

Work Session Meeting of the Sandy Springs City Council was held on Tuesday, March 6, 2012, at 7:35 p.m., Mayor Eva Galambos presiding.

STAFF DISCUSSION ITEMS

Community Development

1. Draft CDBG Annual Action Plan

Manager of Planning and Zoning Patrice Dickerson stated this item is a follow up to the update that was given to Council last month. The CDBG annual action plan will be publicly advertised tomorrow and placed at various public locations for review for the required thirty day period. The action plan schedule is as follows: the item will be heard at the March 6th Work Session; the draft plan will be available for public review on March 14th; the final plan will be brought back to Council for adoption on May 3rd; and the final plan will be submitted to HUD on May 11th.

Mayor Eva Galambos asked about any important changes to the action plan.

Manager of Planning and Zoning Dickerson stated the action plan just highlights the continuation of the multi-year sidewalk project that was outlined in the original consolidated plan. There have not been any modifications other than the allocation received last year from HUD in the amount of \$489,000. This amount will be spent on the current sidewalk construction and phase 2 construction from Northridge Road to the Chattahoochee River.

Councilmember Gabriel Sterling asked about the timeline for construction of the sidewalk from Northridge Road to the Chattahoochee River.

Manager of Planning and Zoning Dickerson stated the timeline is covered under the current consolidated plan, which continues until 2013. Council will then need to start a new consolidated plan for adoption that will start in 2013 and end in 2017.

Councilmember Dianne Fries stated sidewalk construction is currently occurring from Dalrymple to Northridge Road.

2. Site Development Inspection Process and Staffing

Director of Community Development Angela Parker stated pursuant to Council's direction during the midyear budget review, staff was asked to consider additional inspection as part of the plan review process. The inspection process focuses on the stormwater best practices and retention of the tree canopy. In staff's estimation, it would take approximately twenty-four hours a week to conduct the additional inspections. This is based upon the fifteen to twenty new projects a week that the City is currently receiving.

Mayor Eva Galambos asked if the work would require an additional part-time employee.

Director of Community Development Parker stated the position may require another part-time employee. Currently on staff there are two FTE equivalents consisting of one full-time employee and two part-time employees. The additional work would probably result in an increase of the two part-time employee's work hours.

Councilmember Dianne Fries thanked staff for looking into this issue. Council relayed to staff what they would like done and staff figured out how to accomplish the task. If the City is going to ask applicants to supply drawings with the permit applications, staff should check to make sure the drawings are correct.

Councilmember Tibby DeJulio stated staff just completed an inspection of variances to ensure applicants were complying with the plans submitted to the City. He asked if staff has checked on other permits to see if applicants are violating the plans they submitted.

Director of Community Development Parker responded no.

Councilmember DeJulio asked about the number of complaints and violations regarding permits.

Director of Community Development Parker stated that are staff inspectors that visit the sites fairly regularly.

Councilmember DeJulio asked if staff should perform pre and post-inspections in addition to what is currently being done.

Director of Community Development Parker stated the pre-inspection of the application seeks to shape the plans based upon what is on the site during the course of developing the plans. Ideally, the pre-inspection should occur during the plan development process. This would be to encourage the designer to save trees and incorporate measures to better protect downstream properties.

Councilmember DeJulio stated a pre-inspection would include staff guiding the property owner on what to build on their property as well as what they could not build.

Director of Community Development Parker stated often when staff receives the construction drawings the plans are already complete. Generally, there is not much desire to modify the plans due to cost and time. In many cases, staff getting involved early on is a better model.

Councilmember DeJulio asked if any other communities get involved with a pre-inspection.

Director of Community Development Parker stated Fulton County performs pre-inspections. A sampling of nearby cities and a couple of counties shows they do not perform this type of inspection.

Mayor Galambos stated there was a previous incident about three years ago where trees were cut down that should not have been.

Councilmember Karen Meinzen McEnerny stated that incident occurred in August 2010 on Davis Drive.

