

**Work Session Meeting of the Sandy Springs City Council was held on Tuesday, October 18, 2011, at 7:33 p.m., Mayor Eva Galambos presiding.**

**STAFF DISCUSSION ITEMS**

**Recreation and Parks**

1. CIP Funds Transfer for Hammond Park Parking Project

**Director Recreation and Parks Ronnie Young** stated this item is a request to discuss moving money from one capital project to the Hammond Park parking project. This project is a 100 parking space addition at a cost of \$250,000. Approximately two years ago the gymnastics program participants at Hammond Park increased to 1,200 children. During the past week there were sixteen rentals for the athletic field. The parking lot now accommodates about 100 cars and is not adequate for the busy evenings during the week. The available parking is less when special events are held. This request is to move \$250,000 from the capital funds for the Sandy Springs Tennis Center to the Hammond Park parking project. If the money is moved there will still be \$200,000 of funds left for the Tennis Center. The parking improvements would include drilling a well to provide for Hammond Park's own water system in the future and additional fencing. The map shows what the project would look like with 99 additional parking spaces in the wooded area, which is north of the existing parking lot. The estimated cost of the project is \$475,000 to \$480,000. The parking lot would be asphalt and have an underground detention for the stormwater that would run to the existing pipes at the ball field. He would also like to add an ADA ramp to move the handicap individuals from the existing parking lot to the turf field. There are programs for handicap students in the school system and with the current conditions the students are not able to go onto the field. The cost for the ramp is estimated at \$80,000. Staff is also looking at stormwater control. There are current issues with the water and silt running onto the turf field. He proposes using \$50,000 to place downspouts underground and run them to an existing drain.

**Mayor Eva Galambos** suggested staff look into rain barriers as an option.

**Councilmember Karen Meinzen McEnerny** stated a cistern could be used and the water redirected to the trees.

Director Recreation and Parks Young stated staff is not ready to start looking at what to do with the water runoff. The parking lot is designed and staff will move forward with the parking lot bid package as soon as Council approves transferring the \$250,000. The projected cost of the items is \$685,000.

**Councilmember Tibby DeJulio** asked if there would be any way to have a recycling cistern for water runoff.

Director Recreation and Parks Young stated he is not sure and has not talked to the stormwater staff on how to handle this issue. The problem is with the water runoff from the building. He will speak to staff on how to approach this situation.

Councilmember DeJulio stated he would like staff to look into grant or conservation money to help with that expense.

**Councilmember Gabriel Sterling** stated he believes the City can lead by example by trying to reuse the water for our own irrigation and trees.

**Councilmember John Paulson** asked if the parking lot project has been through the Community Development staff for review.

**Manager of Planning and Zoning Patrice Dickerson** responded yes.

**Capital Program Manager Garrin Coleman** stated the project began with a quick paver design, which is an infiltration type of system. Staff has looked at a one way option and the impact of that system is smaller. The consultant initially quoted staff a price that was competitive with the asphalt cost. When the project was sized, the consultant discovered more rock was needed, so the cost was 1/3 to 1/2 higher than an asphalt parking lot. That is why the current drawing is asphalt with a center bioswale and an underground detention facility.

Councilmember Sterling asked if the proposed project was originally for 68 additional parking spaces.

Capital Program Manager Coleman answered staff was trying to maximize the space to add over 100 parking spaces.

**Councilmember Chip Collins** stated he recalls the discussion of the parking lot being a permeable surface as opposed to concrete. He thought the policy for Recreation and Parks was to create the most environmentally friendly type of parking lot. He asked if the ecofriendly option was looked at and if it was cost prohibitive. This project would be removing trees in one of the City parks to add 100 parking spaces. Will the parking lot be filled on a daily basis or will the lot be filled to capacity only when there are specials events?

Director Recreation and Parks Young stated the parking lot will be used daily. As the numbers in the gymnastics program have increased there has also been tremendous growth of use of the turf field. The parking lots are filled in the evening. Many people park in the lower parking lot in order to have access to the basketball court.

Councilmember Collins asked what type of parking lot surface is at Overlook Park.

Director Recreation and Parks Young stated the parking lot at Overlook Park is a combination of asphalt and pervious parking spaces.

Councilmember Collins asked if that can be done at Hammond Park.

