

**Work Session Meeting of the Sandy Springs City Council was held on Tuesday, December 3, 2013, at 7:35 p.m., Mayor Eva Galambos presiding.**

**Councilmembers present:** Councilmember John Paulson, Councilmember Dianne Fries, Councilmember Chip Collins, Councilmember Gabriel Sterling, Councilmember Tibby DeJulio, and Councilmember Karen Meinzen McEnery.

**STAFF DISCUSSION ITEMS**

**City Attorney**

1. Consideration of Acceptance of Conservation Easement on Riverside Drive Property

**City Attorney Wendell Willard** stated this item is a donation, conservation easement, and dedication of right-of-way by property owner Dr. Kaswan. This property is located at the corner of Johnson Ferry Road and Riverside Drive. This will allow the City to acquire the right-of-way needed to straighten out a very dangerous curve at that intersection. The City is being asked to accept as a party to hold the donation of the easement for the conservation easement. If this is approved by Council this evening, it will move forward to the next Regular meeting.

**Mayor Eva Galambos** asked if the property is being given away at no cost to the City.

City Attorney Willard stated the property is free. James Freeman is in attendance representing the property owner, if there are any questions.

**Councilmember Gabriel Sterling** asked if the amount of property being donated is enough for engineers to straighten the street properly.

City Attorney Willard responded yes.

**Councilmember John Paulson** asked what it means that the City is the holder of the easement. He asked if the City controls anything regarding the property.

City Attorney Willard stated the holder of an easement is for tax purposes. The property is to be maintained as an undisturbed green area and with that comes a tax benefit to the property owner.

**James Freeman, representative of Dr. Kaswan,** stated the responsibility to the City is enforcement of the covenants within the easement. The property owner is taking away the development rights on the property. If a future land owner for some reason builds a house, it would need to be removed, because it would be in violation of the easement.

Councilmember Sterling asked if the easement is in perpetuity.

City Attorney Willard responded yes.

Mr. Freeman stated the current proposal is for the City to realign that part of Riverside Drive with a fee simple donation of about 0.6 acres.

Mayor Galambos asked if Dr. Kaswan will need a new driveway and how she will reach her property with the easement.

City Attorney Willard stated the easement will be maintained throughout that area and Dr. Kaswan will have right of egress and ingress to that area.

There was a consensus of Council to move this item forward to the December 17, 2013, City Council meeting.

### **Public Works**

#### 1. Resolution in Support of High Capacity Transit in the SR 400 Corridor

**Director of Public Works Garrin Coleman** stated at the October 1<sup>st</sup> Work Session meeting MARTA updated Council on their planning efforts for the expansion of the MARTA rail into North Fulton County. Staff is asking Council to consider a letter and resolution to give to MARTA stating the City participated in the process and will be involved going forward; as well as giving input on what side of the road Council would want the rail expanded. Based on comments tonight, one revision to the letter will be made stating the rail line should be located on the west side of GA 400. Currently, the letter states the transit station will be on the west side of GA 400.

**Councilmember John Paulson** stated the letter needs to be amended to state that any potential MARTA station and the rail line should be on the west side of GA 400.

Director of Public Works Coleman stated staff will include that information in the letter.

**Councilmember Dianne Fries** stated part of the letter should include if the MARTA station is to be located at the Northridge exit or not. The station should not be located at the Northridge exit off GA 400. The MARTA buses and trains already stop too many times. The problem is getting on the other side of the river and that is where the "bottleneck" is. If the station is placed at Northridge, the riders will still be trying to get across the river to get to the MARTA station. The next station should be located across the river, not at Pitts Road or Northridge. The rail line should be on the west side of GA 400 in Sandy Springs, but once it gets across the river, either side can be chosen by the other cities.

**Councilmember Gabriel Sterling** stated he agrees that the rail line should be on the west side. He asked at what point the rail line can extend across to the east side of GA 400.

Director of Public Works Coleman stated studies were done in the early 1990's. The studies showed that after the North Springs station the rail line would transition over to the east side of GA 400.

Councilmember Sterling asked what is located on the west side of GA 400 after the North Springs MARTA station.

Councilmember Paulson stated there are no single family homes on the west side of GA 400, but there are condos and north of Spalding Drive there are high-rise condos.

