

FARMINGTON CITY COUNCIL
STUDY SESSION
April 2, 2012

A study session of the Farmington City Council was held on Monday, April 2, 2012, at Farmington High School, 32000 Shiawassee, Farmington, Michigan. Notice of the meeting was posted in compliance with Public Act 267-1976.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Mayor Buck.

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Buck, Cowley, Galvin, Kuiken.

COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT: McShane.

CITY ADMINISTRATION: City Clerk Halberstadt, City Manager Pastue, Director Schulz, Attorney Schultz, Treasurer Weber.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Council concurred to approve the agenda.

PROPOSED DISPATCH CONSOLIDATION

Introductions

Mayor Buck welcomed everyone to the meeting and discussed the format that will be followed.

City Manager Presentation

City Manager Pastue provided a presentation on the proposed dispatch consolidation with Farmington Hills. He discussed the City's budget challenges, the impact a consolidation would have on the community, and why this is the right time to make the change.

Public Comment/Questions

City Manager Responses

Mayor Buck opened the floor for public comment and questions. He advised questions would be recorded by the City Manager and answered at the end of the meeting.

Mike Shelly, 33702 Oakland, referring to the presentation, questioned the comparison of the number of officers per square mile and population to other communities in terms of police officers versus public safety.

Comparison included sworn police officers only.

SPECIAL MEETING -2-
April 2, 2012

Warren Ringold, 34717 Arundel, believed the City was pessimistic in its income projections over the next several years. He stated residents would be willing to pay the extra \$10 per person that the City would save in the consolidation.

Anne Sennish, 23069 Lakeway, stated the crime in Farmington Hills is worse than Farmington. She pointed out Farmington Hills would like a full merger. She asked about alternatives to dispatch consolidation in order to save money.

The City has already made significant cuts in all departments.

Gary Philips, 33761 James Court, questioned why the City of Farmington shouldn't provide dispatch to Farmington Hills instead of the other way around.

Farmington Hills dispatch is set up to accommodate the number of dispatchers required along with the necessary jail space; their location is centrally located.

Gretchen Perkins, 33353 Kingslane, questioned the difference between dispatchers and police officers.

Dispatcher is not an officer, but the first contact point for Public Safety.

Wallace Palazzolo, 32101 Shiawassee, asked if the final decision regarding consolidation would be made by Council.

Council makes the final decision.

Carrie Sharma, 23174 Violet, questioned the data presented by City Manager regarding the number of officers per square mile; expressed confusion on how the \$100k savings that would be realized by the consolidation would make up for the projected budget losses; questioned how the City Manager arrived at the total number of hours police would be out of the city to complete a booking in Farmington Hills; and noted the City should be concerned about public safety and not the millage.

The \$100,000 savings would not make up for the projected losses in 3-5 years, but is just one of the many cost cutting actions that will need to be taken.

Barb Montgomery, 33924 Shiawassee, noted Farmington is small town America that benefits from a good response time. She cited a recent asthma attack where the police responded within one minute. She opposes consolidation of dispatch.

John Weigel, 36475 Vicary, expressed the importance of keeping Farmington safe.

Jim Madigan, 36569 Heatherton, recommended placing a public safety millage on the ballot. He stated the electorate should be allowed to vote on this issue.

SPECIAL MEETING -3-
April 2, 2012

The City of Farmington staff has always worked as a team. A public safety millage could be divisive.

Matt Schiffman, 31609 Shaw, asked about how Farmington Hills will cover Farmington.

Farmington will still have the same number of police officers, but will receive back-up from Farmington Hills which is currently done.

Mark Craig, 24185 Twin Valley, expressed concern about the major budget challenges facing the City. He stated everything in the City budget needs to be reviewed. He suggested there will be other cuts that are necessary down the road.

The City is looking at everything that will not significantly affect service to residents.

Mary Morgan, 23324 Cass, asked if there will be police officers in the building after hours.

Police Officers will be in the building 24/7.

Betty Quain, 34057 State Street, stated Public Safety is the shining star of Farmington. She opposes dispatch consolidation. She suggested closing City Hall to make up the deficit or don't move forward on the Grove Street project.

Maintaining the infrastructure and character of Farmington is important. The City needs to continue to make improvements in order to remain viable.