Director Recreation and Parks Young responded yes.

Councilmember Paulson stated the City can place two items out for bid; one for an asphalt parking lot with a detention system and the other for a pervious surface. There are many new pervious paver systems, so when the project goes out to bid there may not be that much of a differential.

**Councilmember Meinzen McEnerny** stated she likes the analogy that we are like a family around a kitchen table trying to find ways to save money. If we only have the funds to build 1/2 of the parking lot so that it's environmentally sustainable, then we build half of it now and build the other half when we have saved the rest of the funds. She agrees with Councilmember Collins. Also, she does not see any tree islands in the parking lot.

Councilmember Sterling stated staff needs to look at an underground cistern as an option. Council needs options and would like to see the cost quotes for a pervious parking lot. When Council saw the original

plan, there was going to be parking spaces in between the trees. More parking spaces are needed, because this park is used often.

Councilmember DeJulio asked if this item is just the discussion of moving the money and not the approval of the plan design.

**City Manager John McDonough** stated staff is looking for direction on how to move forward with this item and the project design. Part of the presentation was to include the option of the increased cost. Staff would like to move forward with the project and needs feedback.

Councilmember Collins asked if a parking deck is an option.

Mayor Galambos responded no.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnery stated forward thinking is to maximize the tree canopy and put in a low level deck. At a minimum, we need to have an environmentally sensitive project.

Mayor Galambos asked if the land under the trees is hilly or flat.

Capital Program Manager Coleman stated the land slopes down toward the existing parking lot.

Mayor Galambos stated the reason she asked is because when you visit Callaway Gardens you park between the trees. She asked if that is that possible on this project.

Director Recreation and Parks Young stated that is possible, but it may limit the number of parking spaces.

Capital Program Manager Coleman stated if cars are parked under the trees everyday it will impact the root zone of the trees.

Mayor Galambos stated some of the trees may have to be cut down and the ones that remain will eventually grow. She would like staff to look at the option of the parking spaces being between the trees.

Councilmember Sterling asked if most of the trees are pine trees.

Capital Program Manager Coleman stated seventeen hardwoods were identified in the area.

Mayor Galambos stated Council does not have a problem with moving the money, but there are questions about the current plan.

**Councilmember Dianne Fries** stated she likes nice trees as much as anyone else. She would like everyone to remember that we are land locked. The City built a new park and there are not a lot of trees at the moment, but they will grow. The parcel of land is so jam packed that a shuttle bus was required to get the children to the park. We need active playgrounds in the City. A few trees may need to be removed for that to happen.

Councilmember DeJulio stated he noticed Hammond Park visitors are using the parking lot at the building next door. He asked how many spaces are at that location and if there are any restrictions on using this parking lot until the City comes up with a solution. He asked if the City can buy the property.

City Manager McDonough stated the use of the parking lot is up to the property owner. He does not believe the City can purchase the parking lot property, because it is tied to commercial buildings. Staff needs guidance on how to move forward. At a minimum Council needs to give staff direction on how many parking spaces they would like. Then staff can have a plan designed.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnery stated an environmentally friendly sustainable parking area is needed. She encouraged staff to visit the Gwinnett County Environmental Center. That parking lot has four examples of pervious concrete and pervious asphalt on a sloped site. Something like this could be done at Hammond Park, in phases if needed.

Councilmember Sterling asked for a cost estimate if pavers are used.

Capital Program Manager Coleman stated the cost of the brick pavers is approximately \$607,000 to \$620,000. This would be for about 78 parking spaces. Additional parking was going to be placed on the main drive coming into the park.

Councilmember Sterling asked about the \$80,000 in the proposal for the vehicle garage.

Director Recreation and Parks Young stated the garage is for three twelve passenger vans and one twenty-two passenger bus that belong to the City.

Councilmember Sterling asked if the purpose of building a vehicle garage is to extend the lifespan of the vehicles.

Director Recreation and Parks Young responded yes. Also, now is a critical time for these vehicles to not be taking up the parking spaces.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnery asked if the vehicles have to be parked at the park or if they can be parked at City Hall.

Director Recreation and Parks Young stated the Recreation and Parks staff uses the vehicles on a daily basis.

Mayor Galambos asked if staff can make the parking lot plan more environmentally sustainable.