Councilmember Sterling stated there are interspersed single family homes close to that area and then a lot of multi-family housing in the Pitts Road area. There are four multi-family neighborhoods including two owner occupied multi-family properties. This is a forty year plan and timelines are not something MARTA deals with well. The City's Comprehensive Land Use Plan has a live/work regional section north of this area that will have a lot of high density. The plan includes office use where the Circa 400 is now. Council should not say there is no reason to have a Northridge MARTA station on a thirty year out plan, especially if the City is trying to get to higher density in this area. People will put high density office where there is mass transit, which is what is being seen in the PCID area right now. He would like

the bridge down the middle of GA 400 and then move the rail line to the other side of GA 400. He is not sure what the technology is for this. The project will cost \$2 billion to build and there is no money.

**Mayor Eva Galambos** stated she does not understand why Council is spending time discussing this when there is no money to pay for the project.

**Councilmember Karen Meinzen McEnerny** stated Council is discussing this because MARTA came to the City to get Council's opinion on the record. Roswell Road is the City's main commercial corridor. If the City can get a train station on the west side of GA 400, the City can have Roswell Road corridor access at the MARTA station, whether it be by bus or walking. She would like a MARTA station on the west side of GA 400 at some point, but she does not know exactly where. A Northridge station would be too close to the North Springs station. The station should be on the west side, because that is where the businesses are, where Roswell Road is, and where the MARTA buses already run. She supports the western alignment of a station somewhere between the river going north.

Mayor Galambos suggested the idea of having a MARTA station at the North River shopping center.

Councilmember Sterling stated GDOT already has a lot of the right-of-way on the east side. North of this area, extending to Pitts Road, the area turns into single family homes. He wants to find a way to impact the least number of residential areas.

Director of Public Works Coleman stated the MARTA Board will discuss this matter in January 2014. He proposed using this feedback to make corrections to the letter and bring this item back at the next City Council meeting. Staff will look at aerial imagery and topography information to see where alignment of the station will be less impactful.

Councilmember Sterling stated two schools and a residential area will be impacted if the rail is placed on the east side of GA 400.

Mayor Galambos stated there is a consensus of Council that the rail should be on the west side of GA 400. Council is not united as to whether a station is needed at the Northridge exit.

Councilmember Fries asked if Council can state they have mixed feelings on a Northridge station, but all of Council agrees there has to be a station on the other side of the river.

Councilmember Sterling stated MARTA is already proposing a station on the north side of the river.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnerny stated Council does not have enough information to know where the station on the west side should be, but there is a consensus that a station should be on the west side of GA 400.

Councilmember Fries stated there is not a consensus of Council to have a station on the west side of GA 400. She wants a station on the west side of GA 400, but it needs to be on the other side of the river.

Councilmember Paulson stated he does not want a station before the river and it would be a mistake having a station at the Northridge exit.

Councilmember Sterling stated having a station at the river would not necessarily be a bad thing. The City's Comprehensive Land Use Plan is live/work regional for this area.

**City Manager John McDonough** stated before the next meeting he will have staff use Council's feedback to revise this item. If Council is looking for a catalyst five to fifteen years down the road, the station being located near the river may very well be it. The City would not be well served to rule out the idea of a station being located at the river.

Councilmember Sterling stated look at what happened to the City of Roswell. They have only one exit off of GA 400 and it hurts their ability to handle their traffic and redevelopment.

**Councilmember Chip Collins** asked if the resolution will state Council is in favor of a station on the west side of GA 400, but also that Council is unanimously opposed to the rail being located on the east side. He asked that staff add this language to the resolution.

Councilmember Sterling stated if the option is the west or the east side completely, he is not 100% opposed to the rail being located on the east side on the southern section, because of the impact to the side of GA 400 where he lives.

**Councilmember Tibby DeJulio** asked what is staff's input.

Director of Public Works Coleman stated he would not cut off the potential for an economic driver at this point. There still has been no preliminary design to see the feasibility for a station and if it would be above or underground. It is easier to take something out of a plan than it is to add it.

City Manager McDonough stated the redevelopment opportunities and the value of land rises significantly when a rail station is nearby and an example is the Dunwoody station.

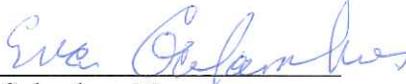
Councilmember Sterling stated Councilmember Meinzen McEnery has a good point that there would be no access to the station from the Roswell Road side, as far as getting to mass transit.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnery stated more ridership can be accomplished by placing the rail on the west side, because it accesses the apartments and businesses, if Council can agree to the rail not being on the east side of GA 400.

There was a consensus of Council for staff to move this item forward to the December 17, 2013 City Council meeting.

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 7:52 p.m.

Date Approved: December 17, 2013

  
Eva Galambos, Mayor

  
Michael Casey, City Clerk