

**Work Session Meeting of the Sandy Springs City Council was held on Tuesday, November 16, 2010, at 7:19 p.m., Mayor Eva Galambos presiding.**

## **STAFF DISCUSSION ITEMS**

### **Public Works**

#### 1. T-0034 Morgan Falls Road Improvements – Wall Design Options

**Transportation Engineer Greg Ramsey** stated staff has developed additional plans for the T-0034 Morgan Falls Road project. There have been discussions regarding certain aspects of the design of the retaining walls including the aesthetics. He then went through the PowerPoint slide presentation. There are two types of things that need to be looked at; the wall types and the aesthetics. The wall types staff looked at are gravity type walls and MSE.

**Mayor Eva Galambos** asked where the walls will be used.

Transportation Engineer Ramsey stated the primary location is after the first bend when approaching Overlook Park, going down the hill to the right. There are two primary curves; the curve to the right and the ninety degree curve as you approach the entrance to Overlook Park. There is a narrow section as you drive around the first curve with a one-to-one slope and a lot of the slope is failing. As you go down towards the Park entrance there will be additional walls on the right.

Mayor Galambos asked how many linear feet of wall will be required for the project.

Transportation Engineer Ramsey stated probably several hundred. The type of wall constructed will affect the length of wall as well.

Mayor Galambos stated part of the consideration is how much wall will be needed. If a lot of wall is not needed, Council may not mind spending more money per foot.

Transportation Engineer Ramsey stated staff wants to balance the area of disturbance versus how steep the walls are, how steep the slopes are now, and the cost of the walls.

**Councilmember Karen Meinzen McEnerny** asked if the reason for the walls is to be able to place pedestrian sidewalks at the top.

Transportation Engineer Ramsey responded no. The pedestrian sidewalks will be on the street level near the bottom of the walls. The primary reason for the walls is to limit the number of acres of disturbance. Another aspect staff will be looking at is aesthetics. The types of walls shown on the slides are examples.

Mayor Galambos asked how long it will take to grow ivy on the wall as shown in the example.

Transportation Engineer Ramsey responded two years.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnerny asked where that particular wall is located on the expense page of the handout.

Transportation Engineer Ramsey stated he would go through the pictures first and then go through the costs. There is a modular block and also a shotcrete option on which different types of veneers can be placed.

**Councilmember Dianne Fries** stated of the seven pictures shown on the slideshow, there are two basic types of wall.

Transportation Engineer Ramsey stated there is a modular block wall, which is a stacked individual piece that can be purchased with an outside aesthetic to it. The other type of wall is a shotcrete option, which is a finish that is blown through a hose onto the wall. The wall can be finished like a brick mason or have an artisan draw a picture on the outside of it.

**Councilmember Tibby DeJulio** asked if the wall is real rock.

Transportation Engineer Ramsey stated it is concrete. The idea with the ivy on the wall is if the City decides to use a cheaper finish on the block, it can be dressed up aesthetically with the ivy.

**Councilmember Chip Collins** stated this rock pattern is modular and not real rock. Is it feasible to have a real stone rock cover on the wall?

Transportation Engineer Ramsey stated both options are available. This is aesthetics and there are more options with shotcrete as opposed to stacked stone.

Councilmember Collins stated since it is a park environment, the wall that looks most natural would be nicer. However, if it is not cost effective, then it might not be a good idea.

**Councilmember John Paulson** identified a picture on the slideshow that is the type of wall at Overlook Park behind the pavilion.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnery asked about concrete that is fabricated to look like stacked stone. It can be made to look like real rock.

Councilmember Fries asked if using stacked stone would be structurally sound.

**Director of Public Works Tom Black** stated it would be used just for facing. It would raise the price another \$750,000.

Transportation Engineer Ramsey showed the picture of the existing entrance to Overlook Park. An idea that staff had to finish Phase 1A is to dress up the entrance with greenery and signage. The entrance to the trail would be located behind the sign. There will be a directional sign for the dam and into Overlook Park as well. There is a lot of flexibility with the finishing touches. He then began to explain the road cross sections through the area.

Councilmember Paulson asked what the yellow line is on the drawing.

