

MINUTES
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS
CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION MEETING
CITY HALL – COMMUNITY ROOM
NOVEMBER 27, 2017

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

Council Members Present: Bridges (arrived at 6:10pm), Bruce, Knol, Lerner, Massey, Rich and Steckloff

Council Members Absent: None

Others Present: City Manager Boyer, City Clerk Smith, Assistant City Manager Mekjian, Director Barr and City Attorney Joppich

LIBRARY BOARD DISCUSSION

Mayor Massey stated that Council, at a previous study session meeting, mentioned to the Library Board several questions that were brought forth by a resident. At that time it was determined that Council would formulate any questions they had and meet with the Library at a future date to discuss those questions.

Mayor Massey clarified that the discussion tonight is not about the closing of the café at the library, however, that was the issue that generated a lot of interest and subsequently these questions were brought forward to both Councils. He stated that one question raised was whether the Library Board was complying with the Open Meetings Act (OMA).

Pam O'Malley, Board Trustee, commented that all Board members always believed they were acting in compliance with the Open Meetings Act and this topic was discussed at their last meeting.

Director Streit indicated that after these concerns were brought to her attention she spoke with Attorney Steve Joppich and at that time he offered to hold a training session with the Library Board. After clarifications by Attorney Joppich, the Board did not feel training was necessary and that they could ensure compliance with the OMA going forward.

Councilmember Lerner noted that the resident also mentioned that the minutes never reflected the closing of the café.

Director Streit explained that the café was a small part of a larger discussion on building updates involving the repurposing of space at the library.

Councilmember Bridges stated that he viewed the Council's position tonight only as offering assistance to the Library Board to ensure compliance with OMA and FOIA laws and that it was his understanding Council had no authority over these other issues.

Councilmember Knol commented that if action was taken by the Board to close the café at a meeting, she believes that should have been reflected in the minutes.

Discussion was held on how the closing of the café took place. It was noted that the cafe was under contract for a period of time that eventually expired and that no formal action was taken at a meeting to close the café.

Mayor Massey mentioned that another matter brought up by Council was that there was not a level of accountability with having an appointed Library Board. He suggested comes discussion on the pros and cons of an elected Board versus an appointed Board.

Councilmember Bruce thanked the Library Board for their service as he feels the cities have a great library that provides great services and he has had no issue with what the Library Board has done. His concern is with the budget process and the Councils having no oversight. He stated he would prefer an elected Board only for the reason that the Board would then be accountable to the citizens.

Mayor Massey commented that it is his understanding that both cities could jointly decide whether the Board should be appointed or elected. Attorney Joppich confirmed that 2/3 of the participating legislative bodies would have to vote in favor to change the Board from an appointed board to an elected board and then within 10 days that decision would have to be presented to the State Library Board.

Library Board Trustees O'Malley and Lazar expressed concern with politicizing the Library by having an elected Board. They feel the citizens are well represented. Mr. Lazar added that he feels there is oversight by way of the budget audit process and oversight and input from the community through the Friends of the Library community group.

Director Streit mentioned that a comment was made at the last meeting that information was requested by the City from the Library and not received, but did not see her response to that reflected in the minutes. She clarified that the audit is sent to the city every year and following that meeting she sent copies of several recent audits to the City Clerk to make sure the city had them. She added that in her time as Director, she has not been asked to provide any information.

Councilmember Knol felt that some of the concerns could be resolved by way of formalizing an agreement between the Library Board and both Councils that would include receiving budget information and meeting with the Councils once or twice a year to keep them apprised of what is going on at the library.

Discussion was held on having an elected Board versus an appointed Board and the majority of City Council indicated that they were not in favor of an elected Board; but agreed that more communication is needed going forward.

Attorney Joppich stated that he could evaluate the possibility of an agreement and review amending the existing organizational plan as an option.

Suzanne Paul, Board Trustee, inquired if there were any concerns with the operations of the library prior to this resident bringing these issues forward.

Mayor Massey stated that not necessarily concerns but Council had brought up the issue of wanting to know what was going on at the library prior to hearing it from others and so he feels more communication between the Library Board and both City Councils is important.

Board Trustee Paul stated that the café closing became a much larger issue than anticipated and agreed that any controversial topics should be brought to the attention of both Councils in the future.

Councilmember Bruce understood not wanting to politicize the Board but he feels the citizens have always elected good people to serve and would do the same in this situation. He commented that

although the Council could ask the Library to do some of these things that have been discussed, the fact is they can't force the Board to do anything.

Attorney Joppich commented that a formal agreement could help.

Dr. Bruce added that he would like to have an annual review of the budget process so that he could answer questions from citizens as to whether the people being appointed by Council are making good financial decisions.

Assistance was offered by Council to have the City Finance Director meet with the Board about the budget process.

Mayor Massey thanked the Board for listening and responding to the questions and concerns brought forward.

Mayor Massey summarized that Attorney Joppich would review the possibility of a formalized agreement between the Board and both Councils. He also informed the Library Board that for other joint boards and commissions with members from both Farmington and Farmington Hills, the number of members serving from each community is based on population. He is not sure this would change for the Library Board at this time, but he did not want there to be any surprises if that discussion took place.

NATIONAL CITIZENS SURVEY RESULTS

City Manager Boyer stated that the City conducted a National Citizens Survey that was the same format as was done in 2011. He stated that it contains a lot of good information that will help the city plan into the future and he expects some of the topics will be discussed at the next City Council goals session.

Assistant City Manager Mekjian explained that the survey was conducted as part of the City Council's Strategic Planning Goals for 2017 and was administered through a collaborative effort between the National Research Center and ICMA. He noted that the survey was sent to 1500 households and 350 surveys were completed and returned. He reviewed the results from the survey which compared this year's survey to that of 2011 as well as other similar city's across the country, noting that 88% of the residents surveyed rated the quality of life in Farmington Hills as excellent or good. Mr. Mekjian stated that the survey provides the city a tool to improve city operations and service.

City Manager Boyer mentioned that the survey was also provided on the city's website and approximately 375 were returned electronically.

Assistant City Manager Mekjian stated that the survey also contained a couple of questions that were formulated by the City, one asking residents if they would prefer to pay for future road improvements through a city-wide road millage or maintain the current special assessment district process and the results were split.

Council requested that future surveys are tracked as to where the results came from in order to obtain more statistically significant data. City Manager Boyer stated that staff planned to track that in the future.

Mayor Massey commented that this information will be brought back during the City Council goals session.

ADJOURNMENT:

The study session meeting adjourned at 7:28pm.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Pamela B. Smith, City Clerk