

MINUTES
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS
CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL GOALS SESSION MEETING
JANUARY 13, 2018 – 9:00A.M.

The special goals session meeting of the Farmington Hills City Council was called to order by Mayor Massey at 9:13am

Council Members Present: Bridges, Knol, Lerner, Massey, Rich and Steckloff

Council Members Absent: Bruce

Others Present: City Manager Boyer, City Clerk Smith and Assistant City Manager Mekjian

MAYOR’S COMMUNICATION:

Mayor Massey commended Council members on how they conduct business in light of differences of opinions and encouraged Council to continue to focus on community-related issues in a non-partisan manner as they have. He asked that during Council meetings side-bar conversations are kept to a minimum and that cell phones are put away so that Council is giving their full attention to the discussion.

DISPENSARIES:

Councilmember Steckloff inquired where the city stands on medical marijuana dispensaries and if there has been further action taken by the state.

Mayor Massey stated that the city is currently under a moratorium as far as approving medical marijuana dispensaries but has allowed for home grow operations for caregivers per state regulations. He noted that there is further legislation pending and the Federal Government has now indicated that they may enforce upon such uses. The city had determined to take a “wait and see” stance on the issue.

Councilmember Steckloff commented that she feels it would be safer to have grow operations in business districts rather than neighborhoods. Mayor Massey stated that the city would still have to allow for home grow operations per state law.

Councilmember Knol clarified the 5 category of licenses at the state level and noted that any community would have to “opt in” to allow for any or all category of licenses. The state is currently sifting through hundreds of applications and she believes may have just issued their first few licenses and she thought past discussion was to wait and see what issues other communities were facing that were allowing for dispensaries.

City Manager Boyer stated that the city could opt-in for any or all of the categories at any time. He added that potential Federal Government enforcement and petition drives to legalize recreational use of marijuana could also change things going forward.

After a brief discussion, Council agreed with the “wait and see” approach. Dr. Rich suggested including this item on the goals session agenda each year for updates.

Mayor Massey summarized that the goal will be to request periodic updates from the City Attorney.

INFRASTRUCTURE:

City Manager Boyer distributed information on the city's water and sewer infrastructure noting that the city has 450 miles of water main and 328 miles of sanitary sewer. He noted that the city is reviewing master plans and those areas that don't have water or sewer as well as long-term capital needs. The Fire Department is training their staff on how to get water to all areas of the city and the plan is to bring water and sewer into those areas through a payback district. The Fire Department and DPS would prioritize those areas.

Councilmember Lerner requested a review of the lift stations to make sure the generators are high enough so that they are functional during a storm. City Manager Boyer responded that he believed they were but staff could make sure.

City Manager Boyer stated that they are finishing the RFP for city facility evaluations including HVAC, plumbing, etc. with the goal of having a capital plan for all needed upgrades.

RIGHT-OF-WAY MAINTENANCE:

City Manager Boyer stated that he included this item on the agenda as the city has received some complaints regarding the appearance of the Northwestern Highway median and natural vegetation used. Staff is evaluating the area including turn-arounds, approaches, sight lines and reviewing options for the planting areas and will come back to Council with an overall plan. The intent is for it to be low maintenance and with more aesthetically pleasing plantings. Staff reviewed the option of turning it back to grass and that cost would be approximately \$100,000 due to the irrigation required and \$11,000/year in mowing costs.

Councilmember Bridges requested that the city review the I-696/Orchard Lake Road area with the appropriate entity that maintains the area as this is an entry point to the community and there are signage issues and often debris in the median. He also suggested painting the median.

Councilmember Rich commented that signage throughout the city should be updated. City Manager Boyer responded that staff is in the process of updating all signage and one new sign has already been placed at 11 Mile and Inkster Roads. Eleven (11) new signs are in the current budget and the rest will be included in the next fiscal year budget.

Councilmember Steckloff stated that she has received complaints on the Northwestern Highway median as well due to the height of the plantings and business owners and patients not being able to find the businesses. Mr. Boyer assured that this will be part of the overall review.

Councilmember Knol stated that she was fine with natural plantings, but there are many that don't require irrigation and don't look like weeds. She has taken pictures from other communities that she would be happy to share with staff.

