

MINUTES  
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS  
JOINT STUDY SESSION MEETING  
CITY COUNCIL AND PLANNING COMMISSION  
CITY HALL – COMMUNITY ROOM  
JUNE 9, 2014 – 6:30PM

The Joint Study Session meeting of the Farmington Hills City Council and Planning Commission was called to order by Mayor Brickner at 6:30pm.

Council Members Present: Brickner, Bridges, Bruce, Knol, Lerner, Massey and Steckloff

Council Members Absent: None

Planning Commission Members Present: Blizman, McRae, Rae-O'Donnell, Stimson and Topper

Planning Commission Members Absent: Fleisschacker, Mantey, Orr and Schwartz

Others Present: City Manager Brock, City Clerk Smith, Assistant City Manager Boyer, Assistant to the City Manager Geinzer, Director Gardiner, Mekjian and Randle, Planning Consultant Arroyo and Attorney Joppich

**DISCUSSION ON MAJOR CORRIDOR OVERLAY DISTRICTS – COMPLETE STREETS POLICY:**

Director Gardiner explained that the Planning Commission has been reviewing an overlay district concept for focus areas along Grand River. He stated that the Commission drafted an overlay district in order to implement the Corridor Improvement Authority's vision plan for the Botsford Focus Area. Mr. Gardiner stated that the Commission wanted to bring this before City Council for their input prior to holding the required public hearing at the Planning Commission level. He stated that if there was time this evening, staff would also like to review the City's proposed Complete Street Policy that ties into this topic.

Planning Consultant Arroyo reviewed the proposed ordinance for the overlay district and noted that the concept was developed through both the Grand River vision plan and the city's Master Plan with the goals in mind. He stated that intent is to draft an ordinance that would allow for the new district in order to initiate redevelopment in that area. He explained that the overlay district is not the same as a mixed use district the Commission previously discussed with Council in that it is optional and is based on the Planned Unit Development (PUD) process. He further explained that the underlying zoning stays the same and the overlay district would provide for flexibility for such things as setbacks, building heights, etc. Mr. Arroyo stated that a structure would pre-qualify for the PUD option if it fell within a designated overlay district.

Mr. Arroyo discussed permitted uses within the proposed overlay district and the PUD qualification process. He noted that setbacks were discussed quite a bit by the Planning Commission. He showed a concept plan for the focus area along Grand River that would bring the buildings closer to the lot line. He noted that there would be flexibility as far as design as long as it had some of the basic concepts such as windows to the street and tied in a pedestrian connection. He noted that there was also discussion about providing flexibility with loading and unloading, which has been incorporated into the proposed

ordinance. Mr. Arroyo confirmed that there would be additional setbacks and sensitivity to residential areas.

Councilmember Bridges inquired if the City of Farmington was considering a similar ordinance. Assistant to the City Manager Geinzer confirmed that the Farmington Council would be considering an ordinance; and while he did not know the specific details, he felt it would be similar and complimentary to the one proposed this evening.

Commissioner Blizman inquired how the Commission would handle requests if a developer wanted to develop a parcel in the district and purchase abutting residential property for additional parking. Mr. Arroyo explained that if the ordinance were approved as proposed, the residential areas would not qualify for the PUD process as they are not part of the district and that type of request would require a rezoning and public hearing process.

Discussion was held on details and the area included in the proposed district. It was noted that this was the first of several overlay districts that would be proposed for the Grand River corridor.

Councilmember Massey inquired how the historic property would be handled. Mr. Arroyo stated that certain requirements would be based on those required by the historic district.

Councilmember Steckloff inquired about bike lanes. Mr. Arroyo responded that the vision plan incorporates bike lanes as an option.

Mr. Geinzer added that the Corridor Improvement Authority (CIA) will be looking at the entire corridor of Grand River in greater detail and what it wants to achieve for this area. He stated that the CIA could possibly do a streetscape project to incorporate bike and walking paths.

Commissioner McRae added that bike racks have been noted as a sustainable design feature, which would be an easy design to include.

Mayor Brickner questioned if a requirement of the district would be building to LEED certified standards.

Mr. Arroyo responded that the developer would be required to demonstrate that the building would meet LEED certified requirements, but they would not have to obtain certification as that can be a very expensive process.

Mayor Brickner stated that while he agrees with the concept, he expressed concern that making this a requirement may discourage redevelopment.

Mr. Geinzer pointed out that the language in the proposed ordinance is the same as that included in the Freeway Overlay District approved by City Council.

