

MINUTES
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS
CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION MEETING
COMMUNITY ROOM/COUNCIL CHAMBER
JULY 26, 2021 – 5:15PM

The study session meeting of the Farmington Hills City Council was called to order by Mayor Barnett at 5:15pm.

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

Council Members Absent: None

Others Present: City Manager Mekjian, City Clerk Smith, Assistant City Manager Valentine, Directors Schnackel and Skrobola, Police Chief King, Fire Chief Unruh and City Attorney Joppich

PUBLIC SAFETY MILLAGE

Fire Chief Gary Unruh, Police Chief King, Finance Director Skrobola and City Manager Mekjian presented a power point presentation and spoke on the need for continued public safety millage funding, the money the millage would generate for both proposed millage rates and how funding would be utilized for public safety purposes.

City Manager Mekjian explained that staff has prepared two resolutions for City Council consideration, Option 1 would restore the current millage rate back to 1.7 mills and would require language that this would be a renewal and increase as it would be increasing the millage up to 1.7 mills from the Headlee Rollback amount and the second option includes a straight millage renewal at 1.6187 mills that includes the Headlee reduction. He stated that staff is recommending Option 1 for 1.7 mills in order to preserve the existing funding as originally approved by the voters.

(Councilmember Newlin arrived at 6pm)

It was suggested that the Police Department review the opportunity for more speed signs within subdivisions and that staff compare the percentage of the general fund used for public safety to other communities.

In response to Council regarding simplifying the ballot language, Attorney Joppich responded that state law requires specific language to be included and the ballot proposal is limited to 100 words. He also acknowledged that the language is very similar to the previously approved millage and therefore has a better chance of being approved once again by the Attorney General and Governor.

It was suggested including the word “only” in the ballot language so it was clear the funding was to be used only for the purposes of fire and police staffing and equipment to maintain the current levels of public safety services.

Mayor Barnett explained the need for dedicated millages and commented that the city is able to provide factual information only and cannot spend tax dollars to lobby for or against a ballot proposal.

City Manager Mekjian added that if the City Council determines to approve the resolution authorizing 1.7 mills to be levied, the Council has the ability to adjust this each year during the budget process. He also

mentioned that the original public safety millage will be expiring in 2025 at which time there will be another opportunity to discuss future funding.

City Council moved from the Community Room at City Hall to the Council Chamber in order to live stream the next portion of the study session meeting.

DEER MANAGEMENT

Bryan Farmer, Deputy Director of Special Services, reviewed for Council background information on concerns raised over the deer population and past discussions, data collected, specific concerns raised by residents and staff and results of the community deer survey conducted in 2016. He discussed research conducted by the city and resources that were available on the city's website. Mr. Farmer noted that in 2017 the city passed an ordinance prohibiting the feeding of deer in an effort to help deter them from residential areas. In response to Council, he confirmed that the city had collected data on where the majority of the deer are located and plotted those locations on a city map, which he displayed and reviewed with Council.

Joe Valentine, Assistant City Manager, discussed the difference in Farmington Hills versus other areas with similar deer population. He explained that the city is proposing by resolution of Council a coalition of communities in Oakland County to work with the Michigan Natural Resources Commission to develop a deer management plan for Oakland County to apply and identify conditions application as well as funding sources. He noted that the draft resolution was included in the material provided to City Council for consideration at a later date in a regular session.

City Manager Mekjian confirmed that the city has started discussions with other communities on a regional approach and have had positive feedback.

Concern was expressed that the DNR and legislators would place the responsibility to develop a plan and fund that plan on the city and it was suggested that the city hold public meetings with wildlife experts to educate the public and Council about the different techniques and options for addressing the deer population.

Mr. Valentine agreed that is a challenge and that there is a need for new options for Oakland County.

Mayor Barnett summarized that the first step would be for Council to consider and adopt the proposed resolution at their August 9, 2021, meeting and then the city would need to create a timeline for discussions on the issue.

Council reiterated the desire for a study session with DNR involvement to educate the Council and public on options and requested data on crashes in north Oakland County by community.

ADJOURNMENT

The study session meeting adjourned at 7:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Pamela B. Smith, City Clerk