Councilmember Collins stated the purple lines represent the asphalt to allow for the most parking spaces, while the black lines are the environmentally friendly plan, with fewer parking spaces, but allowing the use of permeable pavers.

Capital Program Manager Coleman stated that is correct. The \$620,000 includes the spacers along the spine of the entrance road. The number of spaces would be reduced if Council moves forward with that plan.

Councilmember Sterling asked if pavers are used, does the \$50,000 have to be spent for the underground detention.

Capital Program Manager Coleman stated the underground detention is included in the \$475,000.

Councilmember Sterling asked if the detention is included in the \$600,000 cost.

Capital Program Manager Coleman stated a detention pond would not be constructed with that design, because the water drains underneath the pavers and infiltrates into the ground.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnerny stated in the parking plan there were to be trees every six parking spaces.

Capital Program Manager Coleman stated the landscape plan is not shown on the drawing. There are planter islands in this plan.

Councilmember Sterling asked if the 78 parking spaces include the spaces on the entrance road.

Capital Program Manager Coleman stated the total number of parking spaces is 106 with the spaces on the main road for the brick paver option.

Councilmember Sterling stated more parking spaces could be built if both options are used.

Capital Program Manager Coleman stated more parking spaces could be along the main road. However, during the review it was determined that placing parking spaces along the main road may not be the best design, because vehicles would be backing out into the drive lane.

Councilmember Paulson stated he does not want to move forward with the current design. He is willing to spend more money to make the project more of an environmental showcase parking lot.

There was consensus from Council to have staff bring a design plan back to Council that is more environmentally sustainable.

### City Manager

#### 1. Update on General Government Service Contracts

**City Manager John McDonough** stated this item was moved from the previous Council meeting to today's meeting. Council has had a few weeks to review the reports that were provided. Representatives of the contractors are here and he asked them to give a brief overview of the highlighted items in the report.

**Kristin Howlett, Representative of the Sandy Springs Call Center**, stated the call center was created when the City was incorporated. The call center met with the new City contractors during the transition process. Most of the work that had to be done was updating the knowledge base with new information on work policies and procedures that may have changed. The call center averages 11,500 calls a month. Over the last several months those numbers have increased to 13,900 in June and 13,300 in July. The number of calls declined in August and in September the number of calls was at a normal level. The call center has a quality assurance program that includes contacting a random number of citizens that call the center each month. This survey is a series of yes and no questions. There is also a second survey that asks more questions to find out how the call center can provide better service. From the results of the surveys in 2011, the citizens are happy with the response they received from the call center.

**Councilmember Gabriel Sterling** asked if the call volume increase was from any particular content.

Ms. Howlett stated court had a significant increase in call volume over the last several months. The call center has been working with court to decrease the call volume, which has lowered by forty percent in the last two months. There has been an upward trend in the call volume for the public safety department.

Over the last few years the public safety call volume has been about fourteen to seventeen percent of total call volume for the City. The volume was recently in the twenty-four percent range. The Police Chief thought that the volume increase may be due to the Police Department office moving and the phone lines may be set up differently. The call center will look into this possibility.

**Councilmember Chip Collins** asked what type of calls the call center receives regarding public safety. Are they from people who should be calling 911?

Ms. Howlett stated a small percentage of people call the non-emergency number and the calls are transferred to ChatComm. Typically, the phone calls are from people who want to report a barking dog and do not want to call 911, because it is not an emergency. Certain calls are police dispatch calls and those are transferred to ChatComm.

**Councilmember John Paulson** asked if there is a report that states how many calls are transferred to the Police and Fire Department.

Ms. Howlett stated the call volume is now separated by each department and is placed in the call center monthly report. All public safety calls were previously in one group.

Councilmember Paulson asked about receiving a copy of the call center's monthly report.

**Communications Director Sharon Kraun** stated this month she was hired as the Communications Director. The department has been working on refining internal processes to fulfill more service requests through the department. Within the past quarter an internal communications audit was completed. This required looking at all the channels the department utilizes to communicate outward and internally for the City. The outcomes included streamlining the social media, reducing the number of Twitter accounts, and creating a neighborhood news section. In the weekly reports there is a special section for what is happening in the neighborhood and updates on projects for the residents. Preliminary signage plans have been completed to help the visitors to City Hall find their way around.

