

**MINUTES  
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS  
FARMINGTON HILLS CITY COUNCIL  
STUDY SESSION  
CITY HALL – COMMUNITY ROOM  
NOVEMBER 10, 2025 – 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 and Rich

Councilmembers Absent: Bruce

Others Present: City Manager Mekjian, City Clerk Lindahl, Director Rushlow and City Attorney Joppich

**CONCRETE PAVEMENT MATERIALS UPDATE**

Director of Public Services Jacob Ruschlow, City Engineer Mark Saskewski, Hubbell, Roth & Clark engineers Bill West and Andrea Pike, and Chris Nelson of the Michigan Concrete Association, were present on behalf of this agenda item.

Utilizing a PowerPoint presentation, *Concrete Paving Materials Update*, Mr. West provided an overview of developments in concrete road construction since 2022.

- Federal emission-reduction requirements adopted approximately 15 years ago prompted a statewide transition in 2022 from traditional Type I cement to Type I-L, a Portland Limestone Cement containing up to 15% finely ground limestone. While this change reduces energy use and carbon emissions, Type I-L interacts differently with water and is less tolerant of variations in finishing and curing practices. If moisture levels are not properly controlled, the surface layer of the concrete can weaken, leading to scaling, where thin layers of the surface flake or peel away.
- Concrete is manufactured differently depending on its intended use. Structural concrete for buildings, decorative concrete, bridge deck concrete, and machine-paved roadway concrete each require different mixes.
  - MDOT and RCOC use low-water, machine-paved concrete for highways.
  - Residential and local road pavements use higher-water, hand-finished concrete, which is the most vulnerable to scaling under the new Type I-L product (Portland Limestone Cement).
- In January - February 2024 warm rain saturated pavement surfaces followed by a rapid deep freeze, causing trapped water to freeze and expand, triggering widespread scaling. The scaling appeared across different projects completed by different contractors in different communities.

Farmington Hills has responded with:

- Enhanced mix requirements
- Contractual mechanism to remove and replace concrete for early age scaling
- New chemical admixtures developed by the concrete industry – with ongoing monitoring of results
- Testing various products on different project types to determine effectiveness
- Conducting pre-paving meetings for each project, providing enhanced emphasis to the importance and expectations for concrete curing.
- Use of warranties and bonds

- Heritage Hills Phase II: warranty removals and replacements performed in October.
- Maintenance and guarantee bonds (two-year duration) allow additional corrective work before project closeout.
- Heritage Hills Phase III warranty repairs are scheduled for the following year.

In summary, the City has adjusted specifications, implemented stronger oversight, and utilized warranty provisions to address scaling.

#### **Next steps**

- Continue issuing projects with enhanced concrete mix requirements.
- Require all private developers performing work in the public right-of-way to use the updated concrete specifications.
- Continue emphasizing proper placement, finishing, testing, and curing on every project.
- Promote industry certification programs now available for exterior concrete finishing crews.

#### **Q&A**

##### **Were industry certification programs available prior to these changes in concrete materials?**

Yes. Ongoing education and additional proficiency opportunities are part of the industry.

##### **Why can't the City return to the prior cement mixture (traditional Type I cement)?**

Type I cement is no longer available domestically in the United States.

##### **Why isn't there wide demand to return to Type I cement?**

The scaling issue is largely confined to residential and local road pavements that use higher-water, hand-finished concrete. Other uses – of which there are many – are not experiencing scaling, and there is no widespread call to return to Type I cement.

Also, through experimentation since 2022, the industry has identified which admixtures and combinations work well with Type I-L, and those that formerly performed well with Type I do not always perform well with the new cement.

Locally, as a result of lessons learned since the transition began in 2022, current concrete being placed in Farmington Hills is performing better than concrete placed in early phases of Heritage Hills.

