

MINUTES
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS
CITY COUNCIL GOALS STUDY SESSION MEETING
COMMUNITY ROOM
JANUARY 22, 2022 – 9:00AM

The goals study session meeting of the Farmington Hills City Council was called to order by Mayor Barnett at 9:00am

Council Members Present: Barnett, Boleware, Bridges, Bruce, Knol, Massey, and Newlin

Council Members Absent: None

Others Present: City Manager Mekjian, City Clerk Smith and Assistant City Manager Valentine

Mayor Barnett suggested amending the agenda to include the following:

- Welcome packets for residents
- Adaptive playground equipment

REVIEW OF 2021 GOALS:

City-Wide Technology (website, on-line payments, etc.)

City Manager Mekjian noted the following accomplishments by the city in this area this past year:

- Launched Microsoft Teams that would allow staff to work in a virtual setting as needed.
- Pilot study for working remotely from home and establishing a policy for same
- A website refresh that the Mayor will officially be launched on Monday and the Mayor will be making an announcement Monday night at the regular Council meeting
- On-line payments, including property taxes
- Start of SMART City efforts due to city-wide broadband and staff will be working to prioritize projects going forward – a goal of the city is a single sign-on to do business entirely on-line if needed

Council comments and suggestions:

- Suggested that mental health and other organization resources are included on the city website. It was noted SAFE has an updated list it could provide the city.
- Council questioned security of the city's system and continuation of security mentor as a program to educate employees. Mr. Mekjian commented on the city's efforts in this area and what it has done to secure the system and confirmed security mentor will continue to be a part of the employee education.
- It was suggested that a study session is held on SMART City initiatives to discuss with council priority projects.

Streamlining planning site plan approval process

City Manager Mekjian mentioned that he and Assistant City Manager Valentine are working with community development on this as they want to be development ready and this will also be part of the master plan and zoning ordinances updates. He added that he has asked staff to make sure the city is following best practices to expedite approvals.

Council comments and suggestions:

- City needs to be site ready for developers and not only look at zoning ordinances changes but develop incentives for businesses to want to change their sites.
- Would like more focus on additional economic development tools and not just zoning ordinance changes
- Hoping to be able to have all developed cities meet criteria of “core communities”
- Review administrative changes needed to expedite approval process to progress towards being redevelopment ready
- Corridor Improvement Authorities are additional tools that can be used for those specific areas

State Representative Steckloff commented that there is funding available for Michigan to compete and they have been discussing that more economic development tools are need for local units of government. She is continuing to work on this issue and will be speaking to Oakland County.

Hiring of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) staff member

Mr. Mekjian noted the following:

- City has hired a consultant who has put together data received from the city and an executive summary with recommendations
- A DEI Council made up of employees was developed and had their first meeting last Thursday and their goal is to drive this effort
- Council will be updated periodically on progress and outcomes from the DEI Council meetings
- City will follow guideline outlined by the consultant and once the city has developed a plan, a full-time staff member will be considered. It was confirmed this position is in the current budget

It was mentioned that previous discussions included having staff look into performance evaluations and job descriptions. Mr. Mekjian stated that a consultant has been hired to do a market study and that information will be shared with Council in a report. He added that performance evaluations are being conducted.

Hiring of social worker/24-hour hotline

Mr. Mekjian stated that last spring various department heads came to a City Council study session meeting to discuss the various resources the city has in this area, including a staff member who is a social worker. The resources will be provided on the new website.

DISCUSSION ON 2022 GOALS:

Rejoining National League of Cities

City Manager Mekjian stated that this was discussed back in 2018 at which time Council determined that the programming of NLC was more geared toward larger cities and did not meet the needs of the city. He stated that if Council wanted to rejoin at this time, the membership would cost \$7,200 per year.

Members of Council at that time concurred that the programming and elimination of steering committees was the reason they decided to end their membership but that the city would still try to meet with congressional leaders on their own and that hasn't happened.

Council comments and suggestions:

- Concern with currently having no voice in Washington as the city has not met with congressional leaders since they left NLC
- Suggested a one- year membership to re-evaluate the programs offered but to also reach out to congressional leaders for a meeting outside of the NLC conference
- Suggested that the city also join US Conference of Mayors

Consensus:

Council consensus was to rejoin NLC for one year starting immediately with a study session meeting to follow to discuss the programming and continued membership, target an annual meeting with congressional leaders and membership to the US Conference of Mayors.

It was suggested that the Mayor and City Manager reach out to congressional leaders to target a fall meeting following the NLC annual legislative meeting.

Including apartments in rental inspection program

Council comments and suggestions:

- Apartment managers may complain but the city needs to stay firm on this to ensure residents have a dignified place to live
- Focus on older apartments 20 years and older due to staff time required
- Review possibility of charging inspection fees to offset costs
- Review what other communities are doing and gather that data

Consensus:

Council is in favor of reviewing the inclusion of apartments and suggested holding a study session on this topic and to obtain data from other communities.

Benchmark for minority suppliers

City Manager Mekjian stated that the city has joined the Michigan Minority Business Council that matches a business with opportunities to bid on proposals.

Council inquired how long the city has been a member and City Manager Mekjian said at least for the last year but would check into this.

Widening sidewalks to include bike paths/expediting sidewalk replacement

City Manager Mekjian explained that the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) includes a map showing the city's non-motorized path system that includes a combination of 8-foot and 5-foot-wide paths and sidewalks. He noted that some areas with gaps are challenging from a topography or monetary standpoint and it is the decision of Council on where to allocate that funding. He stated that this is part of the master plan update and as the city does road projects, they look at areas where there are gaps to try and complete the sidewalks in those areas as part of the project.

