

MINUTES
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS
CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL GOALS STUDY SESSION
CITY HALL – COMMUNITY ROOM
JANUARY 13, 2020

The special goals study session meeting of the Farmington Hills City Council was called to order by Mayor Barnett at 9:05am.

Council Members Present: Barnett, Boleware, Bridges, Knol, Massey, Newlin and Steckloff

Council Members Absent: None

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

MAYOR’S OPENING COMMENTS

Mayor Barnett explained that the purpose of the goals session was to provide input to staff on items Council would like to further discuss. No official action would be taken at the study session; just a consensus on whether to bring an item back for further discussion.

City Manager Boyer stated that the agenda items were provided by the Mayor and Council members and staff is seeking direction on whether to continue discussions on the items and also determine if funding would be required going forward as they prepare the budget.

Mayor and City Council addressed the following topics:

CONSOLIDATION OF SIGNS AND HEIGHT OF FREESTANDING SIGNS:

Mayor Pro-Tem Knol explained that this issue was discussed some time ago in a study session and she would like to further discuss the option for consolidating signs when there are more than one tenant and raising the ground signs slightly to allow for better site clearance.

The consensus was to bring this issue back for further discussion at a future study session.

DEER POPULATION:

Councilmember Massey commented that this has been an ongoing problem that could also have a financial impact on the city. Concerns have been expressed over the deer eating plants and causing safety issues for drivers. He noted that the city conducted several deer surveys that showed the city has a high population of deer. The city also surveyed the residents asking what they would like to do about the deer population and the majority wanted something done but did not want the city to conduct a cull. This is a regional issue that requires a regional approach; however, the DNR’s only answer is a deer cull. Dr. Massey pointed out that the city also passed an ordinance with regard to feeding the deer in an attempt to limit the deer from congregating and spreading disease.

City Council concurred that there was a problem and that a regional approach was needed. A study session was suggested to include the DNR along with representatives from surrounding cities. Possible options were discussed and it was recognized that some of the options could be costly.

Several residents spoke on the issue and suggested the following:

- Allowing bow hunting in certain areas of the city
- Using more than one approach to address the problem both short and long term

- Asking the DNR for statistics on chronic wasting disease
- Proper signage for deer crossing in certain areas of the city to address safety concerns

City Manager Boyer stated that staff has met with the DNR and other communities on this issue and while there are options, none of them will work if they are not done regionally. He suggested that any study session is held following the next survey that should be conducted in February this year. In response to Council, Mr. Boyer noted that the surveys cost approximately \$5,000-\$7,000 each but are necessary as they must be able to prove to the DNR that they have a deer population problem.

Mayor Barnett agreed to bring the issue up at that upcoming Michigan Municipal League meeting and suggested Michigan State University as another resource to discuss a regional approach.

The consensus was to study this issue further and discuss a regional approach at a future study session meeting.

MEDICAL/RECREATIONAL MARIHUANA:

Councilmember Steckloff stated that she suggested this topic and originally had wanted the city to opt in since the voters had voted in favor of allowing marihuana use. She commented that after further research, she is not sure that residents want the facilities in the community and would like to put this on a future ballot for the residents to vote.

Considerable discussion was held on both medical and recreational marihuana and the possible options and/or licenses for which the city could opt in.

The consensus was to further study the issue at a future study session and to include representatives from both sides of the issue, including the City Attorney. Possible lawsuits were a concern if moving too quickly and it was preferred that the city wait to see what other communities are facing that have already opted in. It was noted that the city is in no way limiting access to marihuana as is allowed under the current laws.

It was also the consensus of City Council to review sooner than later potential zoning regulations that could protect residents from the odor from home grow operations, such as requiring certain ventilation systems.

It was suggested that when the issue is discussed in the future that the agenda is published in the newspaper.

Residents commented and wanted a clear explanation of options and for the city to consider what other communities are experiencing; a few communities have indicated that the money earned does not offset the costs involved.

Owners of Care by Design Health Market offered to assist the city in providing information on the topic and encouraged city staff and Council members to visit their store in downtown Farmington.

MUNICIPAL BROADBAND:

Councilmember Boleware stated that she would like to review the economic feasibility of municipal broadband and would like to review the study that was completed.

Discussion was held on the Municipal Broadband Task Force that studied this issue and it was noted that the reason the issue was on hold was due to new City Councilmembers being elected and staff wanting to

bring them up to speed on the issue before making a decision. It was added that moving forward with a contract for a feasibility study would not commit the city installing municipal broadband.

City Manager Boyer stated that the RFP for the feasibility study was out and proposals had been received and companies interviewed. If City Council desires to move forward on this issue, the proposal would be brought to the next City Council meeting for consideration.

Mr. Lerner, former Councilmember and Task Force member, explained that the task force reviewed whether broadband was feasible and they felt it was and that it could be cost effective. The Task Force had gone as far as it could and recommended a third party vendor to conduct the feasibility study and he encouraged City Council to award the proposal.

The consensus of City Council was to have staff place the award of proposal on a future City Council regular meeting agenda for consideration. It will appear on the January 27, 2020 Council agenda.

