

**MINUTES
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
CITY HALL – COUNCIL CHAMBER
MARCH 9, 2026 – 7:30 PM**

The regular session of the Farmington Hills City Council was called to order by Mayor Rich at 7:35PM.

Councilmembers Present: Aldred, Boleware, Bridges, Dwyer, Knol, Rich and Starkman

Councilmembers Absent: None

Others Present: Acting City Manager Mondora, City Clerk Lindahl; Directors Aranowski, Farmer and Rushlow, Police Chief Piggott, Fire Chief Unruh and City Attorney Joppich

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The pledge of allegiance was led by Ellen Schnackel.

APPROVAL OF REGULAR SESSION MEETING AGENDA

MOTION by Bridges, support by Starkman, to approve the agenda as published.

MOTION CARRIED 7-0.

PROCLAMATION RECOGNIZING GARY MEKJIAN'S RETIREMENT AND YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE CITY

The following proclamation was read by Councilmember Bridges:

**PROCLAMATION
City Manager Gary Mekjian
On the Occasion of his Retirement
March 9, 2026**

WHEREAS, Gary Mekjian, who was raised in Farmington Hills, has provided more than 15 years of service to his hometown, including serving in the City's highest administrative role; and,

WHEREAS, since joining the City in 2010 as the Director of Public Services, Gary has served in various leadership capacities and has supported the development of City staff and provided mentorship to fellow City teammates.

WHEREAS, under Gary's leadership as City Manager, the City achieved numerous successes, including the development of the 2025-2030 Strategic Plan with a mission, vision and values for the City, the securing of numerous major improvement grants, the creation of the Department of Communications and Community Engagement, and more; and,

WHEREAS, as Gary embarks on a new chapter, we thank him for his years of service.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that I, Theresa Rich, Mayor of the City of Farmington Hills, on behalf of the City Council, do hereby thank **City Manager Gary Mekjian** for his service to the City and express our best wishes for his future endeavors.

PROCLAMATION RECOGNIZING ELLEN SCHNACKEL’S RETIREMENT AND YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE CITY

The following proclamation was read by Councilmember Starkman:

**PROCLAMATION
Director of Special Services Ellen Schnackel
On the Occasion of her Retirement
March 9, 2026**

WHEREAS, Ellen Schnackel has dedicated nearly 23 years of exemplary service to the City of Farmington Hills with stalwart dedication and commitment to providing the community with essential services; and,

WHEREAS, throughout her career, Ellen has worked diligently to serve the community, building lasting relationships with community members, and fostering a culture of teamwork and accountability; and,

WHEREAS, Ellen has seen numerous successes as a department leader and colleague to her fellow City teammates since joining in 2003, including the grand opening of The Hawk in 2021, the City’s award-winning cultural arts and recreation programming; and,

WHEREAS, Ellen leaves behind a legacy of service through teaching, coaching, and mentoring with compassion and fairness that will continue to inspire future generations of professionals in parks, the arts, recreation, senior services, and more; and,

WHEREAS, as Ellen embarks on a new chapter, we express our deepest gratitude for her dedication and contributions to our community, as well as her commitment to excellence.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that I, Theresa Rich, Mayor of the City of Farmington Hills, on behalf of the City Council, do hereby honor **Director Ellen Schnackel** for her extraordinary service, and express our heartfelt thanks and best wishes for her future endeavors.

Ms. Schnackel shared that it had been a pleasure to serve, and thanked City administration, City Council members, and her staff.

ANNOUNCEMENTS/PRESENTATIONS FROM CITY BOARDS, COMMISSIONS AND PUBLIC OFFICIALS

Mayor Rich wished Farmington Hills resident AC Calvin Phelix McDaniel a happy 100th birthday and thanked him for being a valued member of the community, noting his service and leadership with the Exodus Missionary Baptist Church and his contribution to the community.

Property tax foreclosure prevention

Oakland County Treasurer Robert Wittenberg gave a presentation on Property Tax Foreclosure Prevention. Treasurer Wittenberg reviewed the Michigan property tax foreclosure three year process of delinquency, forfeiture, and foreclosure; the goal is to help people prevent foreclosure. Should foreclosure occur, new legislation allowed property owners to submit a claim for the surplus from a foreclosure auction.

