

MINUTES
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS
CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION MEETING
COMMUNITY ROOM
FEBRUARY 14, 2022 – 6:00PM

The study session meeting of the Farmington Hills City Council was called to order by Mayor Barnett at 6:00pm.

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 Mondora, Monico and Skrobola, Police Chief King, Fire Chief Unruh and City Attorney Joppich

WEBSITE DEMONSTRATION

Kelly Monico, Director of Central Services, provided an overview for City Council of the website refresh including how to search and improvements made. She stated that the new format would be easier to use with mobile devices.

Mayor Barnett suggested that once the tax payment deadline had passed that the link for that on the homepage of the website then include information for property tax assistance for residents that may have been unable to pay their taxes. She wanted this link to include services and information that could help residents in those situations.

SMART CITY INITIATIVES

Director Monico stated that smart city initiatives was discussed at the City Council goals session and she reviewed where the city is today and how it has laid the ground work for becoming a smart city, which included:

- Employing Plante and Moran
- Staff attendance at a Smart Cities conference
- Speaking with other communities about their Smart City initiatives
- Discussing best practices
- Met with SiFi who is installing city-wide broadband and speaking with their partners to learn more about how this can be used for Smart City initiatives
- Learning about funding sources
- Holding a visioning session with staff

From the visioning session with staff, the initial focus suggested was public health, safety and welfare and several initial projects suggested included:

- Smart traffic signals
- Digitized signage throughout the city
- Road sensors
- Event sensors
- Public safety drones

Director Monico noted that the next steps would be to engage stakeholders, develop and adopt a data management policy to protect the data received, research funding sources, budget for projects on an annual basis and commit to smart cities technology going forward.

Questions and suggestions of City Council included:

- Timeline for SiFi to complete the broadband installation
- Suggested contracting out someone to research and write grants on behalf of the city
- Including privacy provisions when developing a data management policy
- Questioned if there was a Smart Cities qualification process
- Traffic light sensors was a number one priority of one council member
- Suggested a resolution of intent to be a Smart City

Karen Mondora, Director of Public Services, responded that SiFi had 3 years to complete their task from the time they signed their agreement with the city.

Director Monico responded that Plante and Moran has grant writers on staff that could be used early on to assist the city if needed with that source of funding. She added that there is no official qualification for becoming a Smart City and that it is a term used; however, there have been awards given to the “Most Smart City”.

It was noted that a resolution of intent was not necessary but pointed out that the Innovation, Energy and Environmental Sustainability Committee was established for this purpose.

Director Monico she stated that while a resolution of intent may not be necessary, she agreed it was a good idea to communicate to the residents what the city is doing to progress in this manner.

City Manager Mekjian explained that the city would like to start a Flock System as a pilot program for a first project.

Police Chief King explained that a Flock System would allow for cameras to be installed throughout areas of the city that could recognize make and models and/or license plates of vehicles that might be critical in cases where vehicles were used in crimes. He stated that the system does not identify persons or include facial recognition and that it would only potentially identify vehicles or the license plate of a vehicle. Chief King explained how the software works and how data is stored. He added that the software can also be used for traffic counts. During the pilot program, there would be no cost to the city; but if the city determined to maintain the system after the pilot program it would cost \$2500 per camera, per year to lease.

Council inquired how the department would safeguard use of the system for predatory policing and how the software alerts the police department of a vehicle in question.

Chief King stated that this system would only trigger on what he permits in the system and as with all police department programs, there would be strict oversight.

The pilot program would include 40 cameras for a 60-day period. He confirmed in response to Council that there would be an evaluation of the equipment to test for accuracy based on the criteria included in the program.

City Council consensus was for staff to pursue the Flock System pilot program.

JUNETEENTH AS A CITY HOLIDAY

City Manager Mekjian stated that this topic was also discussed at the goals session and questions that staff had was whether Council wanted a holiday with city hall closed or a floating holiday where the city is open but staff could take another day off of their choice. Staff was seeking direction as this would have to be negotiated with the bargaining units and the majority of them were opening up for negotiations very soon. From the goals session, City Council had asked for staff to review the following:

- What other communities are doing
- Budgetary impact
- The possibility of swapping out one holiday for another

City Manager Mekjian reviewed what other local communities and counties were doing and most had not discussed or were doing anything at this time as their bargaining units had already settled contracts. He mentioned that Southfield was closing for the holiday and Genesee County had ratified 3 of its contracts that replaced Presidents Day holiday with the Juneteenth holiday.

Tom Skrobola, Finance Director, explained that as far as a budgetary impact, closing city hall on that day would cost approximately \$60,000 and having a floating holiday would cost approximately \$90,000 due to the need to backfill some positions at time and a half.

Discussion was held and the consensus of Council was that they would prefer to eliminate the floating holiday for Columbus Day and provide the Juneteenth holiday as a day off with city hall closed.

ADJOURNMENT

The study session meeting adjourned at 7:22pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Pamela B. Smith, City Clerk