APPROVED 11/9/2026

MINUTES
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS
FARMINGTON HILLS CITY COUNCIL
STUDY SESSION
CITY HALL – COMMUNITY ROOM
OCTOBER 26, 2026 – 5:30PM

The study session of the Farmington Hills City Council was called to order by Mayor Rich at 5:31pm.

Councilmembers Present:	Aldred, Boleware, Dwyer, Knol, Rich and Starkman
Councilmembers Absent:	Bridges
Others Present:	Acting City Manager Mondora, City Clerk Lindahl, Directors Brown, Davis and Skrobola, and City Attorney Joppich

The closed session started at 5:33pm

CONSIDERATION OF APPROVAL TO ENTER INTO A CLOSED SESSION UNDER SECTION 8(1)(H) OF THE OPEN MEETINGS ACT FOR THE PURPOSE OF DISCUSSING A WRITTEN ATTORNEY-CLIENT PRIVILEGED COMMUNICATION THAT IS EXEMPT FROM DISCLOSURE BY STATE STATUTE; AND UNDER SECTION 8(1)(C) OF THE MICHIGAN OPEN MEETINGS ACT FOR THE PURPOSE OF DISCUSSING NEGOTIATIONS RELATED TO A TENTATIVE AGREEMENT WITH TECHNICAL, PROFESSIONAL AND OFFICEWORKERS ASSOCIATION OF MICHIGAN (TPOAM). (NOTE: COUNCIL WILL RETURN TO OPEN SESSION IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE CLOSED SESSION).

MOTION by Dwyer, support by Starkman, that the City Council of Farmington Hills hereby approves entering into a closed session under Section 8(1)(h) of the Open Meetings Act for the purpose of discussing a written attorney-client privileged communication that is exempt from disclosure by state statute; and under Section 8(1)(c) of the Michigan Open Meetings Act for the purpose of discussing negotiations related to a tentative agreement with Technical, Professional and Officeworkers Association of Michigan (TPOAM). (Note: Council will return to open session immediately following the closed session).

Roll Call Vote:

Yeas: ALDRED, BOLEWARE, DWYER, KNOL, RICH AND STARKMAN
Nays: BRIDGES
Absent: NONE
Abstentions: NONE

MOTION CARRIED 6-0.

The open session resumed at 5:51pm

DISCUSSION REGARDING THE GOALS AT A GLANCE DOCUMENT

The Mayor stated that the Goals at a Glance document was brought back so Council could confirm where it had landed after the Saturday goal-setting session. The Mayor identified three items that had not previously appeared on the document.

- **Community Risk Reduction.** This new bullet falls under Goal 1, Community Safety and Well-Being. It concerns fall prevention, since falls are the second-highest cause of death for seniors and account for a large share of Fire Department runs. The Mayor said it relates to earlier discussions on the Fire Department studies and senior programming. It would explore whether education programs or other efforts could go further than the existing programs. The Mayor asked whether any council member objected to its inclusion, and none did.
- **Community Conversation about Homelessness.** This item falls under Goal 4, Welcoming Community. It was discussed at the goal-setting session but had not been included on the document.
- **Employee Engagement Survey.** This was also discussed at the Goals session and appeared to have consensus.

Councilmember Starkman offered to bring the fall-prevention item to the Community Health area, noting that a committee meeting on the mental health initiative was scheduled in the coming weeks. He suggested it could be a 2027 project area and said the Committee on Aging could partner on it.

Councilmember Starkman praised the document's organization and readability and said it was useful for constituents.

The Mayor noted that other mayors had asked for copies and that a presentation at the National League of Cities might be possible. She added that the Goals At a Glance document would now be rolled out to the city's boards and commissions.

PATHWAYS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD INITIATIVE PRESENTATION

Bryan Farmer, Deputy Director of Special Services, and Liesl Blankenship, Nature Center Supervisor, presented an overview of the Pathways for Early Childhood Initiative.