AUTONOMOUS VEHICLES:

Councilmember Bridges stated that he suggested this topic as he would like for Farmington Hills to consider becoming a test city for such vehicles and innovation. He feels it would brand Farmington Hills as a city that is supportive and recognizes change in the auto industry and would attract investment and young professionals.

City Manager Boyer stated that there are several companies in the city wanting to do this now and some that have already contacted staff. The city needs to approve this type of activity and staff plans to schedule this issue for a future study session.

One resident suggested not allowing this in subdivisions on residential streets where there are children due to safety concerns.

ESTABLISHMENT OF REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION/VISIONING COMMISSION/UPDATING THE 2020 VISION PLAN:

Mayor Barnett stated that she added these items as she feels there is a need to look at areas of the city for multi-use in order to grow the tax base without infringing upon the residential areas and to update the current vision plan.

Discussion was held on the various commissions that the city already has that could help with this goal. It was suggested that any action plan should include actionable goals followed by Council action to adopt ordinance amendments to achieve those goals. It was also agreed that there were certain areas or corridors that could be targeted for improvements and/or redevelopment.

The consensus of City Council was that they were in favor of a vision plan but did not feel that another commission needed to be created to accomplish this goal. It was suggested that a meeting is scheduled with representatives from existing commissions such as the EDC, CIA and Planning Commission as well as school representatives for the purposes of developing a future development and vision plan for the city.

ESTABLISHING FARMINGTON HILLS AS A CITY THAT WELCOMES REFUGEES:

Mayor Barnett stated that Oakland County passed a resolution welcoming refugees and the cities were asked to join in that resolution. She inquired if there is interest amongst Council but only if there is funding included to help with any programs. She added that every city is considered as opting out unless they affirmatively opt in.

One resident urged City Council to review all of the potential impacts of a local community opting in. After discussion on the potential impacts and the fact that Farmington Hills is a very diverse city with residents of its own in need, Mayor Barnett removed the item from discussion at this time.

MINIMUM WAGE INCREASE:

Mayor Barnett indicated that she would like to review a minimum wage increase to \$15/hour for part-time employees.

City Manager Boyer stated that the city has approximately 350 part-time employees throughout the year including seasonal employees and the city has increased part-time salaries at times to address the current market and position.

The consensus of City Council was to further study an increase in minimum wage. They requested that the study include information on current salaries and the financial impact it would have on the city budget and part-time salaries for other communities so they have a market comparison. It was also noted that this would not just impact part-time staff but all employees.

GREEN ENERGY PROGRAMS:

Mayor Barnett inquired if the city's current ordinances allow for green building and if homeowner's association bylaws don't allow for that, how can the city assist.

It was the consensus to review the city's current ordinances to make sure they are not inhibiting green building.

REJOINING NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES:

Mayor Barnett wanted to revisit the city's membership with the National League of Cities (NLC) as she felt there was value in networking across the country and that they had offered many good programs in the past.

Councilmembers involved in the decision to leave the NLC explained that the reason for leaving was that the value of the classes had deteriorated and it was very costly to be a member and attend the conference. NLC used to have a large constituent pool that lobbied for issues and that was no longer the case and they lost touch with subcommittee groups and started focusing on just large cities. Council, at the time, felt the money would be better spent to attend Michigan Municipal League (MML) conference/meetings and bring in state senators and representatives on their own to discuss any issues.

Mayor Barnett stated that she was going to contact NLC to discuss their current programs and reiterate the reasons why the city did not renew its membership.

RESPONSE TO ICE REGARDING FARMINGTON UNIVERSITY:

Mayor Barnett stated that she was very angry that ICE used the city's name and felt it had tarnished the city's reputation. She suggested sending a resolution to legislators and asked if Council was willing to consider a resolution if she brought a draft forward.

The consensus was not to pursue an official resolution on behalf of City Council, noting that any member had the right to send a letter on their own behalf if they wished.

HIRING PRACTICES AND DIVERSITY/INCLUSION TRAINING:

Councilmember Boleware stated that with 30% of the employees coming up on retirement, she wanted to make sure when hiring new employees that the staff reflects the diversity of the city and to also consider

diversity training. She commented that she did not feel the photos in the current activities guide reflected the diversity of the city.

The consensus of Council was to invite the Human Resources Director to a future study session to discuss hiring practices and what is being done to make sure that we reflect the city as best we can but still hire the best person for the job.

UPDATING CITY CHARTER:

Councilmember Boleware stated that she had suggested this topic but requested removal of the item for discussion at this time.

PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS:

Public questions/comments were heard regarding the following:

- A millage for municipal broadband could potentially be less than current cable bills.
- Concern with the increase in minimum wage to \$15/hour being a partisan issue and that such an increase could put the city in a position of competing with local businesses.
- Inquiry as to the funding of the city's retirement system. City Manager Boyer responded that both the city's retirement and healthcare systems are very well funded at approximately 76% and 100% respectively.
- Suggestion for Human Resources to collaborate with OCC and other schools or businesses for employment opportunities
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ADJOURNMENT:

The special goals study session adjourned at 12:29pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Pamela B. Smith, MiPMC/MMC
City Clerk