**Acting Director of Community Development Ed Shoucair** stated within the past quarter Community Development instituted a plan review engineer of the day. This was created to streamline the permitting process and allows the department to issue same day permits for straight forward projects. The process has been formalized for empowering the land development inspectors to make minor changes in the field. Every Thursday applicants that have more complex projects come to management to discuss the projects and to receive guidance when entering into the permitting process. The City received approval from the Atlanta Regional Commission to combine the LCI study with the CoSS City Center Master Plan, saving the City \$50,000 and eliminating potential public confusion that the City performed two similar studies simultaneously. There has been an increase in permit applications. The numbers include 1,459 building inspections, 665 building permit applications received in the quarter, and 653 permits issued. Most of the permits issued were for residential properties and the second largest number was for commercial properties. The remaining permits issued were for grading, fence, administrative, pool, demolition, and land disturbance permits.

**Mayor Eva Galambos** asked how things are coming along with hiring a Director of Community Development.

Acting Director of Community Development Shoucair stated the new Director of Community Development will start the week of November 7, 2011.

---

Councilmember Paulson stated several contractors have called him in recent weeks stating they were not able to reach staff by phone in Community Development. Within the past week the contractors have now told him staff is returning their calls.

Councilmember Collins asked who is the manager of Code Enforcement.

Acting Director of Community Development Shoucair responded Al Ferrell. Today Code Enforcement Manager Ferrell met with thirty representatives of apartment complexes around the City to discuss code enforcement.

**Councilmember Dianne Fries** stated Code Enforcement Manager Ferrell has assumed the responsibilities of the position and is doing a good job.

**Councilmember Karen Meinzen McEnerny** asked who Code Enforcement Manager Ferrell reports to.

Acting Director of Community Development Shoucair stated Code Enforcement Manager Ferrell reports to the Director of Community Development. There are three managers in the department: the Building and Development Manager Johnny Lawler; Code Enforcement Manager Ferrell; and Manager of Planning and Zoning Patrice Dickerson.

Mayor Galambos stated it seems the apartment market is the strongest market the City has. She would like to see some redevelopment there. If the cost of apartment improvements is high enough, it may be more of an incentive to the owner to start over and build new.

City Manager McDonough stated that is an economic decision the property owner would have to make.

**Chuck Button, Jacobs Engineering**, thanked the City Manager and City Attorney Wendell Willard for assistance with the transition. Tyra Little was hired as the Deputy Court Clerk and Jane Gaguski was hired as the Court Administrator. The court system has been audited and areas were identified where challenges exist. The challenges have been addressed. All court staff is now GCIC certified. The court area has been remodeled by eliminating the tall cubicles in order to allow for better customer service. Court is not in session on Tuesday, so staff uses this day for weekly training sessions. Each employee is cross-trained on at least two positions. By Christmas time most of the issues will be worked out in the department.

Councilmember Paulson stated when he sees bullet items on the reports that say, "continue to" he would like to have a time frame included for these items.

**Interim Finance Director Karen Ellis** stated Severn Trent manages the finance contract for the City. There are 18.5 full time employees, which include the Revenue, Finance, and Purchasing Department and administrative support for the City Manager and City Clerk's office. In addition to keeping the cash flow running for the City, an audit was done of the records management system. Throughout the audit there was difficulty locating various documents. Staff is working with the IT department to get the records easily available and retrievable.

City Manager McDonough stated the records issue is not unique to the Finance Department, but a challenge in other departments as well. Staff is investigating to find a solution to the issue. Currently, some records are not easily found in the electronic system.

Mayor Galambos asked if Ms. Ellis is responsible for the monthly financial reports and if Council will receive a report soon.

City Manager McDonough responded yes.

Ms. Ellis stated the staff has been working on software conversion, audits, and finding out where other people left off on their work before they left the City. There have been challenges with employee turnover. Currently, there are only two vacancies in the department, which are minimal. The City Manager will have the monthly report by the end of this month.

City Manager McDonough stated the monthly financial report is a top priority. Being short three to four accountants has contributed to the challenge. The FY11 audit will be starting shortly as well.