##### **Who is responsible for the scaling problems in Heritage Hills?**

Responsibility falls on the contractor to whom the City awarded the road construction contract. The City's specification defines a slab as warrantable for replacement if 15 percent or more of its surface exhibits scaling. Using this criterion, the City and its engineering consultant (HRC) have been identifying affected slabs and requiring contractors to remove and replace them under warranty. The City's objective is to fully utilize all available warranty remedies before expiration. There is no cost to taxpayers for these warranty replacements; the cost is entirely borne by the contractor.

##### **Should warranty language be reviewed?**

The current contract warranty language appears to be working effectively. It has allowed the City to enforce corrective action under existing projects. Opportunities to strengthen warranties in future contracts could be explored, but, as written, the current provisions are functioning as intended.

The current warranty length is two years; the City has not yet reached a point where failures have occurred outside of the existing warranty period. Scaling is predominantly a near-term phenomenon. Most scaling manifests in the first one to two winters after placement. If a pavement surface performs adequately through the first winter, surface-related distress is generally unlikely to appear unexpectedly many years later.

**Does Michigan use different standards than other states?**

Every state has its own standards for concrete pavements. Michigan benefits from strong limestone deposits and multiple cement producers, along with nearby quarries for aggregates. Michigan also has unique challenges:

- Michigan allows higher truck loads than most other states, increasing pavement loading stress.
- Michigan experiences more frequent freeze-thaw cycles than many nearby states, including Ohio.
- Soils in southeastern Michigan are generally poor and present additional challenges for road construction.
- These combined factors make southeastern Michigan a difficult place to build long-lasting roads, and problems are not solely attributable to contractors or basic materials.

**How does the City vet contractors?**

The City uses a reference and vetting process. Bidders must provide references for similar projects, often specifying a minimum length of pavement constructed in southeast Michigan. The look-back period is generally limited to 5 years, depending on project type. References must come from peer municipalities (e.g., Southfield, Livonia).

Engineering staff did not wish to take a “wait and see” approach. The City is actively using available science, research, and lessons from other communities to refine specifications, adopt new materials, and improve application practices. The goal is to achieve the best possible pavement quality under current industry conditions rather than simply watching deterioration occur.

- The City’s 15 percent scaling threshold for slab replacement is based on structural performance; light to moderate scaling affects only a very thin surface layer and does not significantly impair structural capacity, though it may look unsightly.
- The City has historically followed a policy of replacing roads in-kind (asphalt with asphalt, concrete with concrete), based on prior analyses indicating similar costs per mile, though staff noted that relative costs fluctuate over time.

**What is the cost comparison between asphalt and concrete?**

This is a moving target. Prices fluctuate regularly based on multiple industry factors. Concrete is more labor-intensive and requires more extensive traffic control and curing time. Asphalt is quicker and easier to install but has a shorter service life. Staff can analyze recent unit pricing data and service life assumptions from the last several years to provide a more detailed comparison.

**Is concrete preferable environmentally, given that asphalt contains petroleum products that may leach into the groundwater?**

Chris Nelson, representing the concrete industry, said that:

- Both asphalt and concrete can be recycled at the end of their life, so they are roughly equivalent in terms of recyclability.
- Concrete pavement surfaces tend to stay cooler and reflect less heat compared to asphalt, which reduces heat island effects in urban areas.

- Concrete pavements generally offer lower rolling resistance for vehicles, improving fuel efficiency and potentially reducing emissions.

**Does the Sustainability Commission have a role to play in researching the environmental implications of concrete versus asphalt?**

- Councilmember Knol: most members of the Sustainability Commission lack the specialized technical background needed to make pavement material decisions. That role belongs to professional staff.
- Councilmember Boleware: Sustainability Commission could follow the example of the Brownfield Authority, which works effectively with technical experts. The Commission could help ensure that environmental considerations remain a regular part of the discussion.
- City Manager Mekjian said that staff can compile relevant research and information for Council's review. Director Rushlow added that Engineering can assist in gathering and analyzing the available data.
- A UofM sustainability professor serves on the City's Sustainability Commission, which may support a collaborative effort on this issue.

