

MINUTES
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS
CITY COUNCIL GOALS STUDY SESSION
CITY HALL – COMMUNITY ROOM
JANUARY 10, 2015 – 9:00AM

The Goals Study Session meeting of the Farmington Hills City Council was called to order by Mayor Brickner at 9:15am.

Council Members Present: Brickner, Bridges, Bruce, Knol, Lerner (arrived at 9:25am), Massey and Steckloff

Council Members Absent: None

Others Present: City Manager Brock, City Clerk Smith, Assistant City Manager Boyer and Assistant to the City Manager Geinzer

SCAM PHONE CALLS:

Mayor Brickner stated that he has received several scam phone calls with the callers trying to have you send money. He also mentioned the article in the Observer where Police Chief Nebus was informing residents of a similar scam. He stated that he feels the city should have some type of educational or informational program for residents perhaps at the Costick Center through the senior program.

Mayor Pro-Tem Massey stated that the Police Department use to go out and talk to seniors and other groups as part of their community policing efforts on how to be safe, etc; and he feels that is a good idea but that it should be handled through the Police Department if funds are available to do that type of community outreach.

Assistant City Manager Boyer added that articles are included in the Senior Messenger Newsletter as well and that will continue.

City Council concurred with the idea of educating residents on these types of scams and other safety measures as part of a community outreach or community policing effort.

City Manager Brock stated that he would pass this information along to Police Chief Nebus.

GUN SAFETY CLASSES FOR RESIDENTS:

Mayor Brickner stated that he thought he would bring this idea to Council as some other communities provide for gun safety classes, and he thought this might be a good idea since the City's Police Department issues gun permits.

Mayor Pro-Tem Massey commented that all gun safety classes offered are required to be provided by State Certified Instructors and have certain legal requirements they must meet. He feels this would be a duplicate effort as classes are available at nearby locations.

Assistant City Manager Boyer commented that the City does offer hunter safety courses, which also provides for general gun safety as part of that program and is a good program for youth.

City Manager Brock commented that some questions he would have is with regard to insurance issues, wear and tear on the range, access to the building, etc. He stated that the City has had a few inquiries about offering these classes but overall feels the private industry has filled that need.

Councilmember Bruce inquired if free gun locks are still provided by the Police Department. Assistant to the City Manager Geinzer responded that he believes that program is still ongoing.

The consensus of City Council was that there was not a need for the City to provide this service as that need was already being filled by the private industry.

STREET SOLICITATION:

Councilmember Bruce expressed concern over solicitors at street corners holding signs asking for money and inquired if anything could be done.

City Manager Brock explained that the people soliciting seem to know their rights and they do not appear to be aggressive or impeding traffic. Dr. Bruce commented that he felt that having cars stop to give money is impeding traffic in those areas and asked about the City posting a sign at those locations.

It was determined that City Manager Brock would inquire to the City Attorney about the legality of posting a sign indicating that stopping to offer money impedes traffic or some similar wording.

ANNUAL REPORTS BY DEPARTMENT TO CITY COUNCIL:

Mayor Brickner indicated that he thought the Police and Fire Department Annual Reports were very informative and wondered if City Council would want to receive annual reports from each department.

Councilmembers Bridges and Knol thought that City Council had already agreed that they wanted this information. Councilmember Bridges added that he feels City Council should be receiving written reports by departments on a regular basis.

The majority of City council concurred with regular updates of the departments, but they did not necessarily have to be written reports and could be provided at a study session meeting. The intent was not to create more work for the departments but to provide City Council with pertinent information.

WEBSITE, E-OUTREACH AND FEEDBACK:

Mayor Brickner commented that he received information at the last National League of Cities Conference regarding various means to make information available to the public. He commented that he feels the City is a little behind with regard to computer technology and programs available.

Mayor Pro-Tem Massey commented that much of the information was just different layouts for websites and models with increased interactivity with the public such as being able to report potholes or other information on-line. He agreed there was a need to “freshen up” the city website.

Councilmember Bridges commented on the importance of citizen engagement and transparency. He commented on the changing demographics and stated that he felt interactive tools were necessary to attract the younger generation. He is in favor of more interaction with the public and providing them the tools to communicate with the city. He would like to see some action taken on these types of improvements.

Discussion was held on the current website and access to certain information, the use of facebook and other social media, etc.

City Manager Brock stated that the website is the city’s next big priority and City Council will be provided some information on this during the budget sessions.

Councilmembers Bruce and Lerner indicated that they did not want to spend an excessive amount of money on the website as they feel the information being provided at this time is sufficient.