Deputy Director Farmer provided background on the subject noting that the Mayor, Mayor Pro-Tem and Councilmember Starkman attended an NLC conference in March 2026. Staff then applied and Farmington Hills was accepted as one of nine communities. The 15-month technical assistance program has NLC staff guide a local team toward a framework for early childhood development for children ages 0 to 8. The Bezos Family Foundation fully funds the program. The local team was formed from May through July, and staff and officials attended an NLC boot camp in September. NLC support runs through July 2027, after which the local framework and team are expected to continue.

The team includes city staff, representatives of the schools and library, the Commission on Children, Youth and Families, the Mayor's Youth Council, Oakland Community Schools, and Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency (Head Start). Deputy Director Farmer noted that Head Start's move to the Hawk had resulted from similar collaboration with the school district. The desired outcomes are to:

- recruit and retain families with children ages 0 to 8;
- build a communication hub and inventory of programs, places and resources for early childhood providers;
- identify areas of need, such as playgrounds; and
- partner with NLC on family events.
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Nature Center Supervisor Blankenship cited the city's existing resources; the state-licensed preschool at the Nature Center, swim classes, Safety Town, Young Explorers and Little Trekkers, free community spaces such as the splash pad and parks, library programs, and community services such as CARES,

Oakland Family Services, the Salvation Army and Neighborhood House. Staff reported that many families at the recent open house did not know about the free spaces. Staff said no single place currently connects families to these resources. A spot has been reserved in the summer activities guide to begin promoting them.

Deputy Director Farmer also described a possible tie-in with the Feed the Need community meals and an NLC community supper planned in Nashville in November. The Mayor noted that many places already serve free meals but that this is not widely known.

Discussion:

- Councilmember Knol asked about early intervention for vulnerable families and said families' basic needs must be met for the initiative to reach them. Deputy Director Farmer and Acting City Manager Mondora said the initiative would give staff a network of partners to which they could refer families. They cited the Nature Center preschool's existing connection with the Farmington Public Schools special education department and the Fire Department's fundraising for families affected by cancer. Councilmember Knol clarified that she understood the initiative as better connecting existing services rather than creating new programs or departments.
- Councilmember Dwyer asked about the grant amount. Deputy Director Farmer and Councilmember Boleware explained that there is no grant money or budget. The value is NLC staff support, and the Bezos Family Foundation paid for travel to the boot camp through NLC.
- Deputy Director noted that it would take staff time to build a website page listing the resources, however, staff could return to NLC for assistance if the workload became too great as NLC had indicated it would support such requests through June 2027.
- Councilmember Aldred and Councilmember Knol expressed support, citing the value of getting accurate information to residents and of attracting young families.

Council members expressed general support for moving forward.

UPDATE FROM THE 47TH DISTRICT COURT

Matt Friedrich, Court Administrator, presented the annual update with Judge Brady, Judge Parker and Michelle Muskett, Deputy Court Administrator. He thanked the City for its relationship with the Court and noted that the Court is funded by the City of Farmington Hills and the City of Farmington.

Caseload and operations: Mr. Friedrich reported that new filings were just over 22,000 in 2015, just under 20,000 in 2019, under 12,000 in 2020, and over 21,000 in 2025. He said workload has grown even as caseload stabilized, because legislative changes added court appearances to criminal and landlord-tenant cases. The Court continues to handle a substantial share of cases by Zoom. He noted that the Court never fell behind during the pandemic.

Personnel: Judge Brady will retire at the end of the year after 40 years with the Court, first as a magistrate and then as a judge, and his court reporter is also retiring. Senior Clerk Supervisor Donna Rusher retired this year. Mr. Friedrich noted an election in eight days and said the Court is preparing to onboard a new judge.

Public satisfaction survey: In the May survey, 95 percent of court users agreed or strongly agreed that their case was handled fairly. Ninety-eight percent agreed or strongly agreed that they were treated the same as everyone else and that staff were friendly and respectful.

Technology:

- The statewide MiFILE e-filing system for all civil cases will reach its one-year anniversary next month. Grant funds paid for a public filing terminal at the Court.
- An online traffic resolution program launched a month ago as a pilot with the Farmington Hills Police Department. Eligible drivers may request that the ticketing officer take a second look, and some cases can be resolved in as little as three days. Fifty-eight cases were in the system, and 500 to 1,000 tickets are anticipated over a year. Participation is optional, and the Court does not negotiate reductions.

