

Work Session Meeting of the Sandy Springs City Council was held on Tuesday, March 15, 2011, at 7:55 p.m., Mayor Eva Galambos presiding.

STAFF DISCUSSION ITEMS

Public Works

1. Radar Sign Locations throughout the City

Traffic Services Division Manager Chris Waters stated the City has money left over from the Department of Energy Grant after the initial project of the school flashers. Some of the left over money is going towards purchasing thirty-three radar signs. Included in the agenda package is a map of the proposed radar sign locations. He asked if there are any questions regarding the locations.

Mayor Eva Galambos asked if Council has questions regarding the location of the radar signs.

Councilmember Karen Meinzen McEnerny stated she has a question about the locations and the ugly radar sign on display. Quite a few of the radar sign locations are downhill. She asked what the criteria is for selecting the locations for the radar signs.

Traffic Services Division Manager Waters stated when it was initially discussed, there were suggestions to place the radar signs at the school zones as part of the same grant. That was not going to be feasible. A majority of the radar signs will be located near the schools, just inside school zones or outside the school zones. Staff has looked at areas where there have been complaints about habitual speeding. There is about a 200 foot sight distance for the sign, so an individual can recognize their speed. If they are speeding, they have time to slow down. In some cases, the signs may be moved slightly either where depending on the location of the sun.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnerny stated she has no issues with where the signs will be located. Glen Errol is a location not on the list. There will be pushback if the large radar sign on display is placed in neighborhoods.

Mayor Galambos stated the sign is too big.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnerny stated the sign is too big and the green is too bold.

Councilmember Tibby DeJulio stated those signs are not the ones that will be used.

Traffic Services Division Manager Waters stated one of the questions is whether or not Council wants to use the large radar sign. He is not pleased with the color, which can be changed, and was discussed with the vendor. Staff is considering using signs similar to the ones located at Roberts Drive and Lake Forrest Drive.

Mayor Galambos stated those signs are much nicer.

Traffic Services Division Manager Waters stated there are four locations where the large size signs could be placed.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnerny asked where the large signs will be placed.

Traffic Services Division Manager Waters stated on Brandon Mill Road and in the Wyndham Hills area.

Mayor Galambos stated there will be always be complaints about speeding.

Councilmember Dianne Fries asked why the large radar signs are being considered instead of the white signs, which look better. Are the signs more noticeable or do they give more information?

Traffic Services Division Manager Waters stated the larger signs will stand out more because of their size. They will help in locations where there have been problems since Sandy Springs has been a City.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnerny stated she thinks there will be pushback in the residential communities when they see a sign this large.

Traffic Services Division Manager Waters stated other locations where a large sign can be placed are Johnson Ferry Road or at Peachtree Dunwoody. These are two areas with multiple lanes. The large signs will work better, because they can cover a larger area. Staff is considering purchasing signs for areas where traffic calming cannot be performed.

Mayor Galambos asked if the smaller signs will work.

Traffic Services Division Manager Waters stated of the thirty-three signs that staff proposed, twenty-nine or thirty would be the small signs and only two or three would be the large signs.

Councilmember Chip Collins stated the smaller signs have the speed limit on top and the large sign displays the speed limit on the bottom.

Traffic Services Division Manager Waters stated the large sign can state the speed limit, but it will cost more. He asked the vendor if they have a smaller version of the large sign. The vendor is making a smaller sign, but they have not given the specifications of the sign yet. He asked the vendor to have the answers in another week and a half. The information will be relayed to Council.

Mayor Galambos stated Council is not enthusiastic about the large sign.

Councilmember DeJulio stated he is not pleased with the aesthetics of the sign. The sign flashes phrases like "slow down" and "snow and ice". If the speed limit is thirty-five and he is driving forty-five M.P.H., will the sign display "45 slow down"?

Traffic Services Division Manager Waters stated the sign can be programmed to display that information. The smaller signs do not have that option.

Councilmember DeJulio stated the large signs would take the place of the portable ones, which are located in speeding problem areas.

Traffic Services Division Manager Waters responded correct. The sign that states "slow ice" has a thermostat inside that can be programmed. A few of these signs can be placed in areas where ice accumulates during cold weather. The large signs are more customizable, while the others will display just the speed. The small signs can be customized to either display a solid speed, a flashing speed, or no speed at all. If an individual is driving fifteen M.P.H. over the speed limit the sign will go off. This discourages the person from seeing how fast they can go.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnerny stated she prefers simplicity when staff is coming up with ideas for the signs. She would like the signs to look the same throughout the City. Less clutter in the right-of-way

is preferable. This large sign is too big and too green. There would be a lot of pushback if these signs were placed in the residential neighborhoods.

