



Special Council Meeting
6:30 p.m., Thursday, March 4, 2021
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

FINAL

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

A special meeting of the Farmington City Council was held on March 4, 2021, as a Virtual Meeting via Zoom, an electronic meeting platform. Notice of the meeting was posted in compliance with Public Act 267-1976 and electronically as authorized under the Open Meetings Act, MCL 15.261, et seq., as amended by HB 1108, in order to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, protect the public health, and provide essential protections to vulnerable Michiganders by limiting in-person contact and the number of people interacting at public gatherings.

The meeting was called to order at 6:31 p.m. by Mayor Sara Bowman.

1. ROLL CALL

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Sara Bowman	Mayor	Present	
David DeLind	Councilmember	Present	
Joe LaRussa	Mayor Pro Tem	Present	
Steve Schneemann	Councilmember	Present	
Maria Taylor	Councilmember	Present	

City Administration Present

Director Christiansen
DDA Director Knight
City Clerk Mullison
City Manager Murphy
City Attorney Schultz
Director Weber

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Move to approve the agenda as presented.

RESULT:	APPROVED AS PRESENTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	DeLind, Councilmember
SECONDER:	Taylor, Councilmember

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

Lowell Boileau, 24105 Twin Valley, voiced his support of the Robinson proposal.

Jill Keller, 23617 Warner, read the letter she sent to Council earlier in the week.

Susan Kramer, 24105 Twin Valley, supported the Robertson Brothers townhomes.

Sally Petrella, Dearborn Heights, Monitoring Manager of Friends of the Rouge, commented on the Rouge River where it flows through Shiawassee Park and how any paved surface added in the redevelopment would affect the river.

Kevin Gromley, 23626 Warner, lives in the Historic District and supports the Robertson Brothers proposal.

Pam Wright, 21492 Birchwood, wants the option to buy a condo in Farmington.

Linda Chiara, 33630 Shiawassee, supported Robertson Brothers.

Written comments were received from:

Jill Keller to Council, 3/1/2021, recommended Robertson Brothers as the developer for the MTC Property.

David and Arlene Allen to Council, 3/3/2021, requested that Council cast their vote for the Robertson Homes proposal.

Linda Peckham to Clerk Mullison, 3/3/2021, stated that she was in favor of the Robertson Brothers Home for the development of the MTC property.

Jane and Rick Gundlach to Council, 3/3/2021, urged Council to vote for a development of townhomes built by Robertson Brothers Homes on the MTC site.

Kevin Gromley to Council, 3/3/2021, thinks the Robertson Brothers proposal is a better fit for the site.

4. PRESENTATION BY CIB OF SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION FOR MAXFIELD TRAINING CENTER (MTC) AND DETERMINATION OF NEXT STEPS BY CITY COUNCIL

Eric Helzer of Advanced Redevelopment Solutions presented an RFQ Questionnaire, Clarifications, Responses and Supplemental Information – Revision 1 to assist Council as they discussed which developer to move forward with in the next steps for the Maxfield Training Center project.

Helzer introduced Sharon Woods, market analyst of LandUseUSA, who summarized a Retail Market Assessment done on the two projects being considered. This study was done in an objective and unbiased way and measured the direct benefits of new residents on retail sales

and establishments within the city. It compared the expenditure potential that could be generated by new renters versus owners and concluded that the analytic results favored renters.

Each Councilmember had the opportunity to question both Helzer and Woods on their reports and to indicate which developer they wanted to go forward with on a purchase and development agreement.

Bowman said she felt that both developers had great products, and that she had tried to determine which product, using analytics and data, would bring the most benefit to the most people in the community. She indicated a preference for River Caddis because she felt they would bring exactly what Farmington has been looking for to the downtown. She cited the information that had been collected from the citizens in the process of putting together the Downtown Area Plan, the Development Plan, and the DDA Vision Plan as all pointing to this being the exact site for the project. River Caddis brings the best public amenities which could be exactly what these plans have indicated are needed, a connectivity from the downtown to Shiawassee Park. She feels that, as a partner, River Caddis would be the greatest asset and benefit that this particular area is ready for. There are other sites that are ready and primed for the housing development style that Robertson Brothers is offering, and she felt the plan for a rental community next to an existing rental community fits best. River Caddis stood out to her as the number one choice for this project.

