

**MINUTES  
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS  
ACTIVITIES CENTER AD-HOC ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
APRIL 30, 2026 – 6:00PM  
CITY HALL – COUNCIL CHAMBER**

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Steve Stimson at 6:01pm.

**ROLL CALL/INTRODUCTIONS**

Members Present: Aldred, Fantore, Gottlieb, Paymon, Rich and Stimson

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Acting City Manager Mondora, City Clerk Lindahl, Directors Aranowski, Farmer, Skrobola, Sullen-Winn and Senior Adult Supervisor Koet

**DISCUSSION AND REVIEW OF THE VENDOR SELECTION FOR ARCHITECTURAL AND ENGINEERING SERVICES FOR THE NEW ACTIVITIES CENTER****Background and RFP Process**

Acting City Manager Mondora provided a comprehensive overview of the procurement process that led to the selection of an architectural and engineering (A&E) firm for the new Activities Center. She explained that on November 24, 2025, City Council authorized staff to issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) to select an A&E firm to conduct research, gather information, and evaluate the site for the new facility. The RFP was published on the City's procurement website, and proposals were publicly opened on February 25, 2026. Notifications were distributed to over 2,500 firms, and 15 teams responded with full proposals.

Acting City Manager Mondora emphasized the critical role the selected A&E firm would play in the project's success, noting that the firm would be responsible for reviewing and analyzing existing data, presenting design options, and ultimately collaborating with a construction manager and contractor to be identified in a future phase. The firm's responsibilities would span all phases of the project—from schematic design and design development through construction documentation, bidding, construction administration, and occupancy.

**Shortlisting and Evaluation**

A staff review committee comprised of representatives from multiple city departments conducted the initial evaluation of the 15 submissions. Committee members included the Public Services Director, Finance Director, both Deputy Directors of Special Services, Acting City Manager Mondora, and Michelle Aranowski, Director of Central Services. Five firms were shortlisted and invited to interview:

- Albert Connen Associates
- French Associates
- Neumann Smith Architects
- TMP Associates

- Spark 43 Architects

Director Aranowski then presented the criteria used to evaluate and score the firms. In her initial review of all 15 submissions, she examined each firm's years of experience, noting that firms founded fewer than five years were regarded with caution, as staff did not want the new Activities Center to serve as a launching project for an inexperienced firm. Staff also evaluated each firm's prior municipal work experience, specifically seeking firms with demonstrated work in the municipal arena rather than solely in schools or other building types.

Additional evaluation criteria included whether any firm had ever had a contract terminated for cause by a client; how each firm approached budget control, cost control, quality control, and schedule adherence; and how each firm stayed current with construction codes and legal requirements. Director Aranowski noted that firms were required to explain in their own words what those concepts meant to them and how they planned to implement them. Staff also carefully reviewed the list of subconsultants each firm proposed, observing that some firms presented weak or incomplete sub-consultant teams, raising questions about their ability to deliver the full scope of work.

Following the written review, staff developed a list of interview questions for the five shortlisted firms. After conducting interviews, the committee scored the firms and determined unanimously that Neumann Smith Architects was the most qualified, describing the outcome as a clear margin of separation.

### **Neumann Smith Architects — Selected Firm**

Acting City Manager Mondora provided additional details on the selected firm and its team. Neumann Smith Architects is based in Southfield, Michigan, and has an extensive portfolio of similar work in Southeast Michigan, including community center design work for the City of Oak Park, Washtenaw County, and the City of Midland. She also noted that several members of the Neumann Smith team are regular participants in the City's Special Services programming, underscoring their familiarity with the community.

