

Work Session Meeting of the Sandy Springs City Council was held on Tuesday, May 17, 2011, at 8:01 p.m., Mayor Eva Galambos presiding.

CITY COUNCIL DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. Discussion on Funding in FY2012 for the Neighborhood Sidewalk Matching Program

Councilmember Karen Meinzen McEnerny stated she does not think the public knows how Council ranks the City's capital projects. Her comments are not about the neighborhood sidewalk policy. There are three different ways in which sidewalks can be funded in Sandy Springs. One of the ways is through the capital improvement program, based on priorities of the Council. The second way is the developers have to put in new sidewalks. The third way is called a neighborhood sidewalk policy, which enables interested neighborhoods to get a sixty-five percent petition where sixty-five percent of the property owners agree to a cost share of twenty-five percent and the City would pay seventy-five percent. Residents on Dudley Lane have submitted a petition pursuant to the City's neighborhood sidewalk policy dated July 20, 2006. The residents cited the reasons why they would fund twenty-five percent of the sidewalks on Dudley Lane. The residents in this neighborhood have over thirty children residing in the area. Fifty-two citizens signed the petition stating they were willing to fund twenty-five percent of the sidewalk project cost. The City passed the policy, but the neighborhood sidewalk program has never been funded in Sandy Springs and has not appeared once on the capital rankings sheet. She wants to make a change in the City's funding criteria, so that the neighborhood sidewalk policy is funded for FY2012. This item was never ranked on the chart for FY2012. If the policy does not appear on the chart the City will continue to never fund it. She supports the traffic calming policy that has never been funded either. She would like to know why this item is never on the capital projects ranking sheet.

Councilmember Dianne Fries stated she will try to answer why the sidewalk program has not been funded. The program not being funded was not intentional. The City knew there was a need and the citizens had requests. The City was new and we wanted to be responsive, so they decided to establish a policy. Each time Council voted on the policy, it was felt that there were more important things to be accomplished in the City, such as infrastructure and stormwater. This is why the program was never funded. It may be time to bring this item forward before Council. She wants everyone to understand why the program has not been funded, yet.

Councilmember Gabriel Sterling stated Council has set the overall goals for the City in the capital improvement projects list. The list has a total of \$10 million in projects. All the items on the list will be completed, so Council is not really ranking anything or making decisions. He would like to see a list of all of the City projects, so Council can get an idea of every single project that needs to be funded. He does not want to upset the current budget process. If a Councilmember wants to rank one item in a subset, but does not want to rank the other item, both items move up on the list at the same time. He does not know if there is a way around that or not. He wants to see the big list of items.

Mayor Eva Galambos stated the big list was reviewed at the City Council Retreat and City Hall was at the top of the list, even though it is not on the capital projects list.

Councilmember Tibby DeJulio stated if the City had started out with \$1 billion, he does not think that everything on the list could be taken care of. The City has worked diligently for five and a half years and completed many sidewalk projects. The sidewalks completed have primarily been in the neighborhoods. The City will have new contracts for government services in which the City will have additional funds over the next several years, which were not anticipated under the old contract. This could be a time to start looking at the neighborhood sidewalk program and making an allocation of money on an annual basis. If Council moves forward with the sidewalk program, ninety percent of the citizens will still be

upset because the Council will have to choose a different project. The City does have enough money to install every speed hump or sidewalk that people would like to see. This is a good time to say maybe the City can commit some funds to this program. The neighborhoods should have skin in the game for the sidewalk program. If the citizens make a request, they have to prove they have the money to contribute. Since the disaster on Windsor Parkway, the right-of-ways need to be taken care of as well. He will not vote again to pay a homeowner a fee to put a sidewalk in front of their house. The City has identified a diverted source of money, so this might be a good time to revisit these items.

Councilmember John Paulson stated there is a maximum limit of \$50,000 total project cost in this proposal. One way to accomplish this would be to fund three or four of the sidewalk program projects.

Mayor Galambos stated the policy he is referring to is not the one being currently discussed. The policy he is reading was constructed particularly to join a swimming pool to a neighborhood.

Councilmember Paulson stated he agrees with putting money aside for the sidewalk program.