Treasurer Wittenberg encouraged taxpayers to pay mandatory state fees to avoid interest, explained ways the Oakland County Treasurer Office worked to prevent foreclosure including confidential taxpayer assistance meetings and working with the Financial Empowerment Center (248-858-0672). He shared 2024 and 2025 foreclosure data. In 2025, out of 500,000 parcels in Oakland County, 251 were foreclosed. In Farmington Hills, in 2025 there were 747 delinquent parcels, 130 forfeited parcels, 2 foreclosed parcels, and 2 land sale parcels.

March 31, 2026 is the deadline for anyone who owes taxes for 2023 and prior to 2023 to pay or make a payment agreement to prevent foreclosure.

Other Oakland County Treasurer's Office programs include the SmartFinance Academy, the Independent Bank Homebuyer Assistance Program, and the Residential Property Owner Education Program. Information about the Oakland County Treasurer's Office can be found at oakgov.com/treasurer. Residents can call the Oakland County Treasurer's Office at 248-858-0611 to schedule a taxpayer assistance meeting.

Councilmember Bridges asked clarifying questions, complimented Treasurer Wittenberg on the programs available for Farmington Hills residents including the Homebuyer Assistance Program, and thanked him for his presentation.

Emergency Planning Commission Tip of the Month

Emergency Planning Commissioner Mike Sweeney referenced a recent water main break and shared tips to address flooding:

- Do not attempt to walk or drive through flooded streets.
- Avoid flooded areas to allow repair work to be done.
- Boil water for cooking during a water boil alert, and use bottled water for drinking.
- Regularly use and replace stored food and medicine items.
- Check sump pumps, hot water heaters, and fuses.

Water main break discussion

Acting City Manager Karen Mondora explained that a water main break occurred in transmission main that runs along 14 Mile Road on March 7. Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA) crews isolated the damaged section within six hours and were in the process of replacing a 40ft section of damaged pipe. Multiple city departments worked tirelessly to assist; rescuing stranded motorists, evacuating adjacent property owners, managing road closures, monitoring flooding, removing debris, and informing residents and motorists.

Acting City Manager Mondora explained that the City water system has redundancy and resilience built into its design and operation; she credited the City's continued investment in the water system infrastructure for preventing service interruptions or water quality issues during the break and thanked Council and the Oakland County Water Resources Commissioner's Office staff for their support.

Community Engagement Representative Alyssa Taube, Oakland County Water Resources Commissioner's Office, thanked Farmington Hills on behalf of Water Resources Commissioner Nash for their commitment and investment in the water system and for emergency planning and preparation.

Mayor Rich said that she visited the four residences that were evacuated as a result of the water main break, and that resident issues would be addressed.

Councilmember Knol raised concerns that there had been multiple breaks in the water main that runs along 14 Mile Road and asked if pipe replacement was included in the GLWA capital improvements plan.

Community Engagement Representative Taube said that GLWA was aware of recurring breaks in certain types of pipes in the area, but that she was not familiar with GLWA capital improvements plan.

Councilmember Bridges observed that a previous water main break approximately four years ago was very close to the most recent water main break, and echoed concerns about future water main breaks in the area.

Community Engagement Representative Taube stressed the importance of protecting residents from flooding and committed to working with Acting City Manager Mondora and the GLWA to determine next steps and address possible additional water main breaks in the affected area.

Flock camera policy

Chief of Police Piggott addressed a recent concern about the use of Flock cameras and license plate reader systems. Chief Piggott explained that the City IT policy and police department standards strictly allow computer systems to be used for work purposes only and that additional police department standards governed criminal justice system information. Chief Piggott said that a license plate reader policy had recently been completed. Chief Piggott noted that law enforcement officers have access to a lot of private information, and said that violations of private information policies were strictly enforced through discipline up to termination and criminal charges for misuse of private information.

