

MINUTES
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS
FARMINGTON HILLS CITY COUNCIL
STUDY SESSION
CITY HALL – COMMUNITY ROOM
APRIL 13, 2026 – 5:30PM

The study session of the Farmington Hills City Council was called to order by Mayor Rich at 5:31pm.

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

Councilmembers Absent: None

Others Present: Acting City Manager Mondora, City Clerk Lindahl, Directors Farmer and Skrobola, Fire Chief Unruh and City Attorneys Joppich and Gouri

The closed session started at 5:31pm

CONSIDERATION OF APPROVAL TO ENTER INTO A CLOSED SESSION TO DISCUSS STRATEGY AND NEGOTIATION SESSIONS CONNECTED WITH THE NEGOTIATION OF VARIOUS COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENTS, AS ALLOWED UNDER SECTION 8(1)(C) OF THE OPEN MEETINGS ACT. (NOTE: COUNCIL WILL RETURN TO OPEN SESSION IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE CLOSED SESSION).

MOTION by Bridges, support by Starkman, that the City Council of Farmington Hills hereby approves entering into a closed session to discuss strategy and negotiation sessions connected with the negotiation of various collective bargaining agreements, as allowed under Section 8(1)(c) of the Open Meetings Act.

MOTION CARRIED 7-0.

The open session resumed at 6:06pm

REVIEW OF THE FARMINGTON FAIR SHARE STUDY

Finance Director/Treasurer Skrobola presented an updated analysis of the Farmington Fair Share Study, noting this was substantially the same memo received last April with updated data. The study focuses on Special Services cost-sharing between Farmington Hills and the City of Farmington, specifically covering cultural arts, seniors, and recreation services where Farmington residents receive resident rates rather than non-resident rates.

Finance Director/Treasurer Skrobola explained that under the 2008 agreement, Farmington's contribution is capped at a 3% annual increase, but actual costs have diverged significantly since the Hawk opened and post-COVID program expansion. Based on 2025-26 estimated figures, Farmington should contribute approximately \$684,170 versus their current capped amount of \$382,000, creating a \$302,000 gap.

Staff met with Farmington officials in summer 2025 to discuss a phased increase over five years, but Farmington was not supportive at that time. The recommendation is to approach them again with a proposal to eliminate the 3% cap temporarily and implement annual increases of \$60,000, then \$120,000, \$180,000, \$240,000, and finally \$300,000 over five years in order to close the gap.

Councilmember Bridges supported the recommendation, noting the careful analysis and that Farmington residents benefit from the programs.

Councilmember Knol confirmed that Farmington residents now receive resident rates for golf and ice arena services, not just the three original program areas.

Councilmember Aldred expressed concern that the \$684,000 figure might be on the high side and emphasized the need for negotiation, noting that simply charging non-resident fees would not generate the full amount being requested.

Councilmember Boleware argued for the increase, stating that Farmington Hills residents should not subsidize Farmington residents, especially with a new \$30-35 million community center being built. She cited examples of inequitable cost-sharing, including the Art Commission where Farmington contributes only \$164 annually while Farmington Hills contributes \$5,000.

Mayor Rich emphasized that she does not support Farmington Hills residents subsidizing Farmington residents and questioned the utilization data and comparative tax rates. She noted that any negotiation must include readiness to end the partnership if fair terms cannot be reached.

Interim Special Services Director Farmer detailed additional services provided to Farmington including field scheduling, maintenance coordination, Meals on Wheels, senior transportation, and joint commissions; estimating \$29,000 in direct park maintenance support alone.

Finance Director/Treasurer Skrobola clarified that Farmington has an 18.1 city millage compared to Farmington Hills' 16.5 mills, and their general fund shows a \$12.5 million budget with a \$4 million fund balance (31% surplus).

Council reached consensus to proceed with negotiations based on the \$684,170 figure, with staff directed to prepare a comprehensive list of additional services provided to support the financial justification.

REVIEW OF THE OPEN MEETING ACT AND THE RULES OF THE CITY COUNCIL AND GUIDELINES OF CONDUCT

City Attorney Joppich provided a presentation on the Open Meetings Act (OMA) and the Rules, of City Council and Guidelines of Conduct. He emphasized that Council has always taken the Open Meetings Act seriously and follows a conservative interpretation to ensure compliance, as courts read the act very narrowly.

City Attorney Joppich explained that a "meeting" is defined as a convening where a quorum is present for deliberating toward or rendering a decision, noting that even deliberation without decision-making can constitute a meeting. He warned about technology traps, particularly email chains where "reply all" communication among three or more council members could constitute a meeting if they involve deliberating toward a decision.

The presentation covered notice requirements, explaining that the city exceeds minimum requirements by posting detailed agendas online. Attorney Joppich clarified that while agendas can be amended during regular meetings, special meetings have more restrictive rules about adding business.

Regarding public participation, Attorney Joppich noted that meetings must be open to the public in accessible locations, and attendees can record meetings without prior approval, subject to reasonable rules that don't interfere with business. The rules for removing disorderly individuals include multiple steps: warning, restriction from further speaking, and only then potential removal from the meeting.

Attorney Joppich detailed the limited exceptions for closed sessions, emphasizing that all decisions must be made in open session. He covered the various grounds for closed sessions including personnel matters, collective bargaining strategy, real property purchases, litigation settlement strategy, and reviewing confidential job applications. He noted that interviews for public positions must be conducted in open sessions.

The presentation concluded with enforcement provisions, noting that violations can result in both civil and criminal liability, including potential personal liability for council members. Attorney Joppich mentioned a recent Court of Appeals decision requiring cities to provide reasonable accommodations for disabled individuals to have their public comments read at meetings when they cannot attend in person.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Rich closed discussion and adjourned the meeting at 7:23pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Carly Lindahl, City Clerk