

Work Session Meeting of the Sandy Springs City Council was held on Tuesday, October 16, 2012, at 7:18 p.m., Mayor Eva Galambos presiding.

STAFF DISCUSSION ITEMS

City Attorney

1. Amendment to Chapter 18 of the City of Sandy Springs Code of Ordinances ("Code") to replace the current false alarm ordinance at Article II, Division 2; and memo setting forth proposed fees for violations of the proposed false alarm ordinance

Police Chief Terry Sult stated this item is regarding building false alarms. The City averages 44,000 to 46,000 calls for service from Sandy Springs citizens each year. Of those calls, there are about 9,000 to 9,700 burglar type calls. In 2010, 9,372 of the 9,700 calls were false alarms calls. These calls require police time and services. That is 96% of the alarms calls dispatched were false alarms. To date, 96% of the alarms calls are still false alarms. Twenty percent of all calls police officers respond to are alarm calls. This is a lot of time the officers spend answering calls. People are not taking accountability and responsibility to correct their alarms or use the alarms properly. This equates to 4,600 man hours per year the Police Department spends answering the false alarms calls. These numbers amount to over \$150,000 annually that is spent on false alarm calls; or two full time employees on the calls. Staff recommends a policy for the police perspective combined with the Fire Department's equivalent into one ordinance. The ordinance would require registration of alarms for tracking and accountability and a fee schedule. The fee schedule allows for two false alarms and fines will be assessed after the second false alarm.

City Attorney Wendell Willard stated the ordinance includes a fee schedule. Council should review the fees and when this item comes back to Council, it will be in the form of a resolution.

Police Chief Sult stated the proposed ordinance is almost identical to the City of Marietta's ordinance. In 2006 the City of Marietta started with 9,200 false alarm calls per year. As of this year, Marietta has had a seventy percent reduction in false alarm calls. The effects were almost immediate upon passing of the ordinance. The City of Marietta does not charge an alarm registration fee. However, they do have fines for failing to register. The City's proposed ordinance includes a fee schedule, but those numbers are subject to Council review. The passing of the ordinance would allow the City to outsource the alarm registrations to a private company. The false alarm system is not expected to be a huge revenue generator. The system will pay for itself in the management process and if there are a few funds leftover, they may offset some E-911 center expenses. A reason to register the alarms is for accountability when responding to the alarms. The registration of the alarms would also give the 911 center the ability to provide the police officer with the contact information. Considering the City operates under a combined 911 center, the City is trying to mirror ordinances the cities of Dunwoody and Johns Creek are looking to adopt.

Mayor Eva Galambos asked how staff would go about notifying citizens that they must register their alarms.

Police Chief Sult stated the implementation date should be set at 90 to 120 days. An educational campaign should be done first. This time frame would allow the City to choose a vendor to monitor the alarm registrations. During the education period in Marietta, there was a reduction of false alarm calls even before the ordinance took place. There may be a grace period after the ordinance is put in place for particular problem alarms.

Mayor Galambos asked if the City does not adopt an alarm registration fee, would the penalties pay for the whole program.

Police Chief Sult responded yes. He met with a vendor who has a contract with the City of Fayetteville. The ordinance will cause false alarms to decrease, so the revenues will decrease. The City of Marietta had fines of \$218,000 in 2008 and fines of \$76,000 in 2010. The vendor charges the City of Fayetteville a percentage fee of about 38%. As the false alarms fee decreases, that percentage amount increases.

Councilmember Gabriel Sterling asked if the City will be treating businesses and residential alarms with the same fee schedule.

Mayor Galambos asked if the Fire Department receives as many false alarms from residents compared to businesses.

Police Chief Sult stated he does not believe so. The fee schedule is different for the Fire Department and the Police Department. The reason for the cost difference is more equipment is required to respond to the fire alarms.

Councilmember Karen Meinzen McEnerny stated when the Fire Department responds to calls the paramedics respond as well. This ordinance does not address false paramedic calls.