CORRESPONDENCE

Mayor Pro Tem Boleware received correspondence from Farmington Hills resident Peter Strickfaden concerning flooding on his property. The correspondence was provided to Acting City Manager Mondora to be addressed by the DPW.

Mayor Pro Tem Boleware received correspondence from Arts Commission President Lindsay stating concerns regarding the September 22nd Sports Facilities presentation. The Arts Commission asked City Council to examine and verify the data in the consultant's report, and to include staff and community members in discussions about major operational or budget changes at The Hawk. Mayor Pro Tem Boleware will work city staff to provide answers at the next commission meeting.

CONSENT AGENDA

MOTION by Knol, support by Bridges, to approve the consent agenda items 7-9 as published.

Roll Call Vote:

Yeas: ALDRED, BOLEWARE, BRIDGES, DWYER, KNOL, RICH AND STARKMAN
Nays: NONE
Absent: NONE
Abstentions: NONE

MOTION CARRIED 7-0.

MOTION by Aldred, support by Starkman, to approve the consent agenda items 10 and 11 as published.

Roll Call Vote:

Yeas: ALDRED, BOLEWARE, DWYER, KNOL, RICH AND STARKMAN
Nays: NONE
Absent: NONE
Abstentions: BRIDGES

MOTION CARRIED 6-0-0-1.

CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

There were no consent agenda items for discussion.

COUNCILMEMBERS' COMMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councilmember Aldred thanked the Fire Department and DPW for their efforts in response to the recent water main break and recognized Gary Mekjian for his years of service, noting his role in the construction of the city water tower that saves the city about \$3 million a year in water costs and maintained water pressure during the recent water main break. He also thanked Ellen Schnackel for her years of service.

Councilmember Bridges thanked Gary Mekjian for his years of service and his role in the construction of the water tower and Ellen Schnackel for her years of service.

Councilmember Knol echoed thanks to Gary Mekjian and Ellen Schnackel for their years of service.

Councilmember Knol reminded residents that the Beautification Commission would host the annual Carol Posby Litter Walk and interested community members should contact the Community Development Office. She congratulated the Farmington United Gymnastics Team for their second place finish at the Michigan State High School Athletic Association state meet.

Mayor Pro Tem Boleware recognized International Women's Day and acknowledged the work women are doing in municipal government.

Mayor Rich congratulated two-time gold medalist Megan Keller from Farmington Hills who scored the "golden goal" in the most recent Olympics and the Greater Farmington Area Chamber of Commerce for the recent State of the Cities event.

Mayor Rich reported that Feed the Need Farmington Hills met today and the following items were discussed:

- Feed the Need is working with Forgotten Harvest and Ward Church to bring a mobile food pantry to Farmington Hills one day a month.
- They heard a presentation from Smart Flex, to find ways to better use Smart Flex for families in need and people with disabilities.
- A pilot hot meal delivery program for unhoused community members staying in various hotels is being sponsored by ISCKON Farmington Hills, with participation from the Dawoodi Bohras USA, Neighborhood House, and Nardin Park United Methodist Church.

CITY MANAGER UPDATE

Acting City Manager Mondora noted that the city is hosting evening hiring events on March 10th and March 16th at The Hawk.

NEW BUSINESS

CONSIDERATION OF APPEAL OF A FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT REQUEST DATED JANUARY 11, 2026.

City Attorney Joppich explained that the individual requesting an appeal would like to postpone the appeal hearing until the first meeting in April to provide time to meet with City staff to discuss the matter while preserving his rights to an appeal.

MOTION by Bridges, support by Boleware, that the City Council of Farmington Hills hereby postpones the appeal of a Freedom of Information Act request dated January 11, 2026, until the April 13, 2026, regular meeting.

MOTION CARRIED 7-0.

CONSIDERATION OF APPROVAL OF APPOINTMENTS TO THE FARMINGTON HILLS ACTIVITIES CENTER AD-HOC ADVISORY COMMITTEE.