Programs and facilities: Judge Parker reported that Sobriety Court, which began in 2005, has a three-year recidivism rate of zero percent for graduates. It has a capacity of 20 participants, 12 or 13 are currently enrolled, and it is limited to residents of Farmington and Farmington Hills.

Mr. Friedrich noted that the Community Work Program remains active, with 72 people on the list for the most recent Saturday. The Court hosted fire extinguisher and bomb awareness trainings with city departments and has made capital improvements to its 23-year-old building, including a new roof, carpet and boilers. In August, a local producer filmed a legal drama at the courthouse.

Questions and comments:

- Councilmember Boleware asked whether survey scores had changed over time. Mr. Friedrich said they have been consistently above 90 percent in nearly every category.
- Councilmember Boleware asked about funding from the City of Farmington. Mr. Friedrich said the split is based on caseload and population and is roughly 85 percent Farmington Hills and 15 percent Farmington.
- Mr. Friedrich said traffic matters are about 50 percent of the caseload but not the largest share of time.
- The Mayor said the Court's values align with items 1, 4 and 5 of the City's goals. Acting City Manager Mondora said Mr. Friedrich attends executive staff meetings on Tuesday mornings.

FARMINGTON AREA FIBERCITY UPDATES FROM ARCLINK

Acting City Manager Mondora introduced representatives of ArcLink, formerly SiFi Networks, to give a project update, discuss the bankruptcy transition, and address recent challenges. Jacob Rushlow, Director of Public Services, introduced Jon O'Brien, who has been the company's spokesperson with residents. He also introduced Shane Hampton, the new General Manager, and Adam Pappas, who manages day-to-day construction and restoration.

Presentation. Mr. Hampton said ArcLink is an open-access network provider and not an internet service provider. He said the company is placing local staff in the community to respond to issues quickly.

- Farmington and Farmington Hills have about 39,600 addresses in total, with just under half in private communities. About 2,600 to 2,700 named communities require right-of-entry agreements before ArcLink can build in their streets.
- Just under 19,000 addresses, less than 50 percent, are serviceable. Mr. Hampton explained that addresses are released to service providers in stages as the metro network, feeders and distribution are completed.
- There are about 47 cabinets, plus huts at City Hall and a fire station, and two data centers outside the city.

Mr. Pappas reported on the City's restoration punch list of about 70 items:

- 23 items were deemed complete and were sent to the City for review.
- 9 were returned to the contractor for further work.
- 38 remained to be field verified within the next couple of weeks.

Open items included a completed driveway replacement at 29700 High Valley, an unresolved item at 11 Mile and Sky, and the Apple Blossom Lane driveway. For Apple Blossom Lane, Mr. Rushlow explained that a shallow service line had been run at an angle across the driveway to reach a connection in a neighbor's yard, causing the cracking. The line was removed and the lawn restored. ArcLink is obtaining contractor quotes for the driveway, and Mr. Pappas has met with the homeowner. The cabinet at Farmington Road and Leisure Lane was reported to be within the right-of-way, with screening options still possible.

Discussion:

- Councilmember Aldred said poor communication during construction has been one of residents' greatest frustrations. Mr. Pappas said door tags go out about 15 days before work and door hangers 6 to 7 days before construction. Mr. Hampton agreed communication has been poor. He said construction would pause around Thanksgiving and a stronger communication plan would be in place before work resumes.
- Councilmember Aldred asked how to resolve cases where fiber is installed at a home but a provider says service is unavailable. Mr. Hampton said ArcLink could review such addresses individually.
- The Mayor asked about the completion date. Mr. Hampton said work would start again around April 1, and the yellow areas should be finished by about this time next year. He also said ArcLink would improve grass restoration and that the company is backed by one of the largest private investment funds in the world.
- Acting City Manager Mondora asked about the complaint process. Mr. Hampton said residents can call ArcLink's 800 number, which is staffed around the clock, and a ticket will be created. City staff should route concerns through the City Manager's Office and Mr. Rushlow.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Rich adjourned the meeting at 7:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Carly Lindahl, City Clerk