

MINUTES
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS
CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL BUDGET STUDY SESSION MEETING
CITY HALL – COMMUNITY ROOM
MAY 16, 2022 – 6:00PM

The special budget study session meeting of the Farmington Hills City Council was called to order by Mayor Barnett at 6:12pm.

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

Council Members Absent: None

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

Gary Mekjian, City Manager, commented that the unique items in this budget include requests for additional staffing, which will be discussed as those departments present and a different approach the city is taking to pay off capital projects specifically storm drainage projects.

Tom Skrobola, Finance Director, commented that City Council was provided a presentation prior to the meeting that will also be presented at the public hearing when the budget is presented at the public hearing meeting. He discussed how the city planned to optimize capital investments to catch up with unmet capital needs over the next 5 years, using the optimal mixture of cash and debt financing to support capital projects and prioritize storm sewer/drain projects

City manager Mekjian recognized that this work would be integrated with major road construction and culverts.

Director Skrobola stated the strategies outlined would tripe the normal investment in drains, eliminate unmet capital/infrastructure needs, maintain the city's commitment to facilities and other capital improvements without increasing the General Fund's support of Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) projects.

Discussion was held on bonding projects and the possibility of creating a storm utility fund to be used for bond payments or repairs. Director Skrobola responded that the city would have to review that option and how those monies could be utilized. Attorney Joppich added that currently by law you cannot use utility fees to pay off bond debt but legislation is being proposed to address this issue.

In response to Council's inquiry about bonding more projects affecting the city's bond rating, Director Skrobola stated that the city has very low debt and its bond rating would not be affected.

There was a request to increase funding for the Economic Development Corporation. Director Skrobola stated that he would look into the reasoning as to why this funding was capped at \$50,000 and the possibility of increasing that amount.

Director Skrobola next reviewed the Special Services facilities study that would include a strategic plan to optimize facilities investments and maintenance without adding additional financial burden to the city. The strategic plan will address unmet needs and priority needs as identified by the Special Services department. He noted that the city wide capital expenditures were mentioned and would be addressed further during departmental reviews.

City Council reviewed the following budgets with the City Attorney and respective Department Directors and the following highlights, significant changes in budgets, requests, or amendments were noted:

City Attorney

Costs have increased for the firm but the requested budget is consistent with no significant changes or requests being made.

Planning & Community Development/CDBG Fund

- The department is working on filling vacancies, including that of the Director position
- There was a request from council to be more proactive on enforcement rather than enforcing based on complaints
- It was noted that contractual fees had increased as the City's Planning Consultant was hired to assist the department in the absence of a Director and for as-needed building services. Some of these costs would be recoupled through permit fees
- Council expressed concern with the turn-around time for permits and this was noted as due to the lack of staffing and that the new Building Official has a goal of a 10-day turn-around time for permits going forward
- Council suggested a line graph for the history of building permits at market value rather than just raw numbers (Page 138 of budget document)
- Council liked the performance indicator for inspections performed within 24 hours and felt that was good data to track but suggested that there is a good metric used to accurately track that percentage (Page 137 of budget document)

Special Services/Parks Millage Fund/Nutrition Grand Fund/Community Center Renovations Fund/Related Capital/Public Information

- The department has sold 6,500 annual passes and 22,000 daily passes over the past year for the HAWK; staff is considering increasing daily pass rates to encourage annual passes
- The Youth Theater has been successful and has brought in approximately \$250,000 in revenue
- It was suggested that programming for the seniors is kept as a priority for the city in light of so much funding going into the HAWK for other programming
- Discussion was held on credit card fees and exploring options to reduce those fees

- There was an increase in telephone services due to additional full-time staff hired for the HAWK as well as additional cell phones for certain staff members
- The scholarship funding was sufficient but Director Schnackel said they could always provide more funding and they really work with other organizations to target those in need
- Playground equipment improvements and adaptive playground equipment was discussed with the facilities consultants as requested by Council
- Council commented on the need to clean some city road signage, particularly the signs at 14 Mile and Drake and 12 Mile and Inkster. Special Services is only in charge of park signage but this would be passed on to the correct department

City Council took a 10 minute break at 7:52pm.

Fire/Public Safety Millage Fund/Related Capital

- 2021/22 was the busiest year in the history of the department. Runs increased by 20% since 2018
- Equipment needs for the past budget and proposed budget were discussed
- Retention of Paid on Call (POC) firefighters has been better in the last 18 months than the last 6 years as the program was revised to have POC sign up for shifts which has been well received
- Increase in runs attributed to aging population and response to assisted living centers
- Four of the five stations are 24 hour stations and Station #3 closes at midnight as it received the least amount of runs and the city is best responded to by the other three surrounding stations and headquarters.
- An additional two full-time firefighters were included in the proposed 2022/23 budget
- Discussion was held on the need for more full-time firefighters due to the run volume and to reduce over time. Chief Unruh stated that he has asked for six additional full-time staff to phase in over the next couple of years. City Manager Mekjian added that the administration would make sure staff is not burned out and additional staffing would be included in future years as needed
- Council requested a break down of runs per station

Police/Public Safety Millage Fund/Federal Forfeiture Fund/State Forfeiture Fund/Related Capital

- A member of Council expressed concern with the dashboard data for the percentage of African Americans arrests and citations versus the percentage the city's African American population. It was noted that this data includes non-residents.
- City Manager Mekjian suggested a study session with Council to explain the dashboard data
- 2021 was the busiest year in the department's history with a 20% increase in calls for service and expansion of the community policing program
- Two additional police officers and one lieutenant are included in the proposed budget as well as one department technician due to the increased demands on the records department with Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests

- It was confirmed that the Chief originally requested eight additional police officers and one lieutenant due to increased calls for services and the difficulty in recruiting and retaining officers and other staffing issues such as FMLA and military leave.
- Discussion was held on staffing and need for more officers and Council suggested amending the proposed FY 2022/23 budget to include the hiring of four police officers rather than two. It was discussed that if this proves to be a financial burden going forward, the city will be losing other Police staff due to attrition and the Council could chose to not back-fill additional officer position at that time

Public Comment

There were no public comments.

Adjournment

The special budget study session adjourned at 9:40pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Pamela B. Smith, City Clerk