Councilmember DeJulio asked if the large signs can be put up temporarily.

Traffic Services Division Manager Waters responded yes.

Councilmember DeJulio asked if one of the signs could be placed downhill at Northland before GA400 for a couple of weeks and then switched out for a smaller one.

Traffic Services Division Manager Waters stated that can be done. If the large sign were left there for a few months, the weight of the sign would bend the pole holding it up. If the large sign were to be permanent, it would be mounted on a pedestrian pole and concreted in the ground.

Councilmember Collins stated he did see on the map that a sign will be placed on Johnson Ferry Road going towards the Chattahoochee River.

Traffic Services Division Manager Waters stated that is correct.

Councilmember Collins asked if there is a reason no sign will be placed there, because speed in this area has been an issue.

Traffic Services Division Manager Waters stated the reason is because the area is under construction through 2012. The map with the proposed locations will constantly change as staff receives more requests.

Councilmember DeJulio asked what the colored dots represent.

Traffic Services Division Manager Waters stated the purple dots are the locations being proposed from the Department of Energy funds. The six green dots are the radar signs that currently exist. The other dots are locations where neighborhoods have called in complaints that were not part of the original proposal.

Councilmember DeJulio asked if the radar signs are all paid for by government grants.

Traffic Services Division Manager Waters stated the initial thirty-three signs would be purchased with the grant. The City may have to come up with some money for the installation of the signs.

Councilmember DeJulio asked if it is a 100% grant.

Traffic Services Division Manager Waters responded yes.

Councilmember Fries stated there is a radar sign on Hightower Trail. The neighborhood would like a radar sign on River Run Drive, because of the downhill to the club. The residents would probably prefer to see the sign at the top, as they start driving down the hill, rather than on Hightower Trail.

Traffic Services Division Manager Waters stated staff has received speeding complaints for the area near the Country Club. There have been about ten to fifteen complaints from that neighborhood.

Mayor Galambos thanked Traffic Services Division Manager Waters. Most of Council does not like the large sign.

There was a consensus of Council to move forward with this item.

2. Discussion of Intersection Improvement Specifications for Various Areas around the City

City Manager John McDonough stated staff has received feedback on a recent intersection improvement project. It includes sidewalks and is in the Lake Forrest Drive and Hammond Drive area. Staff also received feedback regarding the height of the pole that holds the camera to oversee the intersection and the utilitarian look of a wall along a sidewalk project. Rather than take these on a case-by-case basis, it would help to have a standard set by Council for staff to follow.

Mayor Eva Galambos asked for an explanation of the rationale for the tall mast pole.

Traffic Services Division Manager Chris Waters stated the mast arms are part of the intersection improvement project. The pole should be as high as possible in order to provide redundancy for the traffic camera system. The high pole will allow the camera to view Lake Forrest Drive back towards Mount Vernon. The camera will also show the Hammond Drive and Mount Vernon interchange and back down towards the Sandy Springs Circle interchange.

Mayor Galambos asked how much each pole will cost.

Traffic Services Division Manager Waters stated the cost varies. The cost of a pole is usually in the range of \$13,000-\$20,000.

Mayor Galambos asked if that is the cost for the small poles.

Traffic Services Division Manager Waters stated that cost is for the typical mast arm.

Mayor Galambos stated if one large pole is there, there is no need for two smaller ones.

Traffic Services Division Manager Waters stated that would be the case. If staff decided to install a camera at Sandy Springs Circle and Hammond, this would allow the camera to see further down to Sandy Springs Circle and also look back towards Roswell Road. If that camera stopped working, there is another camera up the road that can also see this area.

Councilmember Karen Meinzen McEnerny stated her concern is a fifty foot high mast arm in a residential area.

Mayor Galambos stated it is not a residential area.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnerny stated the traffic camera pole is located at the corner of Lake Forrest Drive and Hammond. She and former Councilmember Jenkins suggested reducing the clutter along the streetscape by getting rid of the wooden poles and electrical lines. This corner is part of the overlay district. The overlay district does not address the maximum height for a mast arm, but it states no lighting can be higher than eighteen feet. Council objects to the utilitarian look of the concrete foundation walls for sidewalks. Some of them need to be faced with stone. There is a need for aesthetic improvements. The Public Works Department should not have the authority to make the decision on aesthetic covering. Public Works should be working with Community Development and the Design Review Board when something is built in the right-of-way. A twenty-one foot pole would work fine and is more aesthetically appealing.