**There is a perceived higher quality of concrete pavement in some other communities. Is this perception accurate?**

Staff and consultants were not familiar with different cross sections or contractor practices used from community to community.

**How many pounds of limestone are being used under the wire mesh?**

Wire mesh is no longer used in pavement construction. If the question refers to the aggregate base under the pavement, this layer is used beneath almost every road, and is measured by thickness, not by weight. The amount of aggregate base used also depends on the geotechnical soil conditions underneath the roadway.

**What evidence exists that current scaling issues will remain primarily cosmetic and not evolve into deeper structural failures in five years or more?**

Type I-L cement has been used in other regions of the United States since approximately 2012, with those states reporting good performance and no widespread long-term structural failures.

When Type I-L was introduced in Michigan in 2022, local contractors were unfamiliar with its finishing characteristics, leading to a learning curve and increased sensitivity to finishing practices. The scaling experienced locally is largely tied to this adjustment process, rather than an inherent structural defect.

**What additional measures are being taken beyond using admixtures and being especially attentive to field slump and water content?**

Full-time inspection, pre-paving meetings, and immediate field interventions are being used to enforce best practices and prevent avoidable surface damage.

**Why does MDOT use a different concrete mix?**

The key difference is the mode of placement and finishing. MDOT and RCOC highway pavements are machine-paved in long, straight sections with relatively uniform geometry. In contrast, subdivision and local street intersections involve frequent handwork: navigating around driveways, catch basins, ADA ramps, and cul-de-sacs.

Mayor Rich closed discussion on this item.

## **DISCUSSION ON FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR FOOD BANKS AND OTHER NON-PROFITS IN FARMINGTON HILLS**

This item was brought forward at the request of several Councilmembers, in light of increased global and local needs and the important role of local service organizations.

### **Overview of CDBG public service funding and partner agencies**

Planning and Community Development Director Kettler-Schmult presented an overview of the City's use of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds for public service activities.

- The discussion revisited the public hearing held in April on the CDBG budget, which at that time was based on conservative estimates because the final allocation was not yet known.
- The "public service" category is defined by federal regulation and differs from how the City typically uses the term; in this context, it refers to agencies providing direct community services.
- Current public service partners funded through CDBG include:
  - CARES of Farmington Hills (food bank and social services)
  - HAVEN
  - Common Ground
  - Lighthouse (South Oakland Shelter)
- Some of the CDBG-funded activities also fulfill the City's fair housing obligations and help demonstrate to the federal government that the City supports domestic violence services, mental health care, and emergency housing.
- By partnering with countywide agencies, the City can leverage CDBG funds alongside other resources the agencies receive, rather than providing those specialized services directly.
- CDBG public service funding is subject to a federal cap of 15 percent of total CDBG resources (annual allocation plus eligible program income).

City Manager Mekjian added that the CDBG budget is formula-based and varies annually, so the City does not know the final allocation in advance. Non-profits must contact staff if they wish to be considered for public service funding within that 15 percent portion.

City Manager Mekjian also noted that, following recent discussion, there was some confusion stemming from information suggesting that other municipalities might be contributing more to CARES than Farmington Hills. Staff therefore contacted nearby communities to clarify their contributions.

Director Kettler-Schmult reported:

- The City of Southfield used federal COVID-era CDBG allocations, which were subject to a temporary waiver of the 15 percent cap for public services, to provide support. Their last recorded contribution to CARES of Farmington Hills was \$14,650 in May 2023.
- The City of Livonia has provided CDBG funding to CARES as well. Their records show \$25,000 in 2025 CDBG funds, following \$10,000 in 2024 CDBG funds.
- The City of Farmington does not allocate CDBG funds to CARES but they may choose to support CARES through other mechanisms. Councilmember Knol noted that the City of Farmington does not receive CDBG funds directly because of its size. Instead, Oakland County administers its program, which is why Farmington does not contribute CDBG funds to CARES.

