

MINUTES  
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS  
FARMINGTON HILLS CITY COUNCIL  
CITY HALL – COUNCIL CHAMBER  
JANUARY 22, 2024 – 6:30PM

The study session meeting of the Farmington Hills City Council was called to order by Mayor Rich at 6:30pm

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

Council Members Absent: Dwyer

Others Present: Assistant City Manager Mondora, Interim City Clerk Lindahl, Director Brockway, Senior Traffic Engineer Saksewski, and City Attorney Joppich

**MDOT 696 DISCUSSION**

Senior Traffic Engineer Saksewski said he had received verbal assurance that Oakland County's 12 Mile Road project from Middlebelt to Inkster had been pushed out to 2025 (instead of 2024).

Oakland Transportation Service Center representatives present for this meeting:  
Brian Travis, Construction Engineer  
Jeff Pitt, Construction Contracts Engineer

Engineers Travis and Pitt provided an overview of the planned 2024 road work for I-696, as that impacted Farmington Hills.

- HNTB is the consulting firm that runs the day to day engineering.
- This project is building 9 miles of freeway, and the work impacts everyone.
- A PowerPoint presentation that is part of tonight's packet shows the planned work, including:
  - WB-I696 Closure and Detour Map, with closure start date January 2024
  - March-November work on culverts and bridges.
  - Orchard Lake Ramp Impacts, with closures and showing detours
  - Other ramp impacts, including out-of-city ramps, showing detours that affect Farmington Hills
  - Bridge Impacts, listing detours
  - WB Hills Tech Drive, showing closure in order to work on Seeley Drain culvert, and detour
  - Noise Impacts
  - Contact Information, including a 24/7 Ombudsman
- At certain times 12 Mile Road will see a lot of the detoured traffic

**Council questions and discussion**

- City Council and staff take many calls about the traffic associated with this project.
- Businesses were negatively impacted last year, and this year looks almost as intense in terms of work being done. It would be helpful to have a schedule of work as it unrolls, so that businesses can prepare.
- The project team tries their best to get accurate information out ahead of time. This year's work should be of shorter duration than 2023.
- The impact is especially severe for businesses and residents along 12 Mile Road between Middlebelt and Inkster, which is already a challenge for traffic when there is no construction. Residents are not able to get out of their neighborhoods as there are no gaps in traffic, yet some residents can only exit

their neighborhoods via 12 Mile Road. A way has to be provided for people to leave their neighborhoods. Last year's situation was not okay; it must be improved.

- This year eastbound traffic on Middlebelt should be lighter. Westbound traffic will be the most impacted.
- Temporary signalization was suggested. MDOT could also work with the County and modify the timing on the traffic lights in order to create gaps. This should be done as soon as possible. Senior Traffic Engineer Saksewski said he would work with City Manager staff to coordinate a meeting with County, MDOT, and city staff to discuss this issue.
- Oak Park's overpass signage was paid for by Oak Park.
- Council had concern that there were very few people of color on the road construction sites. Who ensures that these construction jobs have a representative workforce on construction projects across the area?

Engineer Pitt said as this was a federally funded project, there were requirements and target goals for underrepresented populations, and there was language in the contracts relative to this.

- Council was concerned about the litter and overall mess resulting from the Orchard Lake Road off ramps, which consistently looked terrible.
- One of the biggest complaints last year was the inability to access the expressway when so many ramps were closed, and the poor signage/notification that a ramp was closed. Sometimes drivers did not find out a ramp was closed until they were driving on it.
- The batch plant site at Oakland Community College was supposed to be cleaned up and restored by January. This had not happened. Two big concrete piles were still on site.
- The batch plants have been very noisy over a long period of time. Having the batch plant moved this year should help the residents who had suffered through the crushing, pounding, back-up beeping, etc., but the noise would still be audible.

Mayor Rich thanked Engineers Pit and Travis for coming this evening.

## **REVIEW OF SALE OF CITY PROPERTY ORDINANCE**

### **Review of sale of city property ordinance**

Assistant City Manager Mondora introduced this agenda item. City Council has given the go-ahead to sell small city-owned properties that are next to neighboring residents. The sites are very small, often landlocked, and unbuildable, and have mostly been acquired by the City through tax foreclosure. There are 10-13 such lots.

Economic Development Director Brockway asked if Council had interest in seeing purchase applications as they came in as single proposals? Or should any agreements just be brought to a City Council meeting and acted upon there?

City Attorney Joppich explained the legal procedure that enabled the City to sell these lots to neighboring property owners, often for very small amounts (e.g., \$3,000). Typically the purchase agreement is signed by both parties, after which the City Charter requires a separate ordinance be adopted for each property sale. This ordinance is adopted as any other ordinance – with a first and second reading.

In the past, the City Manager has signed the purchase agreement contingent on the sale going through. The alternative is to bring the purchase agreement to Council before the City Manager signs it, requiring 3 meetings instead of 2 for these low-valued properties.

Council does act as a check and balance on the amount the property is being sold for, but that check and balance can be triggered at the first ordinance reading.

In response to questions, Attorney Joppich said there was a range of processes across the state relative to selling city-owned property. One community requires a public vote in order to move forward with a property sale. Other communities don't require an ordinance for each sale. In Farmington Hills' case, the ordinance requirement is per City Charter, so changing the process would require changing the Charter, which would require a city-wide vote. This seemed like a small issue to put before the voters in this way.

After discussion, Mayor Rich summarized that the Council appeared to be in agreement that Council did not need to see the Agreement to Purchase prior to the first reading of the ordinance for each sale, and that the City Manager could sign the Agreement contingent on the process laid out in the City Charter being successfully completed, up to and including ordinance adoption.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The study session meeting adjourned at 7:16pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Carly Lindahl, Interim City Clerk