

MINUTES
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS
CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION MEETING
CITY HALL – COMMUNITY ROOM
JANUARY 11, 2016 – 6:00PM

The Study Session meeting of the Farmington Hills City Council was called to order by Mayor Massey at 6:00pm.

Council Members Present: Bridges, Bruce, Knol, Lerner, Massey, Rich and Steckloff

Council Members Absent: None

Others Present: City Manager Boyer, City Clerk Smith, Director Mekjian and City Attorney Joppich

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION PRESENTATION ON I-275 CONSTRUCTION:

Mayor Massey explained that study sessions are for the purpose of Council gaining more information on an issue or item that they may be asked to consider taking action on at a regular meeting. He acknowledged that there were many residents in attendance and that he would try to allow for a few public comments if time permits.

Director Mekjian explained that representatives from MDOT were present to provide information on a large regional road rehabilitation project along I-275. He stated that MDOT is asking communities within the construction area to grant permission to MDOT to work 24/7 due to the magnitude of the project. He felt that it would be a good idea to bring in MDOT to discuss the project with Council including the scope of work, proposed schedule, costs and how this method and time frame was chosen for the project.

Sandy Montes, TSC Manager for Oakland County, indicated that this project was being managed through the Wayne County Office; however, she was here to support Ishrat Jahan who would be presenting the project; and she would certainly bring any concerns or questions back to the Wayne County Office.

Ms. Jahan, project manager, provided an overview of the road rehabilitation project that would include replacing the riding surface in a very cost effective way along I-275. There would also be minor rehabilitation to 16 bridges within the project area. The cost of the construction is estimated to be \$82 million with a total estimated cost of \$95 million that would include design and construction. She explained that the surface roadway is failing and this project is being done to extend the life of the pavement by 15-25 years.

Ms. Jahan reviewed the options considered for managing traffic during the construction and mentioned that there was public input by way of a survey and a public hearing meeting held in November, 2015. The comments from the public were in favor of finishing the project as quickly as possible.

She provided Council with proposed traffic detour routes and noted that the pre-work would begin in March, 2016 with stage 1 of the project starting mid to late April and stage 2 starting mid to late June. Completion of the most of the major construction should be by September 15, 2016 and incentives have been included to encourage the contractors to finish by that date. She stated that in order to get the work done as quickly as possible, they have proposed a very tight construction schedule of approximately 5 ½ months and in order to meet the deadlines they are requesting communities to grant them construction and

noise waivers to have the contractors work on the project 24/7. She stated that if they were not granted these waivers, this would be a 2 to 3 year project and the costs would go up by approximately 40 percent.

Ms. Jahan stated that a production website should be available by next week and she would send more information on that to the affected communities.

Mayor Pro-Tem Knol asked if Ms. Jahan could explain what type of construction would be taking place in the evenings.

Ms. Jahan responded that they are not able to place restrictions on the contractor regarding the type of activity that can take place in the evening as that would depend on where they were with the project.

Ms. Montes stated that the crushing facility is located off-site so the concrete would not be crushed on site, which in their experience is one of the noisiest components of such a project; but they would still be busting up the concrete to haul it away to the crushing facility and there could be drills in operation during evening hours.

Ms. Jahan added that this is a moving project and the contractors will not be in the same location for long periods of time so the noise in the evening at a given location would not be extended.

Councilmember Steckloff inquired about the construction taking place along I-696 and the detour routes. Ms. Jahan explained that this would include concrete patching from the interchange of I-1275/I-696/I-96 to east of Telegraph Road and the detour would be M-5 to 8 Mile Road to Telegraph. She added that this portion is proposed to be closed for 2 weekends only

Councilmember Steckloff stated that MDOT mentioned there was overwhelming support from residents for the 24/7 operation and to get this done as quickly as possible, but questioned if the residents who live along the freeways were included amongst them. She also inquired what happens if Farmington Hills were to deny the construction/noise waivers.

Ms. Jahan stated that the survey did not inquire where they lived in relation to the project; however, many residents also came to the public hearing meeting. She added that MDOT needs approval of the construction/noise waivers from all communities involved otherwise this would end up being a 2 to 3 year project.

Ms. Jahan added that the pavement is bad along this corridor and MDOT is spending millions every year to patch the roadway.

Councilmember Bruce inquired if residents will be given advanced warning of the 24/7 construction. Ms. Jahan noted that the information will be included on their project website.

Dr. Bruce inquired if mailings could be done instead as many people would either not be aware of the website or may not have access to a computer.

Ms. Montes stated that they have not used mailings in the past on such projects as they are constantly moving projects, but they would be sure to post all stage changes.

Councilmember Lerner expressed concern that MDOT is just now coming to the City with this project and asking for waivers when it clearly has been planned for years.

Ms. Jahan stated that the project was scoped out in May, 2015 and MDOT contacted the City at that time.

Councilmember Lerner commented that noise along I-275 in this area has been an issue with residents in Farmington Hills for over 40 years and the City has over and over again contacted MDOT asking them to do something about this for the residents. He commented that the City has received no assistance with that issue and he felt now might be a good time to discuss it.

