



City Council Meeting
7:00 p.m., September 8, 2026
23600 Liberty Street
Farmington, MI 48335

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

A meeting of the Farmington City Council was held on September 8, 2026 at 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 PM by Mayor LaRussa

1. Roll Call

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Johnna Balk	Mayor Pro-Tem	Present	
Joe LaRussa	Mayor	Present	
Kevin Parkins	Councilmember	Excused	
Steve Schneemann	Councilmember	Present	
Maria Taylor	Councilmember	Present	

City Administration Present:

City Manager, David Murphy
City Clerk, Meaghan K. Bachman
City Attorney, Beth Saarela
OHM Advisors, Austin Downie

2. Approval of the Agenda

Motion by Balk
Seconded by Taylor

Resolved, move to approve the agenda with the addition of the Caddell Drain payment following Item 6 and renumber the remaining items accordingly.
Motion carried unanimously 4-0

3. Public Comment

Devin Schwalm, 25668 Rutledge Crossing, Farmington Hills, addressed Council regarding the proposed regulation of electric bicycles. He supported safety measures for narrow downtown sidewalks but expressed concern that a citywide sidewalk prohibition could force lawful e-bike riders onto higher-speed roads such as Grand River Avenue, Farmington Road, and Orchard Lake Road.

Michael Harris, 36 Wintergreen, stated that rider age appeared to be a greater safety concern than the type of bicycle and noted that younger riders are frequently involved in reported incidents.

4. Liquor License Application for Zap Zone Extreme

City Manager Murphy presented Zap Zone Extreme, Ltd.'s request to transfer an existing Class C resort liquor license from Bonefish Grill in Troy to 31506 Grand River Avenue. The proposed bar would offer beer, wine, and spirits. Staff reported that the Building Official, Department of Public Safety, and City Treasurer had reviewed the application and identified no outstanding compliance issues. Because the license is a resort license transferable throughout Michigan, the transfer will not affect the City's quota licenses.

Representatives of Zap Zone explained that alcohol service is intended primarily to support corporate events, adult groups, and parents attending family activities. The renovated facility includes a separated bar area, banquet space, arcade and entertainment offerings, and updated interior and exterior improvements. The representatives stated that the license would allow Zap Zone to retain groups that currently leave the facility for food and beverages elsewhere.

Motion by Balk

Seconded by Schneemann

Resolved, move to approve the transfer of an existing Class C liquor license to Zap Zone Extreme's location at 31506 Grand River Avenue, Farmington, Michigan 48336.

Roll Call Vote:

Yeas: Balk, LaRussa, Schneemann, Taylor

Nays: None

Motion carried unanimously 4-0

5. Farmington Civic Theater Seating Upgrade

Farmington Civic Theater General Manager Clare Cooney presented an opportunity to purchase approximately 325 Irwin Signature rocking seats and spare parts from the closing Romeo Theater. The seats were purchased in 2018, are in near-new condition, recline by rocking, and have flip-up armrests. Cooney explained that the Civic Theater's rigid seating is a frequent patron complaint and that comparable new seating would cost substantially more.

The estimated project cost is approximately \$40,000, including roughly \$17,000 for the seats and spare parts and \$23,000 for removal, transportation, design, cleaning, patching, and installation. Funding would include \$30,000 from the Theater Capital Outlay Buildings account, with the balance from the Capital Outlay Fund. The proposed layout may modestly reduce capacity while increasing legroom. Council discussed sight lines, the height and spacing of the replacement seats, possible floor repairs or coating while the auditorium is empty, resale of selected existing seats, and compatibility with potential future theater renovations. Cooney reported that theater attendance and ticket sales had increased significantly in 2026 and agreed to have the professional installer verify the layout and sight lines before installation.

Motion by Schneemann
Seconded by Taylor

Resolved, move to upgrade the seating at the Farmington Civic Theater by purchasing seating from the Romeo Theater, provided the final layout maintains industry-recommended sight lines for theater use.

Roll Call Vote:
Yeas: LaRussa, Schneemann, Taylor, Balk
Nays: None
Motion carried unanimously 4-0

6. Governor Warner Mansion Addition Guaranteed Maximum Price

Staff and representatives of OHM Advisors and Shaw Construction and Management reviewed the subcontractor bids and recommended a guaranteed maximum price of \$1,725,750 for the Governor Warner Mansion addition. Staff advised that multiple bids were received for most trades and that the guaranteed maximum price includes a construction contingency. Unused contingency funds would reduce the final project cost. Approval would allow Shaw to execute subcontractor agreements, submit drawings for permits, begin submittals, and order long-lead materials.

