Work Session Meeting of the Sandy Springs City Council was held on Tuesday, February 1, 2011, at 7:11 p.m., Mayor Eva Galambos presiding.

CITY COUNCIL DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. Proposal for Children's Playable Art Grove at Abernathy Park by Sandy Springs Conservancy

Director Recreation and Parks Ronnie Young stated this is a collaboration of three community groups, one major company, and the City. It is an innovative, unique and exciting project. He introduced Cheri Morris and stated she would make the presentation.

Cheri Morris, Board member of the Sandy Springs Conversancy, stated with her tonight are Linda Bain, Executive Director of Sandy Springs Conservancy; Bernadine Richard, Co-Founder and past President of Art Sandy Springs; Randy Young with Art Sandy Springs; and Peggy Gardner, Sandy Springs Conversancy Board member and Chair of the Abernathy Greenway Committee. The Sandy Springs Conservancy, with a $300,000 grant from Northside Hospital, would like to create a children's playable art project and give it to the City of Sandy Springs for installation in Abernathy Greenway. Sandy Springs Conservancy and Art Sandy Springs have come together in a joint venture to secure original, permanent, public sculptures for the park. The sculptures are intended to introduce children to fine art and inspire play, engaging the children to play with or on each sculpture. It would also provide the City a feature that can be used as an example of an inspired urban design and public private partnership. This would be an iconic feature for the City, unique in the Atlanta Metro area, and probably even the southeast. Mayor and Council have been provided with pictures of interactive sculptures in other communities to show the scale and the range of creative possibilities. This is not just a playground, but is art that inspires children to play. Active play is a key tool in the fight against our epidemic of childhood obesity. Like books, gardening or nutrition, a relationship with art crafted early in childhood can set positive lifetime habits. A steering committee with members from the Sandy Springs Conservancy Board, Art Sandy Springs Board, Abernathy Greenway Committee, and the Abernathy Arts Center is in place to guide this project. They will assist from the call for entries to the final juried selections that will be presented to City Council for approval and installation in the park. In addition to the steering committee, experts in child safety, public art installation, and sculpture conservations have been called in to assist. The steering committee will liaison and has already begun with the City of Sandy Springs Recreation & Parks and Public Works Departments. City staff has been great and has provided wonderful support and guidance. She referred to an area on the map outlined in red where they hope the sculptures can be placed. This is a desired area because the area is flat, set back from the road, shaded, and has a bench feature. The steering committee will also manage the communications aspects of the project to gain broad community support. There is a multi phase selection process for quality control. The first thing that will happen is the call for entries. The steering committee, along with the specialty advisors, will make sure everything meets the criteria. They expect to receive entries from around the world. The City of Atlanta is placing one sculpture in Woodruff Park and they received submissions from 122 countries with a budget of only $25,000. The second thing that will happen is this will go before a jury of fine arts specialists to select the art. The third step is the finalists that the jury has selected will be submitted to Mayor and Council for acceptance in keeping with the City Gift Policy and for installation. The estimated completion time is spring to fall of 2012, depending on when the park is ready. What is being asked tonight is for the City to agree to accept, install, and maintain the playable sculptures at Abernathy Path. A final vote will be held after the jury has selected the winning sculptures, which she expects to be in late 2011 or early 2012. The Conservancy is grateful to Councilmember Collins for his guidance and support and they hope to continue to use his valuable time as this project moves forward.

Councilmember Karen Meinzen McEnerny stated she was heartened to hear about this project. The one thing she did not like regarding Morgan Falls Overlook was because there were so many invasives, the trees died. During periods of time in the summer you have to be underneath a tree for shade. She loves that the sculptures will be put in an area where people will have shade during the summer months. She appreciates the fact the committee will be engaging children safety specialists to ensure the art is safe. She thanked the Conservancy for their leadership and vision.

Councilmember Chip Collins thanked the Conservancy and Art Sandy Springs for putting together this wonderful project. What makes parks a destination is having something that makes people want to go there. The Overlook Park has a beautiful river and Big Trees Park has big trees and solitude. This project is giving Abernathy Park a destination that will make people come from all over Metro Atlanta, or further, to come see and play on the playable art.

Ms. Morris stated there is a year and a half of work to do, so they want to make sure the City Council wants to move forward with this project. She asked how to make that happen.

Mayor Eva Galambos stated we do not vote tonight. This item will be on the agenda at the next City Council Meeting and will be officially approved.

Councilmember Tibby DeJulio asked if the $300,000 is to pay the artist. If you are going to pay an artist $300,000, there may be thousands of applications submitted.

Ms. Morris stated there will be multiple artists. There happens to be ten or twelve sculptures on display at the library right now, one of which the Conservancy can afford to purchase. In this case, since there is such a large grant, the Conservancy hopes to purchase many pieces of sculpture. It is not out of the question that one sculptor will come with an entire concept that gets selected. She guesses there will be eight or ten different sculptors with different pieces.

Councilmember DeJulio asked who will be on the jury.

Ms. Morris stated the jury is not selected, yet. They are a few months away from doing that.

Councilmember DeJulio asked if different options will be brought before City Council to look at and recommend for selection.

Mayor Galambos responded no. The committee will bring the items to Council that the jury has selected.

Councilmember Dianne Fries asked when the competition will be made public.

Ms. Morris responded as soon as this is officially approved by Council.

Councilmember Fries stated she had several artists ask about the City's next cool thing. She told them about another art competition. It might be a good idea if she goes back to the artists and informs them of this competition. Will the competition be advertised on the Conservancy website?

Ms. Morris stated a special art website will be created for the competition. One of the reasons the Conservancy partnered with Art Sandy Springs is because in the past Art Sandy Springs has reached out to sculptors and brought in dozens of submissions to select from. She expects many good submissions.

Mayor Galambos thanked Ms. Morris

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

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 7:24 p.m.

Date Approved: March 1, 2011

Eva Galambos, Mayor

Michael Casey, City Clerk