

MINUTES
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS
CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION MEETING
APRIL 26, 2021 – 5:30PM

The Study Session meeting of the Farmington Hills City Council was held electronically and called to order by Mayor Pro Tem Boleware at 5:35pm. Members were asked to state their name and location (city and state) as to where they were attending the electronic meeting.

Council Members Present: Jackie Boleware, Farmington Hills, Michigan
Michael Bridges, Farmington Hills, Michigan
Valerie Knol, Farmington Hills, Michigan
Ken Massey, Farmington Hills, Michigan
Mary Newlin, Farmington Hills, Michigan
Matt Strickfaden, Farmington Hills, Michigan
Vicki Barnett, Farmington Hills, Michigan (arrived at 5:40pm)

Council Members Absent: None

Others Present: City Manager Mekjian, City Clerk Smith, Director Monico, Randle, Schnackel, Skrobola, Fire Chief Unruh, Police Chief King and City Attorney Joppich

BUDGET OVERVIEW

Tom Skrobola, Finance Director, provided an overview of the proposed budget that included information on the following:

- Taxable Values
- Millage Rates
- Revenue and Expenditure assumptions
- General Fund revenue and expenditures
- Major and Local Road Fund summaries
- The Community Center (HAWK) project
- City-wide capital expenditures

Questions from City Council members included:

- The impact of COVID on home taxable values
- Whether the Economic Development Corporation millage was a city-mandated cap and could be raised
- Major road funding and the increase in operational costs
- Impact of COVID on the commercial market down the road when building leases expire
- Fund balance figure that could impact the city's AAA bond rating
- Impact of electric vehicles on Act 51 funding

Discussion was held on the various grants available and lost revenue recovery for businesses.

In response to questions of Council, Director Skrobola commented that the housing market as well as the commercial remains strong. He believed the EDC millage was a city-mandated cap but would follow up with Council on that question.

He noted that Director of Public Services Mondora would answer the question on major road funding and that budget during the budget meetings.

Director Skrobola stated that there is a concern regarding vacant buildings in the future and hopefully alternative uses could be explored for those buildings in the future. He noted that the budget does project future losses for commercial property values.

Regarding the City's AAA bond rating, Director Skrobola answered that the city's policy is to maintain a fund balance of 15-25% and the city is currently above that percentage so it is in good standing, but the city should continue to discuss opportunities for new revenue or scaling back when necessary.

He commented that phasing in electric vehicles would be best to allow legislative changes to Act 51 as needed.

REVIEW OF PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES RELATING TO SOCIAL SERVICES

City Manager Mekjian stated that the presentation is a culmination from several departments discussing the varied programs and resources the city currently has related to social services. The following individuals each discussed the resources utilized by their Departments/Divisions as it relates to social services:

Police Chief Jeff King
Fire Chief Jon Unruh
City Planner Charmaine Kettler-Schmult
Director of Special Services Ellen Schnackel

It was noted that the city currently has a social worker on staff in the Special Services Department, Theresa Jergovich.

Jill Pines, Public Information Coordinator, discussed how the city promotes the programs and resources mentioned that includes the city website, social media, E-newsletter, FOCUS Activities Guide and through local media outlets.

In response to council inquiry, Police Chief King outlined the training programs of the Police Department, the strong review process used in any instance requiring use of force and specifically the Fair and Impartial Training program and how that is used in the department.

Due to time constraints, Mayor Barnett suggested that if any members of Council had further questions on this information to please forward those to City Manager Mekjian and he will route those to the appropriate department for a response and send that to all members of Council.

REVIEW OF HUMAN RESOURCES CONSULTING PROCESS

John Randle, Director of Human Resources, explained that his department had started a compensation survey and determined there was a need for a broader scope of human resource services and decided to go out for a Request for Proposal (RFP) for human resources consulting services. He noted that the focus was on best practices and the city was seeking a firm that would assist with the following:

- Conduct competitive market analysis of wage, compensation and benefits
- Analyze the quality and competitiveness of the City's benefit programs; make recommendations for changes that integrate with a total compensation strategy

- Develop a job evaluation system that is flexible, defensible, valid and reliable to evaluate current and future jobs.
- Conduct a comprehensive internal equity evaluation of specific jobs; Develop pay and classification structures to be implemented for specified employee groups that support pay equity between employee groups, between full-time and part-time equivalents, and within the hierarchy of the organization
- Identify specifications and competencies for jobs that can serve as a basis for the development of job descriptions to support performance measurement and employee development, recommend pay and compensation strategies for key positions as necessary to aid in the retention of current talent and recruitment of qualified external applicants.

Director Randle stated that 4 proposals have been received and are currently being reviewed by staff.

City Manager Mekjian explained that the intent with this RFP was to utilize resources of a consultant to evaluate the organization and identify areas of improvement to help build a strategic plan specific to Farmington Hills with measurable goals. If it was identified that there was a need to hire an individual as a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Officer, then the city would review that option at that time.

Mayor Pro-Tem Boleware stated that she believed the majority opinion of Council was to hire a DEI officer and not for a study.

Mayor Barnett stated that she understands having a broader review of services but believes there is a need for a DEI officer and while she does not oppose the consulting services in general, she does not want to see this position turned over to a consulting firm.

Councilmember Massey stated that he is not in favor of approving a new position until Council is shown there is a need and he feels this review is a good way to go through that process.

City Manager Mekjian stated he would review the goals session minutes but felt that there was a consensus to evaluate the need. He added that a position has been included in the budget should Council determine it is needed.

Councilmember Knol stated that she is also not comfortable with hiring another staff person at this time as that is an ongoing expense, but that hiring a consultant to evaluate the need is a good idea.

Councilmember Bridges stated that he had submitted a lot of statistics and information to Council for the goals session that demonstrated a need for the position and supports the consulting services as it could be helpful towards hiring that person. He supports having a Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

Mayor Barnett summarized that the consulting services study will proceed so that Council can review the needs identified and noted that there is a placeholder in the budget for this position.

ADJOURNMENT

The study session meeting adjourned at 7:38pm.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Smith', written in a cursive style.

Pamela B. Smith, City Clerk