Work Session Meeting of the Sandy Springs City Council was held on Tuesday, August 16, 2011, at 7:30 p.m., Mayor Eva Galambos presiding.

STAFF DISCUSSION ITEMS

Community Development

1. City Council Briefing on Floodplain Map Updates

Plan Review Engineer Bennett White stated this item relates to the floodplain discussion from the last two City Council Work Sessions. The following individuals were present at the meeting: Collis Brown, Floodplain Management Office Program Manager, Georgia Department of Natural Resources; Garrett Skinner, Floodplain Hazard Management Project Manager, Atkins North America; Bruce Bender, outreach specialist with Bender Consulting; Tom Shillock, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, GIS Specialist; Yongqing Yu, Engineer, Georgia Department of Natural Resources; Lynne Keating, National Flood Insurance Program Outreach Specialist, FEMA.

Collis Brown, Georgia Floodplain Management Coordinator, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, stated the Department of Natural Resources, in partnership with FEMA, has embarked upon on a new study of seven counties that are impacted along the Chattahoochee River basin. The seven counties are Coweta, Cobb, Douglas, DeKalb, Fulton, Forsyth, and Gwinnett. The new study, unlike previous map updates, will focus on risk and assessment. This is referred to as risk M.A.P. The acronym M.A.P. stands for mapping assessment and planning. These maps are based on watershed basins. In September, 2011, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GA DNR) will be issuing preliminary flood maps for the City and the public's review. This discussion is to give Council a preview of the maps and the changes that will occur. During presentations he will reference areas as high, moderate, and low risk. He will not reference areas as being in the floodplain or out of the floodplain. That may influence a resident to think that if they are not in the floodplain boundary, water will respect that line. In addition to the Chattahoochee basin, there will be high priority sub basins that will be identified on the map. Technology has enabled improved matching of the topography and the flood plains. Fulton County has been divided into three phases: North Fulton, City of Atlanta, and South Fulton.

Councilmember Gabriel Sterling stated that Carroll County borders the Chattahoochee River basin. Why is Carroll County not included in the study?

Mr. Brown stated Carroll County did not have the latest topographic and elevation data available, so it was excluded. This map review process began in April, 2010, with a multi-agency stakeholder meeting. A number of interested parties attended, including real estate agents, developers, engineering firms, local, State, and Federal officials. That meeting was followed up a week later with a fact finding meeting with City staff and other North Fulton County stakeholders. On June 29, 2010, a kick-off meeting was held that initiated the project. This meeting framed the project and what was going to be done and the projected outcomes. Work maps were developed and presented to the City staff on May 10, 2011, for review and comment. He stated he will now turn the presentation over to Garrett Skinner, who is one of the State mapping contractors.

Garrett Skinner, Floodplain Hazard Management Project Manager, Atkins North America, stated the Fulton County project will produce a countywide product. The flood insurance rate map distributed by FEMA will be for Fulton County and the incorporated areas. The data used was received from both Fulton County and Manhard Consulting. Atkins North America coordinated with Manhard Consulting to take that information and the methodology used to develop the floodplain areas. This was done in a manner acceptable to FEMA for incorporation into the new flood insurance rate maps. He explained each

City Council District scope map. The detailed local update is the information received from the City. The red line on the map is the new detail study that his firm conducted for the Chattahoochee River. This information may differ from what was previously done by Manhard Consulting.

Councilmember Dianne Fries asked when Atkins North America performed the study.

Mr. Skinner stated the study began last fall and the engineering was completed in early spring 2011.

Councilmember Karen Meinzen McEnerny asked Mr. Skinner to provide the slideshow to staff, so that Council can receive a larger map of each district.

Mr. Skinner stated excluding the Chattahoochee River, the total miles of streams within each district is fairly small.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnerny asked for an explanation of the color lines on the maps.

Mr. Skinner stated the red line is the new detail for the Chattahoochee River. The purple line is the incorporated study from Manhard Consulting, which is also a detailed study area. A detailed study means the maps will be based on elevations and cross sections. The green line is a Zone X shaded area.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnerny asked if the Zone X shaded area is a hazardous area.

Mr. Skinner responded that area is referred to as moderate risk. Zone A or AE are the high risk areas. The X shaded regions, previously referred to as a 500 year flood, are the moderate risk areas. Everywhere else in the county are low risk areas.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnerny asked for an explanation of the brown and blue lines on the map.