Steven Bergstrom, 23077 Mayfield, asked about the terms of the \$260,000 contract with Farmington Hills. He asked if Farmington Hills would charge for booking arrests.

The contract is for 5 years with an 18 month notification if either party wants to terminate the agreement.. Farmington Hills will not charge for booking arrests.

John Schroeder, 34021 Grand River, stated the City needs to look at other larger line items in the budget to address the projected deficit.

Karen Gara, 23348 Farmington Road, believes Public Safety is being made the sacrificial lamb. She spoke about the importance of Public Safety to her business in Farmington.

Dan Potter, 22760 Manning, questioned whether fire fighters were included in Pastue's comparison of officers to other cities. He asked why residents are not voting on this issue.

SPECIAL MEETING -4-
April 2, 2012

Tom McPhail, 22780 Manning, asked why the City is rushing into this decision. He noted Michigan's economy is recovering. The City should wait and take a vote.

Sanford Altshul, 33775 State Street, asked about the length of the contract with Farmington Hills. He further asked what would happen if Farmington Hills decided to go to Novi for dispatch. He asked about the cost of funding SMART.

SMART is a voter approved issue and a separate millage.

Maria Putt, 31528 Marblehead, asked how the Cities arrived at the \$260,000 annual cost for dispatch. She stated the City must understand what it is buying. She asked about liability. She offered to sit on a committee to study alternatives. She stated there is no reason to rush into this decision. She stated if it is a good deal today it will be a good deal in six months.

The contract can only work if both parties believe it is fair; cost allocation is reasonable; no additional liability with consolidation.

Gary Philips, 33761 James Court, spoke about his negative experience in the City of Plymouth where dispatch has been consolidated with Plymouth Township.

John Haapala, 35477 Tall Pine Road, spoke about the City's legacy costs and recommended the City re-open negotiations to reduce retiree benefits. He stated the City has major financial issues that need to be addressed.

Discussed steps that have already been taken relative to legacy costs, i.e. defined contribution rather than defined benefit plan for retiree healthcare for employees with less than 20 years of service.

Tom Watson, 23411 Glenview Court, discussed the financial issues facing the city; continued budget pressures; legacy costs; millage increase would be bad for business.

City Council Comment/Questions

Kuiken thanked the public for attending the meeting. She stated the question for her is can Farmington Hills provide a service that not only saves money but maintains a high level of security for Farmington residents. She advised the City needs to make tough financial decisions early on when the opportunity presents itself. The decision making process is not any easy one.

Cowley pointed out the "fear factor" that is being used to protest the consolidation doesn't work. The City needs to meet its financial burdens without a reduction in services. He stated the City needs to be competitive pointing to the fact that it is cheaper to do business in Birmingham.

SPECIAL MEETING -5-
April 2, 2012

Cowley stated the City needs to take action now. Housing prices will never return to previous level highs.

Cowley advised outsourcing dispatch is a way to save money and still retain a safe community. He stated Farmington Hills does not have substandard service. He believes consolidation is a win/win for both communities. He cited continuing negative economic trends. Consolidation of dispatch is just the tip of the iceberg.

Galvin thanked the audience and Vince for their time. He spoke about his conversations with other communities that have experienced dispatch consolidation; and his tour of Farmington Hills dispatch with Chief Nebus. He discussed what it would take to make up \$100k in savings in terms of the number of new homes, new constructions, etc. that would be required.

Galvin spoke about the informal mutual aid agreement that has been in place between the cities and our ongoing relationship.

Buck advised the City has been suffering from a down economy for awhile, however, it is in better shape than most mature cities. He pointed out that City Manager Pastue will continue to advocate for the City and find ways to reduce costs with limited affect on service.

Buck expressed strong support for keeping dispatch in Farmington. He advised keeping dispatch would mean a higher millage rate and possibly less service in other areas.

Buck congratulated everyone on the great dialogue that took place. He stated Council and administration are trying to make the best decisions for Farmington.

ADJOURNMENT

04-12-070 MOTION by Cowley, seconded by Galvin, to adjourn the meeting.
MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

J.T. (Tom) Buck, Mayor

Susan K. Halberstadt, City Clerk

APPROVED: May 21, 2012