



Special City Council Meeting
5:30 p.m., July 20, 2026
23600 Liberty Street
Farmington, MI 48335

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

A special meeting of the Farmington City Council was held on July 20, 2026 at 23600 Liberty Street, Farmington, Michigan. Notice of the meeting was posted in compliance with Public Act 267-1976.

The meeting was called to order at 5:34 PM by Mayor LaRussa

1. Roll Call

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Johnna Balk	Mayor Pro-Tem	Present	
Joe LaRussa	Mayor	Present	
Kevin Parkins	Councilmember	Present	After Roll Call – 5:34 p.m.
Steve Schneemann	Councilmember	Present	
Maria Taylor	Councilmember	Present	

City Administration Present:

City Manager, David Murphy
City Clerk, Meaghan Bachman
City Attorney, Beth Saarela

2. Approval of the Agenda

Motion by Balk
Seconded by Schneemann

Resolved, move to approve the agenda as presented.

Motion carried unanimously 4-0

3. Public Comment

Anne Edelstein, 21698 Sheffield Drive, Farmington Hills, opposed the proposed addition to the Governor Warner Mansion and urged Council to protect the Mansion's Victorian architecture and historic setting.

Martha Taylor, 23750 Gill Road, supported the proposed trellis or living-wall concept as a way to soften the modern addition and connect it to the gardens.

Jill Keller, 23617 Warner Street, supported further consideration of the living-wall concept and said it could reduce the visual impact of the addition. She also shared comments from other Historical Commission members requesting updated architectural renderings, a transparent review process, and consideration of additional design alternatives.

Lena Stewart, 33615 Adams Street, supported the living-wall concept and suggested that a lighter exterior color also be considered.

Laura Myers, 33601 Shiawassee Street, supported the living-wall concept as the most practical way to improve the proposed addition within the project's time constraints.

Dirk van den Muijsenberg, 23718 Wesley Street, opposed the original design and encouraged an addition that better complements the Mansion's historic character.

Kimberly Shea, 23606 Wesley Street, opposed the original design and expressed concern that a living wall would not resolve the underlying architectural and maintenance issues. She urged Council to reconsider the design and public-review process.

Kathy Bilger, 19170 Augusta Court, Livonia, speaking on behalf of members of the Warner family, stated that the family did not object to either design and particularly supported the trellis-wall concept because of the Warner family's historic connection to the gardens.

Betty Poole, 35928 Quakertown Lane, Farmington Hills, opposed the original design and the proposal to conceal it with ivy, and encouraged an addition that blends more closely with the existing Mansion.

Stephanie Messina, 35250 Oakland Street, opposed the original design and expressed concern regarding the design-selection process. She encouraged Council to obtain additional alternatives that enhance the historic building.

Kevin Russom, 32040 Valley View Street, stated that additional design options should have been presented. Although he preferred the living-wall concept to the original proposal, he encouraged broader consideration of alternatives.

Pam Wright, 21492 Birchwood Street, encouraged Council to take additional time, obtain more renderings, and provide residents with a meaningful opportunity to participate in the design process.

4. Governor Warner Mansion Addition Project Discussion

Council discussed the proposed addition to the Governor Warner Mansion and a possible trellis or living-wall alternative. The addition is intended to provide an elevator, code-compliant egress stairs, ADA-accessible restrooms, storage, warming kitchens, and an accessible entrance. Council emphasized that these improvements are necessary to make the Mansion accessible, functional, and suitable for expanded public and event use.

OHM Advisors estimated that the additional design and construction-document work for the living-wall alternative could cost up to \$25,000 and take approximately four to six weeks. The alternative could add more than \$200,000 to construction costs. Council discussed the need to maintain progress on the original bid package while exploring the alternative so the City would not jeopardize the \$1 million State grant or the December 31, 2026 expenditure deadline.

Councilmembers discussed the Secretary of the Interior's standards for differentiating new construction from historic structures, the visual scale and color of the proposed addition, vegetation and maintenance considerations, and the relationship between the Mansion and its gardens. Council expressed support for continuing the bid process for the original design while OHM concurrently studies the feasibility, design, materials, vegetation, cost, and construction impacts of a trellis or living-wall alternative. City Manager Murphy stated that the preliminary work could proceed within his administrative authority. Council requested an update in August, with a final design decision to return to Council after OHM's findings are available.

5. Board and Commission Interviews and Appointments

Council interviewed Theresa Bridges, Janet Saunders, and Vince Pastue for appointment to the Zoning Board of Appeals. Council also interviewed Isabella Bond and Frank Andre for appointment to the Grand River Corridor Improvement Authority. The candidates discussed their backgrounds, interest in serving the community, understanding of the respective boards, and relevant professional or volunteer experience.

Motion by Balk
Seconded by Taylor

Resolved, move to appoint Theresa Bridges to the Zoning Board of Appeals for a term ending June 30, 2028; appoint Janet Saunders as an alternate to the Zoning Board of Appeals for a term ending June 30, 2028; appoint Vince Pastue as an alternate to the Zoning Board of Appeals for a term ending June 30, 2029; and appoint Frank Andre to the Grand River Corridor Improvement Authority for a term ending March 30, 2029.

Motion carried unanimously 5-0

6. Other Business

No other business was discussed.

7. Public Comment

No members of the public spoke.

8. City Council Comment

None

9. Adjournment

Motion by Balk
Seconded by Taylor

Resolved, move to adjourn the meeting at 7:08 PM.

Motion carried unanimously 5-0

Joe LaRussa, Mayor

Meaghan K. Bachman, City Clerk