Mr. Skinner stated the red line is the high risk area. The flood plain boundaries are not depicted on the map. Those boundaries have been given to Plan Review Engineer White in the form of work maps. The preliminary maps will not be released until the end of September.

Councilmember Fries asked about the draft maps and what will change from now until the preliminary maps in September.

Mr. Skinner stated usually there are not many changes. There are some items that can be addressed between the draft maps and the release of the preliminary maps. The flood plain boundaries are reviewed in detail to ensure that staff is aware of the new boundaries. In some cases, there may be an additional area that an official or a member of the community may request to be added to the maps.

Councilmember Chip Collins stated staff was presented with the concept that Council has some discretion to decide what areas will be designated Zone A, AE, or X. He does not think it is appropriate for Council to make this decision. Where did that concept originate?

Mr. Skinner stated FEMA has a standard for how far upstream a study is conducted. FEMA's usual cutoff is one square mile of drainage area. The study usually does not go beyond that, unless specifically requested by individual communities.

Councilmember Tibby DeJulio asked what one square mile of drainage area means.

Mr. Skinner stated usually stream lines are the lowest points within the immediate area. Around a stream is high ground, which separates the water that flows into one stream or flows into a different stream. That ridgeline is considered the drainage basin for any given point in a stream. The further up a stream you go, the smaller the drainage area is. Moving further downstream, the drainage area is increasing in size. The one square mile drainage area is the size of the catchment area. The Sandy Springs requirement for the Metro North Georgia floodplain ordinance requirements are to study up to the one hundred acre catchment area. That is significantly smaller than the standard drainage area size that is used on most FEMA maps. This means a study is performed further upstream than what is done on a standard map.

Councilmember Fries asked if the City's maps that were created for the State show a larger flooding area than what the standard maps usually show.

Mr. Skinner stated the City's map has more floodplain area. FEMA acknowledges that some communities want to go the extra mile and study further upstream. It is acceptable to incorporate the data the City provided, because there are instances where flooding beyond the one square mile limit has occurred. Any floodplain developed beyond that one square mile is shown as an approximate study. The floodplain boundary is still considered as being a high risk flood area. The detailed study is shown to that one square mile limit. Any study provided beyond that point can be shown as an approximate boundary. The property owners in that area would be notified of the mandatory flood insurance purchase requirement, Zone X shaded, or the moderate risk area.

Councilmember Sterling asked if the data is just as good as it is in the one mile square area.

Mr. Skinner stated it depends on whether or not a significant amount of field survey has been done in that area beyond the one square mile limit.

Plan Review Engineer White stated Manhard Consulting utilized a different basis for establishing elevations in the areas where the drainage basin is less than a square mile. That is one reason why it is considered approximate, as opposed to the areas that have larger drainage basins.

Councilmember Sterling asked, since the information is not as detailed in the smaller drainage basin, does that mean the level of deviation could be a lot higher.

Plan Review Engineer White stated the drainage basin in the area smaller than a square mile is going to be, in general, more narrow. The area shown as high risk, which would be Zone A, would be much narrower than what the current map shows as moderate risk, or the shaded Zone X. The current FEMA maps will show a broad area of moderate risk and the Manhard maps will show, in general, a narrower area of high risk. In that regard, it would be safe to categorize Manhard's maps as a more accurate representation of the risk. The data that was utilized by Manhard to generate the flood zones was significantly more detailed than what was available for the current maps, which have been in effect since 1998.

Councilmember Sterling asked if a parcel is touching the shaded Zone X, will most mortgage companies require the homeowner to purchase flood insurance, or will it only be required in Zones A and AE.

Plan Review Engineer White responded the flood insurance would only be required for the homes in Zones A and AE.

Mr. Skinner stated the colored lines are rivers or streams. The purple line is the leverage detail. The leverage detail is data incorporated into the maps that is provided by the community, State, or FEMA. This would be an AE full detail study on the map. The green lines are revised or new detail study, which

is still an AE flood zone. The brown lines are leverage approximate study, which are A flood zones. Both A and AE are considered high risk flood areas. The difference between the two is elevation is provided on the maps for the AE. The blue lines are the new revised approximate study. The lighter green lines are the revised X shaded area. He will be giving Council full size maps with the streams labeled. He asked if the Councilmembers have seen the work maps.

Plan Review Engineer White stated he has met with some of the Councilmembers and shown them the work maps and the map that shows the dots representing the houses that are directly affected.

