

MINUTES
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS
FARMINGTON HILLS CITY COUNCIL
CITY HALL - COMMUNITY ROOM
JUNE 27, 2022 – 6:00PM

The study session meeting of the Farmington Hills City Council was called to order by Mayor Barnett at 6:01pm.

Council Members Present: Barnett, Boleware, Bridges, Bruce, Knol Massey and Newlin (arrived at 6:05pm)

Council Members Absent: None

Others Present: City Manager Mekjian, City Clerk Smith, Assistant City Manager Valentine, and City Attorney Joppich

PRESENTATION ON INVESTING IN MICHIGAN'S BROADBAND FUTURE

Gary Mekjian, City Manager, explained that the city has had some issues with Spectrum related to internet outages and reliability and staff asked representatives to come in to discuss those with Council.

Karen Coronado, Manager of State Government Affairs, discussed the company Charter Spectrum and its network outreach noting that it is the 2nd largest operator in the United States with over 32 million customers in 41 states.

Council expressed some concerns they were experiencing with speed and reliability and she mentioned that in some cases it could be an issue with the lines in that area and if addresses were provided, she could have those areas reviewed.

Ms. Coronado pointed out that \$153 million dollars was recently spent in Michigan. She stated that the standard download speed is proposed to increase from 200 to 300 and from 300 to 400 but the upload speed will remain at 10. She confirmed that the standard download speed is only guaranteed if the device is hard wired and stated that many things can affect speed such as the number of devices in the home.

She explained that the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) is adding 115,000 miles of network throughout the country. She commented on the substantial gap in people not using the service and noted that Charter Spectrum has several assistance programs for residents. She discussed other funding that is expected or could be used to expand broadband with Charter.

Council requested obtaining the amount of money spent in Farmington Hills. Ms. Coronado responded that the data they have is not broken down to each city.

Discussion was held on the cost of cable services and Ms. Coronado explained that those costs are related to the cost of programming, which is passed along to the customers.

In response to Council regarding competition, she explained that the Michigan Uniform Franchise Agreement is not exclusive and the city can have as many franchise agreements and cable companies in their city as they want. The issue is that there is a significant cost to build the infrastructure for a company if that is not already in place.

It was suggested that the assistance programs are promoted for residents and a link included on the city's website.

Council inquired about a battery-operated unit within subdivisions so when power goes out there is battery back-up in those locations. Ms. Coronado was not aware of any battery back-up unit and commented that all of their equipment runs off power and if there is an outage and the area is safe, they would bring out a generator. She noted that the battery back-up may be possible and that option could be reviewed, but she is not aware that the company is looking into utilizing these at this time.

Additional concerns were expressed with service and discussion was held on checking modem speeds and if that is done by Charter Spectrum on a proactive basis. Ms. Coronado stated that there is a program in place to send messages to residents but she would be happy to inquire about proactive testing of modems.

She confirmed with council that there was a full digital upgrade in Farmington Hills in 2019 but no upgrades since that time. The plan is to replace infrastructure as needed but there are no plans in place for specific infrastructure replacement.

Ms. Coronado stated that residents should not have to pay more for the speed increase and that change should be automatic but there may be some scenarios where older equipment would have to be upgraded to handle the higher speeds. There was a recent rate increase in cable so she does not expect that to increase in the near future.

Council suggested offering more packages that could reduce the cost for some users or even help to attract new users. Ms. Coronado responded that they have limits and restrictions on programming but the industry as a whole is talking ala cart services due to the use of streaming services.

Council requested that the company look into the roll out of 5G modems and providing technology updates to the city.

ADJOURNMENT:

The study session meeting adjourned at 7:16pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Pamela B. Smith, City Clerk