on the presentation there were areas where localized change occurred. He assumes the change would be a reduction in the yellow shaded areas.

GIS Analyst Sanders stated that is correct.

Mayor Paul asked if there are any areas where the canopy increased.

GIS Analyst Sanders stated there are some areas that look like the canopy may have increased overall. It is much easier to cut down a tree than it is for trees to grow and the canopy to intensify. In a two year time span, most of the change that is seen is in a negative direction. If you were to look at an area over the course of ten years, you would probably see more infill canopy development. It is hard to tell in that short of a time what canopy growth would have occurred.

Mayor Paul stated going from 58% to 60% is not so much an increase in the canopy as it is a more accrument measurement of the actual canopy.

GIS Analyst Sanders stated he would say the estimate of 60% is more accurate than the 58.7% in 2013. The main takeaway is that there is a margin of error. For the true value, 95% of the time we will expect it to be between 58% or a little over 60%. The 60% is a more accurate estimate.

Mayor Paul stated basically the canopy level is flat over the last four years.

GIS Analyst Sanders responded yes, when you look at canopy at the City level and go to that decimal point.

Mayor Paul asked how that compares with other communities of our size.

GIS Analyst Sanders stated he does not have that information. He can gather that information and get it to Council.

Council Member Tibby DeJulio asked how far back did staff go to look at the changes in the City's tree canopy cover. It seems to him that the 60% canopy coverage has been the same since incorporation. He asked if the previous statistics were reviewed.

GIS Analyst Sanders stated the only analysis that was done was in 2013 and 2015 by using data at the one meter resolution level.

Council Member DeJulio asked if the resolution changed a couple of years ago.

GIS Analyst Sanders stated he is not sure. He would have to review the previous information.

Mayor Paul stated the confidence level of this information is much higher and the margin of error is shrinking, because the predictive tools we have are more accurate.

GIS Analyst Sanders stated we are also doing more iterations. This is an automated grouping of pixels, and then you iterate over that manually and run it through the model repeatedly. We are doing more of those iterations and more of the manual classifications. The projects are taking a little bit longer, but we are seeing an improvement. The imagery itself is comparable to 2013. The City's methods are improving using the tools that we have and additional staff time.

Council Member Andy Bauman asked if when the back testing was done, it was completed with statistical sampling. We have had the pixel level for quite a few years. We now have a much more refined picture. He asked if the difference is the statistical sampling.

GIS Analyst Sanders stated that is correct.

Council Member Bauman asked if statistical sampling was applied when the numbers were compared to 2015 and 2013.

GIS Analyst Sanders replied yes. That information was included on the first slide of the presentation.

Council Member Bauman asked if the comparison is apples to apples.

GIS Analyst Sanders answered that is correct. The original classifications did not have a margin of error, because they were reported at the raw output of the model. What staff did was resample the previous products. That is how we came up with this estimate and the margin of error.

Council Member Bauman asked if the statistical 400 pixel points are randomly generated by the computer software.

GIS Analyst Sanders stated yes, they are randomly generated by the software. It is stratified random sampling, so there is a slightly larger group from which to base the expected canopy areas. That is following the recommendations from the literature.

Council Member Bauman stated it was mentioned that staff reviewed the Aria and Mercedes-Benz developments. He asked if those locations made it into the random sampling, or if they were looked at because staff decided to add them. He asked if those locations ended up in the 400 points, or were just

something staff decided to review. A study is not needed to show that in those 60 acres the canopy was lost.

GIS Analyst Sanders referenced the sample points for 2017. There are about four points in that area. He can go back to see if they were included in the sampling.

Council Member Bauman stated that is a lot of acres. If those locations were not included in the sampling, that is a large area of loss. This overall canopy coverage is a useful tool, but it gives the ability to zero in on zoning areas and neighborhoods. We have a lot of national forest area and river area that will have a strong baseline for canopy. We do not need studies to know that in some of the development areas the canopy has been lost. The analysis is very helpful and he appreciates the next step of going forward to localize this and using the tools we have to do better. He asked what the term canopy means, if it is the square footage of a particular tree's overhang in summer.

GIS Analyst Sanders stated it is essentially the imagery. He referenced a slide of what is canopy in green versus the light pink. If you go outside and look up, the leaves that you see is canopy.

Council Member Bauman asked if this is the kind of data that could be made available to the public in order for them to change the data in a nonproprietary way, similar to voting. He asked if our citizens could use the data whether it is for curiosity, policy development, or whatever it is they are looking to do.

GIS Analyst Sanders responded absolutely. The GIS team has created an open data portal where we share a lot of our data.

Council Member Bauman stated this is a policy question he proposes to the rest of Council. He would like this information to be available to the citizens like a lot of our other public records.

Mayor Paul stated he assumes that anyone can submit an open records request for this information.

Council Member Bauman stated he is referring to the information being available online.

Council Member DeJulio asked what the difference is between the green and pink dots.

GIS Analyst Sanders stated the dots are the sampling points that were randomly distributed across the City. They are colored based off of the classification. Green dots are canopy and pink dots are non-canopy.

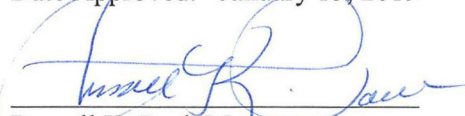
Council Member DeJulio asked if the tree canopy study would continue to be performed every two years.

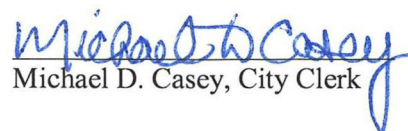
Mayor Paul responded yes.

This agenda item was presented for the purpose of an update to Mayor and Council.

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 6:34 p.m.

Date Approved: January 15, 2019


Russell K. Paul, Mayor


Michael D. Casey, City Clerk