

FARMINGTON CITY COUNCIL  
SPECIAL MEETING  
OCTOBER 4, 2010

A special meeting of the Farmington City Council was held on Monday, October 4, 2010, 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 7:00 p.m. by Mayor Buck.

**PRESENT:** Buck, Knol, McShane, Wiggins, Wright.

**ABSENT:** None.

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

**APPROVAL OF REGULAR AGENDA**

**10-10-178** MOTION by McShane, seconded by Knol, to approve the agenda as presented. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

**DISCUSSION ITEMS**

**CIVIC THEATER AGREEMENT - SCOTT FREEMAN**

Pastue discussed his reasons for recommending the City enter into a contract with Scott Freeman to operate and manage the Civic Theatre.

Freeman laid out his vision for the Theatre. He identified areas for improvement as well as how to increase attendance. He stated his ideas were consistent with those of the Civic Theatre Ad Hoc Committee in terms of ways to maximize revenue while minimizing expenses. He is encouraged by the potential of the Civic and identified areas that need to be addressed, i.e. cleanliness, user-friendly atmosphere, enhancing technology, which could also lead to other rentals such as teleconferencing, boxing matches or other alternative programming.

Wright commented that the Civic must be operated like a business in order to be profitable. He asked Freeman how he plans to create broader community interest in order to enhance usage.

Freeman spoke about his vision for a family-friendly Theatre which is in line with the Master Plan. He stressed the importance of making it an integral part of downtown. He stated profit is important but attracting the right clientele is be key.

Pastue noted the success of the concert series in downtown Riley Park was a direct result of Freeman's efforts.

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McShane inquired about the last page of the contract. Pastue explained the provisions relate to Tracy Freeman's (Scott's wife) involvement with the Civic.

Attorney Schultz discussed the challenges of incorporating two people on the General Manager contract and explained the indemnification process.

Pastue responded Freeman's starting date is yet to be determined. He will move the process forward and bring the contract back to Council for formal ratification if this is Council's desire.

In response to a question from McShane, Pastue stated Kevin Carron is temporarily managing the Theatre and is doing a good job. However, he will be a full-time student in January and will not be able to devote the time needed for the position.

McShane noted the provision in the contract regarding "adhering to family values" and questioned whether boxing would meet that standard. She asked if decisions would be made unilaterally regarding what falls under the family values category.

Pastue explained the theatre is a community standard type operation and opportunities would be reviewed on a case-by-case basis to determine appropriateness.

Freeman explained that he had worked in television and broadcasting for a long time and there are the same types of measurements the FCC looks at regarding community standards, i.e. difference in cable or satellite programming and broadcasting.

McShane expressed concern over perception portrayed of the Civic in hosting certain events.

Knol commented that certain complaints have been aimed at the Civic, i.e. second run movies because it is a second run operation, insinuating a lack of professionalism from the low level of technology, staff attitudes, cleanliness, etc., and indicated there is a need for improvement in those areas.

Freeman responded that image is important and cited a number of goals towards that end including: cleaning the theatre both inside and out, regular maintenance performed, uniforms for staff, and to develop a brand identity as an entertainment venue. He would develop proper staff procedures and look to enhance the technological aspects of the projection and sound system.

Knol expressed the importance of properly maintained equipment. She noted a movie she recently attended where the film broke down and staff was difficult to find in order to address the issue.

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Wiggins commended Freeman on the job he has done in making improvements to "Rhythms in Riley Park", but inquired as to how much time he has to dedicate to the Civic given his current full time job.

Freeman discussed his current schedule which affords him the time, along with his wife Tracey, to operate the Theatre. He indicated a lot of the work would be behind the scenes and that there would be no conflict of interest with his employer. He is looking forward to going into the community to revive interest in the Civic.

Wright questioned what had been done with financial modeling or forecasting that would allow for revenue expectations.

Pastue responded that 1200 patrons per week need to visit the Civic to make it profitable. He stated additional rentals, programming opportunities, etc. to increase revenue will be pursued.

Wright asked about the outcome if the Civic only averaged 600 patrons per week. Pastue responded that unless there were a lot of other rentals and income streams, that issue would be addressed during the next budget process.

Wright noted the difficulty in meeting attendance goals given the increasing competition from home rentals, etc.

Freeman stated he understood his concern and that it was a valid concern.

McShane commented on the great opportunity that is being presented with the prospect of a number of creative venues and the opportunity to create a brand or market for the Civic.

Mayor Buck asked for clarification of Freeman's job as it relates to the work completed by the Civic Theatre Ad Hoc Committee.

Pastue responded that from an operational and vision statement, the ideas of both Freeman and the Committee were very compatible. He stated the Committee will continue their work in finding where the Civic would best serve the community.

Mayor Buck also asked for clarification on Page 5, G(a), on whether the word "she" was improperly used and it was indicated that it is probably just a typo.

Pastue asked if Council was comfortable moving forward on the contract with Freeman.

Wright responded that the lack of clarity regarding expectations, forecasts, revenues and expenses caused him some concern.

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Council agreed to move forward with the understanding that financial forecasts for the Theatre would be presented to Council prior to the next meeting.

Mayor Buck thanked Freeman for attending the meeting and being available for questions.

**SUMMER WATER CONSUMPTION AND IMPACT ON RATES**

Pastue explained that during the last budget process the question was raised as to why water usage by residents had decreased over the last two years. He stated as a result of continued decrease in water consumption this past summer, administration has determined consumers have altered their consumption habits due to a depressed economy rather than in response to weather conditions.

