

MINUTES  
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS  
CITY COUNCIL MEETING  
CITY HALL – COUNCIL CHAMBER  
JULY 8, 2024 – 7:30 PM

The regular session meeting of the Farmington Hills City Council was called to order by Mayor Rich at 7:30PM.

Council Members Present: Aldred, Boleware, Bridges, Bruce, Dwyer, Knol and Rich

Council Members Absent: None

Others Present: City Manager Mekjian; City Clerk Lindahl; Assistant City Manager Mondora; Directors Harvey, Kettler-Schmult, Rushlow and Schnackel, Police Chief King, and City Attorney Joppich

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Representatives of DTE led the pledge of allegiance.

**APPROVAL OF REGULAR SESSION MEETING AGENDA**

MOTION by Knol, support by Bruce, to approve the agenda with the addition of item 5a. Consideration of City Attorney recommendations regarding the case of *Glenn vs. City of Farmington Hills*.

MOTION CARRIED 7-0.

**PROCLAMATION RECOGNIZING JULY 2024 AS NATIONAL PARKS AND RECREATION MONTH**

The following proclamation was read by Council Member Aldred and accepted by Director of Special Services Ellen Schnackel:

**PROCLAMATION**  
National Parks and Recreation Month  
July 2024

**WHEREAS,** Parks and Recreation programs are an integral part of communities throughout our state and country, including in Farmington Hills; and,

**WHEREAS,** the City of Farmington Hills Special Services Department is vitally important to establishing and maintaining our quality of life, ensuring the health of our citizens, and contributing to the economic and environmental well-being of the entire community and region; and,

**WHEREAS,** parks and recreation programs are shown to increase a community’s property values, expand the local tax base, increase tourism, attract and retain businesses, and reduce crime; and,

**WHEREAS,** the programs that are created and managed by the City’s Special Services Department that take place at The Hawk and numerous other facilities and

parks throughout the City positively impact the physical, mental, and emotional health of everyone who participates, helping to build an active community; and,

**WHEREAS,** the City's parks and natural recreation areas enhance the ecological beauty of our community and provide a place for children and adults to connect with nature and enjoy the outdoors.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that I, Theresa Rich, Mayor of the City of Farmington Hills, on behalf of the City Council, do hereby proclaim July 2024 as National Parks and Recreation Month and encourage all citizens to pursue enjoyment of the outdoors through taking part in one of the Special Services Department's many wonderful programs including cultural arts, golf, archery, aquatics, ice skating, fishing, senior activities, Nature Center classes, athletics, special events and more.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS/PRESENTATIONS FROM CITY BOARDS, COMMISSIONS AND PUBLIC OFFICIALS**

Utilizing a PowerPoint presentation, Brian Calka, Vice President – Distribution Operations, DTE Electric, presented an overview of DTE's services and investments in Farmington Hills, specifically addressing DTE's reliability performance in recent years, and what DTE's path forward looks like from an investment strategy standpoint.

Mr. Calka highlighted the following:

- Serving 50,000 Farmington Hills residential and business customers via 10 substations, DTE has invested around \$50 million in Farmington Hills in the past five years, split 50/50 between tree trimming and infrastructure (overhead and underground) improvements. DTE plans to invest an additional \$50 million over the next five years.
- There are a series of metrics that are consistently used across the country, measuring around frequency of outages. Due to the investments being made, the number of outages experienced in Farmington Hills is coming down to the level DTE expects it to be.
  - For instance, in 2024 the number of outages experienced by individual customers is projected to be .8, assuming the second half of the year mirrors what has been experienced so far.
  - Regarding duration of outage events, 80% of the duration total (659 minutes) so far this year is related to a severe storm that occurred on June 19. In 2023 the average customer had about 1,100 minutes without power, which means they had power 99% of the time.
- Over the next 5 years DTE plans to invest ~\$9B area wide. The \$50M investment planned for Farmington Hills will focus on four pillars:
  1. Technology and automation. The system should be fully automated in 5 years. Remote monitoring will be deployed to isolate damage and remotely restore customers. Farmington Hills will have about 10% of its grid automated by the end of 2024.
  2. Upgrade existing infrastructure. Ramp up maintenance to a 10-year pole cycle and a 5-year pole top cycle. Harden the system to reduce outages and increase storm resiliency, to help withstand the impacts of climate change.
  3. Rebuild the Grid. Accelerate conversion of 4.8kV circuits to higher grid voltage. This may be a 10-year investment effort.
  4. Tree trimming. Complete tree trim surge and remain on cycle. Trees cause ~50% of the minutes that residents are out of power.

