APPROVED 11/23/2026

MINUTES
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS
FARMINGTON HILLS CITY COUNCIL
STUDY SESSION
CITY HALL – COMMUNITY ROOM
NOVEMBER 9, 2026 – 6:00PM

The study session of the Farmington Hills City Council was called to order by Mayor Rich at 6:00pm.

Councilmembers Present:	Aldred, Boleware, Bridges, Dwyer, Knol, Rich and Starkman
Councilmembers Absent:	None
Others Present:	City Manager Mondora, City Clerk Lindahl, Directors Brown and Davis, and City Attorney Saarela

DISCUSSION ON PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE CURRENT USE OF FACILITIES POLICY REGARDING THE HERITAGE PARK SPLASH PAD AND PLAYGROUND FACILITIES

Director of Special Services Davis presented a proposal to add the Heritage Park playground and splash pad to the City's facility use policy. He explained that large, unregistered groups, mostly for-profit day cares and summer camps, regularly arrive with two or three buses at a time, sometimes with more than 100 children. These groups take over the site and crowd out residents. Davis said a new playground planned for next year is expected to increase the issue. The policy would require organized groups to pre-register with the City, giving staff another tool to manage the site while keeping priority usage for Farmington Hills residents. He noted that staff already keeps a database of previous users, including unregistered groups and would contact those groups ahead of time with the updated policy.

Councilmember Bridges asked how the policy would be enforced. Director Davis said enforcement would rest with park rangers, part-time staff, and a full-time parks employee on site. He noted that staff already turn away unregistered groups, including four school buses that arrived on a field trip about six weeks earlier. He said most groups comply when offered the option to register, though some outliers should be expected.

Councilmember Bridges asked how the policy would relate to a possible Oakland County takeover of the park. Director Davis said the policy would give the County a framework to continue if it chose to, and that he expected the County to rely on the City's operating rules.

Councilmember Boleware asked about the extent of the area covered. Director Davis confirmed there is one playground in the park and the policy focuses on the splash pad and playground, where group crowding affects resident use.

Councilmember Boleware described the site as sometimes too crowded to use. She said the crowding was a safety concern for small children. She also raised concerns about dogs and said her calls to the park ranger number had gone unanswered. Director Davis noted that dogs are not allowed and that this was a separate matter.

Councilmember Dwyer asked about reservations for the picnic area. Director Davis said the pavilion and shelters are reservable and are first-come, first-served when not reserved. City Manager Mondora presented the rates.

Mayor Rich stated she had no objection and asked whether signage would notify the public of the policy and the pre-registration requirement. Director Davis said signage would be developed and that previous user groups would be contacted directly.

Councilmember Aldred noted that the draft refers only to "organized groups" and sets no specific number. Director Davis confirmed this was deliberate, to prevent groups from splitting into smaller parties.

Councilmember Bridges asked whether other communities have similar policies. Director Davis replied that he knew of no comparable free, open, accessible splash pad in such a desirable location. He said other area splash pads, including those in Westland and West Bloomfield, are fenced. He acknowledged the park is a regional amenity and said he did not oppose that use. He said Heritage Park has become a "free field trip" destination for area organizations, and his objective is to protect resident access.

Councilmember Bridges cautioned that the park's regional history could create friction. Director Davis agreed that the first year would likely be the most difficult and said staff would communicate extensively with affected organizations.

Councilmember Knol added that most day cares and camps would comply once notified, since they would not risk turning children away after packing swimsuits and lunches.

Director Davis stated that the policy would be implemented for summer 2027. Council reached consensus to proceed with the amended policy.

DISCUSSION ON PROPOSED ANNUAL CITY MANAGER PERFORMANCE REVIEW PROCESS

Mayor Rich introduced the item as a goal of the Council and noted that the process is built on the ICMA framework and tied to the City's vision, mission, values, and goal areas.

Councilmember Bridges questioned whether it was appropriate for the City Manager to present her own evaluation process. He said he meant nothing personal but was concerned about objectivity and transparency. Mayor Rich then walked through the presentation, and Councilmember Bridges' concern was noted for the record.

Mayor Rich described the following:

- The purpose is accountability, alignment with the vision, values, and goals, and constructive feedback.
- ICMA uses a 10-category evaluation, which each Councilmember would complete separately using a 5-point rating scale with narrative comments.
- The review would be annual, on a calendar set in advance.
- The discussion would take place in closed session at the City Manager's request, as permitted for periodic personnel evaluations under the Open Meetings Act.
- A Performance Review Committee of two to three Councilmembers would collect all seven evaluations and consolidate scores and comments into one summary. Comments would be reproduced verbatim without attribution, and no one's comments would be edited.
- The City Attorney would assist with consolidation and administration.
- The City Manager will submit a year-in-review summary of accomplishments, organized by Council goals and showing measurable results, along with staff and community partner recognition.

- Suggested timing was approximately six weeks before the review for the City Manager's summary, four weeks before for Councilmembers to submit signed forms, and two weeks for the task group to compile results.

Councilmember Dwyer asked how confidentiality of ratings would be addressed. Attorney Saarela explained that only the closed-session discussion is confidential and the ratings are public and subject to FOIA.

Mayor Rich noted that she believed the Mayor should serve on the Performance Review Committee task group, along with up to two Councilmembers. Councilmember Bridges said he had requested a City Manager evaluation for 18 years and expressed strong support for the process and asked to serve.

Mayor Rich noted that most neighboring benchmark cities do not conduct formal reviews. Human Resources Director Brown provided a brief description of those processes.

The initial proposed annual review discussion was targeted around March or April, six months after the City Manager's hire. Councilmember Knoll suggested a later date so that the review could account for the budget, noting that budget work is generally completed by the end of May and adopted in June.

Councilmember Boleware observed that an annual review should reflect annual performance and that concerns should be raised with the City Manager before the review.

Council reached consensus on the review taking place in July. The lead time for the City Manager's year-in-review was discussed at about eight weeks before the July meeting.

Councilmember Boleware observed that some items, such as staffing and supervision (Category 7), would be hard for Councilmembers to rate. City Manager Mondora said the form allows items to be left blank, and blank items are treated as a 3 (average).

City Manager Mondora noted that the employment agreement states that the City Manager annual performance review shall utilize a formal written process, form, criteria and format that the Council shall establish in consultation with the City Manager. She thanked the Mayor for the collaboration and invited Councilmembers to contact her directly at any time with performance concerns, so that feedback is proactive.

Council expressed general support, and there was consensus on the review cycle as well as Mayor Rich, Councilmember Bridges, and Councilmember Aldred to be on the Performance Review Committee.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Rich adjourned the meeting at 6:38pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Carly Lindahl, City Clerk