Ms. Jahan commented that the proposed project, because they are using federal highway funding, does not qualify for a noise abatement wall. She noted that at the request of the City of Livonia, MDOT will be taking noise levels before and after the project. She stated that they anticipate some reduction in noise due to the type of concrete being used.

Mr. Lerner commented that while the project may not qualify for a noise abatement wall, there are other means that could help reduce noise levels such as berms and natural plantings that would not require federal highway funding.

Ms. Jahan noted that 500 trees were being planted as part of the project. It was noted that these are not considered noise reducing. Ms. Montes added that with every joint in the pavement that the cars hit that creates additional noise so just by reducing that and with the material being used is anticipated to reduce noise levels; however, they are unable to say by how much.

Councilmember Bridges concurred with Mr. Lerner and stated that the noise issue has been a long-standing one and he would like to see steps taken to address the issue. He inquired about MDOT having no authority to change the contract for the project and what the city's portion of this project will be.

Ms. Jahan stated that they have control over certain items like having the concrete crusher off-site or only allowing certain drills to be used; but they are unable to tell the contractor when they can or can't do a certain function of the construction project. She noted that the city's portion will be approximately \$650,000-\$750,000.

Councilmember Rich stated that she does not feel communicating to residents by way of the website only is sufficient and she expressed concern with the noise levels at night for students in the area who have to get up and go to school. She stated that Council is charged with preserving the rural character of the city and she feels that would be difficult to do when they are being asked for noise waivers without any assistance in abating the existing daily noise for residents.

Ms. Montes stated that from their experience, residents would rather see the project done quickly rather than having it last for 2-3 years. It was explained that the majority of the project would be done when school was not in session and that the first stage starting in April would include work on the bridges and not the major construction until May.

Councilmember Rich pointed out that school runs through the end of June and students have final exams at that time. She added that the long-term issue of noise still also needs to be addressed.

Mayor Massey commented that taking noise level readings before and after the project will still not abate the noise. He stated that MDOT has not addressed this issue and is now asking for noise waivers from the City. He asked why MDOT could not include noise abatement walls into the contract.

Ms. Montes stated that they would be taking on too much liability if they were to try and dictate the means and methods by which they could do the project within the tight time frame.

Mayor Massey inquired about the life cycle cost analysis. Ms. Jahan explained that this is the legally approved method for determining the least costly pavement for the intended project.

Mayor Massey suggested that the \$3,000,000 in incentives is used for a noise abatement wall. Ms. Jahan stated that they are unable to utilize any of the funding for noise abatement as it is federal highway funding.

Mayor Pro-Tem Knol asked for clarification on the various options for routing traffic and hours of operation. Ms. Jahan explained how traffic would be managed for each option and noted that the project would be 24/7 regardless of which option was chosen for managing traffic flow.

Councilmember Bruce stated that he would like the project done as quickly as possible with the least disruption to the residents. He inquired about temporary, moving sound walls.

Ms. Montes commented that sound walls are very expensive and could cost up to an extra \$3 million and she felt the process to get approval and write that into the contract would make it difficult to meet the project start date.

Ms. Montes commented that the largest impact will be on traffic, more so than noise.

Councilmember Lerner stated that there is no vote being taken this evening, but when this issue is back before Council at a regular meeting for consideration, he will be looking for more berms and natural plantings to be included as part of the project before he will support it. He stated that the residents along I-275 between 8 and 9 Mile Roads need some relief.

Mayor Massey stated that the bottom line is that noise in this area has been a 40 year issue for the residents in Farmington Hills and that has affected their quality of life and Council wants to work with MDOT to satisfy both issues. He reiterated that there is no vote being taken at this time and that the issue will come back to Council at a regular meeting.

Mayor Massey opened the meeting up for public comments.

Patrick Beckley, 38095 Southfarm, stated that his home was built in 1969, four years prior to I-275 being constructed and at that time residents were made promises that were not kept. He commented on noise walls being all over Chicago along freeways where there are not even residents close by. He feels that MDOT does not care about the residents and urged Council to “stick to their guns” on this issue.

Larry Shoup, 21111 Centerfarm, stated that he is here representing several residents along I-275. He does not feel that the noise level study proposed is a good value and suggested that the funding is used towards noise abatement instead. He stated that some of the residents are available to participate or help with work studies as they know the issue first hand and he offered their assistance.

Nihad Attee, 21253 Woodhill, stated that she has lived in the area for 35 years and the noise is so terrible that they are unable to use their deck. She added that her husband took a noise decibel reading at one time and tried to get help on this issue with no luck.

Dennis Beagen, 38895 Westchester, stated that his home abuts I-275, only 25 yards to the shoulder of the freeway; and he commented that you would be unable to hold this meeting in his back yard due to the noise. He stated that it is not only the noise, but dirt and debris from the freeway as well. He stated that they were never provided the survey mentioned by MDOT. He added that he has been very involved in

this issue and even took the matter up in Washington D.C. but could not get MDOT or the federal government to speak to him.

Wayne Robinson, Homeowner's Association President for Preserves of Meadowbrook, added that another important issue is the containment of lighting during construction so that it is not shining in the residents' windows at night.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further discussion, Mayor Massey adjourned the study session at 7:25pm.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. B. Smith', written in a cursive style.

Pamela B. Smith, City Clerk