

MINUTES
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS
CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION MEETING
CITY HALL – COMMUNITY ROOM
MARCH 23, 2015 – 6:00PM

The Study Session meeting of the Farmington Hills City Council was called to order by Mayor Brickner at 6:00pm.

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, Director Mekjian and Attorney Joppich

DISCUSSION WITH STATE REPRESENTATIVE CHRISTINE GREIG:

State Representative Christine Greig thanked the Council and staff for allowing her use of the Council Chambers for her coffee meetings with constituents. She indicated that after hosting various coffee meetings she stated that it was clear that more community forums were needed on two issues and they were Mental Health and Proposal 1 that will appear on the May 5, 2015 ballot. She stated that there were many questions with regard to Proposal 1 and she felt that working with surrounding representatives and hosting a town hall meeting for the area would be a good idea.

Several members of Council felt that there was misunderstanding and confusion over Proposal 1. Mayor Pro-Tem Massey felt that the State should have approved funding themselves and not left it for the voters to figure out and thought it would be more acceptable if all of the funding from Proposal 1 was dedicated solely to improve roads.

Representative Greig explained that everything paid at the pump is dedicated to roads, but explained that the elimination of fuel from the base sales tax would create a gap in funding to the School Aid Fund and revenue sharing to local communities so modifications were made to the sales and use tax rates and how that revenue is distributed to hold these programs harmless. Dr. Massey commented that this gap in funding is part of the issue.

Representative Greig commented that there was a lot of anger when Proposal A was adopted and it was felt that not all of the funding went where it was supposed to go and there are still some residual feelings.

Councilmember Bruce inquired if there was a backup plan if Proposal 1 does not pass and inquired about 40% of the funding in the first year going towards debt.

Representative Greig responded that there have been discussions regarding alternative plans but it is unlikely that anything will be heard on this until after the Election. She stated that because the debt was transportation debt, it was felt that this was an acceptable use of the funds.

Councilmember Bridges stated that clearly the roads need to be repaired and he supports Proposal 1, but feels that public mistrust is a big hurdle the State will have to overcome to get Proposal 1 passed.

Representative Greig agreed and commented that without the funding it will be tough to even keep up on the bare minimum needs for the roads.

The issue of mental health was discussed. Representative Greig reported that there is additional funding for mental health; however, the distribution of that funding is not favorable for Oakland County. She stated that Oakland County has some of the best mental health programs and she feels if they can help people across counties, there is the possibility for regional funding.

Dr. Bruce commented on the shift of money from mental health to correction facilities and the high percentage of prisoners having mental health issues. Representative Greig agreed that money should be shifted from the corrections facilities to mental health.

Representative Greig discussed the various committees on which she serves at the State level. She touched on various Bills that are currently being discussed in the legislature including modernizing laws with regard to public notices, CPL licenses and precinct consolidation for the upcoming May 5, 2015 Election.

City Manager Brock commented on mental health and how Police Officers are often dealing with persons with mental health issues and the liability involved.

With regard to Proposal 1, Manager Brock commented that there is mistrust towards the State, but he feels this is the way to solidify funding for roads and there are a lot of positives with Proposal 1.

Councilmember Bruce mentioned that Michigan allows for twice the national truck weight, which he feels is tearing up the roads.

Representative Greig stated that there has been a Bill introduced to reduce the weight by one-half, but the transportation industry is hesitant to look at it in terms of total weight. There is a concern that reducing the weight would only cause more trucks on the roads.

Councilmember Knol added that at a town hall meeting this issue was discussed and an Engineer from MDOT explained that it is not about the total weight, but about axle weight.

Councilmember Bridges commented that the Detroit Free Press did an expose on trucking weights and fines and he feels there should be escalating fines.

Representative Greig mentioned that issues such as faith based adoption services and a Bill defining life at conception are also being discussed at the State level.

Mayor Pro-Tem Massey mentioned that on the issue of mental health, the city has put together a resolution asking for support at the federal level in order to assist with training Police Officers on how to deal with mental health issues. He indicated that they would also welcome support at the state level.

Representative Greig said that the State is not taking up the issue of Human Rights and she strongly encouraged a local ordinance. She commented that the people the Human Rights Ordinance is trying to protect are also some of the most vulnerable to mental health issues.

Representative Greig commented on two Bills that were introduced with regard to Medical Marijuana.

Mayor Pro-Tem Massey commented on the increase in heroin overdoses and he stated that people are hesitant to call when they witness someone overdose as they fear being charged with a crime. He inquired if there has been any discussion with regard to a good-Samaritan law so that those people would not be charged with a crime.

Councilmember Knol stated that this was passed last year, but possibly is not yet in effect.

Representative Greig stated that the House budget is coming out this week. She thanked Council and staff for having her at the meeting to discuss what was happening at the state level.

DISCUSSION ON GREAT LAKES WATER AUTHORITY/DWSD UPDATE AND RATE

APPLICATION:

Director Mekjian indicated that there has been a lot of press on the creation of the Great Lakes Water Authority and water and sewer rates so he felt it was a good time to discuss this issue and clarify the information.

Water Resource Commissioner James Nash introduced his staff Sue Coffey, Manager and Jody Caldwell, Chief Engineer. He complimented them on their work with regard to this issue and stated that city staff is always a pleasure to work with. He explained that his staff has a presentation and then will answer any questions.

Sue Coffey, WRC Manager, commented that she has been involved from the beginning with regard to the change from Detroit Water and Sewer District (DWSD) to Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA). She discussed the history leading up to the Memorandum of Understanding and Articles of Incorporation of what is GLWA. She explained that GLWA is a regional governing body made up of members from the City of Detroit, Oakland, Wayne and Macomb Counties and a Governor appointed member for outlying communities of other counties. The GLWA will operate and manage all water and sewer lines that serve the suburbs and are part of the DWSD assets that are common to all communities. She noted that there will be no regional transportation authority until a lease agreement is signed for GLWA to lease these necessary assets.

Councilmember Bruce inquired if the Detroit Board will remain. Ms. Coffey explained that the Detroit Board will remain for the City of Detroit retail system. She stated that there are many pipes within the system that only serve the City of Detroit.

Director Mekjian added that DWSD will become a retail customer to the Authority.

Ms. Coffey discussed the terms of the proposed lease agreement indicating that payments will not go to Detroit's general fund, but will remain in GLWA set aside to fund Detroit's capital and/or debt service needs. It was noted that the State has provided a grant in the amount of \$3.8 million for transition costs.

Jody Caldwell, WRC Chief Engineer, discussed the impact of this transition on rates and the proposed average unit costs increases that would be effective July 2, 2015 and causes for the cost increases. He noted that they would like come before City Council within the next 2 months with the recommended rates for Farmington Hills.

Ms. Coffey indicated that discussion are ongoing and DWSD has reduced its number of employees from approximately 2,800 to just under 1,400 as of January 1, 2015 and further reductions were contemplated.

Councilmember Lerner inquired about the Board's retiree pension benefits and who pays for that. He also feels it is time to move towards defined contribution. Mr. Caldwell stated that this would be the responsibility of the GLWA.

Ms. Coffey added that retiree pensions from the water/sewer department are the obligation of the DWSD. She noted that a study group is discussing the issue of benefits and what should be offered and she will pass along Mr. Lerner's comments.

City Manager Brock stated that the City will be holding a study session meeting on city water/sewer rates.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 7:20pm.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Smith', written over a horizontal line.

Pamela B. Smith, City Clerk