

MINUTES
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS
CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL BUDGET SESSION MEETING
CITY HALL – VIEWPOINT ROOM
MAY 4, 2017 – 6:00PM

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

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

Council Members Absent: Bruce

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

City Manager Boyer stated that the Departments were issued guidelines to follow with regard to their budgets and their target budget figure. He stated that the Capital Improvement expenditures are the items that need to be reviewed in order to meet the goal of maintaining the city's fund balance at 50%. The city may need to look at bonding some of the proposed capital projects as outlined along with various growth revenue scenarios at their last regular study session. He stated that there is little change in the day-to-day expenditures and there are no new positions proposed in this budget.

Mayor Massey commented that the budget is basically flat but the City needs to continue to invest in capital needs so Council needs to consider in the future either increasing the millage or bonding some of the projects to pay them off over time.

The following budgets were reviewed with the respective Departments heads and the following comments/changes were noted:

CENTRAL SERVICES/SUPPORT SERVICES

Director Kelly Monico explained that Central Services is focused on customer service not only for the city staff but residents as well. She discussed the use of capital funds and projects included in the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and mentioned that Farmington Hills is leading the way in cooperative purchasing. She has hired a part-time employee who will assist her Department in maintaining the city website, social media postings, etc.

In response to Councilmember Knol about the use of interns, Director Monico stated that the Department had utilized an intern in the past and she is open to that option if needed going forward.

Discussion was held on the volume of calls to the department, maintaining IT for the City of Farmington and turn-around time on calls.

Councilmember Rich inquired if the city has considered using a consultant to utilize the data the Department is collecting in order to streamline processes.

City Manager Boyer indicated that city staff is always discussing ways to streamline processes at the staff level but have not considered an outside consultant at this time.

Councilmember Bridges inquired about the use of an App for residents to use to report potholes, etc.

Director Monico stated that the city communicates with the residents very well through the website, list serves and social media and that the trend is moving away from Apps. She confirmed that residents can currently submit a request, complaint or comment through the website.

Councilmember Knol inquired about extending email retention. Director Monico stated that the Department is currently reviewing a product regarding email retention and archival with staff and the City Attorney.

Questions were raised regarding the line items for sick leave/vacation, membership and licenses, part-time and land acquisition. Director Monico explained that the increase for sick and vacation time was the result of a retirement, membership and licenses included additional software licenses for staff, the part-time line item included the new part-time IT Clerk mentioned as well as the existing part-time mail clerk and the land acquisition was a result of the purchase of foreclosed property by the City.

Related Capital

Discussion was held on the capital improvement projects and proposed facility and sustainability studies. Director Monico noted that the increase in data processing was due to the radio system replacement.

Councilmember Knol expressed concern with spending \$250,000 on studies in one budget year and suggested budgeting for the Harrison High School facility study this budget and waiting a year on the other. She is not opposed to the studies, but feels it is more financially responsible to do one now and one next fiscal year.

City Manager Boyer explained that the studies would provide a full audit and review of all city-owned buildings and will drive the capital needs in the future.

Councilmember Steckloff agreed to having both studies in this budget.

Councilmember Bridges felt it was important to have good data in order to prioritize projects.

SPECIAL SERVICES

Director Ellen Schnackel stated that the Special Services Department continues to focus on Customer Services as well as marketing/branding for the city. She noted that 50% of their revenue is generated from their activities. On-line registration continues to grow and the department continues to use volunteers where they can. She explained that the Department recently added a part-time marketing staff person which they are now hiring full-time. Staff has been working with the public relations staff at city hall to incorporate the city's FOCUS newsletter into the Special Services Activities Guide, which will save the city money.

City Manager Boyer explained that the full-time marketing position was possible due to the repositioning of staff between departments when he did not replace the Assistant to the City Manager position in his office.

Councilmember Knol liked the idea of including the FOCUS in the Activities Guide.

In response to Council, Director Schnackel stated that the Department has not had to turn kids away from after-school program due to space but they do expect some growth in the program. She felt that if there was more space overall for the Department that it could open up opportunities for additional programming.

Parks

Councilmember Lerner inquired about past discussion with Brighthouse to supply funding for surveillance cameras at the skate park.

City Manager Boyer indicated that it was just too costly to make it work.

Assistant Director Farmer stated that they currently use DVR's at the archery range and have considered doing the same for the skate park as the cost would be considerably lower.

Golf Course

Director Schnackel stated that they had a great golf year with the golf course open 252 days in 2016. She added that Greek Island has renewed their agreement to operate the restaurant at the course.

Ice Arena

It was noted that the debt for the arena was paid off 2 years ago and there were recent repairs to the Zamboni.

Councilmember Lerner requested a study session with regard to millage renewals and a long-term plan going forward.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

Fire Chief Jon Unruh stated that the salaries for the 4 employees hired through the Safer Grant is reflected in the next FY budget as the grant ends this year, but the Department intends to apply for an extension.