Mayor Galambos stated if the flood gates are opened to neighborhood sidewalks for any neighborhood, there may be not enough money for a New City Hall.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnery stated she agrees with the current sidewalk policy. She wants the City to begin funding the program.

Councilmember Chip Collins stated he is glad there is movement on funding the previously approved policies. Unfunded policies end up being no policy at all. The sidewalk program and the traffic calming policy should be controlled the same way as the sidewalk and paving projects. The Council has control over how much money is allocated for projects and then they are ranked by priorities.

Mayor Galambos stated the sidewalk project was not funded because the City has stormwater problems. The collector and arterial streets needed sidewalks more than the neighborhoods. The paving is again a huge issue, because last winter the streets fell apart again. The City is falling behind on paving by just putting \$2.2 million into paving projects, which is less than in prior years. Neighborhood sidewalk projects did not seem important relative to the major unmet needs of this community.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnery stated the items were never put on the list for the Council to rank.

City Manager John McDonough stated sidewalks have always been on the Council's list and continue to be on the list. Staff came to Council with different categories of programs. The first was the sidewalks to schools in 2006, 2007, and 2008. The second priority on Council's list was arterial and collector streets. Staff has been working on those streets for some time now. The third priority on the list was the gap fill program, and then the fourth item on the list was the neighborhood sidewalk policy.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnery stated she never ranked the neighborhood sidewalk policy, because it was never on any list.

City Manager McDonough stated he agrees the sidewalk policy was never on a list, but it was part of the discussion. The direction from Council has consistently been in that order. The priority order can be changed any way the Council chooses.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnery asked to have the neighborhood sidewalk program placed on the list for ranking.

Councilmember Sterling stated not to take what he said as there were no conversations regarding the neighborhood sidewalk policy. There are three Councilmembers that are new to some of the items. He has no idea what the cost of all the City's priorities are. The cost will be different than it was five years ago. He would like to see what is on the overall City priority list.

City Manager McDonough stated the categories on the list capture all of the projects Councilmember Sterling is referring to. All of the projects would fall under the major categories on the current list before Council.

Councilmember Sterling stated he understands, but he would prefer a larger scale discussion about the items. The City is five to six years into the projects and there are three new Councilmembers who have not had the opportunity to have an understanding. He agrees with placing the neighborhood sidewalk program at the bottom of the list, because there are things far more important to the community as a whole.

Mayor Galambos stated there are still community needs as a whole that are unmet.

City Manager McDonough stated he wants to meet the expectations of the Council. He asked if there is a consensus of Council to have funding in FY2012 for neighborhood sidewalks. If there is consensus, there will be money for the projects. Staff is working on finalizing the budget.

Councilmember DeJulio stated staff will now be more certain about the cost of running the City, since the general government services contracts were approved. Staff can now better advise Council on how much money is available. Perhaps some of the remaining money can be comfortably put into this program.

Councilmember Fries asked how much the first three neighborhood sidewalk projects would cost.

City Manager McDonough stated the cost for traffic calming is about \$250,000. He asked how much the neighborhood sidewalks would cost.

Transportation Planner Mark Moore stated no one has fully completed the petition process for sidewalks. There is not one neighborhood that has everything complete on the list.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnery stated number three on the sidewalk policy list is in the hands of the staff. Number three of the policy never happened after staff received the petition. The Public Works staff was to get direction from the City Manager. There was no funding in place, so nothing happened.

Transportation Planner Moore stated he understands this. Staff scored Dudley Lane specifically and separated Dudley Lane into two sections, which may be the easier and cheaper way to build sidewalks in that neighborhood. The cost for Dudley Lane would be around \$200,000, due to grading issues.

Mayor Galambos asked about the cost sharing in the policy.

Transportation Planner Moore stated the cost sharing is twenty-five percent. There were discussions regarding petition support for Dudley Lane. He will check with staff to see if there is a petition.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnery stated she has a copy of the petition dated July 20th and fifty-two people signed it. Number three of the policy states once verification is completed, the Public Works staff should submit requests and petitions to the City Manager for direction. If this was done, the City Manager potentially denied the request because staff is following the Council's direction by placing

public school sidewalks as a priority. That is why this particular sidewalk application did not make it through the whole process.

Councilmember Sterling stated he does not want to place the neighborhood sidewalk program ahead of anything with a City wide impact. The policy states all right-of-way has to be donated for the program to move forward. How much is left to complete the arterial and collector streets?