Council discussed the proposed green-screen and trellis treatment, which was not included in the guaranteed maximum price and was conceptually estimated at approximately \$150,000. Members requested additional design development showing the structure and plantings at installation and as they mature. OHM was asked to return at the September 21, 2026 meeting with options and visual information so Council could provide direction without delaying the initial construction work. The anticipated construction duration was discussed as approximately six to eight months, subject to permitting and material lead times, including the elevator.

Mayor LaRussa expressed concern that the guaranteed maximum price was higher than the earlier construction estimate and that the total investment could exceed \$2 million after design and engineering costs and any green-screen or trellis work were included. He questioned whether the full two-story addition remained the appropriate scope when the City also had road, utility, and other capital priorities, and asked whether using capital improvement and millage funds for the project could limit funding available for those needs. While supporting the goal of preserving and making the Mansion usable, he was hesitant to authorize the expenditure without a clearer plan for how the facility would be managed, scheduled, marketed, and used to generate activity and revenue. He noted that the City no longer had a dedicated Mansion director and that policies and staffing responsibilities for operating the facility had not yet been established. Council agreed that an operating plan was needed, and City Manager Murphy was asked to develop options with assistance from interested Councilmembers.

Council also reviewed available grant and capital funding, the increase from earlier conceptual estimates, competing capital needs, and the importance of preserving and activating the Mansion. Discussion included reinforcing and rehabilitating the existing

structure, improving accessibility, creating larger gathering spaces, potential uses and revenue, and the need for an operating plan identifying who will manage, schedule, and market the facility after construction.

Motion by Taylor
Seconded by Balk

Resolved, move to approve the guaranteed maximum price of \$1,725,750 for the Governor Warner Mansion Addition project.

Roll Call Vote:
Yeas: Schneemann, Taylor, Balk
Nays: LaRussa
Motion carried 3-1

7. Caddell Drain Payment

City Manager Murphy reported that the City had received the Oakland County Water Resources Commissioner assessment for the Caddell Drain Nine Mile and Drake project. Farmington's assessment of \$689,367 was less than the \$727,454 budgeted for the project. The work addresses the deteriorated triple-barrel culvert beneath the Nine Mile Road and Drake Road intersection, a project discussed for approximately seven to eight years.

Motion by Balk
Seconded by Taylor

Resolved, move to approve payment to the Oakland County Water Resources Commissioner Special Assessments Office for the Caddell Drain Nine Mile and Drake Project PRJ-17877 assessment in the amount of \$689,367.

Roll Call Vote:
Yeas: Taylor, Balk, LaRussa, Schneemann
Nays: None
Motion carried unanimously 4-0

8. Public Art and Mural Policy Discussion

City Manager Murphy introduced the revised draft public art program developed following Council's earlier mural ordinance discussion. The City Attorney reviewed changes that would establish one citywide application process, require building-owner consent, assess a proposed \$250 application fee, and assign review to the DDA Design and Public Art Committee rather than using separate review processes inside and outside the downtown district.

Council reviewed the proposed definitions, approval criteria, committee authority, relationship to the sign ordinance and site-plan review, originality and copyright requirements, neighborhood and business support, and the treatment of temporary

window painting. Members questioned whether a single policy should cover murals, sculptures, tapestries, architectural enhancements, and other forms of public art when several provisions were written specifically for painted murals.

Council also discussed maintenance and removal requirements, enforcement procedures, the responsibility of artists and property owners, potential bonds or deposits to assure future removal or repair, and whether added costs would discourage otherwise desirable art. The consensus was to simplify the document and focus it on murals. Sculptures and similar improvements on private property would continue through existing site-plan review, and temporary window paintings would remain subject to the sign ordinance. The City Attorney will revise and recirculate a clean draft. No formal action was taken.

9. Other Business

City Manager Murphy advised that the City had received verbal confirmation of funding for two additional bus stops. Pending the formal award and contract amendment, he requested Council's concurrence to include the two locations when concrete pads are poured for other stops. Council indicated support for proceeding with the preparatory work and bringing the contract amendment back for formal approval.

10. Public Comment

No members of the public spoke.

11. Council Comment

Mayor LaRussa reported that he attended the unveiling of the Historical Commission's first historic plaque at the Farmington Civic Theater. He complimented the plaque design and noted that the Commission intends to promote the program to property and business owners, who may participate by contributing toward the approximately \$250 cost.

12. Adjournment

Motion by Balk
Seconded by Schneemann

Resolved, move to adjourn the meeting at 8:51 PM.
Motion carried unanimously 4-0

Joe LaRussa, Mayor

Meaghan K. Bachman, City Clerk