**Director of Human Resources Phil Davis** stated he is employed by Flex HR, which provides human resource services to City employees. Flex HR has been working with the City for thirty months and things are running smoothly. There have been no EEO charges or legal issues that have started within the last eighteen months. This is a result of partnering with City leadership. There is going to be an e-verify report to ensure all City employees are properly credentialed from an immigration standpoint. The 2012 open enrollment period for benefits will begin soon. The human resources department is fully staffed and has been from the first day.

Councilmember Sterling asked if e-verify applies only to City employees and not contract employees.

Mr. Davis responded yes.

Mayor Galambos asked if all City staff have to be e-verified or just new employees.

Mr. Davis responded the e-verify is for new staff. Flex HR has been complying with the e-verify all along and this is just a reporting requirement.

Councilmember Paulson asked if a flu shot day was held.

Mr. Davis stated the flu shot day was already held. With the City Manager's support, this is the third year the flu shot day has been held. The flu shot is offered to all employees.

Councilmember Meinen McEnery asked if Council can be notified when the next upcoming flu shot day is held.

Mr. Davis responded yes.

City Manager McDonough stated a flu shot make up day may need to be scheduled.

**Senior Project Engineer Johnny Johnson** stated he is employed by InterDev, which manages the City IT services. A few accomplishments include the set up and configuration of the recently purchased storage solution and virtual server solution as well as the Cisco devices acquired from the initial buyout. New laptops and desktops have been deployed as well as migrating the existing desktops to a newer version of Windows and the Sandy Springs domain. The application security and the domain security have been improved by auditing the current users. It was discovered there were 360 or more user accounts that were still active for people that are no longer with the City. The next issue and challenge is securing sensitive data and encrypting certain pieces of data based on sensitivity and classification. InterDev staff is working with the Police Chief and his staff on classifying their data as well as with the Court department.

**Director of Public Works Kevin Walter** stated the Public Works Department has worked on an emergency call system for staff to be available for emergencies. A three tier level of staff was developed to respond to emergencies and the system is working well. There have been several road closures, a large water main break, traffic and safety incidents with trees down, and staff has been able to handle all of these. The road paving and reconstruction have been successfully bid out and came in at a cost of twenty percent under the estimate. Staff was able to contact the appropriate contractor for emergency repairs to the Spalding Bridge. The contractor completed the repairs ahead of schedule and under budget. The traffic was managed very well, which minimized the inconvenience to the public.

Councilmember Fries asked if the lower cost of the bridge project was due to an original estimate from CH2M HILL.

Director of Public Works Walter stated the low cost was a result of the bidding process and was from the estimate of the contractor. Staff asked the contractor to provide the bid with a thirty percent contingency, because it was not known how much material would be needed. The contractor that was selected did not need the thirty percent and the estimate they gave was under the base estimate.

Councilmember Fries stated the City is usually conservative with estimates and she wanted to know if the City is still being conservative.

Director of Public Works Walter stated the costs listed are the actual bids from the contractors. Because it was emergency work, the other contractors bid higher. Staff asked for unit price bids and the other bidders gave a lump sum bid.

City Manager McDonough stated there was no budget, since it was an emergency repair.

Mayor Galambos stated the emergency occurred after the transition.

Director of Public Works Walter stated the City's estimate on the repaving was based on past prices over the last two years. URS offers quality and customer service training. In the proposal, URS stated they would train all of their staff. There will be an upcoming training session in customer service. URS has worked closely with the communications department in providing information to the public to get better information on the City website. A concern of the City Manager is the utility expense the City is experiencing for streetlights. For the past two months there has been an intense review of how street lights can be used at a lower cost. Staff is searching aggressively for alternatives for the City in the future.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnery stated near the new sidewalks on Lake Forrest Drive there are existing old wooden telephone poles that still have "mongoose" light fixtures that need to be turned off. They are a waste of electricity now that we have the streetscape lighting installed. We don't need both.

Mayor Galambos stated that is one of the things staff is looking at.

City Manager McDonough stated staff just received a complete inventory from Georgia Power of the entire lighting system in the City, including the location and wattage of the fixtures. There are over 5,000 existing light fixtures, which will be placed in the City's GIS system. This may take several months, but afterwards there will be a complete map of where the fixtures are located.

Councilmember Fries asked if the "bobble head" pedestrian lights are sufficient for an active roadway and if that will be enough lighting for Lake Forrest Drive.

