

MINUTES  
CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL BUDGET STUDY SESSION  
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS  
MAY 4, 2015 – 6:30 PM  
CITY HALL – COMMUNITY ROOM

The regular meeting of the Farmington Hills City Council was called to order by Mayor Brickner at 6:30p.m.

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

Council Members Absent: None

Others Present: City Manager Brock, City Clerk Smith, Assistant City Manager Boyer, Assistant to the City Manager Geinzer, Director Schnackel, Police Chief Nebus and Fire Chief Bartsch

**BUDGET REVIEW FOR VARIOUS CITY DEPARTMENTS:**

**POLICE DEPARTMENT:**

Police Chief Nebus clarified the number of dispatched calls for the City of Farmington and that the number has actually decreased.

Councilmember Bruce inquired about the decrease in traffic violations. Chief Nebus indicated that violations have been fairly consistent over the last 5 or 6 years. He added that there are several new officers that have been hired recently and they are not on the road on their own at this time writing tickets.

Councilmember Bridges inquired about the number of suicides documented. Chief Nebus replied the number of suicides is higher. The Department has 3 or 4 cases that have not yet been ruled upon, but there have been 8 or 9 suicides to date and there were 10 total last fiscal year.

Councilmember Lerner inquired if the City of Farmington or Village of Bingham Farms would be contributing towards the cost of the new personnel for dispatch that is being requested in this budget.

Chief Nebus explained that before the economic downturn, the Department had two additional dispatch personnel than they currently have and they are asking for one full-time employee in this budget. He commented that the City of Farmington already contributes funding towards dispatch operations and per the contract with Farmington there is a 2% increase in costs to them each year. He clarified that the request for personnel is not necessarily due to the addition of Farmington.

Mayor Brickner added that the increases seen in salaries are due to the new contracts signed and this will be seen across all department budgets.

Chief Nebus expressed the need for full-time dispatchers and Fire Chief Bartsch concurred and was present to support this request.

In answer to Councilmember Bruce, Chief Nebus indicated that the cost is \$76,000 for a full-time dispatch employee, but they are currently paying \$26,000 in overtime costs to cover shifts so the difference is \$50,000. He spoke to the expense of hiring part-time dispatchers.

Chief Nebus pointed out that they have requested a new prisoner van in the budget as the old van could pose safety hazards if they had to drive any distance.

Councilmember Bridges inquired about on-going training of Officers given the incidents occurring across the country between Police Officers and citizens.

Chief Nebus explained that there have been suggested procedures since the incident in Ferguson and he is happy to report that 90% of that is already being done in the Farmington Hills Police Department. He routinely meets with the task force members and officers to discuss issues and lawsuits and proper procedures.

City Manager Brock voiced his support of hiring a full-time dispatcher.

Discussion was held on health care and retirement plans.

Councilmember Bruce inquired about the increase in court time and overtime expenses and decrease in training expenses.

Chief Nebus indicated that the number of felony cases, misdemeanors and drunk driving cases have gone up that has created more court time.

Deputy Chief Comini added that court time is all overtime for those Officers on the midnight shift.

Chief Nebus noted that much of the overtime costs come back to the City.

### **Public Safety Millage**

Mayor Brickner stated that the Public Safety Millage expires in June, 2016 and the City is reviewing the possibility of a Renewal of the Public Safety Millage for the November, 2015 ballot.

In response to Council, Chief Nebus noted that there are 154.14 Police personnel in total including those officers that are funded through the Public Safety Millage.

### **Federal Forfeiture Fund**

Councilmember Lerner inquired if spending down the forfeiture fund is required each year. Chief Nebus responded that they prefer Departments to spend the funding and monitor that closely as there are only certain items that can be purchased through Federal or State Forfeiture funding and they are two separate funds.

Mr. Lerner inquired about the purchase of new vehicles. Chief Nebus stated that there would be 14 total new vehicles purchased, 8 purchased from the Federal Forfeiture fund and 6 vehicles from the Capital Fund. He noted that they try to re-use equipment from the previous vehicles when they can.

### **State Forfeiture Fund**

Chief Nebus commented that the funding brought in through the State Forfeiture Fund is typically less than \$100,000.

### **Capital Improvement**

Chief Nebus discussed the proposed improvements to the Police Department building that they are proposing to be funded under Capital Improvements.

Mayor Brickner asked if anyone had further questions or if Chief Nebus wanted to make any comments.

Chief Nebus thanked City Council for their time and stated that it is going well over at the Police Department with regard to morale, new equipment, etc.

Councilmember Steckloff inquired about the new body armor proposed for Police Officers. Chief Nebus explained the different body armor and equipment worn by the Officers.

**FIRE DEPARTMENT:**

Mayor Brickner inquired about the increase in incidents.

Fire Chief Bartsch stated that fortunately the Department has not had a steady 5% increase each year. He noted that incidents are projected to be up just over 2% from last fiscal year.

Mayor Pro-Tem Massey questioned the Department's ability to provide for this upward incident trend and ability to provide for a demographics comparison.

Deputy Chief Panoushek stated that with the new reporting system, the Department would have the ability to graph information and determine run volumes.