MOTION by Knol, support by Boleware, that the City Council of Farmington Hills hereby confirms the Mayor's recommendation to appoint the following individuals to the following committee:

The Farmington Hills Activities Center Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee

Length of Term:	Term ending:
1 year	February 1, 2027

Steve Stimson – Parks & Recreation member

Daniel Fantore – Commission on Aging member

Cynthia Gottlieb – Senior Community member

Peyton Paymon– Community member

Jon Aldred – Council member

Theresa Rich - Mayor

MOTION CARRIED 7-0.

CONSENT AGENDA

RECOMMENDED APPROVAL OF THE FARMINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS/FARMINGTON HILLS POLICE DEPARTMENT SCHOOL LIAISON OFFICER COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT. CMR 3-26-28

MOTION by Knol, support by Bridges, that the City Council of Farmington Hills hereby authorizes the Acting City Manager to sign the Cooperative Agreement with Farmington Public Schools for School Liaison Officers.

Roll Call Vote:

Yeas: ALDRED, BOLEWARE, BRIDGES, DWYER, KNOL, RICH, AND STARKMAN
Nays: NONE
Absent: NONE
Abstentions: NONE

MOTION CARRIED 7-0.

RECOMMENDED APPROVAL OF PURCHASE OF A BACKUP SERVER TO PEOPLE DRIVEN TECHNOLOGY INC., IN THE AMOUNT OF \$104,475.00. CMR 3-26-29

MOTION by Knol, support by Bridges, that the City Council of Farmington Hills hereby authorizes the Acting City Manager to issue a purchase order to People Driven Technology Inc, for a backup server, in the amount of \$99,500.00 plus a 5% contingency for a total of \$104,475.00.

Roll Call Vote:

Yeas: ALDRED, BOLEWARE, BRIDGES, DWYER, KNOL, RICH, AND STARKMAN
Nays: NONE
Absent: NONE
Abstentions: NONE

MOTION CARRIED 7-0.

RECOMMENDED APPROVAL OF A REQUEST FOR EMPLOYMENT UNDER SECTION 10.01A OF THE CITY CHARTER FOR A POLICE CADET. CMR 3-26-30

MOTION by Knol, support by Bridges, that the City Council of Farmington Hills hereby approves an employment request per Section 10.01A of the City Charter for Zach Jordan, who is related to employees of the City, Tracy Jordan (Police Department Administrative Secretary) and Jennifer Jordan (Police Department Dispatcher).

Roll Call Vote:

Yeas: ALDRED, BOLEWARE, BRIDGES, DWYER, KNOL, RICH, AND STARKMAN
Nays: NONE
Absent: NONE
Abstentions: NONE

MOTION CARRIED 7-0.

RECOMMENDED APPROVAL OF CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 23, 2026.

MOTION by Aldred, support by Starkman, that the City Council of Farmington Hills hereby approves the City Council study session minutes of February 23, 2026.

Roll Call Vote:

Yeas: ALDRED, BOLEWARE, DWYER, KNOL, RICH AND STARKMAN
Nays: NONE
Absent: NONE
Abstentions: BRIDGES

MOTION CARRIED 6-0-0-1.

RECOMMENDED APPROVAL OF CITY COUNCIL REGULAR SESSION MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 23, 2026.

MOTION by Aldred, support by Starkman, that the City Council of Farmington Hills hereby approves the regular session minutes of February 23, 2026.

Roll Call Vote:

Yeas: ALDRED, BOLEWARE, DWYER, KNOL, RICH AND STARKMAN
Nays: NONE
Absent: NONE
Abstentions: BRIDGES

MOTION CARRIED 6-0-0-1.

ADDITIONS TO AGENDA

There were no additions to the agenda.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Suzanne Dengiz, Farmington Hills resident, stressed the importance of a one-story senior center for the safety of seniors. The Rochester Hills OPC referenced at the February 23 City Council meeting is a two-story building, but it is unique in that it has fully accessible parking on the first and second floor.

CITY ATTORNEY REPORT

The City Attorney Report was received by Council.

ADJOURNMENT

The regular session of City Council meeting adjourned at 8:35pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Carly Lindahl, City Clerk