City Council inquired about potential grants, cooperative efforts and additional staffing.

Chief Unruh explained that he believes the Department has a chance to receive a grant for fire hose and while he has not heard of consolidated efforts with regard to equipment, the city participates with other communities on a Hazmat Team and provides for mutual aid. He stated that the Department relies on mutual aid for assistance and they are handling the call volume currently but there may be a need for discussion on additional staffing in the future. He stated that the next logical move would be to have a 3rd full-time fire station.

Discussion was held on retaining paid on call (POC) staff and Chief Unruh stated that the committee established over a year ago to review this issue did not find many answers. The committee reported that people leave due to run volume, moving, loss of interest or they leave for full-time employment. The committee also looked at reducing the 35% required response to runs and did not favor that option as they felt that staff would lose their skills and there would be a loss of cohesiveness with the Department. Current paid on call (POC) also did not agree with reducing the percentage of runs required.

Mayor Massey commented that this is not just an issue in Farmington Hills but many communities.

Chief Unruh added that there is a state-wide shortage of paramedics.

Public Safety Millage

Finance Director Gajda noted that this millage will be affected by Headlee and the revenue projected from the millage for next FY year will be lower for both Police and Fire Departments.

Related Capital

Chief Unruh noted the following capital items in the budget for the Fire Department:

One Platform Fire Truck, Station Improvements, Extrication equipment, and one 75-foot ladder truck in FY 2018-19.

Councilmember Rich asked for staff to explain the difference between the previously discussed sustainability/facility studies and the facility study conducted by the Fire Department.

City Manager Boyer explained that the Fire Department conducted their own internal audit of their buildings for their own budgeting purposes; but the proposed sustainability study would evaluate all city-owned buildings to determine needs going forward not just on the exterior of the buildings but HVAC units, etc.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

Police Chief Charles Nebus introduced his staff and spoke the Department goals that included achieving accreditation of the department through the Michigan Association of Chiefs of Police, implementing new technologies and preparation for the Next Generation 9-1-1 System.

As far as future challenges, he feels there is a need for enhanced radio communication, new work stations and equipment for the dispatch area and recruiting and retaining officers continues to be a challenge not only in Farmington Hills but nationally.

Councilmember Rich stated that she appreciated the new plans for dispatch as she feels it is greatly needed and questioned the time frame for the proposed improvements. Chief Nebus stated that he believes funding would be included in the next budget for those upgrades.

Councilmember Lerner inquired about the false alarm fees decreasing. Chief Nebus responded that they are in the midst of replacing a very antiquated alarm billing system but typically the fees total approximately \$4,000+ per year.

Discussion was held on staffing challenges and being able to keep up the pace of hiring with the potential retirements.

Chief Nebus stated that he believes Farmington Hills is keeping up with the pace of hiring. They are doing aggressive recruiting at the various academies and participate in a consortium for recruitment. The Department is also now offering conditional job offerings conditioned upon the new hires passing all tests so that they know when they leave that they have an offer on the table. Chief Nebus commented that he believes this will assist with the hiring process.

Chief Nebus discussed the community activities and events that contribute to the overtime and also acknowledged that the Department discusses ways to control the amount of overtime. He noted that the overtime for special events is reimbursed to the city.

Public Safety Millage

Finance Director Gajda reiterated that this millage is affected by Headlee and the revenue projected from the millage for next FY year will be lower for both Police and Fire Departments.

Related Capital

Chief Nebus stated that capital expenditures for this year include funding for the Next Generation 9-1-1 System and new vehicles. Some of the vehicles are proposed to be purchased through forfeiture funds and the others out of the general fund.

CITY CLERK'S OFFICE

City Clerk Smith reported that the budget for the Clerk's Office has remained mostly flat with some accounts fluctuating based on the Election cycle in that fiscal year. She stated that the election worker budget increased for this current FY due to the raise that was approved by City Council for Inspectors. The education budget is proposed to increase slightly next FY as the Deputy City Clerk is pursuing her bachelor's degree. The Deputy Clerk recently completed training through the Clerk's Institute and has received both her Certified Municipal Clerk (CMC) and Certified Michigan Municipal Clerk (CMMC) certifications.

Clerk Smith noted that the new Election equipment will be implemented for the upcoming November General Election and funding was included in the Capital Improvement Project budget to fund a portion of the equipment (back-up units and a portion of the high-speed scanner for absentee ballots) that would not be covered by the State grant.

Councilmember Lerner questioned what is being done with the old equipment and if it was worth any money. Clerk Smith responded that per the state contract, the vendor supplying the new equipment was required to dispose of the old election equipment and that there was no monetary value.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

There were no public comments.

ADJOURNMENT:

Mayor Massey adjourned the study session meeting at 8:38pm

Respectfully submitted,



Pamela B. Smith, City Clerk