Mr. Arroyo suggested that Council could consider providing flexibility with requiring LEED certified standards when it involved only an addition or minor changes to an existing building. He reiterated that this is handled through the PUD process so if there were unusual circumstances, the developer could ask the city for relief as part of the PUD agreement.

Mayor Pro-Tem Bruce inquired why there is the requirement of LEED certified standards. Mr. Arroyo pointed out that the Master Plan specifically states that it is appropriate to target LEED certified building in certain areas. He added that the theory is that the developer is being allowed to develop something otherwise not allowed within that zoning district and in return provides the community with a building built to those standards.

Further discussion was held on requiring LEED certified standards and the costs and trade-offs involved for the developer.

Councilmember Knol concurred with Mr. Arroyo's suggestion to allow for flexibility with LEED certified standards for additions to existing buildings.

Mara Topper, Planning Commissioner Chair, mentioned that the Commission is holding a study session meeting Thursday evening to further discuss this issue.

Mr. Gardiner added that the Planning Commission would likely move forward with setting this matter for public hearing and eventually make a recommendation to City Council.

Mayor Brickner commented that the City wants to encourage redevelopment in this area and the City needs a plan in place in order to move forward.

Commissioner McRae cautioned about not moving too quickly on this matter and to make sure that the ordinance in place is correct as this would be a dramatic change to this area.

Mayor Brickner commented that there has already been much public input as part of the CIA process through 2 or 3 neighborhood meetings. He added that he appreciates the work done by the Planning Commission so far as well as that of the CIA.

Commissioner Blizman questioned the city's investment in the district. He expressed the need for adequate zoning and building enforcement.

Mr. Geinzer stated that the CIA vision plan anticipates between \$11 and \$18 million dollars for the Grand River Corridor in Farmington Hills over a 30 year period, which does not include funding from the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT).

City Manager Brock stated that part of the public investment could possibly include storm water management or recreational activities as well.

Mayor Brickner added that some money will come through the capture of tax monies.

Mr. Geinzer stated that once the city knows that the taxing jurisdictions are on board with the vision plan; strategies can be set in place. The goal is to have the overlay district in place so that once the city goes through the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) process; it is ready to make the necessary investment.

### **Complete Street Policy**

City Manager Brock stated that staff was here to discuss the proposed Complete Streets Policy with both the Council and Planning Commission.

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Public Services Director Mekjian distributed a copy of the proposed policy and explained that the purpose of the policy is to provide the City guidance and flexibility for the planning and design of roadways and for safe movement of non-motorized and pedestrian traffic.

Mark Saksewski, City Traffic Engineer, discussed the legislation that encourages all agencies to develop a Complete Street Policy and requires local communities, MDOT and other agencies to work together on projects. He stated that while there is no requirement to adopt a policy, it could affect the city's ability to obtain funding down the road. He stated that the policy would guide the city through transportation designs to meet the residents' needs and expectations for non-motorized and pedestrian traffic.

Councilmember Bridges inquired about the percentage of sidewalks located within subdivisions. Mr. Brock responded that he did not know the exact number, but it was a very small percentage.

Mr. Bridges expressed concern with kids trying to get to school and stated that he supports the idea of a policy and creating more sidewalks.

Mr. Mekjian added that the policy is drafted in such a way so that the City does not necessarily have to implement all elements and provides the city with some flexibility.

City Manager Brock provided some background on the bike lane along Northwestern Highway that was installed by the State.

The general consensus of Council was to move forward with the policy. This would come back to City Council for consideration at a regular meeting.

The joint portion of the meeting concluded and the Planning Commission Members left the meeting at this time.

**DISCUSSION OF ANNUAL JOINT MEETING OF FARMINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS, CITY OF FARMINGTON AND CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS:**

Mayor Brickner explained that he and the City Manager were invited by several School Board Members to attend a meeting at which the Board indicated that they would like to hold smaller meetings with the Farmington and Farmington Hills Councils in the future with only a few members of each Council present and rather than the annual joint meeting with the full Councils and Board. Mayor Brickner clarified the discussion held at the meeting and comments made as he felt the comments in the newspaper were not completely accurate.

City Council members expressed concern with this meeting being held and some members not being permitted to attend.

It was the consensus of Council that they did not wish to hold smaller meetings and wished to continue with the annual meetings with the full Board and Councils in attendance. It was suggested that if the School Board did not want to host a joint meeting this year, the Farmington Hills Council would host and invite the School Board to attend if they wanted.

It was also suggested that a meeting is held with the new Superintendent at some point.

Mayor Brickner stated that he would convey Council's position to the School Board and inquire if they wanted to host the annual meeting this year.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

The study session meeting adjourned at 7:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Smith', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Pamela B. Smith, City Clerk