Mr. Skinner stated once the preliminary maps are released in September there will be a thirty day comment period and a ninety day appeal period. The appeal period process consists of the constituents throughout the county having the opportunity to officially dispute any of the elevations that have been changed with technical data.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnerny asked if he was referring to elevation certificates.

Mr. Skinner responded not necessarily. It would have to be flood study data that would dispute the data on the maps. The elevation certificate for an individual property can continue to take place even after the maps are released through the letter of map amendment process. He referenced the slideshow table that shows the number of parcels that will be impacted by the change in the high risk flood areas. There are areas where there is a floodway change. A floodway is the area that is crosshatched and usually directly over the water channel. This is usually the area with the most strict development regulations. In District 1, there are 81 parcels in the area of decrease in floodway. That means there are 81 parcels in the area on the map where the floodway boundary has decreased in width on the map.

Councilmember DeJulio asked if this means the parcel is not in the floodway.

Mr. Skinner stated it does not necessarily mean the parcel is no longer in the floodway, but a portion of that parcel is no longer in the floodway.

Mayor Galambos stated we do not know if that portion is where the house is located.

Mr. Skinner responded that is correct. The table lists the SFHA, which is the Special Flood Hazard Area, and that is a designation of an A or AE on the map. For District 1, there are 165 parcels that are in an area where the SFHA or high risk flood plain boundary has decreased. It does not mean the entire parcel has been removed or the structure on the parcel has been removed. It means that some portion of that property is no longer designated in a high risk area. There are 587 parcels where there is an increase in the floodplain boundary width. That means there is more high risk flood zone designated on that parcel, than was designated on the previous maps. The parcel numbers in the no change area are in the low risk area or possibly the entire parcel is in the high risk area, but there is no change on those parcels.

Councilmember DeJulio asked if an increase could mean that previously ten percent of the property was in the high risk flood area and now twenty percent is.

Mr. Skinner responded yes. He will let Bruce Bender, who is in charge of outreach, go into more detail on that. There is an outreach reason for providing numbers at a parcel level instead of a structure level.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnerny stated she was under the impression there were 320 structures that would be affected with the new maps.

Councilmember Collins asked if Council has discretion regarding Zone A versus Zone X, because the City study went beyond what was required by FEMA.

Mr. Skinner responded yes. Both methods are deemed acceptable to FEMA.

Councilmember Collins stated the City's study identified high risk areas that would not have been identified in the one square mile study required by FEMA. The City's map of high risk zones is just as reliable as or even more reliable than the bigger study, because there is more detail. The affected properties identified on the maps are in high risk areas, but the City can choose to ignore the maps, because they were more detailed than what was required by FEMA.

Mr. Skinner stated there is sound engineering data and historical flooding to back up the approximate areas that are depicted beyond the one square mile area.

Councilmember Collins stated he was hesitant for the City to make a decision that would cost people money in insurance costs and decreased property costs. This is an instance where the greater good might be more than the impact to just an individual.

Mr. Skinner stated there is a need for community outreach. Bruce Bender is the team outreach expert and can help in communicating with the community.

Bruce Bender, Outreach Specialist, Bender Consulting, stated he has been asked to help out with the public outreach aspect from a community perspective and educating the public. The updated data will allow the current flow risks to be more accurately displayed on the new flood maps. The businesses, residents, and renters will have a better understanding of the flood risks. The slideshow displayed about 400 parcels where the high flood risk area is reduced. For about 2,000 parcels, there will be an increase in the high flood risk area. The Georgia Department of Natural Resources will assist with getting the message out to the public. There are options for the residents. For those who may have flood insurance and the map changes eliminate the requirement for insurance, they can easily convert those policies to a low risk policy. FEMA has a policy with the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) called the preferred risk policy. That policy starts out at a cost of $129 for $20,000 coverage for the building and $8,000 to cover contents. There are changes in over 2,000 parcels where there is an increase in the high risk area. The flood zone may not be touching the structure, but the risk has increased for the person who owns that parcel. It is important that the owner understand that change has occurred. FEMA has ways to help reduce the cost of insurance. If the property owner has a loan through a federally regulated or insurance lender and does not have flood insurance now, they will be required to purchase it.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnerny asked if a federally insured lender would be FREDDIE MAC, FANNIE MAE, or SunTrust and Bank of America.

