



CITY OF DUNWOODY

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MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor and City Council

From: Jennifer Peterson, Community Development Director

Date: June 15, 2009

Subject: Discussion of Community Council

The Dunwoody Community Council was created upon the adoption of the zoning code in December. The Community Council discusses and makes recommendation to the Planning Commission and City Council on requests to rezone property, special land use permits, and text amendments to the zoning code.

The concept of the Community Council was developed within the DeKalb County system of land use reviews. The concept began in 1975 as a part of a comprehensive planning process, and then was modified in 1980 to provide local representation within each board of commissioner district area for the purpose of reviewing rezoning applications. The stated purpose of the Community Council within the DeKalb County process is to “review applications... and report their recommendations to the Planning Commission and their appropriate neighborhood organizations”.

Upon incorporation the Council decided to keep the Community Council role within the land use review process intact and decided to create one group rather than the multiple group/district system of DeKalb County. The Community Council charge of making recommendations and reporting those recommendations to neighborhood organizations continued.

I believe the intent of creating a Dunwoody Community Council was to allow the opportunity for a discussion less formal than the public hearings that occur at Planning Commission and City Council. However the major intent of the group was to create an opportunity for “through-the-grapevine” communication intended to provide a different method of information sharing in addition to the traditional and government mandated communication methods of signage, letters, and legal ads. Under the existing regulations legal ads, public notice signage, and letters to adjacent property owners occurs “at least fifteen (15) days before the public hearing before the planning commission and not more than forty five (45) days prior to the date of the public hearing before the City Council”.

Should the Council decide to direct staff to initiate a zoning text amendment to require these noticing steps to occur prior to the Community Council meeting two significant changes to the existing process would happen. First, we would need to mail, post signs, and publish legal notice two times within each application process in order to meet the requirements of State and local law. Secondly, we would need to change the application deadline for such request to create a longer process in order to accommodate the new noticing requirements.

Should Council direct staff to initiate a text amendment to the zoning code, the amendment could be heard by the Community Council in July, the Planning Commission in August, and be voted on by the Mayor and Council in September.