

MINUTES
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS
CITY COUNCIL GOALS STUDY SESSION MEETING
FIRE STATION #3 - JON GRANT COMMUNITY CENTER
JANUARY 6, 2024 – 9:00AM

The goals study session meeting of the Farmington Hills City Council was called to order by Mayor Rich at 9:01am

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

Council Members Absent: None

Others Present: City Manager Mekjian, Interim City Clerk Lindahl and Assistant City Manager Mondora

OPENING COMMENTS

Fire Chief Unruh explained that beginning today Fire Station #3 will be open 24/7 to provide both fire and EMS coverage to this corner of the city which will benefit the citizens. He noted that 2023 was the busiest year in the department's history with over 12,000 runs and thanked Council and the City Manager's office for their support in making this goal a reality.

REVIEW OF RULES OF THE CITY COUNCIL AND GUIDELINES OF CONDUCT

City Manager Mekjian encouraged councilmembers to review and abide by the Rules of the City Council and Guidelines of Conduct that was recently provided to them.

CONTINUING EFFORTS ON 2023 GOALS

City Manager Mekjian mentioned the city's accomplishments over the past year noting that they have addressed the vast majority of goals council had set in 2023 and reviewed the continuing efforts of the items held over from 2023.

Council discussed the continuing efforts of the 2023 goals and came to consensus the priority of the following 2023 goals to bring forward to 2024:

- Sports Facility Company report – Priority A
- Ordinance review in light of proposed Master Plan changes – Priority A
- Website updates – Priority A/B
- Deer – Priority B
- MCMR – Priority B
- Cannabis – Priority C
- Ongoing collaboration with other entities – Priority B/C

DISCUSSION ON 2024 GOALS:

COMMUNICATION

Council comments and suggestions:

- Incorporation of AI into city website to make gathering information, accessibility, and navigation easier
- Improve construction communications with residents and business
- Improve citizen surveys
- Strategic planning on mission, vision, goals and branding of the city along with new logo

City Manager Mekjian and Assistant City Manager Mondora noted the following:

- New message boards are going in at City Hall, Heritage Park, Founders and the Hawk as part of the Smart Cities initiative
- Challenge with construction projects is that other agencies do not necessarily provide advanced notification of the issues that affect these projects.

The consensus from council was for staff to move forward with the following:

- Incorporating AI into city website
- Make use of the electronic message boards for construction updates as well as press releases
- Offer incentives to participate in citizen surveys
- Develop a mission statement and new city logo

SPECIAL SERVICES

Council comments and suggestions:

- Provide council with regular updates on what is being done to address the budget deficit at The Hawk prior to budget meetings
- Special services evaluate/review programming as it relates to revenue and also community needs
- Review of the 3rd floor at the Hawk
- Walking/Biking path from The Hawk to Woodland Hills park
- Possibility of a “Pump it Up Park” bike park on The Hawk property
- More effort on sidewalk connectivity throughout the city
- Review of ordinance to allow dogs in city parks
- More public art throughout the city; part of the PUD requirement
- Collaborate with Oakland County Road Commission on landscaping of the 12 Mile Road median

City Manager Mekjian mentioned the following:

- Special Services programming revenues are up but operational costs are as well
- Many of council’s concerns regarding The Hawk will be addressed in the SFC report
- The mission, vision and scope of special services when the Parks and Recreation millage began in 1998 is far different that what it is today and the city is cautious about increasing millage rates
- Non-motorized master plan update is part of the Parks and Recreation master plan
- As part of the CIP, they are working on a landscape plan and landmark sign for the I-696 and Orchard Lake Road interchange
- They are developing a landscape plan for the Orchard Lake Road median boulevard with the center island prepped for public art
- Possible public art fund similar to tree fund

The consensus from council was for staff to move forward with the following:

- The deficit at the Hawk is a number one priority, council would like information as to what is being done to address the issue
- Provide council with important information sooner than the Friday before council meeting in which it will be discussed
- Review ordinance allowing dogs in city parks and provide information on the concerns and issues that would follow
- Discuss with city attorney the idea of a public art fund as part of site plan development, PUD, etc.

- Reach out to County Commissioners and Executives regarding 12 Mile Road and Orchard Lake Road landscape improvement

POLICE DEPARTMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

City Manager Mekjian gave a brief background on the legal review from Miller Canfield and consultant review by Winbourne as it pertains to the situational awareness training performed by the Police Department.