Neumann Smith's proposed sub-consultant team was identified as particularly strong, comprising:

- IMEG – mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and technology services
- Spaulding Decker – parking layout and site utilities
- Ruby and Associates – structural engineering
- Grissom Metz Associates – landscape architecture
- Water Technologies Incorporated – aquatics consulting
- JS2 – food service consulting

Mayor Rich highlighted the inclusion of Grissom Metz Associates as an especially encouraging element, noting that this firm is already engaged with the city on the Grand River Corridor streetscape study. She described their work with the Grand River Corridor Improvement Authority as exciting and expressed that the firm gets who we are as a community.

### **City Council Action and Site Decision**

Acting City Manager Mondora summarized the resolution passed by City Council at its April 28, 2026 regular meeting. The motion, which carried 5 to 2, authorized the Acting City Manager to execute a

phased contract with Neumann Smith Architecture for architectural and engineering services related to the new Activities Center at the Costick Activity Center site, in a total amount not to exceed \$1,771,430, based on the hourly fees proposed. The authorization was contingent upon negotiation and approval of a revised scope and hourly rate schedule addressing only the Costick site, availability of funding, and final review and approval of terms by the City Attorney. The same motion directed the City Administration to discontinue action related to City Council's November 24, 2025 decision regarding the new Activities Center at the Hawk site, until further notice.

Member Paymon sought clarification, asking whether the current direction of the project was exclusively focused on the Costick site and not the Hawk. Acting City Manager Mondora confirmed that to be the case. Councilmember Aldred further clarified that the A&E firms reviewed were already aware of both potential sites—having reviewed council minutes and prior discussions—and that the pivot to the Costick site was a decision of City Council, not of the A&E firm itself.

Member Paymon also shared feedback she had been receiving from community members who questioned why anything would be built at the Hawk site given the proximity of the recently constructed senior living facility at the Costick site. She said that the Council's decision made sense to her and that she would be happy to relay this clarity to members of the public who had been asking the same question.

### **Commission on Aging Feedback**

Member Fantore relayed that the Commission on Aging had met the day after the Council vote, with approximately 20 people in attendance, and that the general sentiment was overwhelmingly positive regarding both the Council's site decision and the selection of Neumann Smith. Attendees specifically praised the A&E firm's presentation style, particularly their emphasis on communication and listening.

### **Committee Discussion — Process and Structure**

Several committee members raised concerns about the committee's overall methodology and structure for fulfilling its advisory role. Member Fantore stated that he saw the goal but did not see the path and noted that similar comments made at the April 8th meeting had not been captured in the minutes and formally requested that they be added.

Member Gottlieb added that she would like the committee's agenda to include a standing new business item so that members could formally introduce ideas and feedback received from the community.

Member Paymon raised a related concern about how the committee's input and the community's ideas would be reliably conveyed to the A&E firm. Acting City Manager Mondora indicated that the committee's advisory role to City Council was covered under the resolution.

Mayor Rich agreed that a standardized agenda item for new business made sense, noting that the four citizen members were specifically chosen because of their "tentacles throughout the community and different constituencies," and that the committee's value lay precisely in bringing that input back in a structured way.

Mayor Rich indicated her expectation that Neumann Smith Architects would be invited to present at the next meeting, tentatively scheduled for May 14, though she acknowledged they had only been selected a couple of days prior and would need time to prepare. Acting City Manager Mondora confirmed it was possible the firm could be under contract and available by that meeting, noting that typical timelines for completing insurance paperwork, bonds, and other formalities run a few weeks rather than months.

Councilmember Aldred agreed with the call for structure, saying he expected the A&E firm to bring process and guidelines of their own given their prior experience with similar projects, but affirmed that the committee should also adopt a format to ensure it was gathering some thoughts together in a structured way rather than simply talking. He suggested that the committee review prior survey results and existing research so as not to start from scratch. Acting City Manager Mondora confirmed that the survey data already collected would be shared with the committee and provided to Neumann Smith, with any gaps to be identified and filled as needed.

Mayor Rich reminded the committee that at the prior meeting, members had reviewed the RFP, which established the baseline minimum standards for what the A&E firm would deliver, and noted that the committee had already had a thorough discussion about the kitchen component, which would not need to be revisited.