Mayor Rich thanked Mr. Calka for his presentation and noted that DTE also presented during City Council Study Session this evening.

Council questions and comments:

- Council receives many comments from the community regarding power outages. More information should be clearly communicated regarding regular tracking as to how DTE is doing in terms of providing reliability in the City.
- The reliability of electric power is critical for residents and businesses, including the senior citizen population, some of whom depend on power to run life-support machines. Council will continue to monitor the outage situation to ensure that reliability in the City continues to improve. The storm on June 17 resulted in some residents being without power on the east side of the City for 72 hours.

Mr. Calka explained that during the downburst storm that hit the area on June 19, winds were in excess of 60-65mph. The damage to the eastern part of the City and surrounding area was severe. At the time DTE called in 200 crews from outside the State to augment the 2,000+ resources DTE has available on a daily basis; the 200 extra crews turned out to be insufficient, and DTE did miss its mark in terms of having 100% of the customers restored within 48 hours. DTE is fine-tuning its processes further, so that when the next similar weather event occurs, conversations like this one will not be necessary.

- Council continued to emphasize the number of resident complaints about outages that occur during storm events, and outside of storm events. Many residents believe they have to have a generator – a very expensive item – in order to be assured they will have reliable electricity. Additionally, as electric vehicle charging stations and other infrastructure needs increase, how will DTE keep up with the growing need?

Mr. Calka said that DTE's goal was to reduce the frequency of outages by 30% over the next 5 years and reduce the number of minutes customers are out of power by 50%.

Regarding electric vehicles, DTE is constantly monitoring the grid, and DTE knows exactly where electric vehicles are being deployed across the entire service territory. DTE uses that information to monitor loading on transformers in a local area, and to proactively replace equipment to handle increased grid load.

- Council asked how rates in Michigan compared with rates in nearby states, such as Ohio, Indiana, and Wisconsin.

Mr. Calka said that DTE looked at average bills, not rates. Michigan's bills are lower than the industry median. DTE closely monitors the impact of infrastructure investment on affordability. The goal is for rates not to increase at a rate higher than the rate of inflation, and they have met this goal for at least the past 10 years.

- Council believed some residents experienced many more outages than the 1.6 outages per year shown for 2023 on the PowerPoint.
- Council asked Mr. Calka to address DTE's new web-based tool for understanding reliability.

Mr. Calka explained that DTE had recently released an online map tool where a resident can put in their zip code, and the online map can provide the user with recent reliability performance information: <https://www.dteenergy.com/us/en/residential/service-request/system-improvements/system-improvements/power-improvements-map.html>

Regarding people who are reliant on durable medical equipment, Mr. Calka said that most of the time during an outage, power was restored within 2-2.5 hours. For more severe outages, DTE has identification in its systems of vulnerable customers. During the June 19 storm, outreach calls were made to 3,800 vulnerable customers throughout the area. One of the questions asked was whether the customer needed a generator; emergency generators can be deployed on a one-time basis for those who have critical medical equipment in their home but no power. During the June 19 event, on day 3 DTE was offering hotel rooms at DTE's expense. People who think they should be on the list of vulnerable customers should call the regular DTE number to talk with a customer service agent.

Public comment:

Pam Gerald, Farmington Hills, addressed the need for reliable infrastructure, and also asked about DTE's commitment to clean water and air. She asked if remote monitoring meant using drones. How is DTE addressing the extra electricity being used for AI development?

