

**MINUTES
CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION
FEBRUARY 5, 2024 – 6:00PM
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS
CITY HALL – COMMUNITY ROOM**

The study session meeting of the Farmington Hills City Council was called to order by Mayor Rich at 6:00pm.

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

Council Members Absent: None

Others Present: City Manager Mekjian, City Clerk Lindahl, Assistant City Manager Mondora, and City Attorney Joppich

DISCUSSION ON SUBCOMMITTEES

Mayor Rich read the February 5, 2024 memorandum from City Clerk Lindahl regarding the purpose of tonight’s study session:

Following discussion at the goals study session, it was the consensus of council to move forward with the following:

- *Strategic Plan – updated city’s mission and vision statement and logo*
- *Discuss management of the Innovation Center*
- *Discuss the need to reinstate/reconfigure the IEES [Innovation, Energy and Sustainability Task Force] and MCMR [Multicultural/Multiracial Community Council of Farmington/Farmington Hills] commissions*
- *Potential collaboration with Farmington Public Schools - mental health symposium and economic development/job training*

After follow-up conversations with the mayor and city administration, the idea of forming subcommittees to assist with achieving the above goals was discussed. With that, we are looking to council for their thoughts on developing such subcommittees.

Mayor Rich reported that she has been in conversation with School Board Leadership, including Superintendent Delgado and School Board President Blau and Vice President Heinrich, as well as with Farmington Mayor LaRussa, regarding areas where there might be an opportunity to collaborate in order to reach certain common goals.

Mayor Rich asked for council input regarding forming subcommittees as described. Council questions and discussion included:

- How would the subcommittees work? Would staff attend meetings? For instance, conversation regarding the Innovation Center would benefit by including Special Services and possibly Economic Development Corporation representatives.

City Manager Mekjian said staff would be “subject matter experts” who could provide background and counsel regarding the topics listed.

- Had subcommittees and collaborations been done before? If so, what was that experience like?

Councilmember Bruce said he had served on an intergovernmental committee that worked with the City of Farmington and the FPS. That work had resulted in significant cost savings as services were combined with the City of Farmington for things such as dispatch and health care. He noted that smaller groups that don't have to have the formal structure of operating under the Open Meetings Act can be very effective, with ideas then brought back to Council for further discussion.

Councilmember Bridges said he had been part of a task force regarding the schools and cities working together. That task force had met for 3-4 years, but at the end of the day the effort did not lead to any substantive recommendations or implementation efforts. All parties needed to be willing participants for such collaborations to work. He mentioned his support of a subcommittee to review the Winbourne study.

Councilmember Boleware was concerned about the time commitment subcommittee work demanded. In her professional experience, subcommittee members gave a lot of time – often over months/years – but there was no guarantee of successful outcomes. Also, in the interest of transparency, she thought that the public should be welcomed at any subcommittee meetings. Much work could be done regarding the items listed above during regular study session meetings.

Councilmember Knol noted that a subcommittee of 2 or 3 members by its very nature did not represent all viewpoints and could potentially prove to be a waste of time in the long run.

Councilmember Dwyer said that he had been involved on a lot of committees, and sometimes they went nowhere.

Councilmember Alred thought that effective subcommittees could speed up decision making processes.

Councilmembers mentioned the importance of the having discussion on the management of the innovation center as this is a very important topic and needs to be acted on in a timely way, but perhaps the best way to approach this issue was for the entire Council to discuss and give input. It was consensus of council that all members need to be represented in this particular discussion.

City Manager Mekjian said he was recommending bringing SFC (Sports Facilities Companies) back for Phase II work, to help prioritize needed changes at The Hawk and Costick Center; he would be bringing a request regarding SFC to City Council soon.

Discussion was held on the benefit of subcommittees and the following was noted:

- Subcommittees can take a deeper dive into the issues and bring options to the greater body.
- A subcommittee might be able to make a recommendation on what to do with the Innovation, Energy and Sustainability Task Force, or provide guidance relative to the MCMR. On the other hand, everyone might have their own opinion about these committees, and it might be better to discuss them as a complete body. The City of Farmington should be asked to weigh in on the future of MCMR.
- A subcommittee could work on updating the city's mission, vision statement, and logo and whatever they brought back to Council could work as a springboard for further focused thought.

City Manager Mekjian suggested having 2 or 3 council members work with him, Assistant City Manager Mondora, and perhaps one other staff person, in order to draft a revised mission and vision statement to bring to the full Council.

Mayor Rich stated that her biggest takeaway from her recent attendance at the U.S. Conference of Mayors was that the number one conversation at the conference appeared to be the issue of mental wellness in communities. She suggested convening a mental health symposium in fall 2024, in collaboration with the City of Farmington and Farmington Public Schools, Oakland Community College, the Michigan School of Psychology, and Farmington SAFE (Suicide Awareness for Everyone). The Arts Commission could also be asked to assist.

Councilmember Bridges suggested that the City do a better job of highlighting and celebrating Juneteenth.

City Manager Mekjian pointed out that the City was hosting the March SEMCOG (Southeast Michigan Council of Governments) meeting, where a discussion would be held regarding management of the urban deer herd. The DNR is also creating a deer management initiative, and Special Services Deputy Director Farmer has been invited to represent Oakland County municipal governments on that initiative.

City Attorney Joppich suggested that any subcommittees formed should be created by resolution that defined its charge. City Attorney Joppich summarized that there appeared to be consensus surrounding 3 of the 4 ideas listed, relative to subcommittees potentially helping move discussion and action forward:

1. Mission and vision statement: writing committee for planning and visioning.
2. Innovation, energy and sustainability commission being reinstated; this would need to be done by ordinance. Scope and purpose would need to be defined. A subcommittee could work on drafting an ordinance to reinstate this commission.
3. Mental health symposium in the fall, in collaboration with other organizations.

City Attorney Joppich stated he would draft a resolution on each of these 3 subcommittees and noted that the subcommittees could be identified as non-voting work groups.

City Manager Mekjian and Assistant City Manager Mondora updated Council regarding plans around the NFL draft to be held in Detroit in April, including the “On the Clock Tour” event March 19 at The Hawk, 1pm – 5pm.

ADJOURNMENT

The study session meeting adjourned at 7:01pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Carly Lindahl, City Clerk