Councilmember Dianne Fries stated the mast arm did not appear unsightly to her. She did not even notice the extra piece on the mast arm, which will be removed.

Traffic Services Division Manager Waters added originally the arm was meant for a video detection camera, but staff is no longer using those cameras. Those cameras have been returned to the vendor.

Councilmember Fries stated she agrees with the redundancy of the cameras and has no problem with the pole size. She agrees with the Mayor that three out of four of the corners are commercial.

Mayor Galambos stated the Department of Community Development needs to look at the City having new standards for the height of the poles. The City's camera poles and the commercial pole height standards need to be discussed.

Councilmember DeJulio asked if this is something that could be discussed at the City Council Retreat.

Mayor Galambos stated staff needs to research it first.

Director of Community Development Blake Dettwiler stated the Ordinance does not address utilities or poles within the right-of-way. A commercial developer would not have unrestricted access. It does not address the items that are typically installed by Public Works, Georgia Power, and other utility providers.

Mayor Galambos stated private developers would not have the latitude to put up the high poles.

Director of Community Development Dettwiler stated they would not.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnerny asked why the City should be able to.

Mayor Galambos stated the City is doing it for civic needs and not for profit.

Councilmember Chip Collins stated he has a problem with the mast arm. He never knew that a fifty foot mast arm was an option. He was driving around the very developed and cluttered Perimeter area and there was nothing higher than twenty feet. The City needs a policy regarding where the mast arms can be placed. If this pole height is beneficial, why are there not fifty foot poles all over the City? Why is this intersection the one of two in Sandy Springs that needs a fifty foot pole?

Director of Public Works Tom Black stated the fifty foot pole is needed because of the topography. From Mount Vernon to Lake Forrest Drive the area is uphill. The elevation of the pole is needed in order to get up high enough to see this area. This pole is site specific.

Mayor Galambos stated the pole is so high that you cannot see it.

Councilmember Collins stated he does not see why a camera needs to be located at the intersection of Hammond and Mount Vernon. The City has a complex process for approving signs, cell phone towers, and other items that provide potential clutter. The fact that this pole can be placed here without proper authorization is the wrong move. He does not want any other fifty foot poles in his district and others probably feel the same way. First, he would like to decide what is to be done with this pole. Second, he would like a policy to be developed to deal with the poles that Public Works or the Police Department might want in other areas.

Councilmember DeJulio asked where the pole is located.

Public Works Director Black stated the pole is located at Hammond Drive and Lake Forrest Drive.

Councilmember DeJulio stated he was in the area two weeks ago and he did not notice it.

Mayor Galambos stated the pole has been there between two weeks to a month. It is not really that noticeable.

Councilmember DeJulio stated if leaves are on the trees, the pole will not be seen. However, will the camera still be able to see the street?

Councilmember Fries stated if you are looking at the pole, then the trees are behind the pole.

Mayor Galambos stated because the pole is so high, the camera can look all the way up to the intersection of Mount Vernon.

Public Works Director Black stated if at 2 a.m. the Police call and say the traffic light is flashing, staff can use a laptop to fix it remotely. If it cannot be done remotely, a work crew will be dispatched to check on the light. This is the advantage of having the entire camera system connected and having redundancy. If one camera is not functioning, staff can use another camera.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnerny stated she is concerned about the infiltration of unsightly items in our community.

Mayor Galambos stated a policy does need to be developed.

Councilmember DeJulio asked that staff work on a policy and bring it back to Council.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnerny stated there should be public comment on the policy change as well.

Mayor Galambos stated the walls look like the dividers used to separate lanes on the highways. She asked if that is what was used.

Public Works Director Black stated that is what the top front is made of. The back side is a fourteen foot high retaining wall that protrudes above the ground. This is to keep a vehicle from driving into the hole.

Mayor Galambos stated she understands the necessity for the walls, but they are unattractive. All of Council agrees they are ugly. She discussed with a citizen the cost of facing the wall with brick. If the neighborhood feels strongly, the residents may wish to contribute to fixing the walls. Instead of spending \$34,000 of either the City's or the neighborhood's money, the City could use natural materials for the wall. She proposed ivy, but was told that is not an option because it is invasive. Carolina jasmine could be used, which is what is used on the sound barriers. It turns yellow in the spring and is green all year long. The City should use their volunteers and have them plant the jasmine. The jasmine will grow over the wall and it will be an asset, rather than something ugly.