### **Project Timeline**

Member Gottlieb asked whether there was a tentative project timeline with defined milestones that the committee and community could reference. Acting City Manager Mondora explained that the first two authorized tasks are the site evaluation and site master plan, which are expected to take three to six months. Subsequent phases—including design drawings, specifications, and procurement of a construction manager—will be contingent on project funding. She also confirmed that the existing Costick building would remain in operation until staff are ready to open the new facility, as City Council has committed to maintaining the existing facility throughout the transition period. She also noted that the new facility must be large enough and accessible enough to accommodate nine days of early voting as required under current election law.

### **Design and Amenity Ideas from Committee Members**

Several committee members shared ideas gathered from their community interactions.

Member Gottlieb, who spends considerable time at the Costick Center and has been circulating her personal contact information for residents to share input, reported the following themes: a strong demand for a walking track, with community members noting that a gym's naturally high ceiling could make this a cost-effective addition; preference for wooden flooring over composite in the dance and multipurpose areas, as the current Costick floor is described as sticky and problematic for ballroom and hustle dancing; higher-height toilets for residents with mobility issues, framed as a matter of dignity and independence; wider parking spaces to accommodate walkers and caregivers opening car doors in close quarters; and accessible pool entry options, including built-in steps and a lift, in addition to the current ladder-style entry.

Chair Stimson raised the topic of outdoor space, expressing interest in walkable paths and areas to socialize or eat outdoors. He noted that while tree cover is limited near the Costick site, he hoped at minimum for pleasant outdoor seating and gathering areas.

Mayor Rich expressed a desire for a sculpture garden and noted that the Costick once had a courtyard with a fountain and butterfly garden, stating she would like to see those elements considered, even if they could not be funded in the first phase. She added that Member Joshua Taylor of the Parks and Recreation Commission had been a strong advocate for adult changing tables with automatic lifts to provide dignity for people with disabilities, a feature Mayor Rich said she personally supported and had been advocating for across multiple city facilities.

Mayor Rich also raised the issue of restroom and door clearance, citing feedback that a neighboring city's new facility had insufficient clearance for wheelchair users.

Member Gottlieb noted that the current Costick locker room design is reminiscent of a high school, with narrow, closely-spaced lockers that are inadequate for older users who need more room to maneuver.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF APRIL 8, 2026**

Member Fantore noted that his comments regarding a path for the committee and need for a defined process had not been captured in the draft minutes and requested that those comments be added.

A motion to approve the minutes of the April 8, 2026 meeting, as amended, was made by Fantore and seconded by Councilmember Aldred.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Lori Daro expressed deep gratitude to the Mayor and Council for the decision to proceed with the Costick site, stating that the community was very excited. She offered the following input: a one-story building is critical for the senior population; a walking track above the gym appeared to be an inexpensive and popular option at other facilities visited, or alternatively, a courtyard design allowing a walking loop around the building's perimeter; the building should be large enough to accommodate increased demand, as she anticipated a beautiful new facility would attract significantly more users than the current center, which is already frequently at capacity; she inquired whether Neumann Smith had specific experience designing predominantly senior-focused facilities and, if not, whether they planned to engage a sub-consultant with that specialty; she noted that the Hawk's physical therapy partnership did not materialize, but that senior-focused facilities had found it viable and suggested the new center consider space for on-site physical therapy and nursing services, noting the convenience of combining lunch with therapy in one trip.

Michael Harris commented on locker size, noting that the Hawk's lockers are too small and insufficient to hold a winter coat or store shoes without standing them upright. He contrasted this unfavorably with the YMCA and Costick locker rooms and urged the committee to ensure new lockers are adequately sized.