Mayor Galambos stated a lot.

Councilmember Sterling stated he does not see how the neighborhood sidewalk program can be moved up on the list.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnery responded because citizens do not have connectivity to a park.

Mayor Galambos stated it is not a Sandy Springs park.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnery stated Sandy Springs youth residents use the park.

Mayor Galambos stated this item will be discussed further at the upcoming budget meeting on May 24th.

2. Discussion on Funding in FY2012 for Traffic Calming

Councilmember Chip Collins stated that traffic calming is a public safety issue. There is a City wide problem of neighborhood speeding, which currently has no solution. Council has heard from the High Point Association, London Berry, Whispering Pines, and Mountaire neighborhoods. Since he has been a Councilmember, he has received phone calls and emails about speeding in neighborhoods. Because of restrictions on radar due to sight distance, the Police Department cannot write speeding tickets on a majority of the neighborhood streets. There is not enough manpower to place Police Officers on the streets with regularity.

Police Chief Terry Sult stated there are a number of State statutes that limit the use of speed detection devices. One of them is there has to be five hundred feet visibility and there cannot be more than a seven percent road grade. A citation cannot be issued for speeding that is less than ten m.p.h. over the speed limit. There are exceptions for school zones and several other items. When the laws were written, they were written for speed detection devices that were confined to the cars. Speed detection devices are now available that are hand held so an officer can stand on the side of the street. He is working on obtaining an opinion from the Attorney General's office to see if the speed detection devices can be used outside of vehicles. The only thing that is effective in neighborhoods is moving radar or a motorcycle.

Mayor Eva Galambos asked if this can be changed.

City Attorney Willard stated when bills are brought up about modifying laws for the use of radar, some legislators are opposed to radar completely. Trying to get a law through the General Assembly is not a given. He changed the law a couple years ago regarding the road grade issue in school districts. There are a few schools in North Fulton where the roads are more than a seven percent grade. It was difficult for him to get this law passed.

Mayor Galambos asked about the ruling that Chief Sult just discussed.

City Attorney Willard stated he will discuss that with Chief Sult and look at trying to introduce something at the next legislature.

Mayor Galambos asked if a ruling requires a change in the law.

Police Chief Sult stated a strict interpretation of the law would require visibility of five hundred feet in advance. He is checking to see if the visibility applies to a person or a vehicle.

Mayor Galambos stated it will not be a solution until Chief Sult gets the right interpretation.

Police Chief Sult stated the interpretation would be helpful, but it will not be the catch all to be able to enforce in the neighborhoods the way the law should be enforced.

Mayor Galambos stated what bothers her about the traffic complaints is that probably seventy-five percent of the traffic violators are the resident's children.

Councilmember Collins stated he does not dispute that point. The speeding can be the commuters on their way to Cobb County or the teenagers. All ages of citizens are speeding in the neighborhoods. A speed hump can slow down traffic. This discussion is to set aside funding to give Public Works money to use to work on the speeding problems.

Mayor Galambos stated Public Works can use the radar signs.

Councilmember Fries stated the policy states staff will look at the alternatives and what is the least obtrusive.

Councilmember Collins stated there have been discussions on using radar signs. He is not sure that electronic flashing signs are more aesthetically appealing than something in the road. Does Council want to do anything to prevent the speeding? There is no money for the traffic calming policy.

Mayor Galambos stated there may not be money in the traffic calming fund, but the City has placed the radar signs in various locations.

Police Chief Sult stated Traffic Services Manager Chris Waters reported last night at a community meeting that the City has six radar signs installed.

Transportation Planner Mark Moore stated the City has a total of twenty-two radar signs from a grant.

Mayor Galambos asked Deputy Fire Chief Ham to discuss how the Fire Department feels about traffic calming.

Deputy Fire Chief Dennis Ham stated the Fire Department's main issue is public safety. From the Fire Department's standpoint, they need to get to the scene as quickly as possible. Speed humps will delay the fire trucks fifteen to twenty seconds per speed hump. Wieuca Road is a typical example where it used to take the fire trucks forty-five seconds to one minute to get from Lake Forrest Drive to Powers Ferry; now it takes the fire trucks three and a half minutes. A fire will double every minute, so if the fire trucks are impeded, the fire will spread even more by the time the trucks arrive. The goal is to arrive at the scene of the fire as quickly and as safe as possible. The speed humps being proposed where the fire trucks can cushion over the top are an improvement. The firefighters have to be trained as well. When they see a speed hump, they are going to slow down. The type of speed humps that are being proposed in the policy can be driven over and they will crush, or they have a space where the fire trucks can drive in between them.