Councilmember Bridges noted that approximately \$42,000 of CDBG funds are currently directed to public service activities, including CARES, with \$27,000 allocated to HAVEN, Common Ground, and Lighthouse combined. He asked for additional comparative information:

- How much similar communities contribute to HAVEN, Common Ground, and Lighthouse, to determine whether Farmington Hills is above or below a typical range of support.
- Whether reallocation within the 15 percent cap might be appropriate if Council decides to increase funding to CARES at the expense of other agencies.
- How many Farmington Hills residents are actually served by HAVEN, Common Ground, and Lighthouse.

Councilmember Aldred pointed out that the \$42,500 budgeted for public service is \$11,000 below the 15% cap. What would be involved in increasing public service funding closer to the actual \$53,800 cap?

Director Kettler-Schmult explained that increasing the public service budget beyond what is already approved would require the City to file a substantial amendment to its CDBG plan. This type of amendment means the City would need to revise the plan, publish a public notice, hold a public hearing, gather public comments, and then submit everything to the federal government for review. Under normal circumstances—when federal systems are fully up and running—this process typically takes three to four months and requires a significant amount of staff time. Staff remain optimistic that the federal systems will be operating again soon, but the timing is ultimately outside the City's control.

Councilmember Boleware asked whether all of the non-profit entities currently funded through CDBG are 501(c)(3) organizations. Director Kettler-Schmult confirmed that they are. City Manager Mekjian added that while the City could theoretically use general fund dollars to support non-profits, benchmark communities do not do so, and such a policy could require selecting among many deserving charities and create equity concerns. Councilmember Knol further explained that the City limits its support to those agencies funded by CDBG funds, which must provide essential services not otherwise offered by the City.

City Manager Mekjian noted that some CDBG-funded service organizations, such as those addressing mental health and addiction, work closely with the City's police and fire departments. This collaboration helps address needs that intersect with public safety functions.

Councilmember Boleware requested more detailed information on the specific services each funded agency provides, particularly CARES. She expressed interest in confirming that the organizations supported are those providing the greatest impact and meeting the most urgent community needs.

Director Kettler-Schmult responded that all agencies submit service reports before reimbursement, including data on individuals served in crisis intervention, emergency shelter, domestic violence services, and hotline support. These records are available for Council review.

Within the last five years the City significantly increased support for HAVEN and made smaller increases for Common Ground. CARES also received a substantial increase, rising from approximately \$7,000 to about \$15,000.

Mayor Rich closed discussion on this item.

#### **DISCUSSION ON CITY COUNCIL PACKET DISTRIBUTION**

City Manager Mekjian said that over the past six to eight months, staff had noticed occasional problems with packet delivery. Some packets had been misplaced or left in spots where they went unnoticed. Others were delivered while a Councilmember was away, leaving sensitive information unsecured. In

some cases, additional materials were added late, creating confusion about what the packet actually contained.

Clerk Lindahl presented an option of making packets available for pickup at City Hall beginning at 5:00pm on Fridays, rather than continuing the Saturday morning home delivery. This could reduce the chance of sensitive documents being left on porches and give Councilmembers more flexibility as to when they collect their materials.

On the other hand, Council noted that Saturday morning home delivery has been the standard for 35 years and has always worked well. After discussion, there appeared to be consensus that the current delivery method did not need to change.

Clerk Lindahl described the packet preparation process, and Council discussed briefly discussed questions regarding very large packet items that are sometimes not printed out but provided via online links, when mail addressed to individual council members is forwarded through the packet delivery system, etc. Councilmember Bridges advocated for earlier access to packet materials, when possible.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Rich closed discussion and adjourned the meeting at 7:19pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Carly Lindahl, City Clerk