City Manager McDonough stated that is an excellent question. Staff is in the process of rewriting the City lighting policy to include the residential, arterial, and collector streets, as well as larger roads.

Director of Public Works Walter stated another priority for staff is to better communicate with Council. Staff has met individually with the Councilmembers to discuss their priorities.

Mayor Galambos asked if the quarterly updates on the capital improvement projects will still continue.

Director of Public Works Walter responded yes.

Councilmember Collins asked if the City's standard is to have street lights on the inside or on the outside of the sidewalks.

Mayor Galambos stated the light standards were changed.

Councilmember Collins thanked Public Works, Communications, and Police Chief Sult for being so well prepared for the town hall meeting.

Mayor Galambos stated there needs to be more collaboration between Public Works and Community Development.

Director of Public Works Walter stated he and Director of Community Development Ed Shoucair have been meeting weekly for at least an hour to discuss high level issues.

### **Public Works**

#### 1. Update on Traffic Management Center

**City Manager John McDonough** stated this item is an update on the status of the Traffic Management Center and the direction of staff moving forward.

**Director of Public Works Kevin Walter** stated staff is proud of the improvements in the Traffic Management Center over the last three months. The Center is located in the Public Works Department and is linked to the traffic signals, cameras, and fiber networks. Staff has been trying to utilize the Center more efficiently. There were different databases of traffic signals and computer listings that included conflicting information. These were merged together into one database. There were signal controllers and expensive computers that were marked as non-functioning. Out of the eighteen non-functioning, staff was able to make seven useful replacement controllers. The infrastructure and fiber system was reviewed. Cameras being used with the system were connected to the system, but several signals were not connected to the system. For each signal there is a data key, which is a small computer card that contains all the information necessary to program a signal. Staff programed the data keys with the information for the traffic signals. If lightning strikes a traffic signal or a car hits it, wiping out the programming, the signal reverts to flashing or base programming. It could take hours to reprogram the signal. Instead, the data key can be inserted into the traffic signal to more quickly reprogram the signal to its original settings. As of July 1, 2011, there were only eight traffic signals connected to the Center. Now there are thirty-nine traffic signals connected to the Center. There were only sixteen cameras connected to the system previously and now twenty-one are connected.

City Manager McDonough stated on July 1, 2011, fifty percent of the cameras were connected and now seventy percent are connected. The number of traffic signals online was at nineteen percent and now that number is at ninety percent.

---

Director of Public Works Walter stated half of the time the signals can be fixed by the emergency on call staff using their computers from home. Staff uses their computers to evaluate the signals and fix them remotely. This saves the City money by not having to dispatch staff or contractors for a repair.

Mayor Galambos stated that is what Council thought the City had all along.

Director of Public Works Walter stated it is very important for the Traffic Management Center to work with other departments. He has worked with Police Chief Sult very closely to make sure the system is useful to the police, which was not being done in the past. The Iron Sky initiative will be integrated with the cameras as well as the IT network for internet security. Staff worked with the call center in order to get the system interactive with the call center and ChatComm. A big priority is finding ways to improve traffic on Roswell Road.

Mayor Galambos stated this information is very impressive.

Councilmember Fries asked to hear an explanation about the keys.

Director of Public Works Walter stated the keys are similar to thumb drives, but shaped like a key. The information from the signal controller can be downloaded onto the key. The key is kept in the signal box, just in case the signal is struck by lightning and wiped out. If an individual goes to the location of the signal box, the signal can then be restored with the key.

Councilmember Fries stated fiber needs to be funded. One thing that the City of Alpharetta has over Sandy Springs is it is covered by fiber, which the large companies want.

Director of Public Works Walter stated staff has looked at installing more fiber. There are a few loops of fiber to serve some areas of the City that can work off of spines. An example would be I-285 and Spalding Drive. Instead of a loop, a lot of the fiber can be eliminated by serving areas off of the spine. The savings can be used to pay for digital cameras.

Councilmember Fries stated the fiber falls under the Traffic Management Center.

Mayor Galambos stated she understands that. She asked if the fiber is of sufficient capacity so that the City can attract and accommodate a company that has a data center.

Director of Public Works Walter responded yes, to the extent of where the fiber goes. The fiber will not cover the entire City, but it will cover the system for controlling the traffic signals, which will be a large percentage of the City.