Councilmembers Lerner and Bruce inquired about the staffing changes. Fire Chief Bartsch confirmed that they have promoted 4 firefighters to Station Sergeants and lost one staff member with the retirement of Robert Rebtoy. Chief Bartsch added that the Department has not had to back up other Stations during the day with the 3-man crews now at each station; but, overtime remains steady and is driven by vacation time eligibility.

Councilmember Lerner inquired about retention of Paid-On-Call (POC) Firefighters. Chief Bartsch responded that they continue to struggle with retention of the POC as they often leave for full-time positions. The Department continues to look at ways to retain POC, but they are being compensated at a higher rate than other Fire Departments.

Discussion was held on the cost of training POC and retention rate had having a combined POC system versus a full-time career staff. Chief Bartsch confirmed the need for more personnel.

Councilmember Bridges thanked Chief Bartsch for affording him the opportunity to speak with him one-on-one and learn more about the Fire Department. In answer to Mr. Bridges, Chief Bartsch indicated that POC could respond to all stations and that this was encouraged. The POC system has been in place since before his time with the City.

Mayor Pro-Tem Massey inquired about the increase in physical examination expenses. Chief Bartsch indicated that the City is now requiring POC to have psychological evaluations as they do for career firefighters and the cost of physicals has increased. This was discussed and agreed upon with the City Manager.

The building maintenance costs were mentioned. Chief Bartsch confirmed that those costs have increased due to upkeep of some of the older buildings that include bay doors, exhaust systems, etc.

Councilmember Lerner questioned the number of fire hydrants and maintenance. Chief Bartsch stated that Oakland County maintains the hydrants, but the City paints them. Deputy Chief Panoushek noted that there are over 5,000 hydrants in the City.

Discussion was held on Capital Improvement funding and improvements to be made at the fire stations.

**SPECIAL SERVICES:**

Councilmembers inquired about the increase in staffing and where that would occur as well as part-time health insurance.

Director Ellen Schnackel explained that she reviewed the entire part-time staffing with Human Resources and increased part-time wages overall in order to help recruit and retain permanent part-time staffing. She added that she was also required to change the hours for certain part-time positions and other staff had to take on some of those responsibilities in order to meet new guidelines.

Assistant Finance Director Shu-Fen Lin explained that per the Affordable Care Act, the city now has to offer a health care plan to part-time personnel that exceed a certain number of hours worked. She noted that currently there are 5 staff members throughout the City that have taken advantage of this health care option; however, other eligible staff could change their mind at any time so the City has to budget for that possibility.

Councilmember Bridges inquired about the cost of the middle school program and percentage of non-residents that utilize the Costick Center. Director Schnackel responded that the total cost to operate the after-school and summer youth program is \$383,000 per year. She stated that for what they track at the Costick Center, they have approximately 76% residents versus 24% non-residents use the facility. She added that residents of Farmington are included for purposes of the Costick Center Activities but not for the golf course or ice arena.

Councilmember Steckloff inquired about expanding the recycling program. Director Schnackel commented that she would like to expand the program in the Parks areas and at the other facilities.

Inquiries were made by Council regarding the Golf Course. In response, Director Schnackel stated that the restaurant lease at the golf course expires at the end of 2016. Golf balls are replaced every year at the course and the course funds itself by having \$.75 per round put back into the golf course fund.

Councilmember Lerner inquired about the Nature Center. Director Schnackel explained that they intend to expand the office area as the programs there are increasing and there is a need for more privacy for the office staff. She added that there are also plans to make repairs to the roof and replace a leaking front window.

Deputy Director Bryan Farmer noted that WIFI was limited at the Nature Center, which seemed to be a server issue; but should be corrected with an upgrade coming this December.

Mayor Pro-Tem Massey inquired about the percentage increase in programs. Deputy Director Farmer explained that this fluctuates as some programs fall off and new programs are introduced. He noted that the new archery range and building are done and they are planning a dedication on July 13<sup>th</sup>.

Director Schnackel added that she feels the Department is doing a better job marketing the programs available and that has increased activity.

Discussion was held on the repairs needed at the Ice Arena facility.

**Parks and Recreation Millage**

Mayor Pro-Tem Massey inquired about the Capital Equipment fund going down to zero. Director Schnackel stated that funding for the next fiscal year was being requested as part of the Capital Improvement Program (CIP).

Questions were raised regarding the pump stations and ball field renovations as well as the dog park and use of the soccer fields on Twelve Mile Road ( Soccer, Soccer.).

Park Maintenance Supervisor Bill Wright indicated they are replacing 2 pumps at the pump station with one, which should be more efficient. He stated that one ball field would be renovated within the 2014/15 budget and 2 fields were budgeted for renovations in 2015/16.

Director Schnackel stated that users of the dog park have increased and they now have 248 dogs registered with the park. She also mentioned that the entire orientation process is now on-line.

She stated that the Department continues to lease the soccer fields from Soccer, Soccer for \$1/year and the city maintains those fields.

There were no further comments at this time.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Brickner adjourned the City Council meeting at 8:45p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Pamela B. Smith, City Clerk