

MINUTES
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS
CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION MEETING
CITY HALL – COMMUNITY ROOM
JANUARY 9, 2017

The Study Session meeting of the Farmington Hills City Council was called to order by Mayor Massey at 6:00 pm.

Council Members Present: Bruce, Knol, Lerner, Massey, Rich and Steckloff

Council Members Absent: Bridges

Others Present: City Manager Boyer, City Clerk Smith, Assistant City Manager Mekjian, Director Randle and City Attorney Joppich

DISCUSSION ON TAX ABATEMENT FOR KERN LIEBERS, 24505 INDOPLEX CIRCLE

Director of Economic Development, Khalfani Stephens, explained that Kern Liebers is a company that manufacturers springs for the automotive industry and their intent was to expand the existing facility in Farmington Hills in order to increase production. He stated that preliminary plans for the expansion had to change due to an existing sanitary sewer line and the cost of moving the sewer line or redesigning the project around it was cost prohibitive. Mr. Stephens stated that the company has asked for a tax abatement to help offset costs. He noted that alternates they were discussing included a new facility in the metro Detroit area or moving operations to a facility in Ohio with excess capacity.

Director Stephens stated that after looking into the situation in efforts to keep them in Farmington Hills, it was discovered that the company may not be taking full advantage of tax opportunities afforded to them such as an Eligible Manufacturing Property (EMP) exemption. He stated that if the company is eligible for this exemption, it would eliminate the company's personal property liability and there would be no need for a tax abatement or further action by the city.

He added that by keeping the business in Farmington Hills it would be an investment in the city as they would then be purchasing the existing building rather than leasing and moving staff from their office in Mexico to this location. In response to Council he noted that there would be 13 employees the first year with an additional 30 to follow. The company has been in the community for a period of 3 years. He outlined the proposed abatement and stated that he was looking for feedback from Council on whether they would be agreeable to considering an abatement should the company discover they are not eligible for the other tax exemption as outlined.

City Council consensus was that they would be supportive of considering a tax abatement for this company if needed.

DISCUSSION ON BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Mayor Massey indicated that they have reviewed the proposed ordinance at several previous study sessions and the ordinance proposed to limit the number of members for joint boards and commissions and provide for some standardization.

Councilmember Rich inquired how someone could be made to serve until a successor is appointed as outlined in Section 2-129c of the ordinance. Attorney Joppich clarified that this is standard language that would apply to ensure that the current member shall serve until the next appointment should they be

stepping down or their term has expired so that there are no gaps in membership; but there is no way to make someone attend the meetings and serve.

Mayor Massey added that if the person decided not to serve until that time, alternate members could fill in at that time.

Councilmember Lerner inquired if City Council was prevented from applying to be a member of a board or commission.

Mayor Massey stated that members of Council may only serve on advisory boards or commissions but that this would also be monitored and considered during the appointment process.

Discussion was held on members appointing their own liaisons and the number of staff liaisons there should be for each board or commission.

City Manager Boyer stated that it will be made clear to the Chairs that anyone other than the voting members should speak during public questions and comments. He added that there should only be one staff liaison appointed to each board or commission.

Mayor Massey stated that the plan is to meet with the Chairs to review how to properly run the meetings and to have them provide reports on a regular basis.

Attorney Joppich suggested adding language to the staff liaison section to address this issue. The change is included below.

After further review of the proposed ordinance, the following changes were suggested:

Section 2-132. Staff Liaisons.

Include language that additional members of staff may attend upon request of the Chair and approval of the City Manager.

Section 2-139. Budget.

To add the wording “if any” in the second line following staff liaison. This was suggested as not all boards and commissions have staff liaisons.

Section 2-153. Members; appointment; quorum.

To change the number of members for joint commissions to be Nine (9) appointed by Farmington Hills and Two (2) appointed by Farmington. It was felt that this better reflected the populations of both communities. Attorney Joppich clarified that if one community was unable to appoint all of its members, the other community may not fill that appointment as the ordinance is written.

Section 2-154. Consultant.

To clarify that a board or commission may recommend that the City Manager (not city council) contract with consultants for services which they may require; and to move this section and have it apply to all boards and commissions.

Section 2-163. Members; appointment.

Attorney Joppich stated that in this section and others that included the same language, he would remove any reference to an effective date of February, 2017 and include language that would explain the change in the number of members would occur through attrition as previously discussed.

Section 2-165. Absences.

To reflect that three unexcused absences in the court of a year (rather than a term) shall subject a member to removal . . .

Section 2-172. Purposes, authority and duties.

Attorney Joppich also reiterated that the last sentence indicating that, "All programs and activities will be sent to council for approval" will be removed from all sections as previously discussed.

Section 2-173. Members; appointment

Remove the last two highlighted sentences as discussed.

Section 2-192. Authority, purposes and duties.

Attorney Joppich explained that this ordinance for the Commission on Energy and Environmental Sustainability (CEES) already included extensive provisions. He noted that he will remove Items 1, 2 and 10 under this section of the ordinance as they are duplicates since this now being incorporated into one board and commission ordinance.

Discussion was held on the CEES and issues with getting a quorum at the meetings. It was determined that it would be best for this commission to serve under the Parks and Recreation Commission.

Attorney Joppich stated that Council could repeal the existing ordinance eliminating it as a stand-alone commission but the next step would be to determine if it would be left to the Parks and Recreation Commission to pass a motion to establish the subcommittee or if it should be included in the Parks and Recreation Commission ordinance that this is a mandatory subcommittee of the Commission.

City Manager Boyer preferred that it was left to a motion of the Parks and Recreation Commission and not included as part of the ordinance. Mayor Massey agreed and suggested making it a part of their by-laws.

Councilmember Bruce expressed concern that if it were not made a mandatory subcommittee under the Commission that it would fade away eventually.

Councilmember Lerner stated that council needs to cut down on the number of boards and commissions and offered as a compromise perhaps changing the name of the commission to the Parks, Recreation, Energy and Sustainability Commission and allow the members to determine how to best handle the topic.

Councilmember Rich did not agree that the city necessarily had too many boards and commissions and agreed with Dr. Bruce that that his is a forward thinking commission and the city needs to have something on this topic.

Mayor Massey spoke again to the consistent lack of quorum and suggested a name change of Parks, Recreation and Sustainability Commission.

Councilmember Knol suggested allowing up to 11 members on a joint board and commission as she does not believe that the Beautification Commission will be able to get 11 members. She suggested putting CEES with the Beautification Commission although she is not sure it was a good fit.

City Manager Boyer stated that both could probably better fall under Parks and Recreation, but felt the Beautification Commission should stand on its own.

The consensus was to have CEES fall under the Parks and Recreation Commission as a subcommittee.

Due to the time, it was determined that further discussion on the proposed ordinance would continue either at the goals session or the next study session of February 13, 2017.

ADJOURNMENT:

The study session meeting adjourned at 7:25pm.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. B. Smith', written in a cursive style.

Pamela B. Smith, City Clerk