



FINAL

SPECIAL STUDY SESSION MEETING MINUTES

A Special Study Session meeting of the Farmington City Council was held on January 6, 2014, in City Council Chambers, 23600 Liberty Street, Farmington, MI. Notice of the meeting was posted in compliance with Public Act 267-1976.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Mayor William Galvin.

1. ROLL CALL

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Greg Cowley	Councilmember	Present	
William Galvin	Mayor	Present	
JoAnne McShane	Councilmember	Absent	
Steve Schneemann	Mayor Pro Tem	Present	
Jeff Scott	Councilmember	Present	

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

RESULT:	APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Greg Cowley, Councilmember
SECONDER:	Jeff Scott, Councilmember
AYES:	Cowley, Galvin, Schneemann, Scott
ABSENT:	McShane

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment was heard.

4. WINE SAMPLING AT FARMERS MARKET

1. Discussion - Wine Sampling at Farmers Market

Pastue distributed a written overview provided by Market Master Gajewski regarding the background, process, and requirements of providing wine sampling and sales at the Farmers Market.

Pastue advised the city would set the parameters for establishing wine sampling and sales, including a requirement that the Market Master and Public Safety would sign off on applications. He confirmed the market would allow Michigan wineries only.

Cowley expressed the importance of closely monitoring the amount of individual wine samples served.

Discussion followed regarding the number of wineries allowed at the market during the year.

Discussion continued regarding the risk and insurance coverage for this activity.

Council expressed support for wine sampling and sales at the market.

5. MOTION TO AMEND THE AGENDA

1. Motion to amend the agenda adding DISCUSSION - SMART MILLAGE RENEWAL as Item No. 9.

RESULT:	APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Greg Cowley, Councilmember
SECONDER:	Jeff Scott, Councilmember
AYES:	Greg Cowley, William Galvin, Steve Schneemann, Jeff Scott
ABSENT:	JoAnne McShane

6. BOARD AND COMMITTEE APPOINTMENT PROCESS

1. Discussion - Board and Committee Appointment Process

City Administration recommended streamlining the board and committee appointment process. The recommendation is for the Mayor to take a greater role in the process.

Pastue provided a written statement from Councilmember McShane concerning the Board and Committee appointment process which read as follows:

I feel we should not deviate from our long standing Farmington practice whereby the entire City Council interviews applicants to be considered for appointment.

This best practice has been open and fair and has worked effectively for many years. The Council gets to know who they are appointing as well as the public and the press because the interviews are scheduled at regular meeting times in conjunction with published City Council meetings.

It has never taken much time to hold these infrequent interviews.

By having only the Mayor interview and appoint the candidates, this proposed action could be viewed as subverting the Open Meetings Act.

With one selected individual to interview and appoint applicants the process could limit diversity and possibly create bias.

The system we have for interviewing and appointing applicants by the full City Council does not take much time and has worked very well.

Council discussed the process by which the Mayor would interview candidates and make recommendation.

Responding to a question from Cowley, Pastue confirmed this change would comply with the City Charter. He further confirmed Council would have the final vote.

Galvin confirmed that with the proposed process Council would take action on his board and committee nominations.

Schneemann expressed support for the current process by which the full Council conducts the interviews. He stated this process allows councilmembers to hear different approaches to the candidates. He understands the importance of streamlining, but expressed a willingness to put in more time necessary for the interview process.

Scott concurred with Schneemann and stated the current interview process provides councilmembers with a good understanding of the experience and background of candidates.

Cowley pointed out that in the private sector Human Resources vets the candidates. He does not believe Council needs to interview every candidate.

Discussion followed regarding a process by which a regular time is set to interview candidates and councilmembers can decide whether or not to attend.

Pastue will put together a resolution to be presented at the next meeting that would set a regular time and process for conducting interviews.

Schneemann suggested the resolution be written in such a way that the Mayor can go ahead and conduct an interview without Councilmembers present.

Galvin spoke about his interview earlier that evening with Kathy Platzke for a position on the DDA board.

Pastue advised Tom Buck is also interested in serving on the DDA Board.

Discussion followed regarding appointments to the Corridor Improvement Authority (CIA). Mayor Galvin will appoint Scott to the Authority to serve in his place. Pastue advised there are still two more openings available.

Pastue discussed a vacancy on the Planning Commission. He stated Steve Majoros who currently serves on the Board of Zoning Appeals would be a good candidate for that opening. He discussed other changes that could take place if that appointment occurred.

7. GOAL SETTING SESSION

1. Discussion - Goal Setting Session

Pastue discussed the process for a goal setting session and requested Council set a meeting date for this purpose.

Cowley suggested prior to the meeting councilmembers add comments to the work plan format presented by Pastue.

Council concurred to set a special meeting date of Saturday, January 25th at 9:00 a.m. for the purpose of setting 2014/15 goals.

8. RESPONSE TO LETTER REGARDING RETIREE HEALTH CARE BENEFITS

1. Discussion - Response to Letter Regarding Retiree Health Care Benefits

Pastue discussed a letter received by the former Clerk/Treasurer and two former City Managers regarding recent changes made to retiree healthcare and also a request for a potential increase to the pension benefit.