Mr. Bender stated almost every lender will require the insurance. A private lender may not require the insurance. The private lenders typically sell loans to another lender that would require the flood insurance. FEMA came up with a plan to extend the benefits of the low cost preferred risk policy for two additional years after the map changes. If a property owner is in the X Zone and the new map shows the parcel is in an A or AE Zone, the owner can continue to carry the preferred risk policy for two years. When the two year period ends, FEMA states the homeowner can grandfather that low risk zone for future rating and keep the cost of the insurance down. Sometimes it is cheaper to use the new maps, because there is better data that will give the owners a better rate.

Councilmember Fries asked if the grandfathering applies if the property is sold.

Mr. Bender stated the grandfathering can be transferred if the property is sold. The old homes that were built before the first flood map in Fulton County should not cancel their insurance coverage. If they cancel their coverage, they lose the chance for grandfathering.

Councilmember Sterling asked, if the property owners buy the flood insurance before the flood maps are finalized, will that grandfathering continue for them?

Mr. Bender responded yes. For the older homes, it is important continuous coverage is maintained. If the coverage lapses on a newer home, there is a way to prove that the house was built according to what the flood map shows.

Councilmember Sterling asked if older homes would apply to those homes built before 1974.

Mr. Bender asked when the first maps were used in Sandy Springs.

Plan Review Engineer White stated when Sandy Springs became a City, the Fulton County maps were utilized, which were effective in 1998. He is not sure when the very first map became effective in Fulton County.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnerny stated anyone that had insurance in 1971, even if they are now located in Zone A, is grandfathered in.

Mr. Bender stated grandfathering applies to owners that had homes before the first flood maps were released. Before the first flood maps, there were no rules that regulated how the homes had to be built. Newer homes built after the first flood maps were released were regulated on how they could be built. The insurance is easier to buy now and maintain the coverage.

Councilmember Collins asked what opportunities a homeowner has if they believe they are wrongly included in the new flood map.

Mr. Bender stated after the preliminary maps are released, there will be a ninety day appeal/public comment period. If the property owner has technical information to show that the map is incorrect, their property can be removed from the flood area. If not, the property owner can use an elevation certificate and get a letter of map amendment. This would show that the house is above the base flood elevation.

Mayor Galambos stated we do not know if individual houses can be removed from a particular area until we know how far they are above the floodplain.

Mr. Bender stated the flood maps show parcels from a 2D perspective, either in or out of the flood area. The evaluation certificate can show that the structure is built above the base level. It is important Council and staff understands the flood maps in order to be prepared for questions from the property owners. Part of this outreach is educating the businesses, as well as relaying the correct information to the media. Work maps are now being given out to allow engagement from the community and elected officials. The outreach will be to the homeowners, renters, business owners, and the media, as well as staff. The new maps will be explained as to how they will affect people and what their options are. Some people live in a low risk area and then they find out they are in a shaded Zone X. One out of four flood insurance claims come from low risk areas. Water does not always follow flood boundaries and goes where it wants. Those in a high risk area may own their home. There is a twenty-six percent chance of having a flood in the high risk areas. The chance of having a fire is only about nine percent. People have homeowners insurance with fire coverage, but they do not get flood insurance. These are the type of

things we need to educate the people about to help them make an educated choice about flood insurance. There are only about fifty people in Sandy Springs that have flood insurance.

Councilmember DeJulio stated that number cannot be right.

Mr. Bender stated he will work with staff to verify that number.

Councilmember DeJulio asked if community meetings will be held in Sandy Springs, so the map changes can be explained to the affected people.

Mr. Bender responded yes. There has been discussion about having an open house specifically for Sandy Springs.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnerny stated we would like two open houses, one for the south part of the City and one for the north part of the City.

Mr. Bender stated besides the public open houses, a guidebook has been developed for outreach that was given to staff. The material communicates what the flood risk is and what the changes are. Materials can be placed in local libraries and shared with the Chamber of Commerce to get out to the public.

Mayor Galambos stated Council believes this is something that should be communicated personally to the property owners.

Mr. Bender stated direct communication such as letters is one of the best ways to relay the information. Interviewing with the media is a good way to get the information out as well. There will be a Fulton County open house as well as brining the maps back to Council when the preliminary maps are printed.

Councilmember Fries asked if there could be a Sandy Springs open house.

Mr. Brown stated they can work with the City on having an open house. There was anticipation that some of the jurisdictions would want to have the face to face process with their constituents.

Councilmember DeJulio asked if there is any way that individual property owners that have been affected by the change can be identified and notified individually.