Councilmember DeJulio asked if the fiber will eventually be connected to every traffic light within the City.

Director of Public Works Walter responded yes.

City Manager McDonough stated fiber is very important to the City.

Councilmember Fries asked if the City fiber will have capacity available for companies to use.

City Manager McDonough responded yes, under certain circumstances.

Mayor Galambos stated the discussion of fiber is beyond the scope of tonight's meeting. Maybe a special meeting could be held regarding this.

2. Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) for the construction of the Roswell Road ATMS Project (T-0013) Project Number STP-0006-00(727), P. I. Number 0006727

**Capital Program Manager Garrin Coleman** stated this project came to the City as a federally funded project and was initially an 80/20 percent local match. The project is a Roswell Road ATMS project from Roswell Road extending all the way up to Alpharetta along State Route 9 at a total cost of \$3.2 million. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has funded the project at 100%, so there is no longer a local match required for this project. The bids came in a little over the \$3.2 million estimate and FHWA agreed to fund the \$200,000 to make the low bid \$3.479 million from Midasco, LLC. This project will pay for fiber to be installed from Dunwoody Place to Azalea Drive.

**Mayor Eva Galambos** asked if a local match is no longer required.

Capital Program Manager Coleman responded yes. The project will be 100% paid for by FHWA. The City began as the project sponsor and has to pay the initial expenses. The IGA needs to be written in such a way so that Sandy Springs is not the bank for the other cities, including the cities forming an escrow account.

**Councilmember Karen Meinzen McEnerny** asked why the City of Atlanta is not part of this project. There is a major traffic light at Windsor Parkway, which connects to two lights in the City of Atlanta. She thinks it is great the City is connecting to Milton, but what about the City of Atlanta.

Capital Program Manager Coleman stated staff has approached GDOT regarding the RTOP program. Two traffic signals in the City of Atlanta have been connected to the Sandy Springs fiber hub at Roswell Road and should be timed better. Staff did submit for a similar ATMS project from Abernathy Road south to the City of Atlanta for the TIA funding. Unfortunately, that project was not selected for the investment list. GDOT did state the project is valuable and would like to explore another way to fund it.

**Councilmember John Paulson** asked if the City funds this project, will the City be reimbursed through GDOT.

Capital Program Manager Coleman responded yes. Sandy Springs agreed to be the project sponsor, so the City has the responsibility to pay the contractor. Staff would like this to be addressed in the IGA. Now that the City does not have to pay the local match, staff looked at paying the engineer of record for construction observation services. The engineer could sign off on invoices and the work can be done more quickly. This could be a way to expedite the payment and review of the invoices as they come in.

Mayor Galambos asked if the IGA can be brought to the North Fulton Mayors Association meeting to be discussed.

**City Manager John McDonough** stated the cost to the City may be \$600,000 to \$700,000, until reimbursed from GDOT.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnerny asked if the City of Johns Creek is up-to-date on their ChatComm payment.

City Manager McDonough stated he has not received a recent financial report and does not have an immediate answer for that question.

**City Clerk**

1. 2012 City Council Meeting Schedule

**City Clerk Michael Casey** stated Council was provided with a proposed 2012 City Council meeting schedule. The schedule was set up based on the normal first and third Tuesday of the month meetings, with only four exceptions. Two of those exceptions are in January: moving the January 3, 2012, meeting to January 10<sup>th</sup>, because January 3<sup>rd</sup> follows the New Year's day observed long weekend; and moving the January 17<sup>th</sup> meeting to January 24<sup>th</sup>, because January 17<sup>th</sup> follows the Martin Luther King holiday long weekend. The elimination of one meeting in July is a continuation of what was done in 2011 for the summer vacation. The final exception is moving the September 4<sup>th</sup> meeting to September 11, 2012, because September 4<sup>th</sup> follows the Labor Day long weekend. With the consensus of Council this item will be placed on the consent agenda for the November 1, 2011 meeting.

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

**Community Development**

1. Discussion of Vacancy Sign Period Extension

**Acting Director of Community Development Ed Shoucair** stated Community Development would like to amend the zoning ordinance. The changes would address the interest of property owners and managers who seek to extend the length of time they are permitted to post vacancy signs to attract buyers or tenants. There are positive signs of increasing real estate activity. An example of this is the Serrano condo development which has about 125 units. This project is now eighty percent full. The absorption rate of vacant commercial and residential property has still not caught up with supply. Vacancy signs are permitted for two 90 day periods in a calendar year. The proposed change would permit vacancy signs for twelve months with one six month administrative extension. Additionally, staff recommends Council apply a sunset clause, so that two years from adoption of the ordinance this modification would be reviewed again by staff.

