

**MINUTES
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS
CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING
CITY HALL – COMMUNITY ROOM
MARCH 31, 2014**

The special meeting of the Farmington Hills City Council was called to order by Mayor Brickner immediately following the special study session meeting at 8:39pm.

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 Lasley, Fire Chief Bartsch and Attorney Joppich

Mayor Brickner suggested suspending the Pledge of Allegiance and removing the following items from the agenda for this meeting: Correspondence, Consent Agenda (there were no consent items), City Manager Update and Additions to Agenda.

Councilmember Massey confirmed that he would be abstaining from the discussion on the Contract for Emergency Medical Billing due to a conflict of interest earlier noted.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

MOTION by Massey, support by Lerner, to approve the agenda as amended by the Mayor.

MOTION CARRIED 7-0.

PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS:

There were no public comments.

COUNCIL MEMBERS COMMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Councilmember Steckloff mentioned that April Heier of the Special Services Department was the recipient of the Youth Council Advisor of the Year Award - Farmington Hills Mayor's Youth Council.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Consideration of award of contract for Emergency Medical Billing Services to AccuMed Group for a period of three years, with possible extensions. (Postponed from the March 24, 2014 regular City Council meeting)

City Manager Brock stated that there has been much discussion on this issue and he realizes this is not easy for anyone given the relationships between the parties involved; but he feels staff has provided a clear recommendation that has been reviewed by the experts in the field. He commented that staff wants what is best for the staff as well as the residents of the community; and they have gone through the bidding process and the recommendation of staff remains to approve a contract with AccuMed Group for Emergency Medical Billing Services.

MOTION by Lerner, support by Steckloff, that the City Council of Farmington Hills hereby authorizes the City Manager to sign a three (3) year contract with AccuMed Group for Emergency Medical Billing Services at 7.39% year 1, 7.35% year 2 and 7.32% year 3; and renew

for an additional two (2) year period at 7.32% or lower under the same terms and conditions upon mutual consent by the City and AccuMed Group Billing.

Councilmember Bruce stated that this is a very difficult decision to make as he would like this to be a win-win situation where he could support both the Fire Department's need for the best program and Botsford Hospital and Parastar as a community partner. He commented that it appears there have been on-going issues with Parastar and the existing program not only with Farmington Hills Fire Department staff but also other Fire Departments. He commented that he highly respects Director Lasley and his Department and the creative things they have done in order to save money, and he feels he must respect the bidding process and the consortium.

Councilmember Knol echoed Dr. Bruce's comments that this is a very difficult decision and stated that she also has the utmost respect for the Farmington Hills staff and the bidding process as well as the Livonia Fire Department Chief and staff that spoke this evening. She struggles with this decision because Botsford is the community hospital and she wants them to succeed. She added that while she highly respects the Fire Department, she feels that perhaps there could have been some prior discussions with Botsford and Parastar regarding some of the issues presented this evening. She wants what is best for the residents and it appears there would be a cost savings with the new software. Councilmember Knol stated that she questions the payer rates as there are so many factors involved, but for her it comes back to ease of use of the software for city personnel.

Councilmember Lerner also echoed the comments of the other Councilmembers that this is a very difficult decision. He struggles with the fact that the current provider, who has been providing this service to the City for many years, was not identified as a qualified bidder. He stated that Council has heard a lot about the ESO software and feels that is probably the direction that the City should move towards; but he feels that many of the issues with Parastar could have been worked out. He indicated that he is not leaning towards supporting the motion.

Councilmember Bridges commented that he feels the City does a very good job with cooperative purchasing. He questioned the proposed 25% savings and felt that number was subjective. He also concurred with Councilmember Knol with regard to the payer rate issue as Farmington Hills has a different payer mix than the other communities that were mentioned. He added that the City has had a great relationship with Botsford Hospital for many years and agreed that most of the issues with Parastar should have been able to be worked out. He stated that he respects the City staff and the process, but feels that Botsford and Parastar deserves an extension of their current contract. He feels if there are still issues after that time, Council could then revisit the contract. Mr. Bridges suggested a 6 month extension to the current contract with Parastar.

Councilmember Steckloff commented that Council would not be at this meeting this evening if this were an easy decision, and she appreciates staff coming forward with their honest remarks about the current issues. She feels Parastar was given a fair amount of time to address software concerns and issues and that the Fire Department should be provided the tools it needs. She is in favor of the motion.

Councilmember Bruce stated that while he may not agree with everything that staff says or does, he feels it is important to respect the integrity of the overall process and if they don't, he feels that would be undermining their own Department and the process as a whole. He added that if he felt something unethical was being done or that there were glaring discrepancies in the process, he would certainly vote differently; but that is not the case. He commented that Parastar had the same opportunity as the other vendors to bid whatever software they wanted.

Attorney Joppich clarified that the language of the current contract with Parastar would allow for the City Manager to authorize annual extensions and not a 6 month extension. He stated that a 6 month extension would not be allowed unless City Council authorized an amendment to the existing contract.

City Manager Brock pointed out that allowing for any extension of the current contract does not address the software issues discussed.

Mayor Brickner stated that Botsford Hospital is the City's biggest employer and they are a hospital and will continue to succeed as such. The City will still be sending 67% of the runs to Botsford as it does now. He clarified comments made by Councilmember Lerner with regard to Parastar not being qualified as a bidder by stating that proposals from all vendors were opened and reviewed by the consortium so it was known what services and software they intended to provide. He concurred with Dr. Bruce's comments that the process was fair and that the city should not back down from its bidding process. He feels the Council should move forward with the recommendation of staff.

MOTION CARRIED 4-2 (Bridges and Lerner opposed, Massey abstained)

ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION by Bridges, support by Massey to adjourn the special meeting at 9:05pm.

MOTION CARRIED 7-0.

Respectfully submitted,



Pamela B. Smith, City Clerk