Police Chief Sult stated this ordinance does not address emergency medical response calls, robbery alarms, or alarms initiated by an individual, such as a panic alarm. The ordinance does address fire alarms and automated alarms.

Councilmember Collins asked what the usual false alarm call entails.

Police Chief Sult stated most of the false alarm calls are due to human error from not learning how to operate the alarm system. This ordinance gives the City the opportunity to waive fees when the alarms are activated by storms and such.

Councilmember Collins asked about the number of false alarm calls trending down.

Police Chief Sult stated the overall police calls for service have trended down.

Councilmember Sterling asked if the alarms can be registered online.

Police Chief Sult responded yes. One of the vendors has a good website that has educational aspects to the site as well. The vendor would be responsible for registering the alarms and the entire process.

Councilmember Sterling asked about linking the alarm registration website to Smart 911.

Police Chief Sult stated website links can be placed on the vendor's webpage.

Mayor Galambos asked Council their opinion on an alarm registration fee.

Councilmember John Paulson stated since there is such a high percentage of false alarm calls, this program is a good idea. He is not in favor of charging a fee for people to register their alarm systems. He asked about the audible alarms not being on for more than ten minutes.

Police Chief Sult stated the alarm should be set to turn off after ten minutes.

Councilmember Karen Meinzen McEnerny suggested the vendor keep the information of the individuals private when they register their alarms online. She does not want the information to be released as to which houses have not registered for an alarm, inferring they are not protected.

Police Chief Sult stated data protection is one of his top priorities. The Police Department has contracted with a company that audits their data systems. Selection of the vendor will include security of the data being a key factor in the decision.

Councilmember Dianne Fries asked if a fine will be charged to individuals for not registering their alarm.

Mayor Galambos responded yes.

Councilmember Tibby DeJulio stated the alarm would be charged only if there is a false alarm. He asked how anyone would know an individual has an alarm.

Police Chief Sult stated if a police officer responded to an alarm call and it was not registered, the officer would know to enact the paperwork to generate a fine. The registration of an alarm system is helpful if the alarm is activated. The Police Department needs the contact information of the responsible owner.

Councilmember Fries asked if an alarm is activated and unregistered, will the Police Department still be dispatched to the call.

Police Chief Sult responded yes.

Councilmember Fries stated if she has an alarm system that is accidentally activated, but it is turned off before a police officer is dispatched, will she still be charged.

Police Chief Sult stated if there is a cancellation of the alarm and the Police Department does not respond, he believes a fine would not be initiated.

Councilmember Collins asked if a false alarm ordinance can be implemented without a registration program.

Police Chief Sult stated this was discussed three years ago when a false alarm policy was enacted. The alarms could not be tracked because the alarm systems were not registered.

Mayor Galambos asked if the proposed fees in the ordinance are what the City of Dunwoody is considering.

Police Chief Sult responded yes. He is trying to have the Sandy Springs fees mirror those of the City of Dunwoody. The City Council for Dunwoody was not all in agreement with charging a registration fee for the alarm systems.

Councilmember Paulson asked about the data being kept confidential.

City Attorney Willard stated the information obtained and gathered through the alarm system registration process will be held in confidence by the City.

Mayor Galambos asked that the City's ordinance be similar to the City of Dunwoody's when this item comes back to Council.

Assistant City Attorney Cecil McLendon stated the City of Dunwoody is looking to have no registration fee for residential alarms, but having a business alarm registration fee.

City Attorney Willard stated the ChatComm Board is asking all the cities participating in ChatComm to have an ordinance in place that is similar to the City of Sandy Springs ordinance.

There was a consensus of Council to move this item forward to the next Regular City Council meeting to include provisions for an alarm registration fee and if the alarm is deactivated in a timely manner the appropriate department will not be dispatched and no fee will be charged.

2. Amendment to Chapter 42, Article II, Section 42-41 of the City of Sandy Springs Code of Ordinances (“Code”) relating to firearms in public parks

City Attorney Wendell Willard stated the City was involved in litigation several years ago regarding some of the language in this ordinance. The new Georgia State law defines where guns cannot be carried. The language “public gatherings” is still in the City’s ordinance and it is now being recommended that phrase be removed.

