

MINUTES
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS
FARMINGTON HILLS CITY COUNCIL
CITY HALL - COMMUNITY ROOM
OCTOBER 9, 2023 – 6:00PM

The study session meeting of the Farmington Hills City Council was called to order by City Clerk Smith at 6:03pm

Council Members Present: Boleware, Bridges, Bruce (arrived at 6:35pm), Knol, Massey and Newlin

Council Members Absent: Barnett

Others Present: City Manager Mekjian, City Clerk Smith, Directors Brown and Kettler-Schmult and City Attorney Joppich

City Manager Mekjian stated that Mayor Barnett is ill and would not be in attendance at tonight's meetings and Mayor Pro-Tem Bruce would be arriving late.

City Clerk Smith explained that in the absence of the Mayor and Mayor Pro-Tem, the councilmembers in attendance must designate a member to serve as the presiding officer for tonight's study session and regular session meetings until Mayor Pro-Tem Bruce arrives.

City Attorney Joppich confirmed that this was a procedural matter, and a motion would be appropriate at this time.

MOTION by Bridges, support by Newlin, that the City Council of Farmington Hills hereby selects Councilmember Massey to serve as the presiding officer in the absence of the Mayor and Mayor Pro-Tem until such time that Mayor Pro-Tem Bruce arrives.

MOTION CARRIED 5-0.

CITY CLERK EMPLOYMENT AGREEMENT

City Clerk Smith stated that this topic was brought up by members of Council during past reviews and/or succession planning discussions for the City Clerk's Office but was never formally discussed. This matter was scheduled for discussion this evening to determine if there is a consensus of Council to further review such an agreement for the City Clerk position and have staff bring back more information at a future meeting. She added that staff has been working with the City Attorney's Office to draft a proposed employment agreement based on other clerk agreements the city has researched.

It was mentioned by Council that this topic came about as the City Council is responsible for hiring three employees, including the City Clerk yet the Clerk was the only employee of those three without an employment agreement and for consistency it seemed this may be appropriate.

Council inquired about other City Clerks and whether or not they have contracts. Attorney Joppich stated that the City Clerk position varies throughout the state and many clerks are elected and not appointed; but they did find two area clerks with employment agreements.

There was a general consensus of City Council to bring back more information and a draft employment agreement to a future study session for discussion purposes. It was suggested that the employment agreement is broader and not too specific on details of the position as the position is already outlined in the City Charter.

COMMERCIAL CODE ENFORCEMENT

Charmaine Kettler-Schmult, Director of Planning and Community Development, stated that this topic was brought up by City Council at their goals session at which time they requested a future study session and the reason for the meeting tonight. She stated that Dennis Randt, Zoning Supervisor, would be presenting on code enforcement for the department.

Dennis Randt, Zoning Supervisor, reviewed a sampling of code enforcement efforts as outlined to City Council. He stated that some issues take more time to resolve as they are required to go through the court system. He discussed ways that the department receives complaints that include through resident phone calls, internal code enforcement efforts, emails or online complaints. He explained that the department attempts to resolve complaints informally and gain compliance through conversations but if that does not work and there is continued non-compliance it may have to go through the court.

Council expressed concern over commercial development issues including potholes in parking lots and on limited access drives. It was requested that the department review the approach near Einstein Bagels at 12 Mile and Orchard Lake Roads and the plaza with Gordon Foods at 13 Mile and Orchard Lake Roads.

Council inquired if the approach to code enforcement by the city was proactive or reactive. Mr. Randt stated that the city takes a proactive approach but often especially with the larger strip developments, staff needs to meet with multiple tenants. He addressed some previous areas of concern brought up by Council and how those issues were currently being addressed.

Discussion was held on the department staffing and if it was sufficient to handle the workload. City Manager Mekjian stated that this would depend on the level of enforcement Council expects and that could be part of a discussion for a future goals session and during budget sessions.

(Mayor Pro-Tem Bruce arrived at 6:35pm)

Council also requested that the Planning Commission take into consideration landscape plans and when approving those make sure that they are something that can be easily maintained. Council also inquired about signage and lighting and what businesses are provided if they have questions.

Director Kettler-Schmult stated that the department can make recommendations but that the landscaping is at the discretion of the property owner.

Erik Perdonik, City Planner, stated that the sign/light ordinance is a bit technical and he feels the department could put together a summary that would be easier for business owners to understand; but anyone with questions can contact their office for explanation.

In response to forcing compliance, Director Kettler-Schmult stated that the department has not yet utilized the option for formal hearings but has that ability particularly for reoccurring issues.

Several residential properties that were in disrepair were also brought to the department's attention and some of which they were already aware and actively enforcing upon. It was questioned whether CDBG

funding could be used to help with repairs. Staff responded that CDBG funding could only be used for home repairs but also required full cooperation of the property owner.

Attorney Joppich stated that city staff has been good about taking the temperature of the situation and attempting to handle issues without going to court when they can; but that obviously depends on the matter of degree and taking into consideration public health, safety and welfare.

COMMERCIAL VEHICLE PARKING

Erik Perdonik, City Planner, stated that this issue was also brought up in the Council goals session and specifically mentioned when vehicles were being used as additional signage for a business. He noted that the new sign ordinance approved in 2017 addresses vehicle signage and allowing that under certain conditions so the department has tools to address each instance on a case-by-case basis.

Council indicated that one concern of an area real estate broker was that businesses were not allowed to have vans that they used for delivery and catering with their business name on it parked on site overnight.

City Planner Perdonik clarified that the ordinance does not prohibit commercial vehicles with signage being used for legitimate business purposes such as deliveries and catering to be parked overnight. The ordinance states that where possible these vehicles shall be parked in specific areas so not be parked in the front abutting the right-of-way area permanently and used as additional signage.

The consensus of Council was to further clarify the language of the ordinance as this appears to have been misunderstood and could be a deterrent for businesses who want to lease property.

ADJOURNMENT

The study session meeting adjourned at 7:18pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Pamela B. Smith, City Clerk