Mayor Galambos stated if there is anyone that loves trees, she qualifies. Since that date she has not been made aware of any other issues. Comments were heard this evening that the City is not maintaining the tree canopy. She does not think that is a proven fact.

Councilmember Gabriel Sterling stated the pre-inspection would include staff working with the applicant prior to the plans actually being drawn. He asked what the mechanism would be for the applicant to come to the City prior to submitting the drawings.

Director of Community Development Parker stated, "Our intention is not to have that be an absolute requirement. However, we have started having what we call the Thursday morning meetings. These are meetings where we bring all the players that review plans together. It was initiated to review plan comments, so that everybody that made comments was there to explain the comments. That meeting has sort of morphed now to the point where we often meet, quite often, in those Thursday morning meetings with projects that are being proposed before the design is done. So that's the point in time that we would do that.

Councilmember Sterling stated, "These are with good and responsible players and developers, I'm assuming."

Director of Community Development Parker stated, "These are with often players that want to quickly get their project under construction. The better job you do with complying with the City's ordinances on your plans, the quicker the plan review process and permitting process moves. It has become popular to get everybody together and talk about what it is we are looking for on the project."

Councilmember Sterling stated if the pre-inspection is implemented and done appropriately, it could save the City money on stormwater, so he is in favor of the City having the pre-inspections.

Councilmember John Paulson stated he visits job sites as part of his daily job. It is now a requirement that before a project is designed, everyone walks the site first. He supports the pre-inspection process.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnery stated good design costs as much as bad design. When there is bad design, the ramifications spill over into adjacent and down gradient properties. The pre-inspection is to ensure the best plan is designed for a particular property. The City has never performed a tree canopy study. The study that the City relied on when the tree ordinance was passed in February, 2007, was a University of Georgia low resolution tree canopy study. Best management practices would support a high resolution tree canopy study within the next fiscal budget. She thanked the Councilmembers who support the addition of staff for the pre and post-inspection construction review.

Councilmember Chip Collins stated he agrees with the pre and post-inspections being performed. Staff should be mindful of making Sandy Springs a place where trees are protected and ordinances are followed. He still receives complaints from homeowners regarding the permitting process. It should not be difficult to receive a permit and do business within the City. The City wants to preserve the trees, have positive development, and allow the permit application process to run efficiently.

Mayor Galambos asked how the community will be educated that they should come to the City for an initial site visit before submitting plans.

Director of Community Development Parker stated staff will work with the Communications Department in relaying this information. Most of the people that do business with the City come in repeatedly. The information will be displayed at the permit front counter area. Generally, homeowners do not submit permit plans, but an architect or engineer does. Staff would work through those organizations to get the word out.

Mayor Galambos stated the applicants will submit the plans, but the plans may have to be changed because of the pre-inspection visit.

Director of Community Development Parker stated the process will be looked at from a reasonable perspective and all plans will not require changes. There is a growing desire of the applicants wanting to meet with the City prior to submitting the plans.

Councilmember DeJulio stated it is a good idea to let the applicants know of potential problems with a site plan. He does not want to see the City micromanaging what can be built on a lot. It is not the job of the City to tell individuals what to do when building a house on their lot.

Councilmember Fries stated staff has meetings at City Hall with the applicants. She suggested having the meetings at the location of the site plan. On-site inspections are important.

Councilmember Sterling asked if the \$17,146 would come out of the contingency budget for the transition.

City Manager John McDonough responded yes. He recommended that during the budget discussions in May the program be reviewed to see how well it has served the City. He recommended moving forward with the task order amendment for the pre-inspection service in the amount of \$17,146.

There was consensus of Council to move forward with the task order amendment.


Public Works

1. FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Map Update

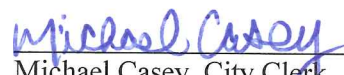
This item was not discussed.

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

Date Approved: March 20, 2012



Eva Galambos, Mayor



Michael Casey, City Clerk