

MINUTES
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS
FARMINGTON HILLS CITY COUNCIL
CITY HALL - COMMUNITY ROOM
SEPTEMBER 18, 2023 – 6:00PM

The study session meeting of the Farmington Hills City Council was called to order by Mayor Barnett at 6:07pm

Council Members Present: Barnett, Boleware, Bruce, Knol, and Newlin

Council Members Absent: Bridges and Massey

Others Present: City Manager Mekjian, Deputy City Clerk Lindahl, , Directors Brockway and Brown and City Attorney Joppich

GRAND RIVER CORRIDOR UPDATE

Cristia Brockway, Director of Economic Development, stated that this evening’s study session is to provide City Council with an update on the Grand River Corridor Authority, the projects they are working on, concerns she has with board member and meeting status, business visits, site improvement grant policy, Grand River/M-5/Freedom Rd interchange, corridor subject areas and business attraction.

She explained that the Grand River Corridor Improvement Authority (CIA) is setup to have a maximum seven-member board with the majority of the members, by state statute, be persons having an ownership interest in property or located within the development area and one member may be a resident of the development area or live within a half mile of it. She stated that they have had difficulty in meeting quorum status due to several members retiring.

Director Brockway noted that the Farmington Hills CIA meets state statute on membership from the development area, so she has been looking at solutions with the City Attorney’s office to fill the other vacancies and has considered inviting City Staff to apply as a temporary fix to improve meeting status and advance community projects. She mentioned the following projects awaiting board discussion and approval: the Grand River site improvement grant policy and grant agreement, Grand River/M-5/Freedom Rd interchange, investing TIF dollars and site readiness evaluations.

Mayor Barnett questioned if this was a joint corridor with Farmington. Director Brockway stated that it was a joint corridor but with independent meetings held once every other month, as Farmington cannot approve Farmington Hills items.

Steve Joppich, City Attorney, explained that the statue allows each community to setup a CIA that adjoins and have an intergovernmental agreement to work together and the City has that.

Discission was held on the following items:

- Corridor boundaries
- Possibility of extending the corridor and/or overlay district
- Businesses included in the corridor
- Criteria for the three board vacancies
- Possible board members – Corewell Health, Cares, Habitat for Humanity store, Comerica
- Benefits of being on the board

Director Brockway discussed her attempts to inform businesses of the CIA membership benefits and how to apply by going door to door. She is also providing information on existing redevelopment and new market possibilities; the diverse business uses permitted within the B-3 district and informing businesses of the opportunities that might take place after the master plan update.

The following items are awaiting CIA board discussion and approval:

- Grand River Corridor Site Improvement Grant - for property owners within the district looking for exterior site improvements. Currently does not have a policy. New policy will cap the amount of dollars awarded by the board per fiscal year and describe the intent, eligibility, rules, and basic standards for interested applicants.
- Grand River/M-5/Freedom Road – The city is pursuing a Reconnecting Communities Grant to improve the neighborhood, street, sidewalk, and economic connectivity within this area by proposing an intersection alternative to the current interchange in front of Target

Director Brockway explained that during the June 2023 CIA meeting she shared her Grand River Corridor subject areas based off of the Economic Development Strategy for the master plan update which included seven business areas with a high level of impact along the corridor:

- Grand River/M-5/Freedom Road interchange
- Former Sport-N-Fun
- West River Shopping Center
- Former McDonalds on Grand River and Middlebelt Road
- Vacant land east of Cuddy Brothers
- Botsford Inn
- Dunkin' Donuts

She mentioned that they had discussions on promoting organic development off Grand River from surrounding new investment areas and where public improvement dollars could be implemented.

Director Brockway discussed her business attraction efforts in which she has included representatives from the Economic Development Corporation (EDC) and has shared with them a standard message to deliver to business and property owners in the corridor about business opportunities and to reach out to her for further information. She noted that she hosted a bus tour with potential investors throughout the City and Grand River Corridor to display investment areas, market gaps, and share information on the assets that exist within the area and has held on-site appointments for developers and property investors looking for opportunities along the corridor.

Discussion was held on the following:

- Redevelopment of the former Sport-N-Fun property into a large recreational site
- Concerns with not using the available CIA grants
- The grant application process for business owners

Director Brockway mentioned that there are public improvements they can use TIF dollars for such as banners, hanging baskets, sidewalks and parks and as the Master Plan update moves forward, they are looking to be a redevelopment ready community which will open up site improvement grants through the Michigan Strategic Fund.

Council suggestions and comments included:

- Install banners so the corridor can be identified
- Publicize the available CIA grants more

- Provide corridor property and business owners packets of material showing before and after photos to promote the site improvement grant
- Councilmember Newlin volunteered as a resident member of the CIA

The consensus of City Council was for Director Brockway to exhaust all options for board members and if unsuccessful, come back to a future study session to discuss the idea of implementing city staff as board members.

ADJOURNMENT

The study session meeting adjourned at 7:19pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Pamela B. Smith, City Clerk