

FARMINGTON CITY COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING

A special meeting of the Farmington City Council was held on Monday, December 19, 2005, 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 7:01 p.m. by Mayor McShane.

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Buck, Knol, McShane, Sutherland, Wiggins.

COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT: None.

CITY ADMINISTRATION: Clerk/Treasurer Cantrell, City Manager Pastue, Assistant City Manager Richards (arrived 7:35 p.m.), Attorney Roberts.

CONSIDERATION OF SMART/OCPTA OPT-OUT

City Manager Pastue discussed the history of Farmington's involvement with Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART) and advised that if the City decided to opt out, Oakland County Public Transportation Authority (OCPTA) would require notification by the end of January 2006. He noted that if no action is taken, a millage renewal rate of 0.6 would likely be placed on the August 2006 ballot.

Pastue advised that the City receives municipal and community credits through the SMART program. He stated that if the City opted-out it would still receive approximately \$9,000. He discussed the various revenue sources for SMART.

Councilmember Wiggins questioned the funding for transportation in the City of Livonia since they opted out of SMART. Pastue responded that Livonia would levy 0.5 mill rather than 0.6 mill to fund their own transit system. He noted that Farmington Hills is also considering providing an alternative service.

Councilmember Knol noted that part of the 0.5 mill levied by Livonia would also go toward road improvements. She further noted that their transit system would have a connecting point to the SMART System.

Discussion followed regarding the willingness of SMART to connect to alternative transit systems.

Councilmember Buck advised that at a Farmington Hills meeting, SMART representatives, responding to an alternative transit system proposal, stated that service could not be provided at a cost of \$1.4 million dollars as proposed and noted several other deficiencies in the plan.

Mayor McShane concurred that the proposal from the alternate transit system had not provided adequate information and costs to determine the viability of their services.

SPECIAL MEETING -2-
December 19, 2005

Discussion followed regarding the deficiencies of SMART and the feasibility of an alternate transit system might work.

Pastue reviewed the SMART routes that run through Farmington and Farmington Hills and daily ridership on each route as provided by SMART. He noted the significant route that runs through Farmington on Grand River Avenue.

Mayor McShane expressed concern regarding opting-out and stated that she would like more information regarding utilization of the SMART System. She also expressed concern regarding fragmentation of the System caused by communities the opting-out. She confirmed with administration that the next opt-out option would be in four years. She stated the importance of a regional decision regarding transportation.

Councilmember Sutherland also expressed concern regarding opting-out of the only public transportation provided in the metro area.

Knol stated that it is important to provide public transportation, but there are better options available than SMART services. She noted the inefficiency of SMART and their failure to improve in spite of repeated criticism from the legislature. She stated that an inefficient system is not necessarily going to improve with additional funds. She noted that SMART has failed to show Farmington Hills any substantial data regarding ridership. She stated her interest in participating with Farmington Hills in an alternative transit system.

Pastue advised that there is no guarantee that a good alternative transportation is available if the City decides to opt-out of SMART. He further advised that SMART has not yet formulated a plan should other communities opt-out.

Buck questioned whether ridership was primarily from apartment dwellers. Pastue responded that SMART has indicated that ridership is largely from the low-income, senior and handicap population.

Responding to a question, Pastue confirmed that more pressure would likely be placed on apartment complexes that are not performing well if adequate public transportation is not provided. Wiggins noted that employers might also be impacted.

Sutherland stated that providing better service would be a reason to choose an alternate transit system, but that would require additional buses, stops and significant upfront costs. She questioned the estimated cost from Parastar to operate a transit system in Farmington Hills.

Buck stated that at the Farmington Hills meeting, SMART challenged Parastar's proposal because it was based on eight mini-buses when they would likely need twenty and that no schedule had been provided.

Pastue noted that SMART has not provided the information required by policymakers to make a case for renewing a 0.6 tax levy.

SPECIAL MEETING -3-
December 19, 2005

Mayor McShane recommended that Council compile a list of questions and arrange to meet with SMART representatives.

Assistant City Manager Richards arrived at 7:35 p.m.

Responding to a question, Pastue confirmed that if Farmington opted out of SMART and contracted with an alternate system, the City would have to levy its own millage.

Richards reported on a meeting held in Farmington Hills concerning SMART. He stated that the primary purpose of the meeting was to give SMART the opportunity to respond to Parastar's proposal. He identified, as Councilmember Buck stated earlier, that it appeared Parastar's proposal was deficient in the number of buses that would actually be required. He further identified items that were omitted from the proposal including cost of liability insurance and maintenance.

Richards reported that there was discussion regarding ridership subsidy and the disproportionate costs to Farmington/Farmington Hills. He noted that Parastar was not present at the meeting to provide a rebuttal. He stated that the Farmington Hills Council has requested a "hard" proposal from Parastar for like services. He further stated that the Farmington Hills Council appeared to be seeking one of three options: gain additional services from SMART for Farmington/Farmington Hills residents at the current rate, secure lower costs for the same service or find an alternate service that would provide transportation locally and then contract with SMART for the "long haul" services. He noted that SMART was not open to this idea.

Responding to a question, Richards noted that the Farmington Hills Council would hold further discussions at a meeting on January 9, 2006. He also noted from the meeting that SMART disputed Parastar's ridership survey and made a good case for the accuracy of their numbers.

Pastue indicated that a decision could be made only after more information is obtained. He stated that he would discuss with Farmington Hills City Manager Brock regarding the possibility of a joint meeting.

Discussion followed regarding working with the City of Farmington Hills on available options.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:56 p.m.

JoAnne M. McShane, Mayor

Patsy K. Cantrell, City Clerk/Treasurer

APPROVED: January 17, 2006

Susan K. Halberstadt, Recording Secretary

SPECIAL MEETING -4-
December 19, 2005