Transportation Engineer Ramsey stated the yellow line is the area of disturbance for the wall. There is some disturbance behind the wall as it is cleared out.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnery stated she does not know where the traffic circle on the picture will be located.

Transportation Engineer Ramsey stated some of that is conceptual.

**City Manager John McDonough** stated the traffic circle idea is not an option. Staff met with Georgia Power and it is not an option for a number of reasons. There is a huge gas line that runs under that area.

Transportation Engineer Ramsey stated the next picture shows a tiered wall. There are two sections of vertical wall separated by a small space of horizontal. In the horizontal space additional plantings could be added.

Councilmember DeJulio asked if a tiered wall adds tremendously to the cost.

Transportation Engineer Ramsey stated it does not. He believes it added about eight percent to the wall area. It is a slight increase to the cost due to the extra area required.

Councilmember DeJulio stated that allows for more green space.

Transportation Engineer Ramsey stated staff felt by doing this it would open the area up. Staff looked at capping the wall height around twelve feet in the tiered system. If the walls were not tiered, they would be nearly eighteen feet high.

Councilmember Fries asked if there is a section of the road that will have a wall on both sides.

Transportation Engineer Ramsey responded a very short section, yes.

Councilmember Fries asked if it is right after you make that right turn.

Transportation Engineer Ramsey responded yes.

Councilmember Fries stated if the wall has a tiered system, there is a planting area at street level and a planting area above it, which gives two ways to grow plantings on the wall to cover it up quicker.

Councilmember Jenkins asked how big the sidewalk will be.

Transportation Engineer Ramsey stated there will be one foot at the bottom of the wall behind the sidewalk where vines can be planted. On the top of the tier more plantings could be added.

Councilmember DeJulio asked how wide the tier will be.

Transportation Engineer Ramsey stated the tier will be approximately six feet.

Councilmember Paulson stated the problem with these walls is if they get too tall you will feel like you are walking in a canyon.

Mayor Galambos asked about the price of the walls.

Transportation Engineer Ramsey stated the price depends on a lot of variables; the types of walls and the height of walls. What is shown on the slide is the least expensive as you move left to right. There are soil nailed walls and MSE walls.

Councilmember Fries asked for a rough idea of the cost of the cheaper wall, the one with the vines on it.

Transportation Engineer Ramsey stated a MSE type wall can be used and the cost would be thirteen dollars a square foot, plus the other dollar amount. The other dollar amount involves an equation with many variables.

Councilmember Fries asked if the wall with the greenery is the cheapest wall of the six or seven options presented.

Transportation Engineer Ramsey stated a plain type modular wall is less expensive than the veneer types.

Mayor Galambos asked if there is an estimate on how many square feet of wall will be needed.

Transportation Engineer Ramsey stated he does not have that right now. The cost will be close to \$1 million worth of wall. The price could range from \$700,000 up to \$1.2 million.

Councilmember Paulson stated when reading the cost table it should be read from left to right. The first line is if soil nails are used, which is a way of stabilizing the soil behind the wall. With the soil nail option there are three different finishes; gunite, decorative and colors. The next option, MSE (Geogrid), is another way of stabilizing the soil. The cheapest wall does not have any blocks, it is vegetation only. Option 2 is decorative, which has a masonry block. The third option is if you want to use a fancy block or stone. Most of the walls in the pictures will have Geogrid reinforced soil behind them. The least expensive is the reinforced slope of rock basket that does not have a hard face. It looks like a steep green wooly slope. The block walls and tiered wall pictures were shown.

Mayor Galambos asked where the \$1 million is found in the budget.

**City Manager John McDonough** stated staff needs general direction from Council on the aesthetics. There is a lot of work to do on this project. There is only \$1.5 million for this whole project.

Mayor Galambos asked if that amount is for the paving, too.

City Manager McDonough stated the budget is for everything, which includes sidewalks and paving.

Mayor Galambos stated since we do not have the money to cover all these wishes and dreams; it is a little premature to be spending this amount of time.

Councilmember Fries stated staff is asking for direction from Council on the design work.

Mayor Galambos suggested staff should receive direction on where the money is coming from before they go too far on design.

Councilmember DeJulio stated if there is \$1.5 million for the project, shouldn't we figure out how much of the money has to be spent on the roadway and the sidewalks, and then we will see how much is left for the retaining walls. This will allow Council to make a decision based on the amount of money left.