In response, Mr. Calka outlined DTE's commitment to clean energy, with the goal of phasing out coal operations by 2032, replacing coal with wind, solar, and battery power, augmented by nuclear technology.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

Mayor Rich acknowledged the over 2,000 emails received today concerning a protest that may be planned in part of the City later in the week. The City is concerned with protecting freedom of speech and the safety of all residents.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

As a request had been received from a member of the public to speak about consent agenda items #6 and #7, per advice of the City Attorney, at the discretion of Council these items could be moved to the regular agenda to allow public comment before the vote on these items.

MOTION by Knol, support by Bruce, to move consent agenda items #6 and #7 to New Business.

MOTION CARRIED 5-2 (Aldred and Dwyer opposed).

MOTION by Bruce, support by Aldred, to approve consent agenda items #8 through #10 as read.

Roll Call Vote:

Yeas: ALDRED, BOLEWARE, BRIDGES, BRUCE, DWYER, KNOL AND RICH  
Nays: NONE  
Absent: NONE  
Abstentions: NONE

MOTION CARRIED 7-0.

**CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

There were no items removed for discussion.

**COUNCIL MEMBERS' COMMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Mayor Rich addressed the three motorcycle fatalities in the City during the current motorcycling season, and urged heightened awareness from drivers toward motorcyclists, bicyclists, and pedestrians.

**CITY MANAGER UPDATE**

City Manager Mekjian provided the following update:

- The City received a very nice thank you letter from the City of Livonia regarding Farmington Hills' assistance during the tornado in Livonia last month.
- City staff and SiFi representatives met in the field with the residents who spoke regarding a SiFi hut on Farmington Road at the last Council meeting.
- 11 Mile Road should re-open before Labor Day.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**CONSIDERATION OF APPROVAL OF THE ENACTMENT OF ORDINANCE C-7-2024 TO AMEND THE CITY CODE OF THE CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS, CHAPTER 34, ZONING CHAPTER TO AMEND THE ZONING MAP AND DISTRICT BOUNDARIES ESTABLISHED UNDER SECTION 34.3.2 TO REZONE AND RECLASSIFY THE PROPERTY LOCATED AT PARCEL ID 22-23-26-480-046, VACANT PROPERTY LOCATED AT THE NORTHWEST INTERSECTION OF MIDDLEBELT ROAD AND ASTOR AVENUE FROM RA-4, ONE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT, AND P-1, VEHICULAR PARKING DISTRICT, TO RA-4, ONE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT; REZONING REQUEST 3-3-2024., AND APPROVAL OF SUMMARY FOR PUBLICATION.**

Director of Planning and Community Development Kettler-Schmult explained that this draft zoning map amendment is before Council for its second reading and consideration of enactment.

MOTION by Aldred, support by Bridges, that the City Council of Farmington Hills hereby approves the ENACTMENT of Ordinance C-7-2024 to amend the City Code of the City of Farmington Hills, Chapter 34, Zoning Chapter to amend the Zoning Map and district boundaries established under Section 34.3.2 to rezone and reclassify the property located at Parcel ID 22-23-26-480-046, vacant property located at the northwest intersection of Middlebelt Road and Astor Avenue from RA-4, One Family Residential District, and P-1, Vehicular Parking District, to RA-4, One Family Residential District; Rezoning Request 3-3-2024., and approval of summary for publication.

Roll Call Vote:

Yeas: ALDRED, BOLEWARE, BRIDGES, BRUCE, DWYER, KNOL AND RICH  
Nays: NONE  
Absent: NONE  
Abstentions: NONE

MOTION CARRIED 7-0.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**CONSIDERATION OF APPROVAL OF AWARD OF PAYMENT FOR DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION CONSULTING TO LIFE'S JOURNEY IN THE APPROXIMATE AMOUNT OF \$200,000. CMR 6-24-67**

Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI) & Employee Development Harvey provided the following information:

- **Life's Journey's Original Proposal and Contract.** The proposal dated July 27, 2021 outlined fees for surveys, focus groups, data collection, consulting and employee training totaling \$264,400. The City had initially approved \$65,000 annually for 3 years. Life's Journey's contract was signed on August 27, 2021.
- **Implementation and Costs.** During 2021-2023, Life's Journey worked with City employees to obtain feedback on work culture and personal experiences through focus groups and surveys. To continue this work, in February 2023 a DEI director was hired. By October 2023, the data was aggregated and utilized to create customized training for City employees and in the development of the City's DEI strategic plan. The strategic plan is ready for implementation citywide during Q1 of fiscal year 2024-2025.