Councilmember Fries stated the walls are ugly. Facing the walls will not make them look any nicer. It will still be a massive wall. She likes the Mayor's idea of the jasmine. The jasmine could grow over and down the back of the wall, which would be helpful. The City needs a policy so this does not happen again.

Councilmember DeJulio stated when sidewalks are installed on Peachtree Dunwoody; stone retaining walls will be placed there. Has staff considered setting up a standard type of retaining wall for the City? This would allow the City to have a uniform retaining wall that looks nice.

Public Works Director Black stated the retaining wall could be faced with stone. Staff is trying to ensure the retaining wall blends in with the resident's fence.

Councilmember Fries stated this sidewalk has a large drop off. Staff is protecting it not from people falling, but from vehicles driving down the hill.

Mayor Galambos stated the same material cannot be used on each wall, because each situation is different.

Councilmember DeJulio stated not necessarily the same material, but the same appearance.

Mayor Galambos stated you cannot have the same appearance each time when there are different needs.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnerny stated the east side of the wall is what people drive by and see. It should be a cost of the City's and the neighbors who want to do something on the fourteen foot high side of the barrier.

Mayor Galambos stated the City would pay for the jasmine to be planted by the volunteers.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnerny stated Carolina jasmine would grow great in this area. It would take approximately two to three years to get established. It is not evergreen.

Mayor Galambos stated jasmine is evergreen.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnerny stated Carolina jasmine should cover the wall, but if that is not enough, facing could be a more permanent solution. The back wall could be painted black to blend in, if the neighbors do not want to pay the \$33,000 for the facing of the wall.

Mayor Galambos stated she has not heard any complaints about the inside appearance of the wall. Not many of the properties have windows that face the inside of the wall. There is quite a bit of vegetation between the houses and the wall. The appearance on that side of the wall is not bothering the residents.

Public Works Director Black stated there is tree fund money that can be used for this project.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnerny stated tree fund money should not go to non-canopy trees. She objects to that.

There was a consensus of Council to have staff bring policies to Council for consideration and approval.

CITY COUNCIL DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. A Resolution in Support of House Bill 180, a Proposed Amendment of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, to Provide for Greater Automobile, Pedestrian, and Bicycle Safety

Councilmember Dianne Fries stated this Resolution is in relation to the City applying for the Bicycle Friendly Designation from the League of American Bicyclists. House Bill 180 states that if there is a need to pass bicyclists, it would be required to give the bicyclists a space of three feet. Approximately

thirty percent of bicycle accidents occur when the bicyclist gets honked at when being passed. It startles the riders and they wreck into the curb. Part of being a bicycle friendly community is the City would have a bicycle advisory committee. There are staff members on the committee, bicycle neighborhoods, and a couple of bicycle type business owners. Dan Ellithorp would be a good addition to the committee. The third item would be a contract with Be Bike Friendly. Eric Broadwell helped the City of Roswell obtain their bicycle friendly designation. Roswell is the only city within the State with this designation. Mr. Broadwell would assist the City in this and he understands what the league is looking for from an applicant. It would be beneficial for the City to spend the money to have Mr. Broadwell assist with the application. If the City receives the bike friendly designation, it will help the City to obtain State and Federal funding. The City already meets the following requirements for the application: the City has a policy to stripe the roads at eleven feet; there are bike maps on the Comprehensive Plan; a future design has been approved for two bridges that will have bike lanes; the Johnson Ferry and Abernathy widening will have bike lanes; and there are bike racks at the City properties. The City has a bike race, an organized bike ride, organized bike groups, and is working with neighborhoods on a connecting bicycle bridge over the Chattahoochee. The City also works with other communities for the hospitality ride on GA400.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnerny stated Councilmember Fries has shown great leadership and she is behind every item on the list. She is impressed with her initiative and the hard work that went into this. She is pleased to support this effort.

Mayor Galambos stated the analysis report on how many people commute to work on a bicycle is fascinating.

There was a consensus of Council to move forward with this item.

2. Discussion of Potential Park Site at Fulton County Sewer Pump Site Located off of Old Riverside Drive

City Attorney Wendell Willard stated this is a potential area where a park could be located. Staff will need to discuss this with Fulton County, since they are the owners of the property. This item is asking for consensus and direction from Council for staff to discuss the potential park site with Fulton County staff.

