

Tuesday January 31, 2017 Falcon Heights Task Force on Inclusion and Policing Meeting Minutes

Attendance: Melanie Leehy, Randy Gustafson, Sack Thongvanh, Mayor Peter Lindstrom, Michael Wade, Kate Thompson, Kathy Quick, Ken Morris, Amy Johnson, Kay Andrews, Jim Ballentine, Peter Demarath and Dan Johnson-Powers.

Jay Colond was absent due to an illness.

I. Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 7:19pm.

II. Review Agenda

There was agreement on the agenda with no changes needed.

III. Review Meeting Minutes

Minutes from the Jan. 10, 2017 meeting were reviewed. Two changes were needed. One was in section 3 where "my" should be changed to "by" and the other was in section 4 where the community meeting should be described as multiple groups of 8-10 people.

IV. Discussion of Draft Statements of Falcon Heights Community Values Provisional statements were made available prior to the meeting for members to read and use to develop language for the community meetings. Four small groups were formed to discuss the draft statements.

Draft statement topics:

Trust and Transparency

Equity and Justice

Welcome and Inclusion

Safety

Active Citizenship

Regarding the process of communicating values there should be no dead ends or surprises meaning there should be no values that do not have actions and no free floating suggestions that are not rooted in community values.

Members reconvened and shared thoughts from the small group discussion. Falcon Heights is often an example for other cities hopefully this can be the case with policing. One value to consider is courage particularly courage to speak up if you see something. What is our definition of community? If a white officer doesn't see a black man as a member of the community then he might not receive equal treatment. Many pass through the city and the task force will need to do the best it can to represent everyone in the larger community.

Everyone owns some responsibility in relationships. An example of community policing was given but the black person felt singled out from the group of mostly white people. Other experiences were shared and how interactions with police can be interpreted. Police may have good intentions but the impact of an experience can be more important to the person and larger community. Random and planned community engagement by police is needed.

People in the community need to engage each other as well. There appears to be a lack of understanding of the history that has led to the current circumstances for many. We need to see ourselves in each other and the importance of working inter-generationally. There is a need to work on history and the future.

There was agreement that the value categories were accurate although more may be needed. They will serve as guard rails that can be tightened up with further discussion. Active Citizenship needs to include the entire community. Engagement among community members can't be legislated but needs to be aspired to. Other values suggested were leadership, service and courage.

Policing directives were mentioned. Do we have directives we want the police to follow? Life safety, property and environment are examples from firefighting. Protection is certainly important. Sack described the experience with the protest at Falcon Heights City last summer. Requests were made of the protesters that were respected. Eventually the protesters left but the city did not tell them to leave.

Another suggestion was having respect being a category by itself. Perhaps this is covered in Equity and Justice or Welcome and Inclusion but could be called out more.

V. Break - meeting continued at 8:42pm.

VI. Community Engagement Planning - Design Team Members of the design team introduced themselves and described the process of the community conversations. The structure of the meetings enables a collaborative problem solving. People engage more deeply when asked to solve a problem and relationships are formed in this process. We want people to attend as many meetings as they can. Meetings will use the draft value statements to encourage community responses along with possibly generating new statements. The process is not static and will draw on wisdom of the members.

A wide net will be cast into the community to gather input. Invitations will be sent to community groups and activist groups. Personal invitations are also needed. Task force members will need to reach out to their networks.

By sitting in dialog in small groups people tend to engage more productively. Facilitators will work to set a productive tone. Others can be brought in to help if needed. Someone may be asked to leave if the meeting is not productive. Format has been successful in the past. People realize when they have the talking piece they have the privilege of speaking. Refreshments and childcare could help attendance.

What will the ethnic makeup be among the facilitators? The pool of mediators is somewhat diverse but the final makeup will depend on who signs up.

People with childcare ideas should talk to Sack. High school students could be involved with groups and provide childcare. Task force members were encouraged to reach out to young people as they can feel left out of the community.

The first general invitation will be sent out tomorrow Wednesday Feb. 1. Perhaps childcare can be added to future invitations. Location will be just for the first meeting.

The role of the task force in the five sessions is to be involved and observe. One of the co-facilitators will take notes during the small group discussions.

Will police be involved? Sack is reaching out to them. There was some disagreement about police involvement and whether they should be in uniform or not. Participation could help them be better officers. Facilitators can help guide difficult conversations. The design team has a protocol in place for meetings for foster these interactions in a safe way.

Members were encouraged to embrace courage. People of color deal with challenging situations on a frequent basis and courage is needed to say what is happening.

VII. Next Meeting Feb. 7, 2017

Discussion will continue regarding the community meeting on February 16.

VIII. Announcements and Updates

Melanie and Randy gave an update on the task force to the city council.

Thank you's were extended to the design team for their attendance and the work they have done.

IX. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned around 9:40pm.

Actions:

Task force members to invite community members to the meeting on Feb. 16. Email Sack your thoughts around policing and what you would like to discuss at the next couple of task force meetings. Members have a copy of the Falcon Heights police contract.