

**MINUTES
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS
FARMINGTON HILLS CITY COUNCIL
CITY HALL – COMMUNITY ROOM
OCTOBER 10, 2026 – 9:00AM**

The goals study session meeting of the Farmington Hills City Council was called to order by Mayor Rich at 9:03am.

Council Members Present: Aldred, Boleware, Bridges, Dwyer, Knol, Rich and Starkman

Council Members Absent: None

Others Present: Acting City Manager Mondora, City Clerk Lindahl and Director Skrobola

OPENING COMMENTS

Mayor Rich opened with remarks acknowledging the work of Acting City Manager Mondora in preparing a comprehensive one-page summary document consolidating the City's five strategic goals, key initiatives, items delivered, items in progress, and proposed 2027 priorities, along with the City's foundational values. The Mayor expressed that the document effectively illustrates how the City's work is not merely incremental but addresses substantive priorities, and that virtually every City employee could use it to understand where their work fits within the larger organizational mission.

Councilmember Bridges commended Acting City Manager Mondora for the document's value in guiding both the Council and administration.

Councilmember Aldred suggested the updated version, following this session, be published and made available to staff and the broader community as a communications tool. Acting City Manager Mondora confirmed that the communications team had already indicated the one-pager would assist them in crafting messaging for the coming year, and that the document would be updated to reflect the outcomes of this session.

REVIEW STATUS OF FEBRUARY 2026 GOALS

Before proceeding goal by goal, the Mayor asked whether any key initiatives were missing from the document. Councilmember Starkman raised the Orchard Lake/12 Mile corridor. Acting City Manager Mondora confirmed this was captured under 2027 potential priorities as the "Orchard Lake Corridor" and also incorporated within the corridor improvements key initiative and the accelerate redevelopment, zoning text and map amendments items.

Councilmember Dwyer asked whether economic development initiatives encompassed both commercial and residential development; Acting City Manager Mondora confirmed they did, tied to the zoning ordinance audit and implementation of its recommendations.

Councilmember Bridges asked whether enhanced zoning enforcement remained a continuing focus; Acting City Manager Mondora confirmed it did.

Mayor Rich noted that the 9 Line trail project was not reflected on the document. Acting City Manager Mondora advised that the City would be applying for a Transportation Alternatives Program grant through MDOT for non-motorized facility funding, with a construction target of 2028 or 2029, and an anticipated award notification in February. The Mayor noted this could become a 2027 goal if funded.

DISCUSSION ON 2027 GOALS

The Council discussed each of the five goal areas, reviewing delivered items, items in motion, and proposed 2027 priorities.

1. COMMUNITY SAFETY AND WELL-BEING

REVIEW OF 2025–2026 DELIVERED ITEMS AND ITEMS IN MOTION

Crime Data Analyst / Police Data Transparency

Councilmember Bridges requested an update on how the crime data analyst position, filled in October 2025, was being utilized. Acting City Manager Mondora summarized the analyst's work, which included intelligence reports, suspect lineups, bulletins, traffic stop and citation reports, use of force reports, mental health co-responder data, human trafficking analysis, and the City's dashboard data compilation, among other functions.

Councilmember Bridges expressed concern about the continued disparity in traffic citation rates, noting that African Americans receive approximately 45 percent of citations issued in the City, and asked that the crime data analyst be directed to provide clarity on whether departmental strategies are addressing this disparity.

Councilmember Dwyer requested an update on the new CLEMIS system, noting it had recently been restructured, and suggested that the Police Chief and CLEMIS representatives be invited to a future study session to present on how updated data capabilities are being used.

Councilmember Boleware noted significant discussion at the recent Traverse City conference regarding the new CLEMIS system and echoed the request for a presentation. She also observed that the crime data analyst position appeared to have expanded beyond its original scope, which was primarily focused on data extraction.

Acting City Manager Mondora acknowledged that a study session with the Chief would be appropriate to address all related questions.