Mayor Eva Galambos stated this is a beautiful piece of land and it would be wonderful to obtain. There are factual issues that need to be addressed first by staff. A few of the questions are: does the County agree to this and want to lease this property; what would be the cost of the lease; will the City have access to the water for kayaks; and what kind of equipment would be allowed to be placed here. She asked if there is consensus to move forward with this.

Councilmember Tibby DeJulio stated there is consensus that Council would like as much park land as possible. Staff needs to go through this process first and see how the property can be used. The City needs active parks for children.

Mayor Galambos stated if we could duplicate some of what was done at Overlook Park, this area would be fabulous.

Councilmember Chip Collins stated we need to be clear on what we are doing. He wants to have support from the surrounding neighborhoods. He does not want to force something that would be a hindrance to the residents. A potential park could be a fantastic deal. There is no harm in completing a walkthrough of the property. Staff should not spend hours on research and then Council decides this is something they are no longer interested in. He asked for clarification on how Council should proceed.

Mayor Galambos stated she would rather have staff get more information before Council uses their time to walk the property.

Councilmember DeJulio stated he and Councilmember Collins do not have the technical expertise to know what drainage type or infrastructure the property needs, whether it is suitable, or if there is adequate access and egress. Council may decide it is a great area for a ball field. What if it turns out there is no way to get in and out without congesting the neighborhood. Information is needed on the property, so Council can know if it is suitable and if they are really interested.

Councilmember Collins stated he does not want this to take on a life of its own. He would like to see the property first. He asked what direction Council is going to take.

Mayor Galambos stated staff is going to get information on the property first.

City Attorney Willard stated staff should approach Fulton County to see if they are open to the idea of working out a lease or sale agreement for portions of the land. What type of park will be permitted should also be discussed. If Fulton County is open to the idea, staff will come back with information for the Council and neighborhoods.

Councilmember Karen Meinzen McEnerny stated many times there are parallel tracks to identify the community's acceptance and the efficacy of a park. She sees no reason why staff cannot do the research while she shows Council and senior staff the property. There is room for both active and passive park land. Heards Creek empties into the River. On the north side of Heards Creek is an undeveloped and undisturbed hill. She could see a pedestrian bridge across the River to a passive side of the park. There can be room for ball fields, if the neighborhoods embrace the idea of a park.

Councilmember Collins stated he sees no harm, while staff is speaking to Fulton County, if Council engages the opinions of the nearby neighborhoods. He would like to complete a walkthrough with a few residents and property owners in order to get their feedback. If they are not excited about the idea of a park, then he would not support the proposal. If they get excited about the concept, he will do everything he can to move forward with the idea.

Councilmember Fries suggested considering what happened with the Georgia Power property and the possible dog park. The City had community meetings about it and lost the deal. We need to see if the property owner is interested in working with the City. When the community is involved, the people sometimes get ahead of themselves, before the City knows where the issue is going. Council needs to get the information first and then give it to the citizens so they can make an educated decision about it.

Mayor Galambos stated if the City wants more park land, should one neighborhood adjacent to where the park may be located negate the needs of the entire community? She asked Council to think about this.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnerny stated this site is well suited because it has its own entrance and it is self contained. Ridgeview is surrounded by property that abuts the Ridgeview Park, plus there is a residential road that services it. This property is totally contained by its own road and the topography drops about 150 feet.

Councilmember Collins stated there are several other City parks that need to be completed first. He sees no harm in viewing the property. He would like to have the public involved from the beginning.

Councilmember Fries stated she appreciates that. This needs to be handled with caution. The property owners do not want to be overwhelmed with phone calls regarding the property. This is what happened with Georgia Power and the dog park.

Councilmember DeJulio stated there were probably no more than fifteen people that contacted Georgia Power regarding the dog park, but they were inundated with questions and Georgia Power walked away from the deal.

Councilmember Collins stated he thought there was pressure to inform the public on this item.

Mayor Galambos stated there was no pressure to inform the public. The pressure was to get staff involved in gathering the facts for Council.

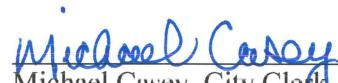
There was a consensus of Council to have staff discuss this item with Fulton County and then bring it back to Council for consideration.

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Date Approved: April 5, 2011



Eva Galambos, Mayor



Michael Casey, City Clerk