Councilmember Dianne Fries stated a few years ago the City ordinance was changed to allow firearms in the City parks.

Councilmember Tibby DeJulio stated firearms are allowed, but not the discharge of firearms.

City Attorney Willard stated the “public gatherings” language is still in the ordinance.

There was a Consensus of Council to move this item forward to the next Regular City Council meeting.

Public Works

3. Consideration of Approval of the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) Lighting Agreement for Interchange Reconstruction – SR 400/US 19 @ CR145/Northridge Road (CIP T0037)

Interim Director of Public Works Garrin Coleman stated this item is for authorization of the Mayor to sign a lighting agreement with Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) for CIP T0037, which is the Northridge Interchange project. This agreement will cover nineteen decorative street lights and thirteen of the lights will be on the bridge. Six of the lights will be located at the roundabout. GDOT will install these lights with their project. The City will be responsible for maintaining the lights and paying for the electricity.

Councilmember Gabriel Sterling asked if the City is allowed to choose what the lights look like.

Interim Director of Public Works Coleman stated staff is proposing the shepherd hook lights on the bridge and post top lights at the roundabout. GDOT prefers to have the agreement approved by November 14, 2012.

Councilmember John Paulson stated six lights seems like a lot for the roundabout.

Interim Director of Public Works Coleman stated staff submitted the light plan to GDOT for approval. Initially, GDOT wanted taller lights near the interchange and that is not appropriate for this location. Staff was able to negotiate the lighting with GDOT to what is being proposed.

Mayor Eva Galambos asked if staff is studying how far apart street lights should be.

City Manager John McDonough stated staff is reviewing upgrading the lighting standards that deal with the scientific methodology of the light levels at ground level. Recommendations will be brought to Council at a future City Council meeting.

Mayor Galambos asked if it is found there are too many lights at the Northridge interchange, will this affect the location of the lights.

City Manager McDonough responded it could. If so, staff has the opportunity to adjust the plans for the project bids or before the interchange is built.

Interim Director of Public Works Coleman stated GDOT would like to let the project for design build procurement in December.

Mayor Galambos asked if this project will be completed before the bridge is widened.

Interim Director of Public Works Coleman responded this is part of the bridge widening project.

City Manager McDonough stated this project is the design part of the project. The construction part of the project will probably start about one year from now.

Councilmember Karen Meinzen McEnery stated there is a Georgia Power standard to have full cut lenses that direct the light street down on the area desired.

City Manager McDonough stated the direct light will be included in the City's updated lighting standards.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnery asked that the lights for this project be the full cut lenses.

Interim Director of Public Works Coleman stated these lights are LED directional in the way they emit light.

Councilmember Paulson asked if there could be fewer lights in this area, since it is located near the entrance of a neighborhood.

Councilmember Dianne Fries stated the City's landscaping level of design quality is not the best. She suggested increasing the design quality. The sidewalk project includes many crepe myrtles. In front of Classic Collision there is a beautifully landscaped hill, but now there are crepe myrtles that block the nice landscaping.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnery suggested canopy trees be planted.

Interim Director of Public Works Coleman stated the landscape architect made the plant suggestions.

There was a consensus of Council to move this item forward to the next Regular City Council meeting.

4. Motion to Authorize the Mayor to Sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the Northridge Road Interchange Improvement Project (CIP T-0037), P. I. Number 751580, as well as, SR 400 at Abernathy Road – Northbound Ramp Extension (CIP T-0038), P.I. Number 0010311

Interim Director of Public Works Garrin Coleman stated this item is a continuation of the Northridge project as well as the Abernathy Road northbound ramp extension. These are two separate projects that were funded by CERTA funds. This agreement will allow the City to recoup \$11,000 spent on concept development for the public meetings. GDOT is requesting \$500,000 that the City allocated in FY13 funds to be used for this project. This will be a total bridge replacement project. When this project was first unveiled it was to be a bridge widening, but the project has expanded in scope. The bridge will be lengthened and widened. GDOT has agreed to decorative mast arm traffic signal poles, LED street lights, illuminated overhead signs, upgraded vehicle detection sensors, green vinyl chain link, and granite cast in place formed finishes.

