



Preserving Our History – The Sandy Springs Chimney at Morgan Falls-Overlook Park

August 12, 2009 - There has been a great deal of activity involving the standing chimney and cabin site located during construction activities at Overlook Park. At the June 16 City Council Meeting there was impressive support from the community requesting preservation of the chimney in place as well as professional investigation of the surrounding area. Those speaking and attending were representatives of the Sandy Springs Watershed Alliance, The Sandy Springs Conservancy, Heritage Sandy Springs, the Sandy Springs Council of Neighborhoods, several wonderful individuals and a large contingent from a neighborhood association.

The City Council determined that an archeological study could be undertaken. The results of that study are to be submitted to the Sandy Springs city staff for evaluation on or before August 15, 2009. Costs of the study are to be borne by the Sandy Springs Conservancy.

The Friday after the City Council meeting an ad hoc committee consisting of representatives from the Sandy Springs Conservancy, Heritage Sandy Springs and The Sandy Springs Council of neighborhoods met to discuss refocusing a proposal for an archeological study from New South Associates that had been received earlier. The goal was to modify a two phase proposal into a single phase and maximize the work that could be completed to meet the report deadline imposed by the City Council.

Immediately after completion of the meeting of the ad hoc committee, representatives of the Sandy Springs Conservancy and the Sandy Springs Council of Neighborhoods (SSCN) left for the site to meet with Dr. Joe Joseph and Mr. Matt Tankersley from New South Associates (NSA). The site meeting was very fruitful in that NSA understood the scheduling and study scope issues and agreed to restructure their proposal for submittal later that day. By a fortunate circumstance this group was joined by another member of the SSCN that was touring the site with a representative of the Sandy Springs city staff. The proposal was received that afternoon, reviewed and approved by the Sandy Springs Conservancy and the archeological survey work began the following Monday.

In parallel the Sandy Springs Conservancy had retained the services of Lord Aeck and Sargent . Lord Aeck and Sargent (LAS) is a well established architectural firm in Atlanta that has a studio within its organization that specializes in historical preservation. LAS have been doing work, among other locations, at the historic Hyde Farm across the Chattahoochee from Overlook Park. The head of that studio, Mr. Jack Pyburn, was asked to provide a technical memorandum to establish the historic significance of the standing chimney and surrounding associated man-made features. This work has been completed and was been submitted to the Sandy Springs city staff.

Both of the reports, referenced above, should be in the hands of members of the Sandy Springs city staff for evaluation within the imposed deadline. It is not certain when they will report to the City Council. The LAS report and preliminary reports from NSA have been very positive for preservation of the chimney in place and a continuation of interpretive activities to evaluate the man-made features that surround it.

In the last few weeks this project has received thorough coverage from The Sandy Springs Reporter. Ms. Amy Wenk, staff reporter, has written several articles including one from the site during the NSA archeological study. Mr. John Schaffner wrote a superb editorial that championed historic preservation in Sandy Springs.

This description represents a great deal of activity in a short period of time. The Sandy Springs Council of Neighborhoods has been happy to play a part. We feel a deep appreciation for the efforts of those specifically mentioned in this article as well as all of those not mentioned who share an interest in the preservation of the historical fabric of our community. Many people have given their time and energy to write letters, create petitions, email members of our City Council and to simply spread the word. Success is definitely not certain and there is a long way to go, but progress toward the goal preserving the standing chimney at Overlook Park has begun.