PUBLIC/PRIIVATE PARTNERSHIPS:

Municipal Broadband

Councilmember Lerner distributed information on the City of Holland who has municipal broadband. He stated that there is a lot of fiber running under 12 Mile Road and the city does not necessarily have to own its own lines but could potentially lease. The City may not be able to reach all homes but at least the businesses. He is asking for staff to form a committee to review municipal broadband that would include residents, businesses and subject material experts. He feels competition will improve customer service and that it could be a great selling point for people considering moving into the community.

Councilmember Rich stated that she likes the idea of municipal broadband and that of a public/private partnership, but would still like to offer free WIFI somewhere in the community for those families with a financial hardship.

Councilmember Steckloff stated that she has wanted this since being elected to Council and so many young people also want this. She agreed with Dr. Rich about also making it available to all families.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

City Manager Boyer stated that he wanted to discuss the Harrison High School facility as well as the Costick Center and Sisters of Mercy property. Staff, along with Mayor Massey, attended the School Board meeting this past Tuesday to present the city's proposal to repurpose Harrison High School as a community center once the school is closed. The city offered to purchase the facility and property from the schools for \$1 rather than lease the building. He noted that the School Board seems to still be struggling with what to do with some of the components on their end such as the bus yard and child care and whether the school administration still wants to move to the 3rd floor of the Harrison building. Mr. Boyer stated he will be making the same presentation to the Harrison Legacy Committee.

If the City is able to come to an agreement to either buy or lease Harrison High School, Mr. Boyer explained that the Costick Center would become the senior mecca for the city. The City has been reviewing options for an adult living community and the Sister of Mercy are phasing out of their site. The next step would be to bring in a design firm to review the potential use of the Sisters of Mercy site whether that is through a partnership with the Sister or on its own.

Staff is requesting permission to move forward with the plans to purchase/lease Harrison High School to repurpose that as a community center and move forward with design concepts for the Sisters of Mercy property.

Councilmember Lerner felt the proposal was well received by the School Board but suggested waiting on their answer until money is spent on design plans for the Costick Center. He loves the conceptual drawings for the proposed community center, but mentioned that the Legacy Committee wants to capture some of the history.

In answer to Councilmember Knol regarding the Sisters of Mercy site, Mr. Boyer explained that Mercy High School will remain and a portion of the property is in conservancy so it will not be touched. The plan is for a transitional community with the senior center to remain at Costick with expanded programming and independent and assisted living on the site as well as businesses for senior adult living such as hair salon, etc. It would be open to the public but also servicing its own community.

Mr. Boyer stated that he had several meetings with the Sisters of Mercy and their vision for the property was similar.

Council supported the plans for both properties.

Councilmember Rich inquired about the proposed development at Sarah Fisher and OCC properties.

Mr. Boyer stated that he has discussed these sites with an architect and so has representatives of OCC. He added that the Sarah Fisher development has changed models several times as it is very expensive to maintain the infrastructure that is on that site but development is intended to move forward.

Councilmember Steckloff mentioned that it was also important for the community to maintain the Harrison High School football field.

Mayor Massey confirmed that if the city owns the property, they plan to preserve that field. Mr. Boyer added that the building will include a room or hallway dedicated to maintaining the legacy of Harrison High School.

Dr. Rich inquired about development at the Kmart site on Orchard Lake Road and plans for Sams Club who just announced they are closing.

City Manager Boyer stated that staff plans to meet with the management company for Sams Club as they have a lease for that building through 2023. Kmart is proposed to be subdivided into three separate stores and that is moving forward.

Councilmember Bridges inquired about the Corridor Improvement Authority (CIA) and the Burger King that closed at 12 Mile and Orchard Lake Road. Mr. Boyer responded that the CIA is starting to capture funding for the area. He just received notice about the Burger King and is not sure yet of future plans for that site.

City Council took a 10 minute recess.

Mayor Massey inquired if the Sisters of Mercy representatives present wished to speak or comment at this time.