Mr. Brown stated there are notification letters that explain whatever the City would like to target. There are nine different categories that can be targeted in the letter.

Mr. Skinner stated there is an opportunity for the City to send out individual property owner notifications. The GA DNR has what is called the early property notification system. He can work with the City GIS staff to identity the parcels that are affected and determine who the property owners are. Letters can be customized for the City to describe what is occurring on the property and also to invite the owners to an open house.

Councilmember Fries asked if this is something City staff can have access to do, or is it something his company will do.

Mr. Skinner stated the templates are set up and the instructions can be provided to the GIS department, along with the data, and staff can complete the process of identifying the property owners and mailing out the letters. The other option is the GA DNR can come up with the list, if City staff provides him with the parcel data and information.

Mayor Galambos stated she does not believe that Council is in the position tonight to figure out all those details. She wants to ascertain that they will be working with staff to make sure this is done in the best way possible.

Mr. Skinner responded yes.

Councilmember Collins asked why more properties are now located in the flood zone. Is it because there is better mapping or because there is more development?

Mr. Skinner responded the reason is because of both. The mapping methods are much more accurate than what they used to be. When comparing the original effective flood insurance maps to what has been produced now, the level of accuracy has dramatically increased. Because of GIS, there is now a better ability to identify the individual parcels. Processes have been improved from the FEMA perspective and with improved technology there is the ability to make sure every single person is aware of their flood risk and the changes. Since population density has increased, more people are affected by flooding. The maps are developed on existing conditions. Future land use plan changes can affect flooding. The maps only change when FEMA or the State moves forward with updating the maps. Even though the maps are being released in September, they may be out of date in October based on additional development that has taken place. The maps are always in flux. Some areas of the map are approximate areas and other areas are detail study areas where there was a survey.

Councilmember DeJulio asked if a flood can change the drainage flow of water.

Mr. Skinner stated a flood can change the characteristics of any given stream. If a flood washes out a bend in the stream and straightens the channel or erodes a portion of the river bank, it can change the existing characteristics of the stream.

Mayor Galambos thanked the individuals for the floodplain presentation. There was a consensus of Council to move forward with this item by having staff work with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources in how to communicate the new information to our citizens.

CITY COUNCIL DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. Perimeter CIDs Updates

Yvonne Williams, PCID President, stated she has a handout for Council for the various construction projects in the Perimeter area. She referenced pages 13, 14, 15, and 16 in the handout as the Fulton/Sandy Springs projects now in construction. She will meet with the Councilmembers to discuss the materials. She referenced page 23 of the handout, which is part of the economic development philosophy. There were LCI questions at the last City Council Meeting for which she received answers. The PCID will come before Council again at a Work Session, so they are in conformance with the LCI Master Plan. Even with the current economy the Perimeter CID market is strong. We should be prepared for the market demand and LCI is one of the tools to accomplish this. There are demands in the Perimeter area, especially in the office market. It is very critical that we look at the Perimeter brand in the four mile area of Sandy Springs, Dunwoody, and the corporate community. The PCID Board will explain the roll out of the Perimeter Business Alliance (PBA). It will be a coalition of a board of trustees that works with the top elected officials to address a proactive competitive policy for business in this market. The PBA will be looking at the footprint of the LCI Master Plan moving forward, growing opportunities together, so we can be a voice of reason for transportation. It is important for us all to be focused with a united voice of what we want and how we position and leverage our leadership. All of this will include working together to stay ahead of the aggressive competition with tax policy and competitiveness. The concept for

the PBA is competiveness, business retention, and branding the market. She wants to make sure the City has the updated facts about the construction portfolio and everything positive happening in the Perimeter area.

Mayor Eva Galambos stated she thinks the Cities of Sandy Springs and Dunwoody have questions about the LCI in relation to the Main Street concept.

Ms. Williams stated the PCID received those questions and the consultants have the answers, which have been given to Nancy Leathers.

Mayor Galambos asked if the PBA will have financing from the PCID to do some economic development from marketing.

Ms. Williams stated this group will not be recruiting for marketing in an aggressive outreach manner. The Board of Trustees will be looking at strong business retention of the companies in the Perimeter area now. This includes comparing the Perimeter market to other markets to ensure we are very competitive on a retention basis.

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 8:44 p.m.

Date Approved: September 6, 2011

Eva Galambos, Mayor

Michael Casey, City Clerk