Pastue discussed a handout that provided a 10-year history on water consumption. Discussion followed regarding data trends.

Responding to a question from Wiggins, Treasurer Weber responded consumption was 4000 gallons less than projected numbers.

McShane asked about the impact of a separate meter for sprinkler systems.

Pastue responded there would be a greater sewer cost for the remainder of those in the system. He was unaware of the effect in terms of water usage, but there would need to be a restructuring within the systems regarding who pays for sewer costs. The difference in sewer systems between old and new cities was also discussed.

Knol noted separate water costs for landscaping was suppose to be part of a recently completed water study. Pastue indicated such an analysis could be done. In response to a question, he indicated the average water consumption was 80,000 gallons per family of four.

**GROVE STREET PROJECT**

Pastue asked Council to prioritize which capital improvement project, the switchback staircase or Grove Street, would be the best use of remaining funds.

Discussion followed regarding proposed changes to project costs and estimates for future projects as outlined in the handout provided by City Administration.

Knol asked if the large pylon sign at the shopping center on Grove Street and Grand River was coming down. Pastue responded the City did not have a definitive answer, however, the property owners associated with that sign have softened their position considerably.

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Knol stated her support of the Grove Street Project would be contingent on the removal of that sign.

Mayor Buck concurred with Knol and indicated that he would like to see a commitment in writing by the property owner stating that the sign would be changed to something consistent with current downtown standards.

Wiggins stated given the shortage of Capital funds, there is a legitimate question as to whether the City should move forward on any project. As a show of good faith, he would like to see the sign removed at owner's cost. He further suggested that the Switchback Staircase might be a better deal due to the leverage of an available federal grant. He cited the opportunities the Switchback would provide to residents and visitors. He reiterated that his support of the Grove Street Project would be contingent on the removal of the sign at owner's cost.

McShane expressed her concern over spending any money given water/sewer issue. She concurred with the other councilmembers on removal of the sign. She felt there would be more return on the dollar with the Switchback Project.

Wright stated due to the uncertainty of the current economy tax dollars may need to be redirected. He asked if funds can be used for something other than Capital Improvements. Pastue responded by discussing use of Capital Improvement Funds for debt reduction. Further discussion was held regarding debt service.

Wright agreed that improvements to Grand River provided more bang for the buck than anticipated for the Grove Street Project. He noted turning Grove Street into a boulevard would provide more parking and slow traffic. Further discussion was held regarding same. He concurred with the sign issue and pointed out that it is not consistent with improvements that have been made on Grand River.

Mayor Buck summarized discussion by saying Council would like a clear disposition on the sign; a better understanding of Capital Improvement funding and its impact on the budget; address concerns expressed by Council regarding the budget going forward; answers regarding which project best serves the City's residents and businesses; and a better understanding of the design of Grove Street and its impact on traffic.

Responding to a question from McShane, Pastue stated the grant money for the Switchback Project is available until September 2011.

Discussion was held regarding signage, historic district signage, and wayfinding signs.

Knol indicated she would like to see wayfinding signs; other signs are not as critical and perhaps signage could be done in phases.

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McShane indicated there may be grant money available for signs.

Michael Harrison, member of the Historic Commission, was introduced and spoke briefly about Historic District signage.

Pastue said he would review the budget and plan for signage improvements over a two-year period. He would like to have the Capital Improvements Program established by January 2011.

Mayor Buck pointed out the need for wayfinding signs in the City, but proposed waiting to order signs until expansion of the Historic District is completed.

### **ABANDONED/VACANT COMMERCIAL PROPERTY**

Pastue asked Council to contemplate a possible ordinance to address vacant and abandoned property as they participate in van tour on October 30, 2010.

### **DISPLAY OF PUBLIC ART AND POSSIBLE LOCATIONS**

Pastue discussed a recent offer from a local artist to donate a contemporary sculpture to the City. Council reviewed pictures of the sculpture and possible locations for placement.

Pastue indicated challenges in finding an appropriate location for the artwork and expressed a need for procedures and policies for receiving and placing of art in the community.

Mayor Buck summarized discussion by saying Council supported public art for the City, but there is concern about where it should be placed. He suggested further communication with the donor family or input from other cities might help guide the decision.

Mayor Buck asked McShane to further discuss placement of the artwork with donors to determine alternate locations.

### **FARMINGTON YEAR-END HOLIDAY VOLUNTEER/RETIREE/EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION DINNER**

Pastue indicated he received positive feedback from employees and volunteers regarding paying a \$25 fee to attend the Holiday Recognition Dinner. He advised the fee would cover the majority of the costs. Discussion followed regarding moving forward with the dinner and eliminating the receiving line.

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**OTHER BUSINESS**

Responding to a question from McShane, Pastue stated appointments to the Downtown Development Authority Board and Planning Commission would be on the next meeting agenda.

Discussion followed regarding status of candidates.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

No public comment was heard.

**COUNCIL COMMENT**

Mayor Buck announced City Attorney Schultz was named Distinguished Municipal Attorney by the Michigan Association of Municipal Attorneys. He congratulated Attorney Schultz and thanked him for his service.

Buck encouraged Councilmembers to attend the upcoming meeting of the South Oakland County Mayors Association. He noted Farmington is co-hosting the event to be held in South Lyon on October 13<sup>th</sup>.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**10-10-179** MOTION BY Wright, seconded by Wiggins to adjourn the meeting.  
MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

The meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

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J.T. (Tom) Buck, Mayor

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Susan K. Halberstadt, City Clerk

APPROVED: November 15, 2010