

**Work Session Meeting of the Sandy Springs City Council was held on Tuesday, August 19, 2014, at 9:50 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. Sandy Springs Pedestrian Infrastructure, Policies, Planning, Programs, and Implementation Tools

**Director of Public Works Garrin Coleman** provided a PowerPoint presentation on the Sandy Springs Pedestrian Infrastructure, Policies, Planning, Programs, and Implementation Tools.

**Councilman Andy Bauman** stated the City wants to build out the sidewalks beyond the proposed network. In some cases the City is missing opportunities for sidewalk construction on the south end of the City.

**Councilmember Gabriel Sterling** asked if the reason most developers do not pay the fee in lieu of is because it is cheaper for them to build the sidewalk.

Director of Public Works Coleman stated this is what he assumes.

Councilman Sterling asked if any neighborhoods have gone through the neighborhood sidewalk program process.

Director of Public Works Coleman stated one neighborhood did several years ago.

Councilman Bauman stated the program has had no funding.

**City Manager John McDonough** stated there is no incentive for residents to go through all the work when the program has not been funded.

Director of Public Works Coleman stated staff has received interest from Brandon Mill, Dudley Lane, and Roberts Drive. Roberts Drive wants to connect from the interchange to the school at Davis Academy. On River Edge Parkway the commercial property owners are interested in a sidewalk, with City participation, to tie to any future development the City does on Powers Ferry.

**Councilman Graham McDonald** stated the sidewalk factors on the presentation are good factors. He asked about the logic of these factors for the scoring.

Director of Public Works Coleman stated he does not recall the difference between the lists. The age of the request is not considered in anything the City constructs. He believes safety was built into the CIP portion.

Councilman McDonald asked about the school connectivity and parks connectivity.

City Manager McDonough stated they became the City's priorities about eight years ago. Some of the criteria came from the Council's top priority list.

**Councilman Tibby DeJulio** stated the City had requests early on for sidewalk connectivity to parks like Chastain. This was excluded by Council, since Chastain is not in the City.

**Mayor Rusty Paul** stated the criteria for the neighborhood sidewalk program reflected the criteria used to determine what the City's initial sidewalk program was. School connectivity was a safety issue and connecting the existing parks is important.

Director of Public Works Coleman stated the City should consider funding this program while further developing the criteria. He then continued to page 19 of the presentation.

**Assistant City Attorney Cecil McLendon** stated an option that could be considered as a way of funding the sidewalks is a special tax assessment. This option is like a lighting district where a special area can be formed as a geographic location of sidewalk projects. The costs would be limited to the engineering and construction. Those costs could be assessed back to the properties within the district. That assessment could not be utilized to acquire right-of-way from the residents. The 100% donation of the right-of-way could be required by the City.

Councilman DeJulio stated the City made a policy years ago that no more sidewalks would be built unless the property owners donated the right-of-way.

Assistant City Attorney McLendon stated if the City had 100% right-of-way donation for Brandon Mill Road, it would be difficult to determine exactly what the donation is before the engineering plans are drawn showing the right-of-way needed. The cart would be a little before the horse. The City could develop something to deal with that. On an initial basis, everyone could be required to donate ten feet at the back of the edge of pavement. That would be the rough estimate of the area needed in order to get the program started and the district created.

Councilman DeJulio asked if a district could be a single street.

Assistant City Attorney McLendon responded yes, but the cart would still be before the horse. This is due to a district of ten houses that will be a sidewalk district, but not have the engineering to know exactly what the price will be. If this program is built, an in house estimate could be used. The money will not come to the City immediately so the Council will have to budget money to fund the design. The payments would come in with the tax bill and level the funds out on the back end. This is not an easy process, but it is allowed by law.

Councilman DeJulio asked if the homeowners on the street would have to agree 100%.

Assistant City Attorney McLendon stated by law the City can place a property owner in a special assessment district without their consent. If someone is put in a district without 100% participation, that is a policy decision for Council to determine. The City can state once they get 75% agreement from the property owners, an assessment district can be created.

Mayor Paul stated a tax cannot be assessed for the City to compensate the property owner for the property the City just took. The money has to stay in the assessment district and cannot be used for another district.

Assistant City Attorney McLendon stated for the right-of-way donation almost 100% is needed. If one property owner will not donate the right-of-way, in order to complete the sidewalk, that property owner will have to be compensated for their property.

Councilman Bauman stated the premises of the neighborhood program and special tax assessment is the neighborhood overwhelmingly wants to do this. He would like money to be allocated for the sidewalk programs.

Director of Public Works Coleman presented the last three slides of the presentation.

Councilman McDonald asked about the pedestrian activity factor. On a stretch of Brandon Mill Road people are not comfortable walking on the street, because of the risk involved. Assuming you do not see a worn trail on the grass to the left or right of the road, how is the City judging evidence of pedestrian activity. He wonders how staff assigned the number six to Brandon Mill. There are varying distances for the line of sight.

Councilman Sterling stated there is a difference in a cul-de-sac road versus a connector road.

