

**MEETING MINUTES  
CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION MEETING  
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS  
FEBRUARY 24, 2014 – 6:00PM  
CITY HALL – COMMUNITY ROOM**

The City Council study session meeting was called to order by Mayor Brickner at 6:00p.m.

Council Members Present: Brickner, Bridges, Bruce, Knol, Lerner, Massey and Steckloff

Council Members Absent: None

Others Present: City Manager Brock, City Clerk Smith, Assistant City Manager Boyer, Assistant to the City Manager Geinzer, Director Gardiner, Planning Consultant Arroyo and Attorney Joppich

**DISCUSSION ON MIXED USE/OVERLY DEVELOPMENT:**

City Manager Brock explained that this is an important topic that the City has been discussing at various meetings and again at the Council goals session meeting. At that time, Council determined that they would like to have a joint study session meeting with the Planning Commission, but first would like to discuss the topic again amongst themselves so that they would be able to provide the Planning Commission with some clear direction on how to move forward with these types of development and particularly with regard to the proposed redevelopment of Orchard Lake Road.

Mr. Brock noted that there has been some discussion with regard to the road improvements along Orchard Lake Road and commented that staff is focused on a narrow boulevard in that area with round-a-bouts at key areas and to stay within the right-of-way parameters that exist with the exception of where the round-a-bouts would be placed.

Planning Consultant Rod Arroyo presented a slide show outlining the differences between mixed use and overlay zoning and how those might apply to the Grand River Corridor and Orchard Lake Road focus areas.

Mr. Arroyo noted that overlay districts provide for regulations within a specified boundary and would lie on top of existing zoning districts to modify the underlying district requirements. He explained that they typically provide for a higher level of regulation than the existing zoning classification.

Mr. Arroyo explained that he had proposed a mixed use district for the Orchard Lake Road area and one advantage of that was that you could have many zoning classifications within that district; but by creating the new mixed district, all new development would have to meet the criteria and it could render some existing development non-conforming. He added that the overlay district would have optional elements.

Mr. Arroyo reviewed the steps for creating an overlay district and clarifying language that should be included and how this type of development could be used for the Grand River Corridor area.

Councilmember Lerner inquired about the use of a mixed use district and creating non-conforming parcels. Mr. Arroyo indicated that language could be included for parcels that were damaged by fire, etc. that would allow them to rebuild under certain conditions such as, building on the same footprint and in a specified period of time, without having to conform to the new criteria. Attorney Joppich added that this would not apply if the use of the building was abandoned after the incident.

Director Gardiner stated that some of the concern he heard from businesses was with regard to the term “non-conforming” and that placing a stigma on the property and putting them at a disadvantage to lease or sell the buildings.

Further discussion was held on the language that would be included to provide for rebuilding in the event of a fire or other incident.

Councilmember Steckloff questioned the possibility of people getting creative with landscaping. Mr. Gardiner explained that there is an approved landscape plan for each site and changes would require approval by the City. Mr. Arroyo added that the owner could not reduce the amount of landscape that is required under the plan.

Attorney Joppich explained that the idea of the mixed use district would be to gradually eliminate the non-conforming uses; and by including such language in an ordinance to allow for continuation of the non-conforming use will lengthen that time so this is a policy question for Council to determine.

Mr. Arroyo noted that the Grand River Corridor vision plan includes various focus areas so it is not likely that one overlay district would fit all scenarios and that multiple overlay districts would be required. He discussed how this area could be addressed using various overlay districts.

Mr. Arroyo informed Council that the Planning Commission has been discussing this vision plan and felt that the existing Planned Unit Development (PUD) ordinance could be amended to allow for it to be used and applied to the Grand River Corridor. He added that the Planning Commission was not yet ready to draft overlay district language. He noted that the Planning Commission discussed the use of a Mixed Use District along Orchard Lake Road and heard some objections by commercial realtors with regard to creating the non-conforming uses. The Planning Commission decided to place this draft ordinance on hold until they received more input on the proposed road changes to take place in that area and felt that overlay district development may be a better option than a mixed use.

Chris McRae, Planning Commission Chair, stated that the Planning Commission tabled any decision on the Mixed Use District pending further information on the road study as they did not feel that they could make decisions on where buildings should be located, etc without knowing what that road will look like. He stated that the Commission held three Public Hearing meetings; and the mixed use concept for Orchard Lake Road was disliked by business owners, developers and residents in attendance at those meetings. He stated that it was felt the city was making changes for change sake and that this was not the way to improve that area.

Mayor Brickner suggested moving forward with developing ordinances for both mixed use and overlay districts so that either could be applied where deemed appropriate. He expressed the need to have some type of ordinance in place, particularly for the Grand River Corridor, so that the Corridor Improvement Authority will be in the position to capture funding for this project.

Councilmember Knol inquired if it were possible to apply overlay districts with varied setbacks together with a PUD in order to provide for mixed uses.

Mr. McRae stated that the one thing that would be helpful would be to encourage a way to assemble property for a unified project so that a full block could be redeveloped at one time.

Discussion was held on amending the PUD ordinance to apply to the Grand River Corridor area. Mayor Brickner expressed concern with spot zoning.

Attorney Joppich commented that any inconsistencies would be addressed by the Master Plan.

Discussion continued on the Orchard Lake Road development and required setbacks. Mr. Arroyo felt that there was probably a need to allow for some forward parking along this stretch of Orchard Lake Road.

Councilmember Lerner agreed that there is a need to improve the Orchard Lake Road area and perhaps with the road improvements, the business owners will invest in their property. He doesn't believe that mixed use development is the answer for this area. Councilmember Bridges concurred.

Councilmember Steckloff felt the City should focus on what it wants that area to look like over the next 30 years with regard to building height, types of businesses, etc.

City Manager Brock summarized the discussion and stated that the Planning Commission was looking for some direction from Council on addressing the Grand River Corridor. City Council will be deciding on the Orchard Lake Road improvements within the next couple of months, but it didn't sound as if Council felt that mixed use development was the answer for this area. He suggested the city should further review the overlay district and perhaps consider some flexibility with setbacks for the area as discussed this evening.

It was the consensus of City Council that the Planning Commission should focus on the Grand River Corridor improvements at this time and review the option of an amendment to the PUD Ordinance as a way to enhance this area.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Pamela B. Smith, City Clerk