

One such request was that for \$578,000 for the San Juan Safe Communities Initiative, which happens to be administered by another city councilman, Dan Darnell.

Would such money be frivolous spending?

Is it fair that such a lofty request ahead of others be linked to a project with special-interest ties to a council member?

Both are good questions and deserve to be answered. Perhaps it is a noble thing. But instead of just looking back, the city leadership should look ahead.

Former City Manager Mike Miller, who submitted the requests before the City Council saw the list, was fired.

Whoever takes that office next must know that on no uncertain terms, the City Council as a whole never should be surprised the way this council seemed constantly to be surprised under the old guard.

Nor should anyone by now remain ignorant of the importance to conduct the public's business in public. No longer should major decisions like this be done "behind closed doors," as Sandel so correctly described it.

Cost overruns on an airport restaurant? Better inform the council; all of the members.

Cost overruns on a park project? Better get the council's direction on what to do next and where to trim.

Prioritizing what to seek from Big Brother in federal funding? Better not let the elected leaders be surprised.

Bottom line: Yet another opportunity exists for the city of Farmington to improve its sloppy management image. And how can it be called anything else given the one surprise after another that has made headlines?

The good news is, most council members seem to indicate they realize things can be done better. Perhaps they also realize the opportunity at hand, and not just in the hiring of a city manager. A bit of mirror examination is needed as well.

Now is the time. No matter who becomes the new city manager, the City Council should be a part of the leadership equation.

We're not suggesting micromanagement. No city staffer wants to hear that. It's the worst thing elected leaders could do.

We're simply suggesting management, period.

That means no surprises.