Dr. Bruce commented that while he is all for transparency, the city needs to strike a balance between what the community really wants on the website. Councilmember Knol agreed there needs to be a balance and that citizen engagement is important but spending a lot of money to have the best website is not necessary.

Mayor Brickner stated that he is interested in hearing more about 311 pages for reporting potholes, etc.

City Manager Brock stated that the information provided during the budget sessions will include in writing why staff feels the city should or should not include information on the website, costs involved and the use of social media and specific links or sites; and City Council can determine what they want and where to spend the money.

CROSS SUPPORT WITH FARMINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS:

City Manager Brock commented that Jerry Ellis is present as part of the Citizens Committee that was formed to review the needs of the schools and help determine the funding required for the upcoming bond proposal on the May 5, 2015 ballot.

Mr. Ellis explained that a committee was formed of a group of 29 people from the community to review the needs of the schools and funding needed to maintain the facilities. He explained the review process of the committee and how they arrived at recommending the 131 million dollar bond proposal that will be on the ballot in May, 2015. He stated that this bond proposal contains no funding for luxuries but includes funding for the needs of the schools. He added that if the bond proposal is passed by the voters, the schools will be required to start improvements within 2 years and complete all projects within 5 years. Mr. Ellis stated that this is an aggressive schedule but should also save the schools money. He noted that an oversight committee has also been established should the proposal pass in order to review the projects.

Discussion was held on possible school closures. Mr. Ellis pointed out that the bond proposal includes funding for all schools, but also takes into consideration a probable decrease in enrollment over the next 5-6 years and the potential that there could be some school closings.

Assistant City Manager Boyer stated that he is sitting on another committee along with other representatives of the schools and communities and part of their focus is to look at the needs and necessity of any school closings in the future.

Mayor Brickner reminded City Council that the Council has adopted a policy to take no position as a Council in opposition or in support of any ballot proposal. City Council members may, however, take a position individually if they so choose.

Mr. Ellis stated that he became involved as he feels it is important for the community to have good schools. He feels the new Superintendent is the right person at the right time for this position and is open to discussion with city staff.

Mayor Brickner encouraged open communication with Mr. Heitsch, the new Superintendent, if Council members had any suggestions or concerns.

Councilmember Steckloff encouraged some communication with representatives from Clarenceville Schools as they are also part of the community and she feels it is important to represent all of the residents.

CARDIO VASCULAR TRAINING:

Mayor Pro-Tem Massey informed City Council that the EMS Division of the Fire Department will be promoting cardio vascular health in the community through educational efforts and trainings and he encouraged City Council support.

CITY CHARTER REVISIONS:

Councilmember Bruce stated that he brought up this issue when discussion was held on a future agenda item with regard to selling property and, according to the Charter; this must be done by ordinance. He feels that there may be a need to be more flexible especially with selling property and the timing of that and having to approve the sale of property by ordinance would require two readings of the ordinance before it could be approved. He suggested that this is an item that City Council may want to consider putting on a ballot to have changed and that there may be other Charter revisions needed. He suggested reviewing the Charter over the next year.

Mayor Pro-Tem Massey agreed and suggested reviewing the Charter during study session meetings.

City Manager Brock stated that the City Charter is on the city's website and suggested that City Council members review the Charter and he will schedule the issue on a future study session for discussion.

EXPEDITED PERMITTING:

City Manager Brock explained that this issue came up when City Council was discussing For Lease/Rent signs. He believes the Building Department is currently processing permits as quickly as possible. He also added that while some people may deal with the city on a continuing basis, it is important for the same process to be followed for all applicants.

Councilmember Bruce stated that the State offers a tiered service based on cost with expedited processing costing more, etc. He inquired if this were possible.

City Manager Brock stated that this work is probably hired out and the City does this now with Fire Department when needed. He added that he can look into the possibility with Director Gardiner but that it may be more difficult to do for building permits.

Councilmember Lerner stated that when asked how the city could help with filling unoccupied buildings, the realtors/brokers at that study session meeting said that expedited permitting would help. He added that he would like to give those realtors a point person so that they know the City is doing all they can to address their needs and the city is not holding up the process. City Manager Brock concurred and commented that this is being done.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

Councilmember Knol stated that she requested this item for discussion as she wanted a better understanding of who was taking over the responsibilities of the previous Economic Development Coordinator who is no longer with the City, as she feels this is a very important role

City Manager Brock explained how those duties were currently being handled and stated that the City is very close to securing someone for this position. He stated that he would let Council who that was as

soon as they confirmed the person for the position Mr. Brock noted that the new employee will be focusing on retention calls and working with medium and small business development.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 12:05pm.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Smith', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Pamela B. Smith, City Clerk