

FARMINGTON CITY COUNCIL  
SPECIAL MEETING  
December 19, 2011

A special meeting of the Farmington City Council was held on Monday, December 19, 2011, in Council Chambers, 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 6:04 p.m. by Mayor Buck.

**PRESENT:** Buck, Cowley (arrived 6:10 p.m.), Galvin, Kuiken, McShane.

**ABSENT:** None.

**CITY ADMINISTRATION:** City Manager Pastue, City Clerk Halberstadt,

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**12-11-206** MOTION by Galvin, seconded by McShane, to approve the agenda as amended; adding "Discussion - SMART" as Item No. 4. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

**MEETING WITH STATE SENATOR VINCENT GREGORY**

Senator Vincent Gregory provided an update on legislative activities including the early passage of the state budget which included: a reduction in revenue sharing, elimination of the business tax and the addition of a pension tax.

Gregory advised no action was taken on proposed legislation to eliminate personal property tax. He discussed the significant negative impact this action would have on local government.

Gregory discussed a recently passed bill related to redistricting Oakland County. The bill reduces the number of county commissioners from 25 to 21 and changes the process for drawing the boundary lines. He discussed the unfairness of the new process.

Gregory spoke about proposed legislation to place a cap on personal insurance protection. He stated the bill did not pass the House or the Senate due to a number of unanswered questions.

Gregory advised the legislature approved uncapping the number of charter schools over a period of time. He did not support this legislation because of the lack of controls and safeguards. He stated if a school receives state money the state should have a voice in the school's performance.

COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS -2-  
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Gregory has introduced a bill that would provide an incentive to employers to hire veterans. He pointed out the State of Michigan has the highest number of unemployed veterans in the nation. He stated Governor Snyder recognizes the need to help veterans.

Gregory advised the Governor is talking about a shared work bill that would allow employers who are facing economic challenges to retain employees at reduced hours with unemployment compensation making up the difference in wages.

Gregory spoke regarding a proposed "conversion school" bill which would allow a public school to be converted to a charter school if 50% of the parents file a petition making that request and have the support of the teaching staff. He stated this bill did not get voted out of committee.

Gregory continued to discuss other proposed legislation relating to public and charter schools.

Buck discussed Farmington's focus on economic development and job creation. He asked what is being done in Lansing to support this effort.

Gregory responded job creation would address many of the economic concerns of local government. He stated the State wants to be a resource for job listings. He advised the governor does not support incentives for businesses. He discussed the negative impact related to the removal of incentives from the film industry.

Discussion followed regarding the impact elimination of personal property tax would have on local government and the positive effect it would have on businesses in terms of expansion.

Discussion continued regarding the recent route cuts made by SMART, impact on Farmington, and the need for a regional solution for mass transportation.

Gregory thanked Council for their time and expressed his commitment to meet with the City every year.

**DISCUSSION – SMART**

Pastue asked Council if they have a predisposition to opt-in or opt-out of SMART and what information would they like administration to provide in support of their position.

Responding to a question from Buck, Pastue advised if the City elected to opt-out of SMART he would recommend retaining the current .59 mil and apply it to alternative transportation with adjustments over time accordingly.

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McShane would like the City to obtain bids from private transportation companies. She has a problem with paying \$250k for the SMART System that goes nowhere in terms of service to Farmington. She stated a private system could hook up to the rapid bus system under consideration for the Detroit area. She does not believe there will be a regional transportation plan for years to come.

Kuiken pointed out that with the remaining SMART 805 bus line Farmington riders will not be able to reach the park-n-ride in Farmington Hills. She stated it seems SMART has already made the decision for the Farmington by their elimination of routes through the City.

McShane suggested providing vouchers to riders.

Cowley pointed out statistical information on ridership is needed in order to make an informed decision.

Buck noted the City Council has requested ridership information over the last several years, however, SMART is currently unable to provide it.

Cowley pointed out it is difficult to purchase services if you don't know what you need.

Pastue advised it would be impractical for the City to run its own transit system. He stated it would basically just go up and down Farmington and Grand River Roads. He expressed the need to work with another city such as Farmington Hills.

Kuiken asked regarding the consequence of Farmington opting out and Farmington Hills staying in.

Pastue responded the City would lose the internal dial-a-ride funds, but could still levy a millage to support some type of transportation program.

Cowley asked regarding the cost to support a senior transportation system if Farmington Hills stayed in the SMART program. Pastue stated the cost would be around \$50k.

McShane pointed out the City has not surveyed its residents to determine who rides the SMART System. She would like to see something go out in the City newsletter or water bill.

Buck noted a few years ago Farmington businesses were asked who had employees that rode the bus system. The response was very light.

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McShane stated it is likely that there are more people riding buses today who are employed in the home care and nursing home services.

Buck stated there are a number of attractive destinations around which a new system could be designed. He stated the city could work with Farmington Hills or Livonia to develop such a system. He pointed out no one is saying no to mass transportation, but a better system needs to be developed.

Galvin stated there are two things he would like to know in terms of how a new system would work: 1) how the city would connect with other cities so that it does not become isolated, in other words addressing fixed routes; and 2) how to address the issues related to seniors and the disabled that rely on the connector schedule. He stated there would have to be a significant educational program and possible transition period.

Discussion followed regarding how dial-a-ride functions and its limitations.

Pastue pointed out there is only a concept transportation plan in place acknowledging there are many more details that have to be ironed out. He stated the concept plan attempted to hit the high points with the senior program.

Cowley noted there is no guarantee that SMART won't cut service again next year. He stated SMART is not a long term solution. He also noted that SMART collective bargaining units have not taken any pay cuts which would have helped minimize reduction in service.

Buck asked Council if they have enough information to make a decision.

Galvin asked when Farmington Hills would vote on the SMART decision. He sees a problem if Farmington Hills opts in and Farmington opts out.

Pastue advised Farmington Hills will have the SMART issue on their January 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting agenda.

McShane does not believe there would be a problem if Farmington opts out. She believes there will be alternatives to connecting to other transportation.

Kuiken stated the City has to ask whether it can do better than the one SMART bus line that runs down Grand River through Farmington.

Cowley would like to hear from residents regarding this issue.

Buck pointed out voters passed the SMART millage 2-to-1 in the last millage renewal vote.

Pastue advised Council must make a decision by the end of January.

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Galvin asked if it would be possible to obtain information from Livonia and Novi regarding their transportation systems before the next Council meeting. He would also like to know how many bus stops are remaining after the SMART cuts.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

No public comment was heard.

**COUNCIL COMMENT**

No council comment was heard.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**12-11-207** MOTION by McShane, seconded by Kuiken, to adjourn the meeting.  
MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

The meeting adjourned at 7:03 p.m.

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J.T. (Tom) Buck, Mayor

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Susan K. Halberstadt, City Clerk

Approved: January 17, 2012