Council consensus:

To focus on sidewalk maintenance and connectivity to eliminate gaps as well as areas where there currently are no sidewalks and limits walkability.

ALICE Training for City Council

Council consensus:

Council was in favor of the ALICE Training.

Gateway Signage/Public Art/Winter Light Display at Heritage Park

City Manager Mekjian stated that staff is proposing to create unique display that would incorporate signage, lighting and public art for the Orchard Lake Road overpass and was seeking a consensus from Council to include funding in the budget.

Council comments and suggestions:

- Hosting a winter light display at Heritage Park was suggested as a way to utilize the parks more creatively.
- Cleaning or replacing if needed the welcome signs into Farmington Hills
- Reviewing augmented landscaping for the 12 Mile Road/I-696 interchange ramps

City Manager Mekjian stated that staff would review the 12 Mile Road/I-696 interchange for further landscaping but commented that this was a challenging corridor.

Council consensus:

Council was in favor of the gateway signage for the Orchard Lake Road overpass and winter light display and including funding in the budget.

Committees needs/memberships/overlaps/on-line presence

City Manager Mekjian explained that the website refresh makes it easier for people to determine openings on board and commissions and to apply for positions on-line.

It was also noted that the boards and commissions ordinance was reviewed extensively in order to look for overlaps and only one committee was eliminated at that time.

Council comments and suggestions:

- Need to rejuvenate and diversify the membership
- Find new ways to publicize openings
- Ensure that all boards and commissions are reporting annually to Council per ordinance requirements

Update on marijuana information meeting updates

City Manager Mekjian explained that City Council approved a plan to hold multiple sessions with members of the industry and staff is moving forward according to that plan. The session meeting times and dates have been identified and the sessions will be electronically and streamed on YouTube. Invitations and a press release will go out 30 days prior to the first session and sign up will be on-line and will be on a first come, first-serve basis according to the plan.

Mayor Barnett mentioned that she will be touring a facility in Walled Lake on February 4th and invited any members of Council or staff to join.

DTE Update

Assistant City Manager Valentine commented that it has become clear that the city has been neglected when it comes to infrastructure and with the help of the Mayor, the city has become more of a focus for DTE.

He reviewed the efforts of DTE over the past year that included:

- Tree trimming for 131 miles of wires with the remaining 41 miles to be done in the first and second quarters of 2022
- 4 circuits replaced on infrastructure

- 2022 they will continue infrastructure improvements, install new poles and animal guards

Mr. Valentine stated that he expects a comprehensive report in a few weeks. The city attorney is still filing complaints with the Michigan Public Service Commission.

Council comments and suggestions:

- Thanked the Mayor for her leadership in these discussions
- Concur that many issues are due to the need for upgrades to the infrastructure as in one week two transformers had blown
- Suggested requiring an update every few weeks to stay on top of the issues
- Concern that they heard MPSC was going to increase fees in order to pay for infrastructure upgrades

State Representative Steckloff stated that she meets with DTE weekly and will continue to work with them and keep pressure on them to make the necessary upgrades for this area.

Juneteenth as a city holiday

It was noted that Juneteenth is a federal holiday and the city is seeking direction from Council on whether this should be a city holiday and if so, would the city close that day or have a floating holiday for employees as they do for Columbus Day and Veterans Day. The city needs direction as there are several bargaining units whose contracts will be expiring and this would be a negotiated item.

Council comments and suggestions:

- Would like more information on what other communities are doing
- What is the cost to the city
- Concern with already having too many holidays and perhaps eliminating one other to allow for Juneteenth to be a city holiday

Council consensus:

For staff to obtain information on what other communities are doing and to gather cost for the city of Farmington Hills and to put this on the study session agenda for February 14, 2022.

Updating Zoning Master Plan

Council comments and suggestions:

- Would like City Council to play a more active role.

It was noted that the joint subcommittee consisting of both members from Council and Planning Commission would have an active role but had not met yet

Welcome packets

Assistant City Manager Valentine noted that the city has created a team and one of the items of discussion was revisiting a welcome packet and how to make that more available through both hard copy and on-line.

Council consensus:

For staff to review the following options:

- Reach out to renters by getting information to apartment managers
- Sending a letter to new homeowners from City Council

- Publicize the welcome packet in the FOCUS newsletter and Special Services activities guide
- Include welcome packet on the city website

Adaptive playground equipment

Consensus of Council:

In favor of the city reviewing options for adaptive and sensory playground equipment and having a senior playground.

It was suggested that the playground equipment and shelters at Heritage Park are updated.

Update for HAWK Innovation Center

The EDC was challenged with reviewing options for a possible business incubator on the third floor of the HAWK and have been working for past several years with consultants and through other resources.

Council received a presentation on the possibility of an Innovation Center on the third floor of the HAWK including potential layout, design and costs, options for funding, need for this type of opportunity, etc.

Considerable discussion was held on what this Innovation might look like and how it would proceed forward.

State Representative Steckloff stated that Michigan's number one focus is on Innovation and the need for business incubators. She is confident that the city would be able to get any investment made back through grant funding.

It was noted that a couple of universities were interested in a potential private/public partnership.

The next step would include holding a study session on the funding but Council consensus to move forward is important so that the EDC members could go back to those that have expressed interest indicating that City Council is in favor of moving forward with this concept to determine if those other entities are serious about partnering with the city and so that the EDC can start applying for grants on the city's behalf.

Council consensus:

City Council was in favor of moving forward with the concept as presented for an Innovations Center on the third floor of the HAWK.

It was noted that this endeavor is proposed to generate revenue and support the HAWK.

PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS:

There were no public comments.

ADJOURNMENT

The study session meeting adjourned at 1:07pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Pamela B. Smith, City Clerk