To begin the implementation process, in May 2024 City staff participated in "Respect in the Workplace" training. This training was customized for Farmington Hills employees, to address focus group and survey results on topics such as: how staff are treated, relationships between staff and leadership, and how respect may look different between various culture and ethnic groups and generations.

The City has expended \$196,000 in the last three fiscal years. This amount encompasses costs related to the original scope of work as well as previously approved out-of-scope work during 2021 and 2022.

- **Additional Funding Request.** Tonight's request is for approximately \$200,000 to complete the training outlined in Phase 3 of the proposal. The request includes:
  - \$109,600 to pay for previously completed training.
  - \$50,000 for continuing implementation of the DEI strategic plan for "Impacts of DEI" training. This training will provide all staff with specifics on how the strategic plan was developed, how the initiatives outlined in the strategic plan impacts the City's DEI efforts, and what those impacts will mean for employees daily.
  - \$40,000 for creation of a procedural justice webinar for the Police and Fire Department.

It is critical that all staff understand how they are affected by DEI, and that DEI efforts have a broad spectrum of focus including but not limited to gender, employee wellness, succession planning, cultural awareness, employee recruitment, hiring, retention, race, and work-life balance. There is also a strong focus on ensuring that City staff are representative of Farmington Hills' diverse community. This goal is accomplished through hiring efforts, cultural norm awareness, multi-language communication modalities, and knowledge of impactful resources for families.

Director Harvey recommended that City Council authorize the City Manager to approve an after-the-fact purchase order with Life's Journey in the approximate amount of \$200,000, for completion of the DEI and employee development training as outlined in Phase 3 of the attached proposal.

Council Discussion and Motion:

Citing a need for more information relative to the payment requested, after discussion and amendment Council Member Dwyer offered the following motion:

MOTION by Dwyer, support by Boleware, that the City Council of Farmington Hills hereby postpones the consideration to approve the award of payment for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion consulting to Life's Journey in the approximate amount of \$200,000 until the August 12, 2024 study session.

MOTION CARRIED 7-0.

**CONSIDERATION OF CITY ATTORNEY RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THE CASE OF *GLENN VS. CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS*.**

MOTION by Knol, support by Bridges, that the City Council of Farmington Hills hereby authorizes the City Attorney and City Manager to proceed with the authority to negotiate a settlement of the case of *Glenn v Farmington Hills* in the manner recommended and discussed in closed session.

MOTION CARRIED 7-0.

**RECOMMENDED APPROVAL OF AWARD OF CONTRACT FOR THE POLICE DEPARTMENT BOILER UPGRADE PROJECT TO GOYETTE MECHANICAL, CO., IN THE AMOUNT OF \$250,077. CMR 6-24-68**

**RECOMMENDED APPROVAL OF AWARD OF CONTRACT FOR THE POLICE DEPARTMENT AUTOMATIC TRANSFER SWITCH REPLACEMENT PROJECT TO AXIS ELECTRIC LLC., IN THE AMOUNT OF \$520,000. CMR 6-24-69**

As previously explained, the above two items had been pulled from the Consent Agenda in order to receive public comment.

Brian Richard, Farmington Hills resident, said he was an electrician by trade, and supported the action to approve these two contracts. As a former labor representative Mr. Richard also thanked the City for selecting union workers to do this work. He asked if the City had taken into consideration the contractors' records in terms of paying their employees and keeping up with benefits as agreed to under their collective bargaining agreements.

In response, City Attorney Joppich said that the City's contracts typically require compliance with statutes and ordinances. The contracts do not typically call for compliance with private companies' contracts and collective bargaining agreements, which are private matters between workers and their employer. If it did come to light that a contractor is in violation of laws, this could be an issue under the contracts that the City enters into.

MOTION by Bridges, support by Boleware, that the City Council of Farmington Hills hereby approves the Police Department Boiler Upgrade Project be awarded to Goyette Mechanical, Co., in the amount of \$250,077.

