

MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor and City Council

From: Chris Pike, Finance Director

Date: November 14, 2016

Subject: **Approval of Dunwoody's 2017 Legislative Agenda (General Assembly)**

ITEM DESCRIPTION

To select and adopt the Dunwoody 2017 legislative priorities for presentation to the DeKalb County legislative delegation.

BACKGROUND

As the City does each year, staff has compiled the following draft list of legislative priorities for 2017.

1. Enhance and Improve K-12 Educational Opportunities

During 2014, the City suggested our legislators begin to explore potential legislative solutions to enhance and improve K-12 educational opportunities in Dunwoody. As the Council discussed, one such solution may be working towards a constitutional amendment that would allow for the creation of a separate school district. Several preliminary meetings and hearings took place to evaluate the current environment and to start exploring solutions that would provide the best alternatives for K-12 education. For 2016, staff recommended a continued effort towards that same goal. However, at the request of the governor's office, our push was softened so as not to distract from the governor's prioritized education bill. Over the next two months, staff and our local delegation will weigh the impact of the election results for the state amendment 1. While our goal doesn't change, how we address the goal is impacted by Tuesday's ballot results.

2. Facilities Authority

Current law limits the City from executing most types of multi-year contracts absent early termination (re-appropriation) provisions. As a result, partners that use our properties to provide services to our citizens (such as Dunwoody Nature Center) are limited in their fund raising efforts. For example, charities are more inclined to donate and invest in our buildings used by nonprofits such as the Dunwoody Nature Center when they are confident the organization will stay in their existing location. Creating a Facilities Authority similar to what Sandy Springs created nearly a decade ago allows the nonprofits to execute agreements that contain the language charities want to see when considering where best to invest their dollars. Following is a copy of the bill passed in 2006 for Sandy Springs. The Dunwoody bill would look similar.

3. E911 Revenues & Statewide E911 Authority

Last year, the state floated the idea of creating a statewide authority to collect and distribute E911 revenue to cities and counties. The state rationalized this idea as a means to ensure that all E911 dollars were collected by the hundreds of phone providers serving the state. With such an authority, administrative bureaucracy and costs are clearly a concern. The City would not want the costs to outweigh the benefit, and should watch any 2017 legislation that follows up on the 2016 bill that failed at crossover.

Also, over the past decades, we've seen many technological advances in the E911 industry. With these improvements, costs have increased as well. However, the E911 fee has been capped at \$1.50 per month per line for over 30 years. State law already caps the fee to no more than actual costs, but now that \$1.50 fails to cover the costs for most jurisdictions including Dunwoody. The City would look for existing bills or opportunities to increase the fee to align it with inflation over the past years and/or index it to subsequent years' inflationary indexes.

4. SPLOST (Part II)

At the eleventh hour in 2016, it was discovered the language creating the SPLOST contained language that would eliminate (or at least suspend) the homestead valuation freeze in DeKalb; not only adding the penny tax but also increasing net property taxes paid by homeowners in DeKalb at the same time. Senator Millar has promised a house bill (all tax bills originate in the house) that would clean up the exemption language. The City will monitor this anticipated bill to ensure the initial language and any amendments to the bill continue to best serve the City.

5. Development Authorities

Several newspaper headlines this year have brought the tax abatement law in Georgia under a spot light. Development Authorities serve a particular purpose, but at the same time, their tax abatement powers can be abused when not managed responsibly in the spirit of the law's intent. As a result, Dunwoody expects to see bills in the 2017 legislative session to modify the development authority laws. The City will watch these bills closely to determine their impact on the City as to prevent an unintended consequences.

6. Monitoring Items

As a City, we have faced numerous attempts at legislation that would have negative consequences to the citizens of Dunwoody. Examples include discussions to change the HOST calculation to provide less to the cities in DeKalb, requiring Dunwoody to pay for DeKalb government employees' retirement, and alter the billing requirements for the tax and special assessment statements issued by the tax commissioner for the City. Staff anticipates the 2017 session to contain similar bills requiring our attention and recommends a conscious effort to evaluate and continue to oppose legislation that would limit our effectiveness as an organization and/or negatively impact the citizens of Dunwoody.

ALTERNATIVES

Council may choose to add or remove items from the list of priorities.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Staff recommends the Council discuss and officially adopt 2017 legislative priorities.

STATE OF GEORGIA
CITY OF DUNWOODY

RESOLUTION 2016-11-XX

**A RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING THE 2017 STATE LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES OF THE
CITY OF DUNWOODY FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE GEORGIA STATE
LEGISLATURE DURING THE 2017 REGULAR SESSION**

- WHEREAS,** the 2017 Georgia General Assembly Legislative Session begins on January 9, 2017 to consider important legislative matters of the state; and
- WHEREAS,** the City of Dunwoody is concerned with legislative matters at the state level which have an impact on the governmental operations of the City of Dunwoody; and
- WHEREAS,** it is appropriate for the City of Dunwoody to adopt legislative priorities to present to its representatives in the General Assembly; and
- WHEREAS,** the City of Dunwoody has identified a number of important legislative items that may be considered by the state legislature in the upcoming year including, but not limited to, opportunities to Enhance and Improve K-12 Educational Opportunities; and
- WHEREAS,** adoption of legislative priorities will empower City officials, staff, and representatives to advocate on the City's behalf, before and to members of the state legislature on such values and goals which are most feasible, urgent and/or of the highest importance.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED AND EFFECTIVE by the Mayor and Council of the City of Dunwoody while in regular session on November 14th at 6:00 pm, that the legislative priorities of the 2017 Georgia General Assembly are hereby adopted.

Approved:

Denis L. Shortal, Mayor

Attest:

Sharon Lowery, City Clerk

(SEAL)