

FARMINGTON CITY COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING

A special meeting of the Farmington City Council was held on Monday, January 17, 2005, in Council Chambers, 23600 Liberty Street, Farmington, Michigan.

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Mayor Campbell.

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Bush, Campbell, Knol, McShane, Mitchell.

COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT: None.

CITY ADMINISTRATION: Deputy Clerk Halberstadt, City Manager Pastue, Attorney Schultz.

DISCUSSION

SIGN ORDINANCE

Council met to discuss the sign ordinance, goals of Main Street Design Committee and the Downtown Center Project.

Mayor Campbell requested that City Manager Pastue lead the discussion concerning a proposed sign ordinance. Pastue stated that the proposed ordinance, developed by the Main Street Design Committee, addresses a number of issues that have arisen in the past regarding signs. He indicated that provisions have been included that address the administration of signs and the amortization of pylon signs. He noted that additional minor modifications to the draft proposal would be made. He advised that the Downtown Development Authority supports the proposal.

Pastue addressed the administrative aspects of the proposed sign ordinance. He noted that permanent sign requests that meet ordinance criteria would follow the current process with final approval provided by the Building Department. He discussed other aspects of the administering the sign ordinance including the appeal process.

Councilmember Knol suggested that the Sign Review Committee develop a picture book of acceptable signs. She stated that the Economic Restructuring Committee (ERC) has discussed implementing a sign replacement matching grant program.

Discussion followed regarding the process for developing a picture book of signs.

Councilmember McShane noted that the proposed sign ordinance is a complete and timely document and provides an excellent standard.

Councilmember Bush stated that she agreed with the idea of a picture book of signs, but noted that most applicants are familiar with sign ordinance requirements and procedures.

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McShane asked when the proposed ordinance could be implemented in the entire City and not just in the Downtown. Pastue responded that once a sign ordinance is established for the Downtown expanding to other commercial areas would not be difficult. He suggested the formation of a committee to review expansion of the sign ordinance.

Councilmember Mitchell noted that the proposed ordinance does not compel an applicant to display a certain style of sign that aesthetically fits into the area. He noted that the use of grants could encourage applicants to display a specific style. Pastue responded that there are some standards in the ordinance that provide for consistency of signs, particularly with regard to awnings.

Responding to a question, Knol stated that it is a goal of the ERC to provide grant money to encourage specific styles, however, money is not yet available.

McShane asked about signage control with the establishment of a Historic District Ordinance. Attorney Schultz responded that providing an incentive to promote specific signage is a better alternative than to compel. McShane noted that the Design Committee did not want to adopt a theme for the Downtown since it would stifle creativity.

Knol noted the importance of displaying signs that fit with the architecture and history of a building. Pastue advised that any exterior improvement to an historic building would need to go through a review process.

Council concurred that offering financial incentives would be an effective tool to encourage appropriate signage.

Discussion followed regarding the twelve-year amortization for non-conforming signs and the notification process. Mitchell concurred with the twelve-year period and the exclusion of a grandfather clause.

Discussion continued regarding how the new Ordinance will be communicated to the Downtown businesses.

DESIGN COMMITTEE

Pastue advised that the Design Committee would be meeting to establish outside seating standards. He further advised that their next project is development of design standards for the Downtown area and review of the Zoning Ordinance as it pertains to the Downtown District. He stated that this process would require additional funds due to the involvement of the City Planners. He advised that this project could be delayed until next fiscal year when funds would be available.

Council concurred that the Design Committee should move forward with the establishment of design standards. Pastue stated that a proposal, including costs,

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would be provided to Council prior to implementation of the project. He recommended increased involvement of the Planning Commission with the Design Committee.

DOWNTOWN CENTER PROJECT UPDATE

Council concurred to delay the update until the Regular Council meeting that followed.