MOTION CARRIED 7-0.

MOTION by Knol, support by Bruce, that the City Council of Farmington Hills hereby approves the Police Department Automatic Transfer Switch Replacement Project be awarded to Axis Electric LLC., in the amount of \$520,000.

MOTION CARRIED 7-0.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

**RECOMMENDED APPROVAL OF A SPECIAL EVENT PERMIT FOR THE ISKCON COLOR FEST TO BE HELD ON SATURDAY, JULY 27, 2024.**

MOTION by Bruce, support by Aldred, that the City Council of Farmington Hills hereby approves a Special Event Permit for the Iskcon Temple Color Festival to be held on Saturday, July 27, 2024, from 4:00pm-9:00pm at the Iskcon Temple located at 36600 Grand River Avenue, subject to the Police Department's pending review and conditions, and the following terms and conditions:

- The applicant will get the appropriate building permits and required approvals
- There shall be no parking within 20' of any tent and the west drive shall remain clear from Grand River to Lochdale for emergency vehicles.
- Egress from the facility shall not be restricted.
- Fire lanes shall not be blocked or restricted.
  - a. Temporary "NO PARKING FIRE LANE" signs shall be put up along Lochdale and Independence Office Drive on 7/27/24.
- Cooking/open flame devices shall not be used under tents.
- Proponent must contact Fire Prevention to schedule a site inspection prior to beginning the event.
- Event shall comply with minimum Fire Prevention Code requirements.
- The applicant is expecting 700 people to attend the event which will be open to the general public.
- Iskcon Temple has received permission from Middela LLC to use their two parking lots for visitors.

Roll Call Vote:

Yeas: ALDRED, BOLEWARE, BRIDGES, BRUCE, DWYER, KNOL AND RICH

Nays: NONE

Absent: NONE

Abstentions: NONE

MOTION CARRIED 7-0.

**RECOMMENDED APPROVAL OF CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION MEETING MINUTES OF JUNE 24, 2024.**

MOTION by Bruce, support by Aldred, that the City Council of Farmington Hills hereby approves the study session meeting minutes of June 24, 2024.

Roll Call Vote:

Yeas: ALDRED, BOLEWARE, BRIDGES, BRUCE, DWYER, KNOL AND RICH

Nays: NONE

Absent: NONE



Abstentions: NONE

MOTION CARRIED 7-0.

**RECOMMENDED APPROVAL OF CITY COUNCIL REGULAR SESSION MEETING MINUTES OF JUNE 24, 2024.**

MOTION by Bruce, support by Aldred, that the City Council of Farmington Hills hereby approves the regular session meeting minutes of June 24, 2024.

Roll Call Vote:

Yeas: ALDRED, BOLEWARE, BRIDGES, BRUCE, DWYER, KNOL AND RICH

Nays: NONE

Absent: NONE

Abstentions: NONE

MOTION CARRIED 7-0.

**ADDITIONS TO AGENDA**

There were no additions to the agenda.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Mayor Rich reviewed the process and rules relative to public comment.

Steven Ludwig, Running Stream, voiced concern about the need for street signs in his neighborhood.

Henrietta Forshee, Farmington Hills resident, spoke in support of the City's Mission Statement, and thanked Council for remaining steadfast in their focus on the local community and its needs.

Mark Forshee, Farmington Hills resident, said that he as well as other residents supported City Council's focus on the local community, and not on involving itself in foreign affairs.

Pamela Gerard, Farmington Hills resident, thanked Council for remaining firm in following established rules and policies.

Angie Smith, Farmington Hills resident, voiced concern about the cost to taxpayers to have Fire and Police Department staff attend council meetings because of a "mistake that we did not do."

**CITY ATTORNEY REPORT**

The City Attorney report was received by Council.

**ADJOURNMENT**

MOTION by Bruce, support by Knol, to adjourn the meeting.

MOTION CARRIED 7-0.

The regular session of City Council meeting adjourned at 8:42PM.

**APPROVED 8/12/2024**

Respectfully submitted,

Carly Lindahl, City Clerk