Mary Ellen Howard, Sisters of Mercy, stated that she is serving as Chair for the Campus Advisory Committee and the city and the Sisters of Mercy have been good neighbors since 1984. She stated that they are both now at a turning point with regard to the use of the campus and the Sisters would like to work together with the city as they have a similar vision for senior housing on the campus. She stated that one asset they would bring would be the skilled nursing facility that exists on the property. She understands the issues with the Harrison High School property but the Sisters hope to move forward soon on a joint venture for this property to capture what they believe is a current window of opportunity for senior housing.

City Manager Boyer commented that unfortunately the city's process would be a bit slower due to Harrison High School but agreed that their visions were very similar.

Discussion was held on the Burger King property and working with the developer to assist with developing that corner. Councilmember Knol also commented that the I-696/Orchard Lake Road interchange eventually needs to be improved. Discussion was held on the potential costs for such improvements.

ROAD FUNDING:

Mayor Massey explained that he, Attorney Joppich and staff have been working with legislators on moving legislation forward that would allow for temporary exemptions to a local road millage. They have identified sponsors for the legislation from both the Republican and Democratic parties in the House and Senate. All parties agreed to the proposed language and they were asked to move this to committee in both the House and Senate with an approval deadline of March, 2018. Mayor Massey stated that they also met with the Lt. Governor who indicated and both he and the Governor agreed to the proposed language and the Governor would sign the Bill if placed before him. If the legislation is passed, the plan is to send the proposed ballot language for a local road millage with the exemptions back to the Attorney

General and Governor for approval and place the proposal on the August, 2018 ballot. If the voters do not approve the millage proposal, the city will not allow the roads to deteriorate and will resort back to the directed special assessment district process.

City Manager Boyer stated that it was a very positive meeting and MML is also reviewing this language as it would not be specific to just Farmington Hills. He stated that Attorney Joppich did a great job working with the legal team at the state level.

City Council felt this was a step in the right direction and would provide the best option for getting a local road millage approved.

Councilmember Knol explained the process for moving this legislation forward at the state level and urged Council to contact the House and Senate Leaderships who determine what is placed on the agendas.

FUTURE MILLAGE RENEWALS – LONG TERM PLANNING

City Manager Boyer distributed a list of the millage renewals and time line highlighting those that were projected to be taken to back to the voters in 2018. He stated that they are meeting with SMART next week and expect they will also be proposing a millage renewal for 2018.

Councilmember Knol commented that she heard the Regional Transportation Authority is likely to also go out for a millage this year.

CITY COMMUNICATION:

Councilmember Rich commented that there are so many wonderful events happening in Farmington Hills that she would like more interaction with residents on the events through social media such as creating the notice as an event so people can indicate they are interested in going.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Julie Kula, Cora, made the following comments:

- Liked the idea of a local road millage
- Expressed concern with truck traffic along Cora and would like to see Cora dead-end at Grand River
- Feels the Rental Inspection Program is good but that the city needs to find a way to address the interior of the homes as well
- She would like more coordination with traffic lights
- The pool at the Costick Center is too warm and not as clean as it should be
- Would like to see something done with the property at M-5/Grand River (old SIPS property).
- She requested when the city is reviewing options for offering senior housing, that they are sure to offer *affordable* senior housing

Peter Trembath, Barlow, made the following comments:

- Applauded Council and staff for efforts in trying to resolve the road issue. If a road millage did not pass, he would prefer the city to revert back to the petitioning special assessment district (SAD) process and not the directed SAD process.
- He is in favor of city broadband as he requires high-speed internet for much of what he does

Fran Vallely, Greening, made the following comments:

- Did not favor the directed SAD process (with millage or no millage) as she does not feel it is a democratic process since the public has no voice

- Feels that 1% contingency currently paid by residents for a SAD for roads should be returned to the residents similar to how residents are reimbursed for payment over 5%. She also feels that any percentage of overpayment should be returned, not just if it is over 5%
- Expressed concern with the process used for businesses paying for road improvements and particularly in her situation on Greening and having so many driveway cuts.
- Inquired about a depository for city policies made available to the public

City Clerk Smith stated that her office maintains all council-approved city policies but these are not out on the city website.

ADJOURNMENT:

The goals session meeting adjourned at 11:57a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Pamela B. Smith, City Clerk