Mayor Eva Galambos stated originally GDOT wanted the City to pay for part of the lengthening of the bridge. GDOT is now paying for the entire lengthening of the bridge.

Councilmember Dianne Fries asked if staff could find out what company the City of Alpharetta uses for their landscaping.

Mayor Galambos stated Alpharetta uses their Community Improvement District.

Councilmember John Paulson stated he would like the pace of work on this project to be similar to the work on the Roswell Road Bridge over I-285.

Interim Director of Public Works Coleman stated the goal is to have the project completed by January, 2013. The other aesthetic issue is the Texas style rail. The rail will be on the outside of the parapet walls, but not on the inside.

Councilmember Gabriel Sterling asked about the Texas style rail.

Interim Director of Public Works Coleman the rail looks like a piano key, similar to the rail on the Hammond Drive bridge. This design will be on the exterior of the parapet wall.

Assistant City Manager Bryant Poole stated the depicted picture is located in Atlanta at Memorial Drive and I-285. The closest comparison is at Johnson Ferry Road over the River and Hammond Drive. This is the image that has been started in the City and staff chose to continue with this image. This design will be applied to the Northridge bridge.

Councilmember Fries stated she does not understand why the inside of the bridge rail cannot be the same.

Assistant City Manager Poole stated staff had a discussion with GDOT and this cannot be done due to a structural matter. The bridge is load rated as to what type of impact the barrier can handle. In terms of a six, eight, or ten foot sidewalk, a vehicle could potentially stop before it hit the rail or side of the bridge.

Councilmember Chip Collins asked about the fence.

Assistant City Manager Poole stated since there is no sidewalk on the north side of the bridge, the fence had to be a straight style. If a car were to leave the road and drive into the shoulder, the hook on the fence would be hit. Staff agreed they do not want one side of the fence hook style and the other side straight, so it was agreed to have both sides of the fence straight. The fence will be a green chain link fence.

Councilmember Karen Meinzen McEnerny asked if green is less intrusive than black.

Assistant City Manager Poole stated the Hammond Drive rail is green and this is consistent with the image the City has started.

Councilmember Paulson asked if the Northbound ramp off Abernathy Road is what GDOT is currently working on.

Interim Director of Public Works Coleman responded yes. The reason that project is in this agreement is to be able to recoup the concept design fees.

There was a consensus of Council to move this item forward to the next Regular City Council meeting.

5. Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) Plan 2040 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Call for Projects

Interim Director of Public Works Garrin Coleman stated staff submitted a project list to seek Federal funds. Staff has received information that the preliminary approved list has been released. Three of the Sandy Springs projects selected for funding on the list include: Roswell Road at Glenridge Drive Intersection Improvement, ATMS on Roswell Road from Abernathy to the City of Atlanta, and the City-wide Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Trail Plan. The City originally asked for construction funds for the Glenridge Drive intersection project, but ARC elected to award the City design funds of \$60,000 with a local match of \$15,000. The ATMS project is \$1,320,000 of Federal funds with a required local match of \$330,000. For the Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Trail Plan study, the Federal funds committed are \$80,000 plus \$20,000 in local match. The City programmed \$270,000 for FY13, which is short \$95,000. Staff will be coming back for the next fiscal year to request additional funds for the local matches.

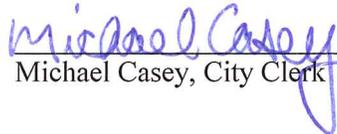
There was a consensus of Council to move this item forward to the next Regular City Council meeting.

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Date Approved: November 6, 2012



Eva Galambos, Mayor



Michael Casey, City Clerk