**Mayor Eva Galambos** asked if the ordinance applies to apartment complexes.

Acting Director of Community Development Shoucair responded yes.

**Councilmember Karen Meinzen McEnerny** stated the Design Review Board has come to Council with suggested improvements to the monument sign. If a sign is going to be displayed for eighteen months, maybe staff should discuss design standards. Some of these signs are not attractive and could be up for eighteen months.

Mayor Galambos stated she is concerned that condos and apartments are being treated the same way. The real estate market is totally different in those two components. Apartments are doing well right now, but condos are not.

**Councilmember Dianne Fries** stated this was discussed during the agenda item dealing with real estate signs. Council wanted an examination of the City's commercial signage for vacancies and for sale properties. She is hesitant on the extension being up to eighteen months, but 180 days is not enough time. She suggested six 2 month extensions for a total of twelve months. Council should think about design standards for the signs. There are some signs in the community that are very attractive. There are some signs that are mounted on 2 X 4's and plywood that do not look good. She does not want to look at those

signs for 180 days, let alone eighteen months. She suggested the signs be posted for six months with one six month extension.

Mayor Galambos asked if the ordinance applies to older properties or newly constructed properties. Acting Director of Community Development Shoucair responded both.

**City Manager John McDonough** stated there are currently at least fifty signs that are nonconforming. The property owners will constantly be coming to the City for an extension permit, because they always have a vacancy. Staff discussion focused on a need for a design guideline for a sign that will most likely be a permanent sign at each location.

Mayor Galambos stated apartment complexes will always have vacancies, this is normal. Ninety-two percent is considered a very good occupancy rate. If this ordinance is approved, the vacancy signs will never be removed.

City Manager McDonough stated that is why staff needs feedback. The variance process will never end with the way it is currently set up.

Councilmember Fries stated the ordinance would increase appeals from businesses trying to get their sign variance extended.

City Manager McDonough stated it is a huge administrative burden on the staff to constantly be processing the variances and extensions.

Councilmember Fries asked if the ordinance can be separated by residential and commercial or if the ordinance can state that the apartment may apply for a sign extension when they are under ninety percent occupancy.

Acting Director of Community Development Shoucair stated that is a good recommendation.

Councilmember Fries asked who will monitor the apartment vacancy numbers.

Acting Director of Community Development Shoucair stated staff will be responsible to monitor the numbers.

Mayor Galambos stated changing the type of sign might be a better decision. New apartment complexes need visibility until they reach full occupancy. That is a different situation from an apartment project that has been in the City for forty years and is near full occupancy. She asked if the newly constructed apartments can be separated from the older apartment projects in the ordinance.

**City Attorney Wendell Willard** stated he is concerned about making the distinction in property owners where a benefit is provided to one and not the other.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnery asked if this item can be given to the Design Review Board to come up with standards and ideas for the signs.

City Manager McDonough stated the Design Review Board can come up with aesthetic standards.

Acting Director of Community Development Shoucair stated the sign extension time can be shortened. The extensions are coming before the Board of Appeals after 180 days. It takes time for staff to prepare the variance applications to extend the signs permits. Many of the applications are from condo owners or

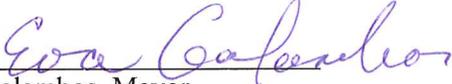
commercial real estate owners who are trying to get their properties occupied. The time period extension can be shortened or design guidelines can be applied to the signs.

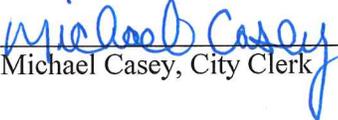
City Manager McDonough stated this item should not move forward as an action item. Council should take time to think about the ordinance and talk to constituents in the business community. This item should be placed on the Work Session in two weeks.

There was a consensus of Council to move this item forward to the next Work Session meeting.

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Date Approved: November 1, 2011

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Eva Galambos, Mayor

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Michael Casey, City Clerk