Councilmember Bridges further noted that Chief King had previously issued an order discouraging the use of the "impeding traffic" citation code and refocusing enforcement on hazardous moving violations, which he supported as a potential mechanism for reducing enforcement disparities.

Case Manager and Mental Health Rapid Response

Councilmember Starkman reported that the Commission on Community Health is forming a subcommittee, with its first meeting scheduled for November 4th, to develop informational materials for citywide distribution and continue efforts to integrate mental health co-response into the police department. A presentation to City Council is anticipated in January.

Pedestrian Safety / E-Bikes / Vape Legislation

Mayor Rich noted that pedestrian safety discussions would likely include the topic of e-bikes. On vape legislation, she indicated that the state is currently considering action, and that the City would maintain a placeholder. If state legislation does not materialize, the City would consider local action given ongoing resident concerns.

2027 POTENTIAL PRIORITIES

Smoking Lounge Hours

Councilmember Bridges stated that hookah lounge hours had been reduced from midnight to 11:00 P.M. following incidents that drew significant police resources. He expressed openness to revisiting the midnight closing time and asked for a police department assessment of whether incidents at hookah lounges had decreased over the past year. Council indicated no objection to further review.

Flock Camera System

Council discussed the upcoming renewal of the City's Flock contract, which expires in June. Councilmember Dwyer provided context on the broad law enforcement use of Flock cameras nationally and in Michigan, noting that the Farmington Hills Police Department has received no complaints related to its camera usage, and cited the Woodland Park homicide as a case where Flock cameras were instrumental in solving the crime.

Councilmember Starkman expressed support for transparent, public-facing discussions about the cameras, concern about potential expansion, and the importance of public education about what the Flock system does and does not do.

Councilmember Knol agreed that council members themselves should be better informed before any public discussion, and supported smaller group meetings with the Chief before the contract renewal comes before the full Council.

Councilmember Bridges noted that he had originally supported the Flock cameras for the purpose of identifying individuals with outstanding felony warrants from other communities entering the City and confirmed with Acting City Manager Mondora that there had been zero reported instances of officers misusing the system. He requested that the Council be provided with a copy of the current Flock policy in advance of the renewal, and that state legislation on the matter be monitored.

Councilmember Boleware stated that she believed Flock camera education should be a stated goal for the year, separate from the contract renewal question. Council reached general consensus on this framing.

Councilmember Knol suggested deferring detailed discussions until after the November election, as state legislative developments were anticipated. The Council agreed to that timing.

Multifamily Rental Inspection

Acting City Manager Mondora noted that a roundtable was held with multifamily housing professionals during the summer, generating significant feedback on available tools and the challenges of implementing a new ordinance. Council had not yet provided direction on next steps. Councilmember Boleware and Councilmember Knol supported continuing the discussion and returning to Council with options. The item was confirmed to remain as an ongoing goal.

Police Presence at City Council Meetings

Councilmember Dwyer raised the issue of uniformed police presence at Council meetings, noting that nearly every comparable city in Michigan has at least one on-duty officer present, at no overtime cost. A benchmarking review of peer communities confirmed this is standard practice.

Acting City Manager Mondora recommended incorporating this as a policy within the Council's rules and guidelines rather than as a standalone goal, and Council concurred.

2. STRATEGIC REDEVELOPMENT

REVIEW OF 2025–2026 DELIVERED ITEMS AND ITEMS IN MOTION

Mayor Rich noted that zoning policy implementation, including text and map amendments, would be addressed at the Monday Council meeting. Work on accelerating redevelopment in the City's corridors continues.

Acting City Manager Mondora confirmed that a resolution establishing a six-month deferral on data center applications would also be before Council on Monday, during which the Planning Commission would review the matter and bring recommended ordinance changes

back to Council prior to March 31, 2026. A further deferral could be considered if that work is not completed in time.