Councilmember Gabriel Sterling asked about the City using roundabouts.

Deputy Fire Chief Ham stated the trucks will have to be able to get around them. Anything in the way will slow down the fire trucks.

Mayor Galambos stated she wants to know how many radar signs the City will receive.

Transportation Planner Moore responded twenty-two more.

Councilmember Tibby DeJulio asked how many requests are there for traffic calming measures.

Transportation Planner Moore stated there are three projects that have met all the City's criteria for the traffic calming program. The order the applications were received in are the North Springs neighborhood, which includes Glencourtney Drive and Duncourtney Drive; Stewart Drive; and Cromwell. There used to be two splitter islands on Wright Road. He had one of the splitters removed when he worked for Fulton County. The intent was to remove the second splitter island and add a speed hump where the entrance treatment used to be on the other side of Wright Circle. The island was left, because it was within the limits of the GDOT project for Abernathy Road. GDOT stated they would not replace any traffic calming. Staff was going to remove the island, put in a new speed hump, and finish the project as it was really designed. Staff has not received petitions from Chaseland that would meet the City's criteria.

Councilmember Fries stated at Duncourtney those are internal cul-de-sacs, so they cannot possibly meet the traffic calming program requirements.

Transportation Planner Moore stated they do meet the program requirements.

Councilmember Karen Meinzen McEnery stated there are neighborhoods that have not applied for the program, but have met with Traffic Engineer Alex Hofelich and the Police Department to discuss Londonberry and Old Powers Ferry neighborhoods. There are 88,000 jobs in Sandy Springs and most of them are in the Perimeter Center area. Take half of those and say it is in Dunwoody, so they don't really come on our streets. We only have 7.2% of the people who live in Sandy Springs working in Sandy Springs. That brings the 88,000 down to 82,000 and then drop half of that to 41,000. Then there are the citizens in Sandy Springs that work outside. We are a nexus of commuter traffic. Due to congestion on I-285 and GA400, we do have to protect our neighborhoods.

Mayor Galambos asked if staff can have the twenty-two radar signs installed and then see where the City is at that point.

Councilmember Meinzen McEnery stated the City should live by its policy and provide funding for the program.

Councilmember Fries stated these items should be brought to the Budget Meeting on May 24, 2011, with dollar amount recommendations for Council to decide on.

Councilmember Collins stated radar signs will not help the residents that live on Chaseland Road. He believes two speed humps will solve their problems.

Councilmember DeJulio stated he has received at least a dozen emails from citizens stating he is opposed to traffic calming. Some of the Councilmembers may be opposed to speed humps, but are not opposed to traffic calming.

Mayor Galambos asked Councilmember Collins and Councilmember Meinzen McEnerny to have the amount they want to add to the budget for the next meeting. She suggested the twenty-two radar signs be placed in the most advantageous locations to calm traffic.

Councilmember Fries asked if the grant is for schools.

Transportation Planner Moore stated the grant was primarily for schools.

Mayor Galambos asked if the signs are needed near schools or is there already traffic calming near the schools.

Transportation Planner Moore stated in most cases there is no traffic calming near the schools, because most schools are located on collector streets.

Mayor Galambos asked about Duncourtney and Wyncourtney near the schools.

Transportation Planner Moore stated that location would be one of the exceptions.

Mayor Galambos asked about Northland and High Point near the schools.

Transportation Planner Moore stated Northland and High Point are both collector streets and would not qualify under the traffic calming program.

Mayor Galambos asked if these locations would qualify for the radar signs.

Transportation Planner Moore responded yes.

Councilmember Sterling stated the radar signs work for awhile and then drivers get used to the fact they are there.

Mayor Galambos stated this item will be discussed at the upcoming budget meeting on May 24th.

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Date Approved: June 7, 2011


Eva Galambos, Mayor


Michael Casey, City Clerk