Discussion was held on the Phase 2 update from Winbourne that will be presented to council at the next study session. The consensus was that this is a top priority item.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Council comments and suggestions:

- Staff to provide council with quarterly Planning Commission, Engineering and Economic Development reports on the construction taking place or proposed within the city
- Progress at the Innovations Center/The Hatchery has been slow, and the business community needs certainty that council is going to move forward with what has been approved
- Council needs to direction on how the innovation center will be managed
- Opportunities for council engagement
- Opportunities to showcase the city when large events come in such as the NFL Draft, etc.

City Manager Mekjian suggested that council continue to come to the ribbon cuttings, grand openings and to work with the chamber to support business owners.

The consensus from council was to have a study session to discuss the management of the Innovation Center.

MASTER PLAN

Discussion was held on the master plan and what the city can do accelerate a move to adopt more flexible mixed-use, zoning ordinances, overlay districts and be redevelopment ready. The consensus was to wait until council is presented with the plan so they can assess what ordinances need to be addressed to reflect the new plan.

City Manager Mekjian made the following remarks:

- Public Services will provide council with annual update on road conditions along with Pacer ratings.
- The 2014 Road millage is up for renewal. Staff will be providing information and proposed ballot language for a full renewal to council at an upcoming study session.

ZONING ORDINANCES

Council comments and suggestions:

- Gas station zoning/design for continued business viability
- Ability to have restaurants in office districts
- Temporary modification of sign ordinances in construction zones
- Enhance zoning enforcement for commercial properties. ie, real estate signs, parking lots, landscaping, dumpsters enclosures an looking at the possibility of adding zoning inspectors

The consensus of council was to have staff look into these items and report back at a study session.

REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Council comments and suggestions:

- Begin the application process to become a NLC Welcome Stop for 2024
- Increase homeowners' associations participation in the COHA
- Partner with FPS to improve education achievement
- Grant opportunities

Council expressed concerns over the long standing issue of working on collaborative issues with Farmington Public Schools, the future of Oakland Community College Orchard Ridge campus and what can be done to improve and assist our educational community.

Discussion was held on the possibility of hiring a grant writer or consulting firm to assist the city with finding and applying for grants.

The consensus was to come back to a study session to discuss the grants currently pursued by the city and the possibility of hiring a consultant.

PUBLIC SERVICES/EMERGENCY PLANS

Council comments and suggestions:

- Options for residents regarding water matters and Payback districts
- Report from DTE to council every 3 months, with an in-person review every 6 months to review progress against the goals
- Warming and cooling centers
- The city's preparedness in the event of an emergency

City Manager Mekjian noted that the City of Farmington receives regular updates from DTE and he will reach out to inquire if Farmington Hills can receive the same.

Council consensus:

- Request quarterly or monthly reports from DTE
- Invite Emergency Manager Brian Pankow to a study session to share the city's EOC/LPT plan with council

BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Discussion was held on the review completed on boards and commissions in 2017, where we are now and if the city's boards and commissions are still serving the purpose intended, and the possibility of reinstating the MCMR commission and IEESC.

Council questioned the scope of the EDC, and the possibility of the direction to be refocused and how the city can fully utilize the EDC.

Council requested staff to look into if there are any problematic boards or commissions that may not be following their adopted by-laws, meeting requirements because of failure in leadership, or are having attendance or membership issues.

It was the consensus of council to have a study session to discuss the need to reinstate the IEES and MCMR commissions.

SUSTAINABILITY

Discussion was held the need for IEESC and freeway land mass opportunities to use for sustainability as well for solar or other things.

BID PROCESS

Discussion was held on long term vendors and the city's current contracts for legal and audit services.

Councilmember comments:

Continue to improve city workforce to reflect the city's population
Offer more activities in city parks
City Manager and department head ride-a-longs
Options for the Costick Center site
Policy for disorderly conduct at council meetings

PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS:

TR Carr spoke of the importance maintaining order and safety at council meetings. He thanked council for their support of the EDC and noted the importance and benefit the EDC provides.

A resident spoke of the importance of the Costick Center and the activities that are provided for residents and seniors.

ADJOURNMENT

The study session meeting adjourned at 11:32am.

Respectfully submitted,

Carly Lindahl, Interim City Clerk