Councilmember Aldred sought clarification on the distinction between deferring decisions on applications versus deferring development of a data center ordinance; Acting City Manager Mondora confirmed the resolution addresses both—applications received during the deferral period would be received but held, while the Planning Commission works on an ordinance update.

2027 POTENTIAL PRIORITIES

Food Truck Ordinance

Acting City Manager Mondora explained that both Cristia Brockway, Economic Development Director and Ted Davis, Special Services Director, have expressed interest in establishing guardrails around food truck operations—allowing them in specific instances such as the Orchard Lake corridor, city functions at The Hawk, or employer and community events—while providing the zoning division with a framework to address related inquiries.

Councilmember Knol indicated support for temporary food truck allowances tied to events but expressed concern about permanent food truck operations competing with brick-and-mortar establishments that pay property taxes.

Council agreed that the food truck ordinance should remain as a 2027 goal.

3. PLACEMAKING AND COMMUNITY HUBS

REVIEW OF 2025–2026 DELIVERED ITEMS AND ITEMS IN MOTION

Acting City Manager Mondora noted Council's awareness of the MNR Trust Fund park acquisition grant program, available on a case-by-case basis should land acquisition opportunities arise. Items in motion include the Costick Replacement and the playground master plan with sensory play equipment.

Mayor Rich reported that the newly launched Mayor's Youth Council would be engaged to help design new playground equipment at Heritage Park, working with a landscape architect and visiting parks in neighboring communities to gather inclusive design ideas.

Acting City Manager Mondora noted that Special Services Director Davis is developing a comprehensive parks asset management plan—the first of its kind for the City—to document the condition of parks amenities, establish life cycle cost analysis, and inform the upcoming five-year CIP.

The Heritage Park agreement was noted as progressing. Bond Park's CIP status under the parks master plan was confirmed.

9 Line Trail

Mayro Rich confirmed that the 9 Line trail project would be added to the Placemaking and Community Hubs goals for 2027, contingent on grant funding. Acting City Manager Mondora outlined the MDOT Transportation Alternatives Program grant application in progress, with construction targeted for 2028 or 2029, if funded.

4. WELCOMING COMMUNITY

REVIEW OF 2025–2026 DELIVERED ITEMS AND ITEMS IN MOTION

South End Focus

Mayor Rich noted that the South End and Grand River Corridor continue to receive attention, including discussion of potential Council meetings or study sessions held in the area.

Councilmember Bridges raised concerns about the appearance of the Jon Grant Community Center, noting that its landscaping is in poor condition and is situated adjacent to a closed gas station, creating a negative visual impression. He urged that attention be directed to improving the site.

Councilmember Bridges also noted that monument signs throughout the City need cleaning. Councilmember Knol suggested that court workers performing landscaping community service could be utilized for cleaning and maintenance of monument signs.

Redevelopment Signage

Acting City Manager Mondora noted that consultant Carlisle Wortman had been consulted on redevelopment notification signage practices among benchmark communities. Options under consideration include increasing the notification radius (currently 300 feet, potentially expanding to 500 feet or more) and determining whether signage is placed by the City or required of the applicant. Acting City Manager Mondora indicated that if this remains a goal, options could be brought forward for Council consideration. Council affirmed this as a continuing goal.

2027 POTENTIAL PRIORITIES

Civility Pledge

Councilmember Boleware presented a proposal, consistent with National League of Cities (NLC) initiatives, to adopt a civility pledge applicable to all who speak before the Council and boards and commissions—not limited to Council members themselves. Council expressed general support.

Early Childhood Initiative

Councilmember Boleware reported on the City's participation in the NLC Early Childhood Pathways Initiative, noting that the City was selected and that its proposal was supported by a letter from the school board. The initiative, funded through the NLC and the Bezos Foundation, is aimed at attracting young families by connecting the City with early childhood care providers and building community programming such as community suppers.