Schneemann reiterated how happy he was that additional information was obtained for these reports and said it cleared up some of the assumptions that he felt Council was making. He stated that he liked both options and that either would be a huge step forward including aspects of both for public amenities. He understood and appreciated that the DDA was looking to do what was best for the downtown and said that having more people downtown would be a great thing. If Farmington wanted to see more vibrancy, then that would mean higher density. His biggest concern with Robertson Brothers was their lackluster design and he stated that Farmington deserved a much better level of design. Based on all supplemental information received, he supported Robertson Brothers for the MTC site. He expressed concern about the design and their ability to deliver but believed Robertson Brothers has the ability to raise the bar on the level of design. He stated that another consideration in his decision was that there was already a high percentage of rental units in Farmington. He said that there would be significantly more tax revenue to owner-occupied units which would translate to revenue for the city. He said that it would be a benefit to property owners to have additional property owners in the city as opposed to a corporate entity that isn't even based here. Most important to him was the level of public outcry. Ninety percent of the people he heard from wanted Robertson Brothers and he felt they shouldn't be ignored or dismissed. He hoped that Council and administration would work together with whoever prevails to do the best possible for constituents and community.

LaRussa said it's been a tough road with a lot of research, information, and opinions and he wanted to be clear on what was being decided on. He summarized that a vote for the River Caddis proposal gets a faster sale on the property, a larger tax capture, a shorter construction time, more spent downtown. Whichever developer is decided upon, LaRussa will be looking for a timeline like the one River Caddis offered in their RFQ. He said that there would be strong negotiations about what would be best for the city. He liked what he saw in River Caddis and would like to see the results outcome be closer if Robertson Bros was chosen. He had spoken with people that are very concerned that the remediation time would be longer with Robertson Brothers and also to some who believe that higher density will benefit our businesses. He wants

to see an aggressive schedule of abatement for the site and for the timeline for construction to reduce the City's risk as seller.

DeLind said that both were excellent proposals. He said that he didn't think that rental was inherently bad or that homeownership was inherently good to a community. He noted that the demographic of young, professional Millennials are more apt to want townhomes. He had heard from many constituents that their concern was not so much about owner versus rental but rather about density on the site. He stated that he was in support of Robertson Brothers, as he felt it was most appropriate in size and density on the MTC site. Most importantly, he felt community support of townhomes brought him to this decision.

Taylor was in favor of the Robertson Brothers townhome project. It would help Farmington's tax revenue, would solve problems the City bought this property to address, and it would be a lower density project to fit into that area. She cited past plans for the MTC property and the general concerns heard from the neighboring residents that ultimately caused those projects to fail. Surrounded by a historic downtown, she was concerned that a modern, trendy building would clash with the area. She stated that brownstones will be timeless over the years. Millennials want a town like Farmington, empty nesters would move into townhomes, and Millennials would move into homes the empty nesters vacate.

Move to direct City Administration and Consultants to begin working with Robertson Brothers to prepare a purchase and development agreement for the Maxfield Training Center and related property for consideration and action by the City Council at a future meeting.

RESULT:	APPROVED [4-1]
MOVER:	LaRussa, Mayor Pro Tem
SECONDER:	Taylor, Councilmember
AYES:	DeLind, LaRussa, Schneemann, Taylor
NAYS:	Bowman

5. OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was heard.

6. PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment was heard.

7. COUNCIL COMMENT

LaRussa commended everyone involved in making the decision for developer. He stated that this is some of the toughest decision making and thanked you all for being so well informed and for being civil about it. He was excited to move on to the next step and stated that in eighteen months, Farmington has come further on this project in more than a decade. He encouraged city administration to heed what he said earlier about pushing Robertson Brothers for the

aggressive schedule offered by River Caddis. He said that he will be looking for positive answers on that topic and that shorter timelines benefit everybody.

Bowman spoke of her family's history in the Farmington area and her own association with the city and Farmington's goals and direction. She felt very strongly for the vote she made earlier in support of the River Caddis project, knowing that is the direction that Farmington really was working towards. She will continue to support the Council and the plan with Robertson Brothers, but she stood by her decision to vote for River Caddis as a once in a lifetime opportunity to bring people to the downtown and to provide an opportunity for more people to experience downtown. She was hopeful that Robertson Brothers will bring everything they said they could.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Move to adjourn the meeting.

RESULT:	APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Taylor, Councilmember
SECONDER:	DeLind, Councilmember

The meeting adjourned at 8:33 pm.

Sara Bowman, Mayor

Mary Mullison, City Clerk

Approval Date: March 15, 2021