City Manager McDonough stated no one is suggesting that \$1.2 million will be spent on retaining walls on this project. Staff is looking for direction from Council on what they think of the aesthetics.

Councilmember Fries stated to construct the road, the hill has to be cut. This will require a wall on the hill, even if the road is just two lanes.

Councilmember Collins stated Councilmember DeJulio has the right idea. If we want to spend \$1.5 million for this project, we need to figure out what the other items cost first.

Mayor Galambos asked if staff can come back to Mayor and Council with this at a later time, when they know more about the amount of money available for the walls.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnery suggested we could place asphalt down over the road and wait until we get the money for the walls.

Councilmember Paulson stated if we pave the road now and then come back and put the walls in, he is not sure how safe that would be, because of unstable slopes. If the road is paved and a wall is put in later, some of the road may have to be torn back up.

City Manager McDonough stated staff will come back to Council with an affordable and buildable plan.

## 2. Briefing on Safe Routes to School Grant Program

**Director of Public Works Tom Black** stated the design on this project will be paid for by GDOT and they are paying for construction. GDOT put out the request and Spalding Drive Charter Elementary School responded the quickest. There was a question from Councilmember Meinzen McEnery about if the private schools would comply with the terms of the grant. GDOT said yes, as long as the schools have a K-8 program, they can apply.

**Councilmember Dianne Fries** asked if the schools should contact Public Works.

Director of Public Works Black responded absolutely.

**Councilmember Karen Meinzen McEnery** asked if there is time for other schools to apply for this grant before the deadline.

Director of Public Works Black stated the deadline is around December 15.

**Councilmember Ashley Jenkins** stated sidewalks are already being installed around the Spalding School. Where else are the sidewalks going to go?

Director of Public Works Black stated there are three or four schools that are on the list. The only school where the details have been worked out is the Spalding School.

Mayor Galambos stated the sidewalk being installed from this program would be more than what the City has installed.

Councilmember Jenkins stated she thought the Safe Routes to School only went half a mile.

Director of Public Works Black stated the Safe Route extends a certain distance from the school. They are also doing improvements on the school property to make sure there is ADA access in all areas and they are upgrading an area where there is a bicycle rack by placing it on concrete.

Mayor Galambos asked the City Manager John McDonough if there is any way an inquiry can be placed to the schools, especially the ones that have had the sidewalks for some time. She would like to know approximately how many more children are walking to school now.

**City Manager John McDonough** stated the Police Department has assisted with this before regarding students using the Ison Road sidewalks. The Police Department can probably do an assessment of this.

Mayor Galambos stated she would like to know how many students are currently walking on the new sidewalks. She wants to know if more students are walking or if the school bus is still picking up the children.

City Manager McDonough stated Public Works can provide the Police Chief with a list of where the new sidewalks are and the Police Department staff can get a report back to the Mayor.

Mayor Galambos stated she does not see many children walking.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnery asked how time consuming it would be for Public Works or Community Development to send out a letter to all of the private schools in the community announcing this program and outlining what they need to do to respond to meet this year's deadlines; or would it be better to do that next year?

Public Works Director Black stated it would probably be best to wait until next year. For staff to get the letters out and then for the schools to take the letters before a committee would run past the deadline.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnery asked if this is an annual grant program of the State.

Public Works Director Black stated it has been, yes.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnery stated she would like this information sent out to all the private schools next year. She would like their involvement as well.

Councilmember Chip Collins asked about the items listed on the school grounds in the neighborhoods. Will all of these be done with the Federal money?

Public Works Director Black stated that is all that is available and the items listed there will be completed on the specific sites.

Councilmember Chip Collins asked if the installation of the sidewalk heading south on Brandon Mill Road to Seville Chase will happen?

Public Works Director Black responded yes. However, this is an application that has not been awarded, yet.

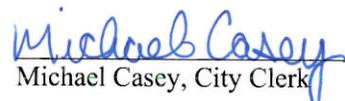
There was a consensus of Council to move forward with this item.

#### **CITY COUNCIL DISCUSSION ITEMS**

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 7:47 p.m.

Date Approved: December 7, 2010

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

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