Acting City Manager Mondora confirmed that a full briefing for City Council is tentatively scheduled for the October 26th study session, covering the boot camp attended by staff and elected officials, and the draft plan produced from that session.

Mayor Rich noted that the Mayor's Youth Council expressed interest in serving as community ambassadors at early childhood programming events, drawing a parallel to the student ambassador model used at the school district's senior breakfast.

New Resident Orientation

Councilmember Knol proposed a new resident orientation event modeled on a program she observed at Sterling Heights' State of the City, in which newer residents are invited to City Hall for a structured event where each department head presents relevant information—permitting requirements, trash and recycling, available amenities, boards and commissions openings, and similar topics. She suggested this could be held during the week, targeted at newer residents including foreign-born residents less familiar with local government processes.

Councilmember Bridges suggested that the Mayor's Youth Council and student volunteers could assist with outreach and logistics. Councilmember Boleware agreed, noting that peer communication from youth increases community engagement.

Councilmember Aldred suggested supplementing any event with a written welcome packet mailed to new residents.

Acting City Manager Mondora raised the question of whether a new resident orientation might replace or alternate with the existing citywide open house, suggesting a possible rotating schedule of signature community events—open house one year, fireworks the next, a Hawk experience another year—to allow staff to focus on delivering one high-quality event annually rather than repeating the same format each year.

Even Year Elections

Mayor Rich raised the topic of moving local elections to even years to align with federal and state election cycles, noting that other cities have made this change.

City Clerk Lindahl confirmed that the City's current local elections cost around \$300,000, with approximately 22,000 permanent absentee ballots going out regardless of election size. She noted that piggybacking on a federal or state election would result in administrative costs being absorbed entirely by the state. Council agreed to schedule a study session to examine the question further.

Public Comment at City Council Meetings

Councilmember Aldred raised the question of whether the format for public comment at Council meetings should be reconsidered, noting that residents sometimes wait through long meetings to speak on items not on the agenda, and some leave before reaching the end. He suggested considering allowing a limited number of resident comments near the beginning of the meeting.

Mayor Rich acknowledged the history behind the current format—public comment was previously placed at the beginning of the agenda, but during a period of high public interest on certain issues, this resulted in meetings running past 11:00 P.M. before the Council could address its business agenda. The Mayor expressed personal reservations about returning to that format but acknowledged the legitimate concern for residents who wait. Legal considerations around equitable and consistent selection of speakers were also noted.

Councilmember Bridges stated that he was inclined to revisit the prior policy, expressing concern that placing public comment at the end of the meeting could inadvertently signal that resident participation is discouraged. Council agreed to keep this as a goal item for further discussion.

Community Conversation About Homelessness

Mayor Rich reported receiving a letter from CARES regarding homelessness and expressed support for initiating a community conversation on the issue. Council indicated support for moving forward with this conversation.

5. ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Special Services Budget Deficit

Mayor Rich acknowledged this as the key initiative under Organizational Excellence. Finance Director Skrobola provided an update on the City's financial position.

Pension Board

Finance Director Skrobola reported that the pension fund's investment allocation has been successfully shifted to 70 percent equities, consistent with the investment policy and aligned with best practices for a long-horizon, intergenerational fund. When he arrived, the allocation was at 55 percent—more appropriate for a mature, near-retirement workforce. The new allocation reflects the fund's broad membership across career stages. He noted that the funded percentage is improving and trending toward benchmark peers, with

collective bargaining agreements incorporating an 85 percent funding target as an incentive for reducing employee contributions once achieved. His long-term goal is to reach 100 to 110 percent funding, consistent with the City's retiree healthcare fund.

HR and Employee Engagement

Mayor Rich raised the value of reviewing the City's hiring, retention, promotion, and demographic data, noting it had been some time since the Council received such a report. Acting City Manager Mondora confirmed that the NeoGov HR platform, in use for approximately 18 months, tracks relevant metrics including time-to-fill positions, turnover rates, and demographic data by employment category. She noted that the communications team is also interested in conducting an internal employee engagement survey to establish a baseline, which could be done periodically.