Leanne Kufchock, a resident and a near-daily user of the Costick Center, offered personal gratitude, noting that the timing of the new facility's anticipated completion would coincide with her retirement, allowing her to enjoy it for decades. Her primary recommendation was the creation of a centralized public website and social media presence for the project, updated at least weekly in real time, containing timelines, supporting documents, and decisions as they are made. She argued this would reduce the spread of misinformation already circulating in the community. She suggested the website could include a Q&A feature to actively debunk rumors and proposed that a member of the ad hoc committee take on the specific responsibility of managing this communications function.

Darcy S expressed appreciation for the Council vote. She suggested the new pool incorporate windows on the east and west sides to bring in natural light and create a connection to the outdoors, noting that she personally enjoys the existing light-filled section of the Costick pool during water aerobics. She seconded the call for higher toilets but noted the importance of also retaining lower toilets for children using the warmer instructional pool. She confirmed that the YMCA's upper-level walking track was a worthwhile reference point and affirmed support for retaining a courtyard similar to the current Costick, where outdoor gatherings and activities such as ice cream socials take place. She recommends the

committee be mindful of the William Costick legacy and the deep affection community members have for the Costick name.

Lynette Bohn and Joan Gibbons, both regular water aerobics participants attending four times per week, presented a joint list of suggestions. Ms. Bohn began with a recommendation for barrier-free showers in the locker rooms, expressing personal safety concerns about the current concrete dividers. Additional suggestions from their joint list included:

- Appropriate pool depth for water aerobics, lap swimming, diving, and scuba lessons, with at least two lanes always reserved for lap swimming and a graduated shallow end with a ramp and handrail
- An indoor and/or outdoor walking track with two lanes—one for power walkers and one for slower walkers—running along the building's full perimeter with windows, plants, and ample glass
- Good air circulation in the walking area for warm weather
- A gentle circuit training area with exercise bands, hand weights, and instructional signage, particularly beneficial for osteoporosis management
- Large lockers comparable in size to those at the Costick (the Hawk's were again cited as inadequate)
- An electronic smart card or phone-based check-in system for locker access and class registration, with a backup option for those without smartphones
- Electronic check-in at the front entrance to reduce wait times

Ms. Gibbons continued with the joint list, adding:

- Enhanced locker room security to prevent unauthorized entry, noting there had been past incidents of unknown individuals entering
- An outdoor pool as an aspirational addition for summertime use
- Dedicated rooms for yoga and exercise classes, a reading room, computer access, and a game and social lounge with coffee, tea, a piano, space for live music and movies
- A dance, balance, tai chi, and Pilates room with mirrors and ballet bars
- A craft room for hobby classes such as quilting, sewing, and drawing
- A gym with basketball and pickleball courts
- A wider entrance driveway, particularly the 11 Mile Road entrance, which is currently too narrow for two-way vehicle traffic
- A small gift shop where residents can donate and purchase items, similar to the one currently operating at the Costick
- Retention of swim lessons for children and scuba diving programming, with pool depths appropriate to those uses—the Hawk's pool was again cited as too shallow for aerobic swimming

Ms. Gibbons noted that the current Costick pool depth is considered ideal and expressed hope that the new center would replicate it.

Sue Homant described the current arrangement of the Costick pool as five lanes, with three reserved for lap swimmers and two open for deep-water walkers, sometimes accommodating nine to ten people in the deep end. She raised a specific concern about pool ramp accessibility, noting that while she appreciated the accessibility intent, dedicating an entire lane to a down-ramp would be a significant loss of swim capacity. She noted that electric pool chairs are already available at the Costick and that lifeguards have confirmed they function well, though some users are reluctant to use them due to embarrassment. She also raised a safety concern about exterior lighting, recounting an incident in which she arrived before dawn in winter and could not identify a person on the walkway until he was close, due to insufficient lighting. She urged that the new facility's exterior be well-lit, particularly for early morning users.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Stimson adjourned the meeting at 7:36pm, confirming the next meeting would be May 14, 2026 at City Hall at 6:00pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Carly Lindahl, City Clerk