DISCUSSION WITH HISTORICAL COMMISSION RE: HISTORIC DISTRICT STUDY COMMITTEE

Present: James Atkinson, Dick Carvell, Jane Gundlach, Chairperson William Lindblad, Donald Munter; Nancy Leonard (excused)

City Manager Pastue stated that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the establishment of a Historic District Study Committee for the purpose of establishing a Certified Local Government (CLG) program.

Chairperson Lindblad discussed the Commission's rationale for establishing a Historic District Study Committee. He stated that the Committee would require specific resources in order to compile the substantial document required by the State to establish a Certified Local Government program. He further stated that the project would require a fair amount of research and documentation. In referring to the timeline of the project, he stated that the first goal set for June would be to obtain a consensus from affected homeowners. He further stated that information packets would be distributed and a public meeting arranged to inform homeowners about the project. He questioned how consensus would be measured in order to move the project forward. He stated that he does not want to give homeowners the impression that a significant change in their district is being foisted on them.

Chairperson Lindblad stated that assuming support of the CLG program is achieved, the completion date of the application process and compilation of supporting documents is set for June 1, 2006.

Responding to a question, Chairperson Lindblad stated that they have five or six possible names to serve on the seven-member Historic District Study Committee. He confirmed that these applicants are ready to be appointed. Responding to a further question, he stated that potential participants outside the Historic District would be educated regarding the benefits and restrictions of the CLG program.

Board member Atkinson noted that in order to complete the application process administrative services would be required. Councilmember McShane noted available resources from the County and State. Pastue suggested recruiting an intern from Eastern University to provide support for the project. Knol noted that Eastern has a Historic Preservation Program from which an intern could be recruited.

Mitchell asked if a Historic District resident could opt out of the program. Attorney Schultz stated that it is a policy question that would need to be answered. Mitchell expressed concern regarding restriction of property rights.

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Mayor Campbell emphasized the importance of properly communicating the CLG program to the community.

McShane expressed concern regarding the inappropriate alteration of the Historic District over the last three decades and the lack of protection over the years to come as cited by the Commission in their letter. She suggested talking with other cities that have adopted CLG programs and learn how they were implemented and maintained.

Discussion followed regarding how the CLG program would affect property rights.

Council concurred that the education process of the program is key to its success.

Mayor Campbell suggested establishing two Historic Districts: the primary District made up of the Central Business District with surrounding homes; and the secondary District comprised of all other historical properties. He stated that with two districts, regulations could be administered differently in each one.

Knol noted that historic properties cannot be regulated differently because tax credits must be applied consistently. Attorney Schultz stated that a full District must be in place in order to have the regulatory authority. Pastue noted that the contiguous District could be expanded as well as identifying other properties that are historic.

Boardmember Gundlach discussed the benefits of a mandatory Historic District which include maintaining the character and history of each home. She noted that there is some flexibility in the administration of a CLG program. She stated that such a program provides value to the District and community.

Responding to a question, Boardmember Atkinson confirmed that under the CLG program the Historic Commission would continue to review renovation plans. Pastue noted that in addition, a review by the Historic Commission would have more teeth.

Discussion followed regarding the administration of the CLG program.

Pastue advised that a resolution appointing a seven-member committee would be presented at the February 7, 2005 Council meeting. He also confirmed that prospective members would follow the application process of other board and commission members.

Mitchell recommended appointing some of the members from outside the Historic District. He encouraged seeking input from all community residents.

Mayor Campbell recommended that the next step would be to draft a resolution establishing a seven-member committee along with applicants completing applications followed by Council appointments.

Boardmember Atkinson again stressed the need for administrative assistance during the application process of the CLG program.

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Discussion followed regarding contact made to historic homes outside of the district.

Council thanked the Commission for their continued effort and contribution.

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

ARNOLD T. CAMPBELL, Mayor

PATSY K. CANTRELL, City Clerk/Treasurer

SUSAN K. HALBERSTADT, Recording Secretary

Approved: February 7, 2005