City Manager McDonough stated if the road is arterial or a collector, it is a dangerous road.

Councilman Sterling stated Brandon Mill is scored higher because it is a collector road. The yards along this street are landscaped and people are not going to walk along in the yards.

Councilman McDonald stated he still is not sure how the roads are being ranked.

Director of Public Works Coleman stated there are areas in the City where people will walk in the street and then get on the shoulder to walk in the grass leaving a worn path. This is latent demand and there is no way to score latent demand.

**CIP Unit Manager Marty Martin** stated along Roswell Road there are people that have no option but to walk to get to transit. Before the sidewalk was built at the intersection of Pitts and Roswell Road, there was evidence of pedestrian activity in the travel lanes, because there was no other option.

Councilman McDonald asked how this was measured.

CIP Unit Manager Martin stated during the business day you would physically see the individuals in the road.

Councilman Sterling asked how often this is reviewed. With the opening of the park off Abernathy Road, he sees families walking with their strollers to the park.

Director of Public Works Coleman stated the CIP program is rescored if there are funds available. The last scoring was done about six months ago.

Councilman McDonald stated he heard several times the City does not build sidewalks where right-of-way is not donated. He does not understand that to be the case and he thought the City is buying right-of-way frequently.

Director of Public Works Coleman stated for the major CIP programs the City frequently buys right-of-way due to the funding mechanisms. For the locally funded projects the City solicits right-of-way donations up front.

Councilman DeJulio stated this came about six years ago when the City had a project on Windsor Parkway from Roswell Road. There was a synagogue on High Point Road that was very orthodox and the people that attend were required to walk. The City received the money for the project, but no one realized

the cost of the right-of-way would be around \$100,000. At that time, Council decided not to purchase right-of-way anymore for sidewalks that are constructed in front of homes. The residents are required to donate the right-of-way. There are places like Sandy Springs Circle where sidewalks go in front of businesses. The businesses do not have the right to donate the right-of-way; it has to be donated by the property owners. The property owners have to get clearance from the mortgage company to donate right-of-way. The mortgage company will not donate right-of-way and will only sell it.

Councilman McDonald asked if the City is following this policy.

Director of Public Works Coleman stated the City has purchased property for the Mt. Paran project where one parcel was purchased. Staff tries to minimize purchasing right-of-way by using methods such as building stack stone walls instead. As an example the City submitted the right-of-way acquisition on a federally funded project on Hammond Drive and did not do the landscaping. When Councilmember Meinzen McEnery was in office, the City had to reinstall trees due to the existing trees being cut down when trying to minimize the right-of-way cost.

Councilman Bauman stated staff needs to focus on the criteria for the programs and he advocates objective criteria. He hopes that Council will take safety into consideration and not only a worn path that dictates evidence. It is very unwise not to include pedestrian destinations that might be just outside the City limits. The ultimate criteria is getting people where they want to be.

Councilman Paulson stated if all homeowners on Brandon Mill donated right-of-way for sidewalks, it would create good connectivity. Every three years the City maps every block of every street to rank them. He asked to see a list of all sidewalks in the City and rank them like the streets.

Director of Public Works Coleman stated what is done annually is a preventative maintenance review of the City sidewalks by Blount Construction and City staff to see what repairs need to be made. There has been no funding mechanism. The limited funds in materials and contractor's crew time caused the sidewalk repairs to be completed when time allowed. The sidewalk along Roswell Road has been rebuilt north of City Hall. A program was completed on High Point Road where all the different ramps were redone and the detectable cushions were installed for individuals with sight disability.

City Manager McDonough stated staff needs direction from Council on how to allocate the \$750,000 from the FY15 funds.

Councilmember Sterling asked if some of the money can be allocated to the neighborhood sidewalk funds.

City Manager McDonough responded yes. We should place about \$375,000 to \$400,000 in that fund.

Councilman Sterling stated he was thinking the allocation should be more like \$200,000.

Mayor Paul stated the project along Brandon Mill will be very expensive, as well as many other projects.

Councilman Bauman stated the City has not been requiring developers to build sidewalks and that should be corrected. If the City is going to have streets where sidewalks will not be located or will not build them on both sides of the street, the neighborhood should look at the option of payment in lieu.

There was a consensus of Council for staff to look at ways to fund sidewalk projects.

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 10:42 p.m.

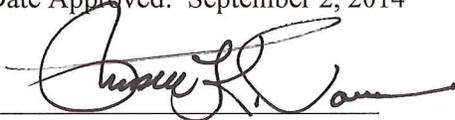
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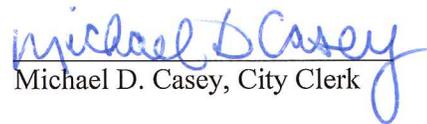
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Date Approved: September 2, 2014

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Russell K. Paul", written over a horizontal line.

Russell K. Paul, Mayor

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Michael D. Casey", written over a horizontal line.

Michael D. Casey, City Clerk