Pastue advised the change in the retiree healthcare benefit involved moving retirees 65 and over to the Medicare Advantage Plan. He stated before this change was initiated the City made sure there would be no loss in service or benefit to the retirees. He advised this change that was effective July 1, 2013 resulted in a \$4 million reduction in liability.

Pastue advised the city attorney will draft a letter of response to retirees. He emphasized the city tried to stay within the spirit of its commitment to retirees while at the same time recognizing the fiscal challenge of managing healthcare costs.

Pastue discussed the pension retiree benefit reserve set aside by the Retirement System Plan. He advised the pension system is 95% funded, but noted that percentage changes with the volatility of the market. He recommended making no changes to the pension benefit.

Discussion followed regarding the changes in the retiree healthcare plan.

Responding to a question from Schneemann, Pastue stated he does not believe the changes constituted a breach of contract. He recognized this is a sensitive issue since retirees left the city with the understanding there would be no changes to their healthcare benefit. Schneemann requested a review of the contractual language.

Responding to a question from Cowley, Pastue confirmed there is currently no surplus in the pension system.

Discussion followed regarding the iron clad protection of pension systems under the state constitution.

Discussion continued regarding what the letter of response to the retirees should include. Council will have the opportunity to review the letter before it is sent.

Schneemann expressed the importance of keeping within the spirit of the contract with the retirees.

Galvin spoke about ongoing changes in the health insurance market relative to the implementation of the Affordable Healthcare Act. Due to government oversight, insurance carriers can no longer operate as they have in the past.

9. DISCUSSION - SMART MILLAGE RENEWAL

Pastue advised the Oakland County Transportation Authority known as SMART will place a referendum on the primary ballot for a millage renewal. He further advised communities can take action to withdraw from SMART by the end of January.

Pastue recommended staying with SMART for two reasons: the expanded services they have provided; and the formation of the Regional Transportation Authority which will likely allow for expansion of service. He pointed out in past elections the City of Farmington has always supported the SMART millage renewal.

Discussion followed regarding past negotiations with SMART relative to service and the city's continued request for ridership numbers for Farmington. Discussion continued regarding the benefits of the expanded service.

Scott asked about assurances from SMART that the level of service will be maintained.

Council requested inviting Steve Brown from SMART to an upcoming meeting to provide an update and future plans.

10. COUNCIL COMMENT

Galvin offered Maria Putt, Farmington resident and former city employee, an opportunity to comment.

Ms. Putt stated she was present to gain a better understanding of the changes that have been made to retiree healthcare benefits.

Pastue provided an explanation of the changes and an assurance that the benefits and service were comparable to what was previously provided. He stated there may be a difference in co-pays.

Galvin read the following statement:

A few years ago The New Yorker ran a cartoon that shows a dog in front of its computer that says "on the internet nobody knows you are a dog". If you followed last year's election in the local media, you saw two different styles of media coverage. The Observer, as objective reporting, with editorials or letters to the editor by citizens. The Farmington Patch also has

objective reporting, but it also allows for unedited user-based editorials and anonymous commentary. The difference of anonymity without accountability is a growing concern in today's media.

As a result of the internet and instantaneous communication, the public is quite often the journalist, but the public lacks the formal journalistic training. As a result, opinion can quickly become false and inaccurate facts. To prevent that, the Observer screens its letters to the editor and prints them with the author's name and city. On the internet, websites, and blogs such as the Patch, one wonders if it really is a dog posting the comments, if for no other reason than based on spelling and grammar.

To improve the users experience, many websites and blogs have moderators that act like editors. They approve a comment before it is posted where they have systems in place to confirm a person's identity and even connect it to Facebook. Other websites and blogs do not allow for any comments in order to maintain the integrity of its content. They do not want their content tainted by innuendo and conspiracy theories.

Now a friend of mine has an anecdotal piece of advice for all of us in how we can deal with the anonymously unaccountable. He calls it the refrigerator test. It's quite simple, if you wouldn't post your comments on your refrigerator then you shouldn't post them anywhere.

Galvin invited the public to make their comments during Public Comment at any council meeting.

11. CLOSED SESSION - LABOR NEGOTIATIONS

1. Motion to enter closed session to discuss labor negotiations.

RESULT:	APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Greg Cowley, Councilmember
SECONDER:	Jeff Scott, Councilmember
AYES:	Greg Cowley, William Galvin, Steve Schneemann, Jeff Scott
ABSENT:	JoAnne McShane

The votes were taken in the following order: Galvin, Schneemann, Scott, Cowley.

Council entered closed session at 8:30 p.m.

2. Motion to exit closed session.

RESULT: **APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]**
MOVER: Greg Cowley, Councilmember
SECONDER: Steve Schneemann, Mayor Pro Tem
AYES: Greg Cowley, William Galvin, Steve Schneemann, Jeff Scott
ABSENT: JoAnne McShane

Council exited closed session at 9:15 p.m.

12.ADJOURNMENT

1. Motion to adjourn the meeting.

RESULT: **APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]**
MOVER: Steve Schneemann, Mayor Pro Tem
SECONDER: Jeff Scott, Councilmember
AYES: Greg Cowley, William Galvin, Steve Schneemann, Jeff Scott
ABSENT: JoAnne McShane

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Mayor William Galvin

Susan K. Halberstadt, City Clerk

Approval Date: January 21, 2014