2027 POTENTIAL PRIORITIES

AI on the City Website / AI Policy

Acting City Manager Mondora confirmed that an RFP for comprehensive website replacement is being prepared as a major initiative for the current fiscal year.

Regarding AI policy, IT Manager Jack Li has drafted an internal AI Use Policy that will be reviewed by the Technology Task Force with departmental representatives, then sent to the City's labor attorney before being finalized and published.

Councilmember Aldred confirmed this policy would govern permissible uses, data inputs, and review processes. Acting City Manager Mondora indicated the goal is to have the policy in place by year-end.

Fund Balance Policy

Councilmember Bridges stated that the City's high fund balance, while previously viewed as a resource, presents perception challenges and that having idle, undesignated reserves above accepted standards is not fiscally appropriate. He expressed support for a formal plan to move the general fund balance toward the Government Finance Officers Association recommended range of 25 to 35 percent of expenditures.

Finance Director Skrobola provided important context: with the Council's commitment of \$14 million toward the new activity center, the fund balance on June 30, 2027 is projected at approximately \$44.5 million—roughly 50 percent of general fund expenditures and transfers out. He cautioned that given the City's structural deficit of approximately \$4 million per year, the rating agencies have indicated that falling below 50 percent while continuing to spend down fund balance, which is projected to continue at roughly \$4 million per year after FY 26-27, will trigger a ratings downgrade. He emphasized that it is necessary to eliminate the structural budget deficit as soon as possible. Council agreed to retain fund balance policy as a 2027 goal.

Refuse Millage

Acting City Manager Mondora explained the history and mechanics of the City's refuse millage, noting it is one of the oldest statutory mechanisms for funding refuse collection. As an alternative, some communities bill residents directly through the hauler. The City's current contract with Priority Waste has several years remaining, and no immediate decisions are required.

Acting City Manager Mondora offered to circulate a benchmark study published annually by RRRASOC's general manager for informational purposes. Council agreed no action is needed at this time; the item was treated as informational.

Road and Special Services Millage

Acting City Manager Mondora outlined a potential strategy previously raised by Councilmembers Knol and Aldred involving a review of whether the road millage is being fully utilized relative to needs, and whether any portion could be redirected or whether a special services millage increase might be warranted given the structural deficit and playground/park infrastructure needs. She suggested a PASER modeling study with assumptions could be commissioned to inform this analysis.

Councilmember Aldred supported further research into the trade-offs. Council agreed the item should remain on the goals list.

PA 152 Hard Cap

Acting City Manager Mondora presented this as an informational item. Public Act 152, passed in 2012, limits public employer contributions to employee medical benefits, with the cap increasing by a modest CPI factor annually. In years of high premium increases—such as the current year, in which Blue Cross Blue Shield statewide rates are rising approximately 13.9 percent—employees absorb the excess or are offered a change in plan options.

Four of the City's six benchmark communities opt out of the hard cap annually. Acting City Manager Mondora was not advocating for a change but noted this is a recurring topic in high-increase years.

City Manager Review

It was confirmed that an annual performance review for the City Manager is included in the contract and is being implemented. Administration indicated a memo from the City Attorney outlining the process would be forthcoming. Council agreed this item does not need to remain as a standalone goal.

Rain Garden/Green Infrastructure

Mayor Rich raised community education around rain gardens as a relevant topic given increased frequency of high-rainfall events.

Councilmember Aldred noted that the IEES could play a role in distributing information and that he had gathered relevant information at a recent sustainable urban council summit.

Council noted the need for clarity on the distinction between a rain garden and an untended, weedy yard, and whether an ordinance framework would be needed. Council agreed to keep this item on the goals list.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

ADJOURNMENT

The study session meeting adjourned at 10:59am.

Respectfully submitted,

Carly Lindahl, City Clerk